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# Controlling the arriving “other”

Migration, racism and change



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# 1. Introduction.

## 1.1. Migration and change.

Migration studies has been quite focused upon change over time, regarding the political discussion concerning *migrants* and *refugees*.<sup>1</sup> These changing discourses can be noticed in the varying use of conceptions, regarding people who cross borders. The 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century mass exodus of Europeans to America were generally not labelled as a wave of “refugees”, but “migrants”.

Today an extensive flora of labels exists, concerning people coming to, for example, the EU. People from wealthier countries (typically high-level professionals) are often called *expats*, rather than immigrants. On the other side of the spectrum, refugees from regions struck with crises, are labelled in many ways. In fact, the label “refugee” has become “the most privileged amongst many inferior statuses”, according to refugee researcher Roger Zetter.<sup>2</sup> Refugees are divided into *false* and *true* refugees in an intricate process, driven by state interests of control and power. “Refugee status determination has, in many parts of the world, developed into a highly sophisticated technique”, writes former UNHCR-researcher Jean-François Durieux.<sup>3</sup> New labels, such as “asylum seeker”, are invented to identify migrants in limbo, to distinguish them from *genuine* refugees. Zetter concludes:

In this way, the label is formed and reformed as part of a social compact between the state and its citizens so that we are all incorporated in the political project of making labels in convenient images, while keeping the refugees and other dispossessed people at a distance. In the past my concern was with the labelling of refugees: now, it is about the fractioning of the refugee label and, arguably, about de-labelling refugees.<sup>4</sup>

The driving force behind this intricate discourse of concepts and labels is the notion of the refugee as basically unreliable, insidious and treacherous. These notions are often communicated in a racist context, by varying racist movements as well as governments influenced by populist racist discourse, for example. Even so, scholars within migration studies does not often refer to racism studies, in their research. It would seem, that these scholars may consider racism as an obvious factor in their material, and so they don't need to mention it.

## 1.2. Racism and change.

The concept of *racism* has been a subject of scientific debate, since before the word itself was introduced in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Recent scholars often focus upon different representations of racism, thus speaking of several *racisms* (in plural) rather than on one coherent single racist discourse.<sup>5</sup> Racism studies also confirm that racisms often are subjects of change. The classic example being the change over time in anti-Semitic rhetoric, where “the Jew” transformed in the early 1800s, from the pre-modern notion of “murderer of Christ” (*religious anti-Semitism*) to modernity’s notion of the “Jewish World Conspiracy” (*secular anti-Semitism*). On the other hand, current

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Zetter Roger. “More Labels, Fewer Refugees: Remaking the Refugee Label in an Era of Globalization”. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 20, no. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Durieux, Jean-François. “Three Asylum Paradigms.” *International journal on Minority and Group Rights*.(2013) No 20, p. 147.

<sup>4</sup> Zetter Roger. “More Labels, Fewer Refugees: Remaking the Refugee Label in an Era of Globalization”. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 20, no. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Distinguished in this field of racism studies is professor Ali Rattansi of London university, see for example *Racism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.

racism studies have not focused upon *under what circumstances* these changes in racism occurs, to my knowledge. These changes can occur in many ways, ranging from *stereotypes* (for example “people of African descent are exceptionally good at dancing”) to racist *hate* (for example “people of African descent are ape-like sub-humans”). Those racist discourses often exist side by side, but one of them can achieve superiority. The changes in racist discourses can also be quite subtle, making them harder to notice for scholars. But how do these changes come to be? Are there certain processes, that can be studied, from a scientific point of view, combining *racism studies* and *racism theory* with *migration studies*?

### 1.3. A synthesis between migration studies and racism studies?

I would suggest, that migration studies could progress, if combining its theories with those of racism studies. Migration studies are primarily concerned with notions of power, politics and control. I would argue that *racism* – regarded as a political ideology concerned with social power – can be a part of this, and could be included as such. In this paper, I will try to formulate a form of synthesis, between migration studies and racism studies, to suggest the value of further research.

## 2. Theory and “the other”: Racism studies and migration studies.

### 2.1. What is racism?

The concept of racism is a troublesome one, since it is a fact that racism exists as a political ideology, while at the same time extremely few individuals or movements identify themselves as being *racist*. Racism as a field of research therefore becomes difficult, since studying it also becomes a process where certain groups of society becomes labelled with a concept they don't agree with. This calls for caution among scholars, active in this field.

Racism studies has long abandon the thought, that racism has to be connected to the idea, that there exist certain biologically defined *races*, within humanity, perceived as a certain type of mammal (*Homo Sapiens Sapiens*). Racism may also – and more commonly, since the late 1930's – be constructed via essentialist notions of *culture*, *religion* or *ethnicity*. Also, racism is understood as a struggle for *social power*, that is politics (thus differing from the psychological phenomenon of *xenophobia*). Racism researcher Francisco Bethencourt states that racism is about “the monopolization of social power” and continues:

These interpretations inspire my hypothesis that racism is triggered by political projects [...] Racism can be fed or deterred by influential powers, and is channelled by a complex web of collective memories and sudden possibilities—a web that can change the forms and targets of racism.<sup>6</sup>

Note that Bethencourt clearly states the changing nature of racism, as it is able to change both form and target. Historically this has been known to often happen quite rapidly.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the political

