

# In Search of Danish Atmospheres

*by* Thomas Paulsen

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# **In Search of Danish Atmospheres**

*An Autoethnographic Study of Nationality, Identity and Being Danish*

Thomas Paulsen



I certify that this dissertation is entirely my own work and no part of it has been submitted for a degree or other qualification in this or another institution. I also certify that I have not constructed data nor shared data with another candidate at Exeter University or elsewhere without specific authorisation.

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## **Abstract**

This research is an autoethnographic enquiry into the formation of Danish identity and how this is altered in becoming stateless. As a study of the self, it uses analysis of belonging and memory to explore self-narratives in the creation of 'Danish' atmospheres within the UK. This is displayed through use of two 'contact zones', the first being a family photo collection and the second the Danish application for the retention of nationality. By exploring these as entry points through autoethnography, it forms discussion of constructing and performing within Danish 'atmospheres', drawing on non-representational theory and identity performance. Autoethnography is used to enable the reader to empathise with an 'embodied' nationality, whilst still applying academic analysis.

## **Acknowledgements**

I must start by thanking my family for their patience and openness whilst I quizzed and queried them throughout this process. Without them I would not be Danish, and this dissertation would not exist. I would also like to thank Ian Cook for both the initial suggestion that I could be my own research subject and for his invaluable continuing support and encouragement despite my constant emails and meetings. His introduction into autoethnography has allowed me to embrace academia with a new lease of life. I also acknowledge that my Danish-ness may have taken its toll on those around me, entering the kitchen to be met by the smell of herring in the evening cannot be described as a pleasant surprise for my housemates and I thank them for their patience and for being brave enough to try many of the unusual dishes I placed before them. I have immensely enjoyed sharing being Danish with all those mentioned and countless others who have all supported, challenged and encouraged me throughout the writing of this dissertation for which I am most grateful.

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## Introduction

*Herrings, knitted jumpers, lamps, butter, Vikings, rye bread, Maersk, cinema, the Egg Chair, flags, The Killing, bicycles, Sydney Opera House, bacon, windmills, farmland, LEGO, open sandwiches, the Oresund, football, architecture, Carlsberg, candles, The Baltic, pastries, the Little Mermaid, me.*

“But why are you Danish Tom? You’ve spent all your life in the UK?”

“I’ve got a Danish passport, I speak the language, erm, we celebrate Christmas on the 24<sup>th</sup> ...”

“Yeah, but you’re more English than Danish though”

“No, not really. I just feel Danish, I can’t really explain it, but I’ve always been told I’m Danish. To be something else just doesn’t sit right”

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On the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2016, I became stateless. My Danish nationality was taken away from me and found myself in a form of identity-limbo. All my life I have felt an attachment to a country where I have never lived, never been outside of holidays, never really known. Yet this unknown place is one I identify with in a way which surpasses simple expression. My identity is intertwined with an unknown, piecing together my surroundings to form a biographical narrative, a pursuit of ‘fullness’ (Hall, 1992).

Denmark has become cool. Over the past few years, it has transitioned from seeing itself as a small *hjemland* (homeland) of mild manners and homeliness to a state revelling in a global “*Danish delirium*”, full of eco-centric living, film and drama, world-renowned welfare state and a design heritage most countries could only dream of (Kingsley, 2012, pp. 12). For a country that has felt to be the little sister of the far bigger and more powerful Norway and Sweden for the last 50 years, it is undergoing its own identity crisis (Østergård, 2012). To be *Danske* (Danish) has become a gift, only which the most deserving can cling to. Whilst ‘Danish-cool’ is now desired globally, *Danskehed* (Danish-ness) has remained at home; inaccessible, not for sale.

Our post-modern society recognises a fluidity of identity and self, with constant re-interpretations of narratives changing our own, never stable or complete (Požarlik, 2013). The loss of nationality provides an invaluable insight to one such moment of fluidity, what normally occurs unseen ‘under the surface’ has emerged, visible for but a moment. Autoethnography traditionally is based in a struggle, a crisis in which identity is addressed (Reed-Danahay, 1997), a category in which my statelessness fits as one for study.

For my family, being *Dansk* is part of our everyday lives. My younger sister Pia and I do not think to speak in Danish to each other, we just act. To be Danish has become natural, surpassing the semiotic and instead entering the realm of the embodied. *Danskehed* is not a concept wheeled out for extraverted display, it is lived, acted, and embraced constantly. Whilst there are times it is not at the forefront of my life, it is always present, a constant in a changing world.

This dissertation analyses how through familial narratives, I have come to enter an 'atmosphere' of belonging that finds itself rooted in Denmark. It allows an exploration into my introduction into a collective-memory of what being *Dansk* is all about. As a study of the 'self' it too becomes one which questions the role of my family, my surroundings and unknown 'others' which all entangle through their mutual interactions to form my identity (Hall, 1990).

### **Objectives**

Autoethnographic method forms the backbone of most of the research and the analysis, allowing a 'lived-in' view into the self. This was teamed with analysis of storytelling, photographs and governmental documents, building up an idea of how nationality is created and curated outside of the state (Miller, 2016). Supported with literature on identity, memory, Danish nationality and performativity, an academic insight into the conflict between my identity and nationality is formed.

To be able to bring readers into the realm of the 'inarticulate' (Lorimer & Parr, 2014) through geographic thought affords me the opportunity to explore many veins of discourse. However, this has been limited to two main 'contact zones'. The first is an examination of family photographs, narratives and memories. The second an analysis of a Danish governmental document and the discussions this raises of changing identity and the self. This research becomes centred around three main research objectives:

- How nationality is constructed by the non-representational, surpassing the framing of the Danish state.
- To explore the formations of identity, the self and nationality through a 'performed' and 'embodied' gaze.
- To consider what it is 'to be Danish'; how this is altered after statelessness and whether it remains accessible.

## Literature Review

This literature review explores how identity is formed through looking at 'rootedness' and a sense of belonging creating a experiential connection. This is drawn into discussion around memory and the self, calling on concepts of 'collective memory' and 'post-memory'. There is an examination of Danish identity and culture looking at 'otherness' and Danish 'atmospheres'. Finally, 'Non-Representational Theory' and performativity are discussed as ways of 'embodying' Danish moments.

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### Identity: Roots and Belonging

*"To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul"* (Weil, 1987, pp. 41)

We all define ourselves, our identity (or identities) in relation to an origin; a root. These roots to nation and place are not simply territorial and delineated, but instead become metaphysical, referring to a 'homeland' (Malkki, 1992). 'Roots' surpass demarcated boundaries by pulling in a more abstract notion of belonging, and 'feeling to belong', with people increasingly referring to themselves through a sense of 'personhood' and a right to society rather than the more traditional idea of a nation (Kofman, 2005). Human and identity development is reliant on the ever-growing relationship between *"connection and separation, between relatedness and solitude"* (Marcia, 2014, pp. 101). This development is not only a search for autonomy, but is also created supported by our 'rootedness', and the desire to escape 'under our own steam' (ibid.). Thereby we can see how our 'roots' and 'belonging' help shape our identity.

These 'roots' need not only be nationality, but also (and perhaps more importantly) familial. The 'collective identity' drawn through families is present and preserved through a noting of linkages and similarities ("You have your mother's eyes", "your granddad could have said that", etc.), creating a shared network of roots from which identity is built (Kiecolt & LoMascolo, 2003). The family network of roots is a thickly affective notion, forming a 'feeling' of belonging, bringing with it overlapping (sometimes contrasting) notions of belonging (Hedetoft & Hjort, 2002). This can create a feeling of otherness from the shared roots, affecting both the 'native' and the 'alien', forcing us to depart from and lose one's roots (ibid.). This dynamic, fluid concept of identity is one understood to be never stable and complete, but instead transitioning throughout our lives (Hall, 1990), grasping new roots and sending out tendrils of identity ourselves for others to embrace. The formation of identity with the loss of roots is one we all undergo, however the seemed importance and reliance on the 'lost' roots varies.

There is immense power in who dictates 'belonging' and the permitted-ness of 'roots', with often contrasting views of how individuals see themselves, and how they are depicted by others (Weedon, 2004). This can be through the sharing of 'visible roots' (appearance, language, religion, etc.) (Shimizu, 2008), but also 'invisible' cultural roots (societal expectancies, cultural understandings, etc.); a form of 'rooted' intersectionality (Yuval-Davis, 2007). Both 'visible' and 'invisible' roots can be used as divisive objects in forming (or losing) a sense of belonging. This is especially present in communities with roots beyond their spatiality. The argument of which roots constitute a 'belonging' is constantly under debate, varying from 'blood' to 'cultural assimilation', all of which constitute a belonging however some recognised as stronger than others (Kiely et al., 2005). It is here where the identity of the self and 'societal identity' clash; in a search for the most 'authentic' representation of 'belonging'. The desired national communal roots are searched for through applications for citizenship, be it birth right, citizenship tests or evidence of that troublesome term 'naturalisation' (Etzioni, 2007).

Roots and belonging call upon our desire to ascribe to both an anonymous group (in this case, nationality), but also a visible familial connection (Paasi, 2003) (Miller, 2016). As we progress and our roots develop and change, as does our sense of belonging therefore our identity. This dissertation aims to examine how roots and belonging are both established and lost through forming a displaced Danish nationality and the effect this has on personal and social identity.

### **Post-Memory and Family Memory**

*"Postmemory describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful ... experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right"* (Hirsch, 2008, pp. 103)

Hirsch's description of post-memory is one that is heavily reliant on significant experiences in the family's former lives, which are then transferred to subsequent generations through the maintenance of a "*living connection*" (ibid. pp. 104). If we take these experiences to include those which they (the previous generation) deem 'powerful' enough to be continued through family conversation (or noticeable lack of), a post-memory of identity-forming events and atmosphere can be built (Shore, 2009). This theme of construction from 'post-memory' is continued by Hirsch, noting how memory becomes formed and mediated by "*narration and imagination*" (Hirsch, 1992, pp. 9). Coser (cited in Halbwachs, 1992, pp. 21) states that this sharing of a 'collective memory' allows social constructions to take place, through mutual understandings of 'self', 'community' and 'otherness'. This creates a family memory that is not only trans-

generational, but also transnational; constantly changing and 'refracted' through repetition within communities across the globe (Erl, 2011). Memory is not only constructed, but constantly shared and reconstructed by those who interact with it.

Photography is a powerful medium for the continuation of memories and the construction of post-memory. We look at the images seeking an understanding, a memory. Beyond the image, surroundings (the 'out-of-frame') are built and expanded upon to form a moment, to which we apply the compilation of stories, memories and thoughts forming a gateway into a previous instant (Hirsch, 2008). Van Dijck highlights the influential role that digital photography has over memory through increased manipulability and access, the way in which memory is formed around images is altered, instead more reliant on the network of sharing itself (2008). Using these ideas, we can see that the framework of the sharing (not only storytelling and narratives, but also the display of photos and therefore memories) goes hand-in-hand with autobiographical examination of images in the production of memory. Langford argues that maintenance of family photographs allows access to a narrative, "*Our photographic memories are used in a performative oral tradition*" (2001, quoted in Kuhn, 2007, pp. 285). This societal narrative constitutes a family memory, varying with narrator. Positionality plays a vital role in how the narrative is told, allowing the creation and continuation of a familial memory (Gedi & Elam, 1996).

Memory must be understood to come from different perspectives; the subject's positionality influences how the memory is formed and maintained (Assmann, 2006). Photography as access to memory carries not only emotional weight but also a mythical dialect of 'the moment' through the photographer's search for the aesthetic (Hirsch, 2002). Sontag notes that 'collective memory can be misleading' (cited in Assmann, 2006, pp. 222) "*All memory is individual, unreproducible – it dies with each person*", instead we must view it as a highlighting of moment, an emergence of the 'vital' and a dismissal of the 'irrelevant'. The power of a memory told through photography is not only with the narrator, but also the photographer and those depicted within (Schwartz & Cook, 2002) (Barthes, 1981). The linking between national identity and memory therefore has its roots in the way it is portrayed and discussed, the joining of expected performances with those depicted (or imagined) in photographs creates a collective memory of what (in this case) Danish-ness is (Gillis, 1996).



## Danish Identity

Danes are renowned for their love of definably *Dansk kultur* (Danish culture). This culture emerges as a clash of apparent humility with an underlying self-confidence, forged throughout the existence of the Danish sovereign state (Østergård, 2012). As the smallest country in Scandinavia, but one with considerable political, military and social influence it has separated itself from its Nordic counterparts (Anderson, 2006). To be *Dansk*, becomes almost a privilege, bestowed upon one at birth, comparable to Welsh or Scottish national identities (Kumar, 2003). These national values are tightly tied in with a group of Danish expectancies, from religion to birth-place (Gudrun Jensen, 2008). By confronting these national values, the very notion of being Danish is also challenged, an immediate ‘othering’ of the unknown and unfamiliar. As we currently see a rise in nationalist and populist parties worldwide, Denmark is no different, with the *Danske Folkeparti* (Danish People’s Party) continuing this divisive rhetoric. This results in bestowing Danish identity coming with huge, inescapable power relations and expected obligations of the ‘subject’ (Kofman, 2005, pp. 455). To be Danish seems to require confirmation by a ‘true’ Dane, therefore anything in conflict with this is dismissed and disregarded as ‘not Danish’. As Moore states (2010), the Danish approach to immigration post the 1980s has allowed this state-induced xenophobia to become more visible, however I argue that it has roots far deeper in Danish society.

Part of this *Dansk kultur* is an understanding and participation of Danish practices, performing Danish-ness at home and in public, creating ‘permitted’ spaces. One of the most famous representations of being *Dansk*, linking together both performativity and the spatial, is the cultural idea of *hygge* (cosy/homeliness). *Hygge* is often referred to as indescribable, something that only Danes can understand and experience (Linnet, 2011), weaponizing it as an expression of Danish identity. The othering of outsiders exemplified through perceived suitability for cultural traditions is prevalent across much of Danish society, most famously displayed in the 2005 cartoon *Muhammedkrisen* (Mohammed Crisis) (Rondestedt, 2014). Anyone who partakes ‘naturally’ in *hygge* has earned a partial right to being Danish, a step within the circle of *Danskehed* (Bean, 2011, pp. 17). Engagement with *hygge* plays a role in the creation of a ‘Danish atmosphere’. Bille notes that this Danish atmosphere is “dynamic ... and continually evaluated in people’s lives”, (2015, pp. 57), a national extension of Böhme’s ‘New Aesthetic’ atmosphere (2016), formed through a naturalised and unforced understanding and partaking in Danish life. This ‘atmosphere’ is created just as much through bonfires at *Sankt Hans* (St. John’s Eve) as it is in eating salted liquorice on the way home from *gymnasium* (secondary school); doing Danish ‘things’, can help you become Danish.

Danish identity is therefore formed by 'living Danish-ly' in a recognisably 'Danish atmosphere'. However, there is 'othering' apparent within this. If you are not permitted to 'live Danish-ly' for any reason, you cannot become a Dane in the public and state's eyes. Those who find themselves, or choose to be outside this preconceived national border of identity, often become culturally lost and regarded through a nationally dismissive gaze (Jenkins, 2011). It is interesting to note that Wilson (2011) in his study of *hygge* learns to understand it, but never able to partake, cut off from the Danes. This dissertation explores how my Danish identity is not only created, but memorised and altered for display through a joint exposure and insulation of *Danskehed* that has taken place over the course of my life.

### **Non-Representational Theory and Performing Identity**

Non-Representational Theory (NRT) is formed by the "*mundane everyday practices, that shape the conduct of human beings towards others and themselves in particular sites*" (Thrift, 1997, quoted in Nash, 2000, pp. 655). This creates an 'inarticulate understanding' of the world formed through performances, linking together body and self, both reliant on each other for their fluid construction (Butler, 1988) (Nash, 2000). Performativity and NRT can reveal our embodied 'personal narratives', shaped through our own actions in reaction to others and our surroundings, creating an unconscious character (Noy, 2004). As this character grows through its own performance, its identity is formed and re-formed. It is worth noting at this point that performativity cannot be examined and expressed as the sole foundry of identity. Performativity can lead to "*static descriptions of identities*" and risks alienating other major veins of geographic thought under the banner of NRT (Nelson, 1999, pp. 342). Instead we must use NRT and performativity as one of many ways to examine identity and nationality, whilst not overlooking the significant insight it allows us. This is highly significant for the mediums of storytelling and autoethnography which call upon an 'inarticulate feeling', to which NRT can provide a viewpoint (Lorimer & Parr, 2014).