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<sup>6</sup> Bethencourt, Francisco, *Racisms: from the Crusades to the Twentieth Century*, 2015, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> For example, when the racism of Italian fascism turned to anti-Semitism overnight in November 1938, chocking the Italian Jewry.

ideology of racism has many and ever-changing faces, which is quite natural for an ideology.<sup>8</sup> One recent model for ideological analysis is suggested by the political scientist Michael Freeden.<sup>9</sup> His analytical model defines an ideology in terms of *a core cluster of interrelated and ineliminable political concepts*.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Freeden argues that all political manifestations – which can vary enormously – of a certain ideology, share a common *ideological minimum* (“a core cluster”), shaping a basic world view. Upon the various permutations of the ideology of racism, historian George M. Fredrickson writes about changes in racism over time, but also about *geographical differences* between various racisms, stating that “racism is always nationally specific. It invariably becomes enmeshed with searches for national identity and cohesion that vary with the historical experience of each country.”<sup>11</sup> Ali Rattansi goes further, denying that it is possible to speak about “racism”. Rattansi argues that “it is necessary to speak not just of a single racism, but always about racisms in the plural.”<sup>12</sup> Or even better, use the concept of *racialization*:

The concept of racialization moves research and political argument away from the unproductive debates about whether any particular individuals, propositions, claims, and doctrines are simply ‘racist’ or ‘non-racist’. Instead, the field is opened up to more useful analyses of the different mixes of biological and cultural connotations of difference, superiority and inferiority that emerge in public and private statements, conversations, jokes, and so forth.<sup>13</sup>

Summarizing these thoughts upon racism, as a political ideology aiming at social power, it would seem possible to place racism among available political tools for a political entity (for example a state or a political movement) to exercise *control over immigration*. Portraying undesired groups of “others” (migrants, refugees, etc.) according to available racist political discourses – that is, producing a racist “truth” about certain people – a given political agency can create legitimacy (and popular support) for very restrictive, or indeed downright hostile, politics of migration.

## 2.2. Migration studies and political control.

People has moved – *migrated* – during the entire history of humanity, but this text will focus upon immigration to Europe since 1918, from the viewpoint of political control (use and exertion of political power via given governmental systems). The development after the first world war was quite dramatic, according to social scientist Claudena Skran, stating that “in terms of size and scope, refugee movements in inter-war Europe dwarfed all previous ones. They were mass migrations that significantly affected both the refugee-producing countries and the refugee-receiving ones.”<sup>14</sup> What distinguished this wave of migration, relative to earlier ones, was the forceful introduction of state control, upon migrants. Had there been an open absorber of migration flows, such as the USA in the 1800’s, people forcibly uprooted probably never would have been called refugees at all, according to Skran:

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<sup>8</sup> For instance; Karl Marx, Joseph Stalin, and Olof Palme all called themselves *socialists*, even though their practical political ideas were extremely different.

<sup>9</sup> See for example Micael Freeden, *Ideology*, Oxford (2003).

<sup>10</sup> Berggren, Lena, “Intellectual Fascism: Per Engdahl and the Formation of ‘New-Swedish Socialism’”, *Fascism* (Volume 3, Issue 2, pages 69-92, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Fredrickson, George M., *Racism: a short history*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 2003, p. 75.

<sup>12</sup> Rattansi, Ali, *Racism: a very short introduction* (Oxford, 2007), p. 106.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 107.

<sup>14</sup> Skran, Claudena M., *Refugees in inter-war Europe: the emergence of a regime*, Clarendon, Oxford, (1995).

[...] the development of immigration restrictions world-wide erected a new obstacle to the resolution of refugee problems. John Stoessinger sums up the problem in this way: 'What distinguishes the refugee of the twentieth century is the immense difficulty, and often impossibility of finding a new home.' The abrupt end to the relatively free immigration of the nineteenth century began in the United States and spread elsewhere. As a result, migrants found themselves subject to increasing government regulation. *The most visible sign of this was the requirement that all international travellers carry a passport*, a device for controlling movement across frontiers.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, the states of Europe after 1918 began exercising political control upon migration on a whole new level. According to this new discourse, migrants (refugees) were considered with suspicion, in the context of the – fairly new – political idea of *the nation state* and its main political ideology, *nationalism*. Governments exaggerated the danger of refugees, ascribing them to hostile contexts such as political, racial, religious or cultural *threats to the nation*. Thus, the spread of nationalist doctrines, combined with the economic, social, and political changes mentioned above, meant that refugees of the Inter-War Period faced difficult obstacles in their quest for new countries and new lives, according to Skran. This development has continued, into present day Europe. To this day, refugees are often perceived as threats to western societies. Researcher Jane Freedman writes:

Reports express fears of huge masses of asylum seekers flooding into countries of the West with the governments powerless to stop them. These asylum seekers, they say, are not “real” refugees fleeing violence and persecution, but “bogus asylum seekers” or “false refugees” coming to benefit from the economic and material benefits available in Western states.<sup>16</sup>

This continuing development requires further and growing exertion of state control. Zetter has analysed this via the use of language, that is a study of present day discourse, regarding migration. To be exact, the concept of labelling migrants into different categories, as described in the introduction above. Zetter continues:

Anyone has a right to claim refugee status; but claims to the refugee label are controlled by the draconian mix of deterrent measures and in-country policies and regulations. These new, and often pejorative labels, are created and embedded in political discourse, policy and practice. Previously enjoyed rights are curtailed and, above all, restrictionism increasingly criminalizes those claiming refugee status as they desperately seek asylum. The outcome is a new set of labels which compound the perception that the protective label ‘refugee’ is no longer a basic Convention right, but a highly privileged prize which few deserve and most claim illegally. [...] *the process of transforming the label ‘refugee’ provides the impetus for the state to co-opt wider agency in its political agenda and reproduce social concerns as normalized policy and practice.*<sup>17</sup>

Zetter ends his paper, thus; “In this way, the label is formed and reformed as part of a social compact between the state and its citizens so that we are all incorporated in the political project of making

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* Italics added by me.