NRT brings the spatial into view by examining participation and 'presentations' of bodies (Macpherson, 2010). Lorimer's linking of NRT and the home (2005), allows a reading of the actions within self-made surroundings (language, artifacts, layout, 'atmosphere', etc.) of how we act in an indefinable yet explicit fashion, forming our identity. The home instils a sense of belonging through acts of natural performance within its spatiality (Tuan, 2004). Tuan goes on to stress that the home need not be a physical object, but rather a more abstract experience of belonging. By connecting performances within the home with identity and belonging, there becomes a formation of nationality through presentation. The performance of nationality

becomes seen as 'staged and scripted', thereby tying in discourse of social constructivism with our material surroundings (Woods, 2010, pp. 836).

This use of the 'self' as the tool with which we explore and examine the world around us risks limiting the view (often to a white, western heteronormative standpoint) but also can 'open the eyes' to an alternative 'lived-in' perspective (Paterson, 2009). This brings us into a peopled world, where "*subjects still have agency*", not merely a spectacle for criticism from afar (Thrift, 1991, pp. 460). By examining nationality and identity with NRT allows discussions of nationality formed not only socially, but through every-day, mundane actions; which all have a role in the fluid construction of identity, and therefore the self (Klein, Spears & Reicher, 2007). This dissertation links together an 'occupied' Danish-ness with material surroundings and memory, seeing the 'presented self' as the subject of the autoethnography.

## Methodology

To study the aims outlined, a series of qualitative methods were undertaken, outlined here. The main research methods of this study were autoethnography and storytelling, coupled with a use of photo and document analysis. A journal was kept throughout the process, with stories and memories noted and providing support for the analysis through an open-coding process.

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### Autoethnography

*“autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms—short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose. In these texts, concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and selfconsciousness are featured,”*

(Ellis, 1999, pp. 673)

*“I believe that—because I am human—when I write about myself, I inevitably describe some aspect of the human condition”* (Holbrook, 2005, pp. 45)

Identity is an intensely personal concept. It is not formed in a day or at a specific moment, instead becoming woven and reformed throughout our lives by ourselves and others. To study it from a distance, with the researcher seemingly separated from both the nationality of their subject and their own, can miss finer subtleties and nuances of what creates an ‘atmosphere’ of nationality. By submerging the researcher into a familiar situation, studying and analysing themselves allows a view not explored by traditional ethnography (Spry, 2001). To write autoethnographically is studying the researcher’s ‘self’, with the writing and the research becoming intertwined (Crang & Cook, 2007, pp. 167). Autoethnography calls upon a fluidity of identity, a shifting between researcher and subject, the roles becoming inseparable from each other forming a postmodern take on Du Bois’ “*Double consciousness*” (Zamir, 1995, pp. 132-133).

Autoethnography utilises the idea of the insider speaking out, a form of natural speech and expression in search of an “*epiphany*” (Ellis & Adams, 2014). Researchers use mediums allowing the best expression of themselves, analysing the outpouring of the ‘self’ that occurs through this (Rambo, 2005). Chang argues that the ‘self’ is vital in cultural formation, with understandings departing from cultural determinism and essentialism to a more ‘community of practice’ related discourse, ‘culture’ a product of interactions between ‘self’ and ‘others’ (2016, pp. 23). Autoethnography of displacement allows the researcher to “*transcend everyday conceptions of selfhood and social life*”, never completely ‘at home’ yet still able to examine and “*rewrite the self and the social*” (Reed-Danahay, 1997, pp. 4).

A major difficulty with autoethnography is the danger of too much 'navel-gazing'. To become narcissistic not only alienates the reader, but also limits the research, the subject of which loses its reflexivity (Pile & Thrift, 1995, pp. 16). Anderson also calls for a more 'analytical autoethnography', with full membership in the studied group and the application of 'analytic reflexivity', without which autoethnography can become too stylised and evocative, losing some of its application beyond the self (2006). Crang & Cook (2007) argue however, that successful autoethnography allows an expression of the personal, through means not dissimilar to ethnography; with the researcher's positionality being on full display, but still allowing the reader to identify and understand the subject. This is a viewing of the 'other' through the eyes of the self. In short, autoethnography must be empathetic without self-indulgence (Sparkes, 2002, pp. 210).

### **Storytelling: Personal and the Examined Narrative**

In 1984, Bertaux and Kohli wrote the inflammatory line "*Life stories are no longer fashionable*" (pp. 231), yet discussion has since moved onto how living an experience and telling your story adds a different lens to the understanding; acknowledging and accommodating your positionality rather than trying to hide or explain it away (Ellis et al., 2011). By writing about myself I become a worded character who performs a role, moulded and exploited for research (Richardson, 2001). Storytelling allows a format where a depiction of self is permitted to become almost theatrical yet still bounded by rationality and expectations. We see ourselves in characters, and liken our performances to theirs, but stylistic representations cannot afford to forgo the "*textualisation of the real*" (Crang, 2003, pp. 498)

This qualitative discourse then, must be in terms which can be understood and empathised by those who encounter it, exposing this 'more than human world' (Davies & Dwyer, 2007). Much like Carolyn Ellis reflects on her discussion with a researcher for an understanding of autoethnography (1999) and John Wylie walking the South West Coast Path for the linking of self and landscape (2005), I too utilise the medium of small, simple, relatable experiences for discussion of the more abstract ideas of nationality and identity. This creates a story, from which we can draw threads of theory and analysis. Storytelling encourages a '(post)phenomenological' approach where "*Personal, experiential geographies are conveyed in narrative form*" (Cameron, 2012, pp. 575), exposing a 'passionate vulnerability' for the reader to consume and engage with (DeLeon, 2010).

Storytelling forms not just the medium for autoethnographic analysis to take place, it too a source of memory and belonging. Family narratives were examined as a main discourse of the

creation of memory, often in which I play a major role. Barone notes that once the inquirer's lived-in experiences encounter the story, it is best to "*stay calm and paddle onwards*" (1992, pp. 144). He goes on to state that within storytelling, certain vignettes become omitted in the avoidance of an episodic narrative (ibid.). This must fall to me in the research; as I increasingly re-hear and recall family anecdotes, I note down emerging themes and sketches in my journal (see Appendix 3). Through a continual form of open-coding, themes emerge and become structured around specific narratives (Philaretou & Allen, 2006). My life and that of the people around me is under examination. Diefenbach is highly critical of storytelling as a research method, with often un/conscious biases taking root and generalisation of mainstream thought occurring (2008). However, I believe that the method of autoethnography allows a realisation of this. I know and am quite happy to display that most of my cultural understandings have come from familial narratives (which too hold their own power relations). By revelling in and exploring my biases formed from years of exposure to storytelling, it allows a legitimate and truthful discourse to emerge (Bochner, 2016).

### **Contact Zones: Discourse meeting the World**

Using Pratt's (1991) theory of the contact zone for the arena of cultural exchange and discussion, the search then fell to a medium which allows access and self-identity of the reader and researcher, a connection understood by both. For this writing it is twofold (much like Spry's 2001 use of "BEING HERE/BEING THERE"). The first is family photographs. We can all identify with photography, to see a younger version of ourselves looking back at us within a frame, is familiar. Using these as an access point for discussion on the creation and manipulation of nationality permits us to cross a temporal bridge; a bringing together of memory and present, reflection and newfound realisation (Hirsch, 2002). This supporting of memory through artifacts engages the memory of the author with a 'trustworthiness', tying down the unknown and unstable (memory) with a tangible, physical object (Holbrook, 2005).