<sup>16</sup> Freedman, Jane., *Gendering the international asylum and refugee debate*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2007, p 1.

<sup>17</sup> Zetter Roger. “More Labels, Fewer Refugees: Remaking the Refugee Label in an Era of Globalization”. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 20, no. 2, p. 184f. Italics added by me.

labels in convenient images, while keeping the refugees and other dispossessed people at a distance.”<sup>18</sup>

To conclude, these analyses from research in migration, provides a strong incitement, that the political ideology of racism can be used by agencies (states, governments and political groupings, such as parties and activists) to exercise control over migration. However, it is uncommon for researchers in the field of migration studies, to refer to racism as a political option, open for use by these given agents. But how can they do it? In what ways can the ever-changing faces of racisms be applied, in political processes, concerning migration? And how can different racist political techniques – ranging from exotified stereotypes of “the other” to open hate towards the racialized “enemy” – be used in social discourse?

### 3. Racisms and migration: politics of change.

#### 3.1. Migration and the changing face of “the Muslim”.

One of Sweden’s most famous and appreciated children’s books are about the private detective *Ture Sventon*, published 1948–1973. The heroic Sventon has a sidekick in an Arab, *mister Omar* (seen twice on the cover of this paper). Always wearing a *fez*, mister Omar concurs with western traditional orientalist racist stereotypes, concerning Middle East Muslims, since Napoleon’s campaign in Egypt 1798-1801. Mister Omar provides Sventon with a flying carpet, he normally lives in a tent in the desert, he speaks in a strange orientalist way and is clearly *feminine*. At the same time, he is obedient, polite and loyal. The depiction of the orientalist *Arab* or the *Muslim* that mister Omar represents was quite common in earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century popular culture.<sup>19</sup> Another example was the movie star Rudolph Valentino<sup>20</sup> (1895-1926), being a representative of the highly sexualised western image of exotified eastern *backwardness* (harems, etc.). The popular American music group *Spike Jones and his City Slickers* sang in the hit song “Sheik of Araby” in 1942:

Oh, I'm the Sheik of Araby  
And all the women worship me.  
You should see them follow me around. Not bad.  
Even wives of all the other sheiks,  
They beg to kiss my rosy cheeks  
And that ain't bad -- in fact, that's good, I've found. I'm a cad!

When I lay down to sleep  
I'm counting girls instead of sheep  
From my harem I can't scare 'em out. Why should I?  
They're beauties from all races,  
And some have pretty faces.  
I'm the Sheik who knows what love is all about.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 190.

<sup>19</sup> The classic study in this field is of course Edward Said's *Orientalism*, New York (1978).

<sup>20</sup> Real name Rodolfo Alfonso Raffaello Pierre Filibert Guglielmi di Valentina d'Antonguella, that is of Italian ancestry, not Arab.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, Harry B. (lyrics), "The Sheik of Araby" (1942).

The key concept in this racist discourse is *the backwardness of the East*. These racist stereotypes of *the Arab* are degrading, but at the same time depicts them as mostly harmless or even charming (*the Arab* could also be sinister – but in a stupid, almost childlike and easily controlled way). Then, something changed. Today, the typical western racist stereotype of *the middle eastern Muslim* is a threatening perpetrator of violence, pursuing *jihad* towards western society. A threat to “our” culture and maybe cultural existence. This new figure is still backwards – but not feminine, any more. On the contrary, *the jihadist* is masculine and potent. How and why did this change in racist discourse come about?

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Muslim world was a target area for western imperialism. After the first world war, all areas of the globe dominated by Islam was under western control. Even the once fearsome Ottoman Empire had been defeated and crushed. Thus, “the Muslim” no longer posed a threat towards the west and the racist stereotype of *feminine backwardness in far way lands* was constructed 1798-1918. But starting in the 1970’s, the number of Middle East Muslim refugees, following unrests, like the situation in Palestine after the 1967 and 1973 wars, the Lebanese civil war starting in 1975 and the revolution in Iran 1979, started to increase. This situation continued, with more Muslims refugees coming to Europe (and from the Balkans to western Europe, due to the civil war in former Yugoslavia). The political developments – and war – in the Middle East eventually caused Iraqis, Syrians and other to flee to the west. Between 1970 and 2000 the percentage of Muslims living in north-western Europe increased from 2,2 percent to 5,27 percent.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the racist stereotype of the Muslim changed, from the feminine “mister Omar” to the masculine threatening figure seen today, in racist discourse. Was this due to the fact, that *the Muslim* ceased to be a racist stereotype “faraway” and instead became *a refugee*, existing “here” in the western world?

One other possible explanation could be Middle Eastern terrorism. In the 1970’s, the world was struck by for example Palestinians hijacking airplanes, and so forth. These acts were generally not considered *Muslim*, but rather leftist-political (for example the PLO), and existed in a context of western European secular terrorism (the German RAF, the British IRA, and so forth). The connection between *Islam* and terrorism did not break through on a larger scale, until September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. But already in 1993 Samuel Huntington presented his famous and influential paper *The Clash of Civilisations?*, stating:

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.<sup>23</sup>

The importance of Huntington’s writings can hardly be exaggerated, and I would argue that the racist discourse of Huntington has played a decisive role in the formation of current European migration politics. Liz Fekete of *The Institute of Race Relations* writes:

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<sup>22</sup> Kettani, Houssain, “Muslim Population in Europe: 1950 – 2020”, *International Journal of Environmental Science and Development*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Huntington, Samuel, “The Clash of Civilisations”, *Foreign Affairs*, summer (1993).



Huntington's belief that civilizational conflict occurs not just between nations, but within those western nations that fail to control immigration and/ or preserve civilizational coherence homogeneity, has become the bedrock of the current debate on citizenship.<sup>24</sup>

Specifically, Huntington was worried about Islamic influence in Europe; "conflict along the fault line between Western and Islamic civilizations has been going on for 1,300 years."<sup>25</sup> Thus, after the cold war – understood by Huntington as being a historical parenthesis – the world would go back to normal, that is the epic fight between Christianity (the west) and Islam (the East). The influence of Huntington's rhetoric became visible two years later (1995), during the discussions at that time, regarding Turkey entering the EU. Anthropologist Matti Bunzl writes:

No issue is more troubling than Turkey's Muslim character [...]. Among the most prominent, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing – the former President of France and head of the Convention on the Future of Europe, the body charged with drafting a European constitution — has likened Turkey's possible entry into the EU to the end of Europe.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the racist image of "the Muslim" changed, even before the terror attacks of 2001. I would argue that this change became explicit in racist discourse, already in the 1980's, when Muslim refugees started to appear in north-western Europe, in larger numbers. At the same time, the demand for labour migration to Europe, had all but vanished. "Most European states were seeking to close the doors on primary labour immigration by 1973/4", writes political scientist Neil MacMaster.<sup>27</sup> Political scientist Gil Loescher writes:

In the hope of deterring all prospective entrants—migrants and asylum-seekers alike—the industrialized states are continually developing newer control measures, contributing to a cycle of more and more restrictive measures.<sup>28</sup>

The 1980's saw the emergence of a new wave of ultra-nationalist political parties, focusing upon "anti-immigration", often targeting *the Muslim* (to some degree replacing or existing side-by-side with the traditional hate towards other people "of colour" – such as these of African origin – and Jews). *Islamophobia* became a part of western European politics. As such, it became available as a possible tool also for main-stream political parties in the European parliaments, for states and for governments, wishing to exercise political control over unwanted migration.

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<sup>24</sup> Fekete, Liz, *A suitable enemy: racism, migration and Islamophobia in Europe*, Pluto, London, 2009, p. 86.

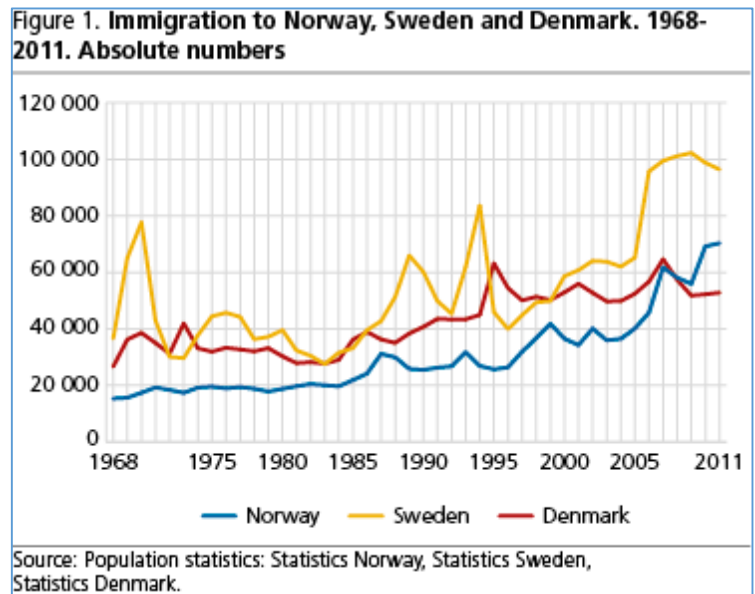
<sup>25</sup> Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilisations", *Foreign Affairs*, summer (1993).

<sup>26</sup> Bunzl, Matti, *Anti-semitism and Islamophobia: hatreds old and new in Europe*, Prickly Paradigm Press, Chicago, 2007, p. 32.

<sup>27</sup> Macmaster, Neil, *Racism in Europe, 1870-2000: European culture and society*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2001, p. 175.

<sup>28</sup> Loescher, Gil, *The UNHCR and World Politics: A Perilous Path*, Oxford University Press, (Oxford, (2001), p. 352.