Choosing the photographs to be displayed therefore becomes imbued with a great sense of power. As I examined the photographs, I searched not only for those 'with a story to tell', but also which I considered a respectable representation of family. The overly blurry, overexposed and mundane became put aside in favour of more discursive images. Deeming the scene image worthy (notably more prevalent in the days of film photography) is the ultimate authority, yet this is continued with the process of maintaining and archiving the developed images. Those deemed aesthetically unpleasing, repetitive, embarrassing, unsuitable or painful are removed, either not on display or rejected, as if by discarding the object we can remove or alter the

memory itself (Hughes, 2003). In choosing the images, I have unavoidably continued this, those that I feel bring relevance to the discussion being used over others. However, I have also endeavoured to explain and interpret the rationalisation behind these decisions, adding that the discussion (much like a picture frame) can only ever be a partial depiction of the surroundings and situations that these images sit within (Edwards, 2012).

To accompany the discussions of familial memory through photographs, the 'contact zone' for changing of identity through the loss of nationality is the "*Ansøgning om bevarelse af danske indfødsret*" (Application for retention of Danish nationality). Whilst the document itself is instantly alienating (through both language and accessibility), the act of filling in governmental applications is far from an unusual experience to most. It becomes a symbolic contact zone, a last plea for nationality, a state prescribed identity. Depicting a change from the 'soft' familial crafting of identity to a 'hard' legal, binary-based delineation of self, suits a change in contact zone. This second 'moment' has a different atmosphere, a 'turning point' which by telling allows a fresh viewpoint to be explored (Muncey, 2005).

### **Photographic and Document Analysis**

The family photographs and the 'Application' must also undergo analysis. They allow a crucial view into the depiction and formation of identity and nationality. To overlook their importance as social documents is to ignore the insight they give to the social background from which they are formed and emerge (Flick, 2009). Kuhn states that a "*DIY approach to memory work*" can be very effective when teamed with photo analysis (2007, pp. 284). It is that autoethnography often relies on, however also joined with Kuhn's guidelines for photo analysis it can allow to a powerful understanding of their assistance in the 'performances of memory'. The photographs were used as 'spark points' for narratives and 'submerged' memories to emerge, but also bringing questions of who is not present, who arranged and framed the photograph; the hidden power connections (Loizos, 2000).

The 'Application' (see Appendix 2) was used in a similar way to the photographs as a trigger for emotional feedback. However, also using Bowen's guidelines of document analysis allows the "*sociocultural, political, and economic context*" in which the document was produced to be examined (2009, pp. 36). This has allowed an 'embodied' gaze to emerge from the document, being able to understand the State and how it is experienced at the emotional 'human' end (Urry, 2012) (Taylor et al., 2015, pp. 71)

## Ethics

(For ethical acceptance form see Appendix 4)

As this research delves into the formation of my 'self', much of the ethics is based around me as researcher/subject. However, the narrative I explore whilst centred around me, draws in my family as co-constructors which brings with it ethical considerations. Autoethnographic writing enters discourse in which I am the controlling power (Tamas, 2011). It has become a search for me to "extract meaning from experience rather than to depict experience exactly as it was lived" (Bochner, 2000, pp. 270), with the 'messy stories' not always on show. What is written instead is a 'mindful slippage', where I and those around me become characters which are both relatable but incomprehensible, bringing academic discourse to the fore (Medford, 2006) (Tamas, 2011). The stories and photos were never intended to be examined, probed for meaning, in doing this I become Sedaris' "*friendly Junkman, building things from the little pieces of scrap I find here and there*" (2004, in Medford, 2006, pp. 860). However, I have followed Tolich's guidelines, by exposing myself and my family I have made them vulnerable, yet not "*publish[ing] anything [I] would not show to the other persons mentioned in the text*" (2010, pp. 1605). Ultimately this is a study bounded in 'truthful' memory and understanding, not one that can be interrogated, but instead interpreted with care and consideration (Bochner, 2016).



## Analysis

This analysis is formed of an autoethnographic approach surrounding two ‘moments’ or ‘contact zones’. The first is the examination of old family photographs (THE ALBUM), calling upon forgotten memories and narratives aided by storytelling by my mother. The second is the filling in of the forms to retain Danish nationality (THE APPLICATION). The titles are excerpts from the form, used as entry points into discussions of changing identity and conflicts of *Danske kultur*.

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### THE ALBUM

Tucked away in a wardrobe behind folders containing birth certificates, old passports, mortgage documents and so much else of the paperwork that we accumulate through the course of our lives, is a wicker hamper hiding hundreds of photographs, curling negatives and rolls of film. We were never a family that photographed every living moment, yet we have still collected and curated the usual selection of holiday snaps and images of special events that accompany oft told stories and long forgotten anecdotes. Looking back on these creates a gateway, a point of access into why for the first 22 years of my life, I have felt Danish. The formation of a nationality, framed in celluloid.

#### Thomas' 8th Birthday - 2002



Fig. 1. Family Archive

As I open a yellow plastic envelope sitting on top of the pile of photographs and negatives in the hamper, one of the photographs catches my eye. I see my own face smiling back at me, slightly blurry but the situation is clear. It's a school morning and on the breakfast-table sit presents and cards, my parents and our guests sipping coffee and planted in the middle a red and white flag hangs amongst parcels I know and remember to be Danish. For a fleeting moment, a home in a London suburb has been transformed into a typical Danish scene. The creation of a definably Danish occasion allows for the performance of *Dansk* life in a foreign setting; through such performances of nationhood, nationality (or rather, *nationalitet*) is forged.

In any Nordic country, a birthday is inherently linked to a national identity. It becomes an excuse to proudly display national flags, serve traditional dishes and sing songs that have been handed down from generation to generation. This in turn has become a linking of the state and the self, to celebrate birthdays in this fashion is to celebrate being Danish itself. In the photograph, the red and white of *Dannebrog* (Denmark's national flag, found in any 'respectable' Danish home) is proudly emblazoned on the wrapping ribbon, postage stamps and of course the miniature flagpole which has become a centre piece for both mine and my sister's birthdays for the past 22 years. At this moment, I am Danish.

However, this memory remains vague to me, I can only recall the atmosphere that would have been present. I know full well that my mum and our au pair at the time would have stood and sang *Fødselsdagssangen* (The Birthday Song) whilst my dad and Auntie Janet sit bemused at the spectacle performed in front of them. My mother and the succession of Danish au pairs that passed through our home have become key actors in the formation of my *Dansk* identity. These are the people who have taught me my language, my cuisine, my culture. In short, how to be Danish. This has been through varying understandings of 'other-ness'. Not only the 'new', displayed to me through their introductions but also what they perceived to be 'English', simultaneously revealing the 'non-Danish'. I vividly remember Mona being shocked at how rude English people were, and how my Dad talked too quickly for her to understand. She too must have struggled with conflicts of identity in her new home; how to be Danish with Mum and me, whilst still carrying the baggage of a tourist in this foreign land. Yet is there a disciplining of voices, the Danish ones heard and present hear and the English less so? A control of memory is in this photo, as one discourse emerges, another (the English view of the moment) becomes hidden.

Mum, the au pairs and I (and later my sister too) came to rely on each other as a link to Denmark. A *lille Danmark* (little Denmark) would be crafted around us. This was not like a

Danish lifeboat lost in sea of 'other', but rather formed through shared communal acts of *Danskebed* (Danish-ness). The growth of my 'roots' would usually take place in the home, however rather than tied down spatially, they were constructed and formed around members of my family. Through familial interactions within Danish 'atmospheres', a collective understanding and memory is formed of what *Danskebed* is.

What I find remarkable, looking back through these photos is how natural it all seems. Our performances (for they are performances) are done in a state of unconscious-action, carefully crafted and displayed yet still not artificial. Once I would have stepped out of that door on my way to school, the scene would stop being definingly Danish, the moment lost. Yet in this snapshot we are not playing at being Danish, instead we are simply *Danske*.

***En hyggelig aften med Oldemor* (A cosy evening with Great-Grandmother) – 2001**



Fig. 2. Family Archive

My great-grandmother (*Oldemor*) always celebrated her birthday with my grandparents, no matter where they were. For many years, we went out to visit my *Mormor* and *Morfar* (Grandmother and Grandad) in their house in southern France, and New Year's Eve was overtaken with birthday celebrations. Yet looking at this photograph, I struggle to see France, instead what is taken from the photo is sense of being, a sense of *hygge*.