One example was the Norwegian social democratic party, *Arbeiderpartiet* (AP), and its relationship to the racist *Fremskrittspartiet* (FRP) in the late 1980's, which has been studied by political scientist Kamilla Simonnes.<sup>29</sup> She states that "radical-right pressure in particular seems to have been important in pushing integration and immigration policies in a more nationalist and restrictive direction". In 1987, the FRP made its political break-through, reaching 10,5 percent in the Norwegian national elections. Since then, AP – along with the rest of the Norwegian political spectrum – more or less adapted itself to the anti-immigrant (and especially *islamophobic*) political rhetoric of the FRP. This social democratic adaptation was called "the politics of stolen clothes", by Norwegian political media. The result was, that Norway maintained a much higher level of state control, regarding immigration, than for example neighbouring Sweden, in the late 1980's and the 1990's. Since then, FRP's critique of a perceived and ever ongoing "sneak islamization" of Norway lead to horrific



Source: Statistiska centralbyrån (SCB), Sweden.

results in 2011, when the islamophobic ex-FRP-politician Anders Behring Breivik committed his act of terror in Norway, killing 77 people, mainly young social democrats. Breivik, alongside FRP, blamed AP for pursuing a secret Marxist conspiracy, mass-importing Muslims into Norway, in order to destroy the country. This deed of terror did not hinder the other political parties to continue to use islamophobic ideas, in order to exercise state control over migration politics. Just a few months after Breivik's terror, the Socialist Left-party (*Sosialistisk Venstreparti*) suggested that the state should force themselves into the homes of Norwegian "minorities" (meaning *Muslims*), interrogating them and controlling that they embrace "Norwegian core values".<sup>30</sup> If they refused cooperation, these "minority-milieus" would be punished. This shows how racist ideas of harsh state control, regarding migrants, of the extreme right gradually had entered the whole Norwegian political spectrum, including the far left. In 2013 the FRP – despite its connection to Breivik – entered the Norwegian government, partnering with the traditional right (*Høyre*).

Thus, racism and racist discourse is clearly used in European politics as one of many political tools, regarding state control over migration flows. In targeting a special group of migrants (in this case *Muslims*), political agencies can point to public concern regarding that specific group ("they" are dangerous, a threat to "our" existence). To be used in this way, racism has to change, from exotic stereotypes (orientalism) of a distant feminine "other" to an aggressive and invading masculine "other". The western view of "the Muslim", from 1918 to today, display this kind of change.

<sup>29</sup> Simonnes, Kamilla, *I stjålne klær? En analyse av endringer i Høyres, Arbeiderpartiets og Fremskrittspartiets innvandrings- og integreringspolitikk*, Oslo University (2011).

<sup>30</sup> *Aftenposten*, "SV foreslår integreringstiltak" (October 18th, 2011).

### 3.2. Anti-Finnish racism in Sweden and Finnish migration

During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the construction of conservative Swedish nationalism was to a large extent based upon “scientific” *race-biological* ideas of Swedes being the world’s only remaining pure Germanic-Aryan people.<sup>31</sup> A myth was constructed, that the basis of this exceptional Swedish racial pureness, had been Sweden’s historical isolation in the far northern periphery of Europe. However, there was an imminent threat towards this racial purity; *the Finns*. Alongside Jews and other “eastern” people, posing a danger to the Swedes, the Finns were considered non-Aryan Asians and “Mongols”, who should not be allowed to racially mix themselves with *Germanic* Swedes.<sup>32</sup> This inter-Nordic racism has been compared to Said’s thesis of orientalism, by ethnologist Marja Ågren, who points out that “the Finn” during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was portrayed as an almost mythical being in Swedish history writing; a beast of the eastern wilderness, emotional, sexual – and always inferior to “Swedishness”.<sup>33</sup> In 1922 the Swedish *Institute for Race Biology* opened in Uppsala, following a politically unanimous decision in the Swedish parliament, and the threat of the Finns were one of the prime tasks for the institute’s operations.<sup>34</sup> So, even though Finns clearly had been a part of Sweden’s history for centuries, this racist *truth* could be constructed, after 1809. The *Finn* became an orientalised and distant *other* in Swedish racist discourse. But world political events would change this, drastically, in the late 1930’s.

In 1939, the Soviet Union attacked Finland, in an attempt to re-conquer the country. Finland, however, put up a fight, resisting the superior attacker and stirred a tremendous wave of popular support in neighbouring Sweden. The notion of a common enemy in Soviet Bolshevism became more important, than Swedish earlier racist anti-Finnish sentiments.<sup>35</sup> Thus, via the war, the idea of *the Finn* as someone racially distant from Swedishness gradually faded. There were also large waves of Finnish refugees coming to Sweden, especially at the end of the war – alongside many other nationalities.<sup>36</sup> To my knowledge, the racism these refugees encountered in Sweden, was limited. The large influx of Finns was sudden, swift and became a part of the general turmoil of the end of the war, in a country who had learned 1940-1944, how to receive vast quantities of war refugees.

After the war, however, the situation changed. Swedish industry entered the prosperous post-war decades, thus having to face a situation of an ongoing labour shortage. Neighbouring Finland was relatively poor, and became therefore a pool of moderately cheap blue collar-labour, starting in the 1950’s and continuing well into the 1970’s. Huge numbers of Finns migrated to Sweden, becoming the largest immigrant group in Swedish history. Today, there are 700,000 Swedes with Finnish ancestry, constituting more than seven percent of the Swedish population. Thus, racism towards “the Finn” was re-constructed – again – after 1945. In a government study about Finns, made in 1975, the Swedish stereotypes regarding this group of immigrants could be summarized in three words; *knifes, alcohol* and *sisu*.<sup>37</sup> In other words, Finns were considered *violent* (and therefore prone to crimes, including assault and murder). Another “typical” Finnish distinctive feature was

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<sup>31</sup> This has been examined by the science journalist Maja Hagerman in several studies. See for example; Hagerman, Maja, *Det rena landet*, Stockholm 2006. Also; Maja Hagerman, *Käraste Herman: Rasbiologen Herman Lundborgs gåta*, Stockholm (2016).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 353.

<sup>33</sup> Borg, Kristian (ed.), *Finnjävlar*, Stockholm (2016), p. 124.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 370.

<sup>35</sup> Even the leading Nazi ideologue Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS, declared Finns as “honorary Aryans”. Starting in 1940, Finns were allowed to enter the Waffen-SS. First Swedish-speaking Finns (*Finlandssvenskar*, considered more Swedish, thus also more Germanic), then also Finnish-speaking Finns, now considered to be a part of the “Nordic Race”. In 1942 Hitler stated that “from now on Finland and the Finnish people be treated and designated as a Nordic state and a Nordic people”.

<sup>36</sup> See for example Ann Nehlin, *New homes in Sweden – the evacuation of Finnish war children during WWII: notions of child-parent separations and the public’s willingness to help in light of Swedish politics of neutrality*, Stockholm University (2013).

<sup>37</sup> Borg, Kristian (ed.), *Finnjävlar*, Stockholm (2016), p. 118.

alcoholism and an almost un-human ability to consume huge amounts of alcohol. The last conception – *Sisu* – is a Finnish word, meaning “single-minded energy, persistence, fierceness with a streak of anger”.<sup>38</sup> To summarize, *the Finn* was considered by Swedish post-war racism to be a lower class, un-educated, animal-like and emotional “other” – compared to civilised *Swedishness*. “The alcoholic Finn sitting on a park bench, screaming in Finnish with a bottle in his hand” was “both reality and a stereotype”, writes Ågren.<sup>39</sup> Swedish racism towards “the Finn” was one of a power relation, in accordance with the theories of racism studies. But at the same time, Finns were appreciated, as blue collar workers. As Ulrich Beck writes, the Finns accepted “to work for low wages” (compared to Swedes) which “worked very well in given sections of the labour market”.<sup>40</sup> The Finns were considered to work hard, without complaining (*Sisu*). They did the dirty work, that few swedes wanted to do; cleaning toilets, putting together Swedish export products in the heavy industries and doing the dishes in hospitals. Thus, we can make assumptions about this racist discourse, used as means of *control of migration*.

Using racist stereotypes about the Finn, Swedish society made sure that a certain group of people *remained much needed cheap labour*, in times of economic boom. This situation of migration was a bit odd, as the Finns were *not unwanted*, as such. But they were kept at a distance. Myself, I remember my childhood in a suburb to Stockholm. My family, being upper middle class, lived in a villa, in a typical middle class area, dominated by ethnic swedes. On the other side of a small hill – actually called “The Border Mountain” (*Gränsberget*) – lived *the Finns*, in small rental flats. The racist discourse concerning these so called “fucking finns” (*Finnjävlar*) was very explicit. They were socially stigmatised as troublemakers, alcoholics and impossible to educate. At the same time, there was little talk about, that they should leave Sweden (“go home”). They were seen as fit to do simple, dirty and low-paid jobs. Maybe one can make comparisons to Hispanics and the descendants of African slaves in the USA? In order to use people considered “different” as a pool of cheap labour, thought of as inferior to “white” Americans, racism is maintained. A certain group of people are thus kept in constant social inferiorness. Regarding Finns, the Swedish state also made sure, using political means of control, like *language*, to hinder Finns from becoming Swedish citizens. Author Susanne Alakoski writes about her family history, as Finns in Sweden:

We came to stay. But to stay does not mean, that you are entitled to vote. My father lived in Sweden for forty years, without ever voting in the parliamentary elections. It is hard to change country. [...] He never became a Swedish citizen. He never learned *Form-Swedish* [*blankettsvenska*].<sup>41</sup>

However, in the 1980's things started to change. Finland became richer and the waves of Finnish immigrants to Sweden declined dramatically. The children and grand-children of former Finnish immigrants to Sweden became assimilated, according to Ågren. So how did this effect Swedish racism towards Finns? Interestingly, but not surprisingly, it thoroughly changed.

Many scholars and writers has noticed “the new positive image of Finland”, according to Ågren.<sup>42</sup> I would rather conclude, that current racist Swedish stereotypes regarding Finns, could be summarized in the words; *back to orientalism*. Once again, as before the years of massive Finnish

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<sup>38</sup> *Nationalencyklopedin*, “Sisu”.

<sup>39</sup> Borg, Kristian (ed.), *Finnjävlar*, Stockholm (2016), p. 118.

<sup>40</sup> Beck, Ulrich, *Den kosmopolitiska blicken eller: krig är fred*, Daidalos, Göteborg, 2005, p. 165.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p. 43.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*., p. 136.

migration to Sweden, the “Finn” is today an orientalised, exoticised and distant “other”. Symbolised by the popular *Moomin*, from popular (especially among the Swedish middle class) children’s books, the notion of “Finnishness” has dramatically changed. The Swedish upper middle class especially appreciates Finland; Finnish authors, Finnish high-brow movies and – not unimportantly – expensive Finnish high-quality design. At the same time, older stereotypes still exist, although in the shadow of current dominating ones. But they are still there, ready to be used, as conditions change. Thus being a possible tool for politics, to exercise control upon possible future migration.