The intrinsically Danish notion of *hygge* has been met with growing popularity in the recent years in UK, becoming along with knitted sweaters and gritty Scandi-Crime dramas a



noticeably defining characteristic of Danish life. The scores of lifestyle books and ‘trendy’ cafés that trade on being *hyggelig* (enacting *hygge*) have defined it in the English language to be a sense of homeliness; a search for the earthy, artisanal way of living which is emulated (rather than recreated) for middle-class consumption. *Hygge* however, is more than this. It is a state of being, entwined with the spatial. Creating an ‘atmosphere’ from which the participants nor their surroundings can be separated, instead relying on a co-dependency leading to the creation of a *hyggelig* situation.

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*“comfort, coziness, cheerfulness, and friendliness. To be in a situation characterized by hygge is to be in a state of pleasant wellbeing and security, with a relaxed frame of mind and open enjoyment of the immediate situation in all its small pleasures”*

(Hansen 1976, pp. 54)

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However, what for me is the most important factor with *hygge* is that it involves a temporal escape, a closing off of the outside and embracing an enjoyment of the moment. This cultural celebration of escapism was transported to France, the very essence of Danish-ness became mobile through performance and a shared understanding of what we were experiencing. Shared experience is allowed to cross the spatial boundaries present through more than conversation, there is a materiality present too. The chairs, the flag above Mømmor, the dog barely visible sitting behind me, all these come from Denmark, aiding creation of the ‘moment’.

“*Vi havde det hyggeligt* (We had a good time)” my mum said as I pulled out the photo from the fading Jessops envelope. She of course was referring to *Oldemor’s* birthday celebrations, captured and exposed before us, however on reflection the simple statement conveyed a far greater meaning. It meant I could partake in a definably Danish experience, sitting alongside ‘true’ Danes whose nationality never became conflicted. It represented a form of social acceptance which had not been present with only my close family. Together we performed *Danske kultur*, fulfilled our identities of how Danes should act. Looking back at the photo though can bring a separate view, if the Danes are so limiting in who has access to Danish identity, did we continue this divisive ‘atmosphere’ in our celebrations? Did we too, deny complete assimilation to those we perceived as others? My dad is not present in the photograph (I can only presume he is taking it), but that also changes the discourse of how we remember such occasions.

By hiding what we perceived to be non-Danes from representation, we go some way to deny both their access to the Danish 'atmosphere' and to erase them from our memories. The non-display of my dad raises some questions: was he allowed full access to the event, could he ever pass across the unconscious nationality boundary put up by Danes? The joke we all seem to be laughing at in the photo is one that he will never experience, his immediate memory of the time (and how it has altered since) will be different to the collective memory that emerged from around that table. What once seemed to be an image reminiscent of happier, '*hyggelig*-er' times, now reveals a darker theme, one of closing off doors to the outside, limiting the view and participation of others.

### Three photos from Krakkedal: Bornholm - Dates unknown



Fig. 3. Family Archive

The evening continues and I become surrounded by small heaps of photographs, encircled in my family's history. Sharing with them not only the moments that defined their lives but also the humdrum, the everyday frozen in time by the camera; my frustration returns. These were not lives that I could join in with, instead I had been forced to experience Danish-ness through a tourist's gaze, detached by not only my spatiality but also the era with which I lived in. Three photographs from *Krakkedal* (my grandparent's farm on *Bornholm*, a Danish island in the Baltic Sea) sit next to each other, removed from their plastic envelope, negatives missing. As I pick them up, my hands touching these unknown settings, melancholy seeps in, replacing

inquisitiveness. I don't recognise these. I know the setting is *Krækkedal*, my mother told me the whole pile I was sifting through were from there, yet it means nothing.

We had visited *Krækkedal* a few summers ago, when holidaying on *Bornholm*. Mum had wanted to return to her childhood home, show her children where she had grown up, reliving days when she too felt truly Danish. Pulling up the drive, uninvited and unexpected, the hire car fought hard against the unmade road flanked by fields complete with grazing ponies. Turning around a corner, a corrugated steel barn came into view, starting to show the first signs of rust. Behind this sat *Krækkedal*. A canary yellow farmhouse complete with red tiled roof and flagpole, *Dannebrog* fluttering proudly in the wind. Mum was silent as the car headed towards the farmhouse. She had already been told that *Krækkedal* had been changed somewhat by the series of previous owners after she had moved to London and the family home had been sold, yet to see it remade and reimagined seemed to have a disquieting effect on her. *Bornholmers* like to gossip and a German family setting up a new barn in front of the old farmhouse in the late '90s was mentioned to us all over the island. The new owners (they had bought the house little less than a year prior to our visit) welcomed us in and allowed Mum to explore their home, pointing out to Pia and me what at one point had been hers. Her bedroom was now a smart office, sparsely but stylishly decorated, a designer lamp hanging from the ceiling. Not all was new, the wood burner in the kitchen still retained the faintly traceable crest from Copenhagen, when *Mormor* and *Morfar* had shipped it over. Mum ran her hand over the familiar warm metal in the foreign setting, chatting to the owners about life on *Bornholm* those years ago, yet all of us knew, her *Krækkedal* and her Denmark had gone.

The piecing together of a Danish identity from storytelling and family photos of an age that had ended before I began, has a profound effect. The Danish spaces created around us as a family, become timeless, reflecting a bygone era, not changing but rather a caricature of Danishness, a collective memory of what Denmark was and should be. Interruptions into this created-Denmark come in the form of au pairs, family friends and trips to Denmark. When one of Mum's childhood friends visits, she always brings a CD of contemporary Danish pop. In 'my' Denmark, music is limited to festive songs and tracks that Mum still plays on her vinyl records, one of the few remnants of 'her' Denmark. These CDs often spark a reminder that Denmark is not timeless, trends change and styles develop, Danish culture has changed from Mum's formative years.

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*"None of us ever knows the world of our parents. ...Theirs' [parents] is a different desire, at once more powerful and more conflicted: the need not just to feel and to know, but also to re-member, to re-build, to re-incarnate, to replace, and to repair."*

(Hirsh, 2002, pp. 242-243)

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Realisation starts to pull in. This is my epiphany. It sneaks up on me, but not with surprise; something more akin to tilting one's head to the side, seeing the world through the same gaze, slightly adjusted to avoid the glare. My nationality is not made only for me. It allows my mum to remain Danish, it validates her own identity. Having Danish children is something done by Danes, yet in leaving *Bornholm* behind it became less possible for my mother. Living and working in London, her ties to Denmark were reduced to an increasingly shrinking community of ex-pats, all of whom (much like herself) became anglicised. The opportunity of raising my sister and me as Danes becomes a link back to a homeland that she has lost, one that no longer exists. The Denmark created around our family becomes a projection of an ideal, unconsciously formulated by my family, au pairs and through my own performance; me. A post-memory built up over years of unconscious suggestion from family narratives. The sanctuary *Danskbed* provides becomes a protective device, sheltering its inhabitants by allowing an escape to an 'other' place through the construction of Danish moments and atmospheres.



***Thomas og Tony, på Jernbanen*** (Thomas and Tony, on the Railway) – Date presumed 2003



Fig. 4. Family Archive

“I remember this one! Where were we then?”. Mum turns around and glances at the photo in my hands, “*Oh, ja, det var den jernbanen i Jylland et sted, far ville nokke vide. Han ser meget yngre der, (Oh yes, it was that railway in Jutland somewhere, dad would probably know. He looks much younger there.)*”, Mum goes back to her pile of photos, re-organising and occasionally adding one to two growing piles on the floor, one for me to keep, the other for Pia. It was rare for dad to appear in the photos, and as I see myself and my sister ageing in the images, his appearances become fewer and fewer. Normally this was because he was behind the lens rather than in front of it, but I start to wonder if he too felt Danish in Denmark.

Dad is rooted in Surrey. Fixed. Allowed to flutter elsewhere, but always returning to Grandma and Grandad and the house he grew up in. Whilst Mum was revisiting her homeland, he and I became the tourists. We’d explore the woods and beaches together, me acting as translator for road signs and ice creams. Mum’s family spoke English when he was present, allowing him a glimpse into *Dansk kultur*, but constantly an ‘other’. Dad on holiday for me represented a root, a tendril back to London.