### 3.3. Conspirator or vermin? Anti-Semitism and migration.

An important circumstance is that a certain “other” is not needed to exist inside a certain society, for racism against that group to exist, or even flourish. The classic example is anti-Semitism, which can freely exist with or without Jews. In the Nordic countries in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, for example, Jewish populations were miniscule. Still, there was no lack of anti-Semitism. The “Jews” became, during the 1800’s, seen as responsible for most things considered wrong with modernity; immoral capitalism was interpreted by the political left as *Jew-capitalism*, socialism was interpreted by the political right as *Jew-bolshevism*, and so on.<sup>43</sup> The “Jew” was the trans-national spirit and mastermind of hidden global conspiracies, directed towards “our nation”, as it became constructed – via nationalism and the nation states – at the time.

However, in a gradual process during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the north-western European reality of the “Jew” started to change, as the “Jew” became a concrete figure – a refugee, fleeing prosecution. The “Jewish question” became acute during the 1930’s, as Germany steadily increased the level of oppression towards its Jewish minority. Thus, the dominant racist image of “the Jew” shifted, from the unseen evil *mastermind conspirator* (de-humanised in racist cartoons as an *octopus* or *spider* in a web) to the *vermin* (de-humanised in racist cartoons as a *rat*, a *cockroach* or a *bacillus*). It is important to underline that both these racist images – the evil *mastermind* and the smelling *vermin* – continued to co-exist during the inter war-era, as they had done during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But when “the Jew” became primarily regarded as a *refugee*, I would argue that the main focus shifted.

This change in racism coincided with a change in European government control, towards Jewish refugees. “In Sweden, the first Aliens Act was passed in 1927 with the aim of maintaining ‘the purity of the Swedish race’”, writes historian Karin Kvist Geverts.<sup>44</sup> The Swedish government had made it very clear, that it did not appreciate “Jews and communists”, according to historian Mikael Byström.<sup>45</sup> But in the 1930’s, there was drastic developments in European politics, and this affected peripheral states like Sweden, as well. Byström writes that “before 1938, only a few of Europe’s persecuted were trying to take refuge in Sweden”.<sup>46</sup> But on march 12<sup>th</sup> 1938, Hitler invaded Austria and the Swedish press started to publish articles warning of a coming invasion of Jewish refugees.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Macmaster, Neil, *Racism in Europe, 1870-2000: European culture and society*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2001, p. 86p.

<sup>44</sup> Byström, Mikael & Frohnert, Pär (red.), *Reaching a state of hope: refugees, immigrants and the Swedish welfare state, 1930-2000*, Nordic Academic Press, Lund, 2013, p. 55.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Byström, Mikael, *En broder, gäst och parasit: uppfattningar och föreställningar om utlänningar, flyktingar och flyktingpolitik i svensk offentlig debatt 1942-1947*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2006, Stockholm, 2006, p. 52.

<sup>47</sup> Byström, Mikael & Frohnert, Pär (red.), *Reaching a state of hope: refugees, immigrants and the Swedish welfare state, 1930-2000*, Nordic Academic Press, Lund, 2013, p. 56.

In July 1938, representatives of 38 countries gathered in Evian, France, to discuss a possible solution to the refugee problem. Historian Ingela Karlsson writes:

The conference was a complete failure, regarding helping the European Jews in their situation of hardship. All the participating countries expressed deep sympathies with the persecuted Jews, while at the same time declaring that they were unable to receive refugees. The reasons were primarily economic and social concerns, and a risk for growing unemployment. There was also a fear that Jewish refugees would create anti-Semitism and “a Jew problem” in their countries.<sup>48</sup>

September 1938 the Swedish anti-Semitism towards Jewish refugees became a part of official Swedish government politics, as Sweden demanded that German Jews should have their passports marked with a J-stamp.<sup>49</sup> In November 1938 the persecution of the German Jews reached new levels of violence, during the so called “*Kristallnacht*”. In Sweden, the Jewish refugees became a topic of political debate. December 21<sup>st</sup>, students of Uppsala university visited prime minister Per Albin Hansson, urging the government to allow Jewish students entry into Sweden.<sup>50</sup> This stirred a fierce reaction from anti-Semitic activists. There was however very little rhetoric about Jews connected to a *secret world Jewish conspiracy*, in their reaction. Thus, the main discourse of Swedish anti-Semitism had changed rapidly, due to the refugee situation at hand. Instead, the Jew was portrayed as *vermin*. The anti-Semitic activists stated that Jewish students were contagious with *bacillus*.<sup>51</sup> Receiving Jewish refugees was called “an import of Jews” or an “invasion of Jews”, pouring a wave of “oriental people” into the pureness of Germanic-Aryan *Swedishness*. A few weeks earlier, Swedish Nazis started their most successful campaign during the 1930’s, the “Stop Moses at the gates”-campaign (*Mota Moses i grind*). Historian Helene Lööw writes:

The campaign was conducted via public meetings, lectures, leaflets, newspaper articles and collections of money, in order to finance continuing action. The campaign tried to influence the government and the parliament to pursue politics, hostile to refugees.<sup>52</sup>