I start to wonder, trying to remember how I felt when he and I sat on that red bike on the rails. Was I Danish or English? Did we ‘have a laugh’ or ‘*havde det sjovt* (have it fun)’? The



conflict of nationality seems to have drifted into the unconscious, cast aside for a moment of family, a bond rather than ethnicity. To be with a state here did not matter. Why? How can identity be formed of such complex dualisms and yet remain hidden and unthought of at times? The scene becomes without spatial ties, removed from nationhood; instead layered with different understandings, ones of family. The performance of nationality then is limited to certain atmospheres, certain definably Danish times which need not always be present.

Perhaps I am English after all, performing as an 'Englishman' till told otherwise. After all, I would have been speaking English to Dad on those rails, we would have laughed and joked with an English humour, both marvelling at this foreign land we found ourselves in. The nationality of my parents, those people I am around is reflected in me. Not only through language, but behaviour and cultural understandings. Had the Danish government offered the chance of dual-nationality at that time, I would probably have taken it, grasping with both hands the opportunity to be linked and accepted in the homelands of both my parents. Now, looking at the photo, I am less sure. To 'give in' to being English would feel like a step back, over-ruling my carefully crafted identity that I have held onto for so many years.

It would be foolish however, to overlook what this photo really symbolises. My identity is truly one of a hybrid nationality, with the Danish visible (when allowed) and the English lying below the surface. These moments of *Danskehed* depicted within the photographs are all set against a backdrop of Englishness. My identity enacts the dual roles of the 'Loud Dane' and the 'Quiet Englishman'. Only when the roles are reversed, when in Denmark, does it become more noticeable. In Denmark, I stand out as much as any tourist. Despite my innate understanding of Danish-ness, I become the 'other'. I fail to fit.

*Oldemor og Thomas, Banyuls sur mer* (Great-Grandmother and Thomas, Banyuls sur mer) - 1998



Fig. 5. Family Archive

The candle on the chest of drawers by the window splutters, my musing and reminiscing briefly interrupted. Mum calls to Pia watching cartoons downstairs, asking her to bring another candle up. Danes and candles, a stereotype understood by anyone who has spent any time in Denmark, but remarkably accurate. Mum always freezes her candles before using them, *Mormor* had told her that they last twice as long if you do. I can hear Pia in the kitchen, struggling to close the freezer drawer. I have started doing the same in Exeter. My flatmates showed initial bemusement at having a packet of tealights in the freezer, yet often spend time in my room, lit by two lamps and a single candle on the desk; I feel I have created my own *hygge*.

Lighting is key to Danish life. How the home is lit changes how we interact, where we go, who we talk to and how comfortable we become. Danes are acutely aware of the powerful effect the right lighting has on people and places. When friends would ask me what we did at home every day that was Danish, candles and lighting would be my instant response. Not only is it one of the most visible Danish affectations within the home, it is also possibly one of the most accessible. For me it remains a simple yet surprisingly inexplicable way of experiencing and

performing within a space. The lighting allows a malleability of the spatial, a kitchen (as in the photograph above) can become a refuge from an outside world creating a space in which only what is illuminated becomes responded to, a walling-in with light.

However, the most important aspect about lighting is its portability. It allows any room to instantly become Danish, becoming an expression of nationality through design. With it my mother has made my home Danish, my grandparents' their house in France and me, Exeter. This deployable bastion of *Danskehed* becomes a connection, a rhizomatic link between all Danes, both familiar and unknown. The photograph "*Oldemor og Thomas, Banyuls sur mer*" exemplifies this. Here sit two people in a French house, separated by three generations and language (this would have been taken in my early days of pigeon-Danish), isolated from the outside world. Yet both partaking in an inherently Danish experience through a shared and unspoken understanding of 'atmosphere'.

"*Oldemor looks old*", I murmur to no-one in particular, thinking instead of the times I can recall sitting at that small, marble-topped table. *Oldemor* of course was old when that photograph was taken, a woman who reached her late 90s, had lived for many years in the US but returned to Denmark later in life. If my *Danskehed* is formed of the people and spaces around me, it too must have a mortality. The house where the photo was taken was sold in 2013, I remember my uncle and I packing up boxes after boxes of furniture, clothes and bric-a-brac, the marble-topped table taken by a local Frenchman, presumably to sell on. The carefully crafted Danish-ness that this house sheltered within its foreign walls was being taken down.

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## THE APPLICATION

Five pages of hell sit on the coffee table. I have put off touching the oppressively formal “*Ansøgning om bevarelse af dansk indfødsret*” (Application for retention of Danish nationality) for weeks now, hating it and everything it symbolises. How can I fit my right to Danish nationality into four small boxes? How can I explain how much being *Danske* means to me and has done for 22 years? This becomes a fight to remain Danish. A battle to retain my identity. One I know I will lose.

“*Alle så Thomas, du er virkelig langsom nogle gange, ønsker du ikke at være dansk?* (Come on Thomas, you are really slow/thick sometimes, don’t you want to be Danish?)” Mum walks in, seeing the form lying blank in front of me. The question obviously rhetorical, but the search for an answer sits with me nevertheless. “*Don’t you want to be Danish?*”, one issue I have struggled with for as long as I can remember. How can I belong to a state that has said it does not want me; said I am not Danish enough, not worthy enough for them? “*Them*”, what an odd concept, until recently it had always been ‘*us*’, ‘*us Danes*’. Suddenly I am out of place, uprooted.

### **22-års reglen (The 22-Year Rule)**

The deadline to an identity. Current Danish law states that any individual born outside Denmark must by the age of 22 have lived at least a year in Denmark and display a ‘thorough’ understanding of the language and culture to retain Danish nationality. To see these words on the paper in front of me induces a sinking feeling. I have not spent a cumulative year in Denmark. Holidays and family visits at best reach 6 months and we have no way of proving it, I struggle to believe that the Embassy will accept our photographs and vignettes as proof. So, is this it? To have my nationality torn away after 22 years, not replaced, leaving an empty hole in my identity.

How to respond? Do I note it down as simply part of my changing identity and belonging, a time to create new roots and attachments? Or do I regress, try to become more Danish, a search for a *Danske* enough performance? This is a realm in which uncertainty rules. The former feels disrespectful to my formative years, to simply cast aside what has made me ‘me’ for so long. Yet I also know that I can never truly become *Danske* enough, the Danes never allowing full assimilation. A new hybridity of identity must emerge, with some roots in Denmark but my ‘belonging’ elsewhere.

I pick up the pen from the table, not ready to put words to paper but knowing it must be done. The frustration does not subside. Such a simple line hides derision and divisiveness behind the word 'Rule'. This is a rule that I fail to understand the merits of, a rule specifically designed to cast aside people such as myself. Why 22? Why now? Why me? I have defended my right to be Danish, been a proud Dane throughout my life, loving and revelling in the uniqueness that it has afforded me. Growing up in London, living in a society where (permitted) differences are celebrated creates a stark contrast to this quiet dialogue of homogeneity, preventing the entry of the 'other'. I fail to belong to this anonymous Denmark represented by the application, but know it exists. I (somewhat naively) prefer my known, lived-in '*lille Danmark*'.

This ruling marks a milestone for me. Perhaps the identity crisis in which this plays a role is more than just nationality. In a time of personal uncertainty that leaving university causes, this loss of nationality comes at a seemingly ironic time. The next few years will bring with them many causes of uprooted-ness, from jobs to leaving the family home, establishing nationality just seems to fit in with these post-modern crises that we all have to go through. The situation I am in now does not prevent it from being an uncomfortable task to tackle, but it is resolvable. It has to be, life continues regardless of nationality. Considered in a more global context, it too seems out of place. As the UK is undergoing a 'step into the dark' with its departure from the European Union, many of its people are reaching out to grab long-forgotten and discarded roots stretching into Europe. Amidst this 'scramble for identity' with people declaring themselves Irish, German, Italian, anything but British; I must relinquish my claim to Europe. The timing of *22-års reglen* is impeccable.

***Ansøgningen indgives til Udlændinge-, Integrations- og Boligministeriet (Applications to be sent to The Ministry of Aliens, Integration and Housing)***

The Ministry of Aliens, Integration and Housing. This grandiose title sits atop the cover page of the form, resplendent in its incomprehensibility. These are the faceless people who will consider my application, every word thought and rethought before committed to paper, judging whether I am Danish enough to be *Dansk*. This is the state. Until now, my only interactions with the Danish government have been the succession of sour-faced blonde women sat behind bullet-proof glass at the Embassy in London. Every five years I head back to the Danish Embassy to renew my passport, originally hand-in-hand with my mum, photocopy of Dad's birth certificate folded away in a pocket, ready for judgement from these gatekeepers of Danish-ness. This ministry however, is something new.

“*Udlændinge*”. The word ‘alien’ fails to do it justice. Directly translated as meaning ‘from out of the country’, it comes with a stigma of distrust. The undercurrent of populist nationalism emerges again. ‘Integration’ here does not allude to assimilation, instead it is a form of allowed performance within the nation, similar but never quite *Dansk*. The beauty that often emerges from the written word, fantastic in its nuances, duality and malleability is not present here; this language printed on the form is case study in divisiveness, designed to weed out the weak, the imposters, the foreigners. This is nothing new to Danes. I recall stories of my mum being bullied for not belonging on her island of *Bornholm*, only third generation residents were true *Bornholmers*. Whilst a dated anecdote, across much of Denmark the sentiment it belies still rings true. Belonging being determined by the ‘self’ but also the community, with standing out from the crowd not necessarily seen as a weakness, but not something expected of a *Dane*.

There is some comfort to be taken from the distasteful process of seeming signing my nationality away. The Denmark they talk about is one demarcated by dates, blood, and the spatial. My Denmark has formed over the years to be one that belongs outside of the nation. In Denmark I am regarded and treated as an outsider, however I perform my *Danskhed* at its purest in an alien environment which is manipulated by my non-representational performances. In losing my nationality, I am simply casting aside the passport I never felt rightfully mine, not losing the family connections which made me feel *Dansk*, the memories of Danish-ness. Whilst the ‘hard’ identity is lost, the ‘soft’ remains and is reinforced by this very discourse.

***Oplysning om, hvorvidt De herudover har bevaret en særlig tilknytning til Danmark***  
**(Information on whether the applicant has retained a special attachment to Denmark)**

*”um, skal jeg tale om ferie?”*

(“um, should I talk about holidays?”)

*“Selvfølgelig, Thomas! Du skal også huske Mormor, da vi var ude på Helgenæs”*

(“Of course, Thomas! You must also remember Mormor, when we were out on Helgenæs”)

*“hmm ... Hvordan staver du ‘Helgenæs’, med stort eller små ‘H’? ...”*

(“hmm ... How do you spell ‘Helgenæs’, with big or small [plural] ‘H’? ... ”)

*“Tæke ‘små’, du mener ‘lille’, ‘små’ er for flertal”*

(“Not ‘small’ [plural], you mean ‘small’ [singular], ‘small’ [plural] is the plural”)

“Na ja ... I always get that one wrong”

(“Oh yeah ... I always get that one wrong”)

*‘retained a special attachment’*. What does that mean? The most I got out of being *Dansk*? The ‘thing’ that I have held on to most tightly from Denmark? When I tell people that I am Danish, it is often met with “*You don’t sound very Danish! Say something for me*”. I find myself recalling oft repeated pleasantries in the harsh, staccato language of my mother that I have adopted, that I have ‘retained’. The demand on the application seems to echo this sentiment, challenging for an exhibition of visual nationality. Not only does it start with the expectancy of failure; “*whether the applicant has retained a special attachment*” is not very far from “*You don’t sound very Danish*”, but it also requests a knowledge of an expected performance. Performance of language.

If I were to answer the social challenge “*Say something for me*” with “*Oh, I can’t speak Danish, but I am, trust me!*”, my claim to a Danish identity is instantly lessened. The same is to be understood if I filled in the application in English. A comprehensive understanding of the Danish language is a necessity for a ‘true’ Dane, with the grammatical nuances and vocal inflections mastered. Mum and I sit for many hours, pouring over what to write on the *Bilag* (additional pages) as well as the small box reserved for answers. Her scrawl sits beside mine, both betraying our roots. Mum’s handwriting is most definitely Danish, every letter seemingly accompanied by a loop or extravagant flourish verging on the point of indecipherability. This used to be a source of amusement for my Dad and me, both unable to read what Mum had written, whilst the Danes in the house (au-pairs and guests) could see no issue in deciphering what for them was a familiar script. My handwriting in contrast had been trained and tutored by an English schooling; small, structured and italic, more in common with my father’s than mother’s. I think about this as I fill in the *Bilag*; what if it is not Danish enough?

This is where the social confrontation “*say something for me*” splits from the formal questioning, the “*special attachment*”. What is Danish enough for one is most definitely not for the other. Mum and I are aware of this as we carefully craft a tale of belonging and immersion in *Danske kultur* for the *Bilag*, Mum flitting between me working at the breakfast table and the pans on the hob. I forget at times that this is not just a questioning of my *Danskehed*, but also my mother’s. The application stresses on her as well, an inquisition of whether she has raised a Danish child, whether she too has been able to “*retain a special attachment*”. The link between her identity and mine visible, a familial bond questioned and tested under the banner of nationality. My sister is more Danish than I am. Born with a Danish name, surrounded at a younger age with



*Danske* films and music, grown up in a time where Scandi-Cool is prevalent. Is this to prepare her better for the questioning that I am currently undergoing? Or perhaps to further cement the family's dwindling attachment to an increasingly distant 'homeland'. Every word I write either cements or further removes me from being *Dansk*.

***Navn og adresse på mindst to personer bosiddende i Danmark, som kan bekræfte Deres oplysninger* (Names and addresses of at least two people living in Denmark, who can verify your information)**

None of my family now lives in Denmark. *Mormor* now spends her time on the South Coast of the UK, regaling the locals in her small village with tales of 'exotic' foreign times, having found a new lease of life outside of the boundaries of continually being *Dansk*. *Morfar* and *Oldemor* passed away within a year of each other in the last of the 2000s and for as long as I can remember *onkel Lars* (uncle Lars) has lived out in California, long divorced from his Danish roots. My family remains Danish in name and belief only. Of course, we know people still living in Denmark, but like most families this has become a limited network of acquaintances and long-forgotten friends. The people I put down as contacts are sadly just that, names on paper.

We have become a *Dansk* family separated from *Danmark*, and now that separation is being questioned. 'The ministry' wish to see whether we still function as a Danish family or have become 'tainted' by embracing 'otherness'. My lived-in performances, my association with collective Danish memories, my emersion in available *Dansk kultur* has not proved enough to overcome mere spatiality. The fact that the names and addresses I put down on the form are not tied to me through blood will be duly noted by 'the ministry'.

I finish filling in the form, leaning back in the chair looking at the pages sprawled out in front of me. Not happy with what is on the paper, but unable to express myself in any other way. I have not been able to convey my Danish memories, my emotions. They will never know how being stateless scares me, ultimate separation. Mum is still standing at the hob, stirring what smells like casserole as she replies to emails on phone, readying for work on Monday. On the floor, Pia tries to teach the dog to roll over, it just sits there, simply happy to be in the kitchen with everyone else. The au pair is out, at a friend's party somewhere in north London. I gather up the wad of papers along with photocopies of the requisite passports, birth certificates and bank statements and carefully put it in an A4 envelope. I do not think I will send it off tonight, maybe tomorrow. Mum calls for us to lay the table, the envelope is put aside, unsealed. Pia and I act. I do not know if Mum asked in English or Danish, but as the bowls and cutlery get



laid out across the table my worries dissipate for a second. Whether I am *Dansk* or not does not matter, in this moment, I simply belong.

The connection is not that easy to sever.

## Conclusion

“So now what Tom? Are you still Danish?”