The Swedish government were thus able, to use these racist arguments, in order to exercise control over Jewish migration into Sweden. The underlying political discourse was, that these fears of *the Jew*, represented notions of the Swedish people, and that a democratic society had to listen to these popular demands. Still, few agencies openly admitted to being anti-Semitic. “Throughout the entire period investigated, 1938-45 it was quite acceptable to express moderately anti-Semitic views in Sweden, but wholly unacceptable to admit to being an anti-Semite”, writes Kvist Geverts, suggesting that anti-Semitism instead should be viewed upon as an ever playing *background noise*.<sup>53</sup>

In this context, I would suggest, the anti-Semitism of the “Jew” as a *mastermind conspirator* gave way, to the racist view of the “Jew” as *vermin*. Racist discourse benefited from a change its main rhetoric,

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<sup>48</sup> Karlsson, Ingela, “Eviankonferensen”, *Forum för levande historia* (2008-2009), <http://www.levandehistoria.se/fakta-om-forintelsen/judeforfoljelserna-under-1930-talet/eviankonferensen> (retrieved October 18th, 2016).

<sup>49</sup> Byström, Mikael, *En broder, gäst och parasit: uppfattningar och föreställningar om utläningar, flyktingar och flyktingpolitik i svensk offentlig debatt 1942-1947*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2006, Stockholm, 2006, p. 53.

<sup>50</sup> Larsmo, Ola, “Det mörka arvet från Bollhusmötet”, *Dagens Nyheter* (February 16th, 2014).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Lööw, Helene, “Bollhusmötet var inte unikt”, *Uppsala nya tidning* (February 16th, 2014).

<sup>53</sup> Byström, Mikael & Frohnert, Pär (red.), *Reaching a state of hope: refugees, immigrants and the Swedish welfare state, 1930-2000*, Nordic Academic Press, Lund, 2013, p. 61p.

being used as an available control tool for mainstream (non-Nazi) Swedish migration politics. The racist concept of the “Jew” as mastermind conspirator remained, but was subdued. Temporarily, as it was. In 1948 the state of Israel was founded and fleeing Jews no longer needed to seek refuge around the world. Therefore, there was no longer need for political control, regarding migrating Jews. Thus, the main anti-Semitic racist discourse shifted back. Today, “the Jew” is once again mainly considered by anti-Semitism as a *hiding evil mastermind conspirator*, in world politics, international economics and media power. Historian Henrik Bachner writes about “power, wealth and conspiracies” as the core of anti-Semitism in the post-war world,<sup>54</sup> stating that “the central part of the race-ideological perception of the world is the belief in the existence of a Jewish world government” or the “Zionist occupational government”.<sup>55</sup> Thus, racism continues to show its flexibility, dynamics and almost Darwinist ability to adapt to changing political realities, in order to continue to exercise social power, over time and space. Racism as a political entity therefore remains a resource to tap into, not only for racist political movements, parties and activists – but also for mainstream political agencies. As it suits their will to exercise control.

#### 4. Further research.

Political scientist Kenan Malik, specialising in migration politics and right-wing populism, writes about the connection between migration and racism, concerning traditional parties struggle to control right-wing populism:

What has made their [traditional parties] assault on [populist] parties such as UKIP and the FN particularly ineffective is that at the same time as attacking them as racist, mainstream politicians have themselves assiduously fostered fears about immigration and adopted populist anti-immigration policies. All this has merely confirmed the belief that the populists were right all along. [...] Indeed, by stoking new fears about immigration, it has merely deepened the sense of grievance.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, Malik underlines the political danger involved, when traditional politics tries to use racism as means of control over migration politics. Some scholars argue, that adopting this strategy regarding controlling migration, benefits extremism, thus posing a considerable risk, given the dark political history of Europe during the inter-war period.

This study aims at furthering academic studies, concerning state control of migration. I would argue that there are indications, that there is a connection between controlling migration and the use of racist ideology. But in order to strengthen these indications, one would need to conduct much more thorough empirical investigations, than I have done in this paper. Extracting random examples of connections between changes in situations of migration and the use of racism, as I have done above, is simply not enough. For example, concerning the question of *causality*:

- Is it really changes in migration that causes changes in racism? And what about the other way around, how does changes in racism influence migration?

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<sup>54</sup> Bachner, Henrik, *Återkomsten: antisemitism i Sverige efter 1945*, Natur och kultur, Diss. Lund : Univ., Stockholm, 1999, p. 223.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Sandelind, Clara (red.), *European populism and winning the immigration debate*, 1. ed., Fores, Stockholm, 2014, p. xvii.

Also, further research could study:

- The relationship between unwanted and wanted migration (*refugees* contra *labour migration*, for example). Politics of migration control seem to have a relationship to racism, also in this field.
- Changes in gender when the distant “other” becomes a present “refugee”. I have implied this, in the study above. It seems that there may be a *process of masculinisation*, when a *feminine* (and often orientalised) distant “other” shows up at the border, as a refugee.
- Migration and democracy. What democratic discourses are mobilised, opposing construction of racism, concerning targeted groups of migrants? Interpreting democracy as an ideology, focused upon *inclusion*, we see that both wanted and un-wanted groups of migrants are targeted as objects of *exclusion*. What rhetorics are used, in this discursive field? Can the harsh methods of control, regarding migration, actually be a threat to democracy?

To summarize, studies of migration can benefit from many other fields of study. Racism studies, political science concerning populism, and historical studies (including fascism studies) could all contribute, to our understanding of what may be one of the most important questions of our time.



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