“... em, I'm not too sure anymore”

---

### A completed identity? No.

The conversation has changed. From being a discussion of why I feel Danish, it has turned to how I feel now, what my identity looks like after becoming stateless. Do I feel different? This proves to be a difficult question. In the day to day, I feel the same, I still speak to my family in Danish, still have it *hyggelig*, still light candles. To live Danish-ly is something I cannot turn away from, my identity and roots are so tightly bound round the idea of *Danskhed* that I find it impossible to cast off (Weil, 1987) (Kiecolt & LoMascolo, 2003). It is not a simple switch between being *Danske* or English, instead they have a fluid, interdependent relationship, always changing and never completely separable (Hall, 1990). The ‘self’ character in my narrative pulls together two performances of nationality (Thrift, 1991), one proud of its multiculturalism and global status, the other an introverted monoculture that has found itself thrust into the sights of the world. It becomes an embodied performance comprised of moments of *Danskhed*, Englishness and times when nationality is not apparent (Lorimer & Parr, 2014). It is non-representational theory at work. This allows *Danskhed* to surpass the Danish state, rather formed through our actions and performances in creating Danish atmospheres. Anywhere can become *Danske*, we pack it up and take it with us wherever we go.

Yet something is missing from my identity that was there before, perhaps I have lost a sense of belonging, not to my family but to that tightknit community of Danes. Whilst never truly accepted amongst them, always having to prove my *Danskhed*, it means something to be officially and visibly ‘othered’ (Gudrun Jensen, 2008) (Østergård, 2012). Now I sit ‘othered’ by Denmark, does the Englishness take over? I doubt it. My identity is not simply my own, it has been unconsciously crafted around me by others (Noy, 2004). My mother in her desire to remain Danish has impacted on my own performance and narrative, as has my Dad, sister and all else I encounter (Bille, 2015). My identity and nationality have always been an embodied character, fluid yet ready to perform in changing ‘moments’ (Butler, 1988). However, what is to fill that passport-shaped hole is yet to be known.

### Why study the self?

From the beginning, major questions began to emerge from this dissertation. Where is the benefit in studying myself? How does this fit in with other studies of nationality and identity? When do the studies stop and my life continue? In some ways, the writing has provided a release and a realisation (Reed-Danahay, 1997) (Ellis, 1999). The outpouring of self-narrative in a creative autoethnography allows an unrivalled viewpoint into an inhabited identity, less 'peering in' and more of a 'shouting out' (Medford, 2006). I had never lived my life waiting for it to be studied and to present it as such is to do it a disservice. Mine is a life like any other, not polished, reverent and isolated; but one dog-eared, mottled and incomplete (Tamas, 2011). This autoethnographic account simply lends an explanation to these snapshots of my life, the application of academia to very personal surroundings (Spry, 2001).

This dissertation notes that national identity need not be something tied solely to a spatial. Instead it is formed of social interactions and reactions, which sculpt a 'feel' of nationhood around an individual (Hedetoft & Hjort, 2002). For me this has the immersion and engagement with Danish 'atmospheres', such as partaking in *hygge* or talking in *Dansk* with family members. It is not to say that this has emerged out of positive action, instead *Danskehed* has been a natural, unconscious process for all those that have interacted with it (Shore, 2009). Statelessness been seen to be no great barrier to this, it seems (somewhat contradictory) that I can be both stateless and *dansk*, one not necessarily depending on the other (Hall, 1990). This is partially due to the different pulls on identity they have; one formal, created through blood and the spatial, the other more difficult to interpret, crafted through memories, storytelling and inclusivity (Kiecolt & LoMascolo, 2003). The formation of a familial narrative through the creation of a collective memory has linked together strands of post-memory and self-narrative allowing the creation of Danish 'moments' (Hirsch, 2008) (Erl, 2011). These moments are supported by a twist on 'Danish othering', with the outsiders remaining as such, welcome but never assimilated (Jenkins, 2011).

### **Further study**

Where to go next? It would be impossible to cover all aspects of *Danskehed* within these pages, there are always different narratives, more memories, other viewpoints. Much of my discourse is drawn from my formative years, before my sister was born, times when I feel our connection to Denmark was stronger. Her experiences of being *Dansk* will be very different to mine, not only due to age and gender but also her surroundings. Whilst we will share a collective narrative interspersed with times of a communal 'atmosphere', Pia's formation of 'self' will contrast mine in many unforeseen and unexplained ways (Ellis et al., 2011).

With film photography becoming (if not already) a thing of the past, culture, memory and post-memory are being transferred to an increasingly online social format (Van Dijck, 2008). This combined with the impending changes in Danish national legislation means that my dissertation, whilst not invalid, is a creature of its time. Another study with different 'contact zones' would produce an analysis that brings to the surface other (and probably contrasting) conclusions around nationality and identity (Pratt, 1991) (Tolich, 2010). Finally, I recognise the uniqueness of my situation. Stateless neither by conflict nor calamity, mine was a challenge presented by bureaucracy. Such a small group of people go through this in their lives, its effects become intensely personal and isolated, to explore another's experience of this would add invaluable discussion.

### **Leaving notes**

This dissertation has allowed an insight and examination into continual formation of my identity and nationality. Autoethnography has allowed me to explore this from a personal and embodied gaze yet allows the reader to empathise with, bringing in their own memories, thoughts and emotions. This is by no means a complete study of the self and should not be read as such, instead it adds to a growing discourse of understanding the complex links between the self and the social. To attempt to word the 'inarticulate' has provided a new outlook, a way of seeing and understanding the formation of my identity and 'self'. As complex yet personal concepts these remain highly subjective, yet we all unconsciously perform and fluidly alter our identities every day. Nationality is formed and shaped around us, and though we draw on our roots, in searching for a 'belonging' we can become our 'selves'.

***Mange tak, og god fornøjelse!***

(Many thanks, and enjoy!)

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. - Glossary of Danish terms used in the text

*22-års reglen* : (The 22-Year Rule)

*Ansøgning om bevarelse af danske indfødsret* : (Application for retention of Danish nationality)

*Bilag* : (Additional pages)

*Bornholm* : (A small Danish island in the Baltic Sea, where *Krakkedal* is)

*Bornholmers* : (People of Bornholm)

*Danmark* : (Denmark)

*Dannebrog* : (The Danish national flag)

*Danske* : (Danish)

*Danskhed* : (Danish-ness)

*Danske Folkeparti* : (The Danish People's Party; a powerful nationalist political party in Denmark)

*Danske kultur* : (Danish culture)

*Fødslesdagssangen* : (Traditional Danish birthday song)

*Gymnasium* : (Secondary school)

*Hjemland* : (Homeland)

*Hygge* : (Cosy/homeliness)

*Hyggelig* : (The state of being or having enacted *hygge*)

*Krakkedal* : (My grandparents farm on *Bornholm*, mum's childhood home)

*Lille Danmark* : (Little Denmark)

*Morfar* : (Maternal grandfather)

*Mormor* : (Maternal grandmother)

*Muhammedkrisen* : ('The Mohammed Crisis', the Danish political cartoon scandal in 2005)

*Nationalitet* : (Nationality)

*Oldemor* : (Great-grandmother)

*Onkel Lars* : (Uncle Lars)

*Sankt Hans* : (St John's Eve, traditionally celebrated as a holiday in Denmark)

*Udlændinge* : (Alien/foreigner)

Appendix 2. - *Ansøgning om bevarelse af dansk indfødsret* (Application for retention of Danish nationality)

**Ansøgning om bevis for dansk indfødsret/  
ansøgning om bevarelse af dansk indfødsret**

**Ansøgningen indgives til Udlændinge-, Integrations- og Boligministeriet**  
(hvis De bor i Danmark)  
**eller nærmeste danske repræsentation** (hvis De bor i udlandet)

**1. Oplysning om ansøgeren**

Navn	Cpr.nr.
Adresse	Tlf.
Fødested	Fødselsdato
Har De bopæl i udlandet og indgivet Deres ansøgning til en dansk repræsentation, vil svar på Deres ansøgning blive sendt til denne repræsentation.	

Har De på noget tidspunkt søgt om eller erhvervet fremmed statsborgerskab?  
Hvis ja, angives i hvilket land, hvornår og hvordan.

Oplysning om Deres og Deres forældres bopæl siden Deres fødsel.  
(Disse oplysninger kan eventuelt gives på særskilt bilag).

Hvis De er født i, har eller har haft ophold i Finland, Island, Norge eller Sverige, og aldrig har boet i Danmark, vedlægges en oversigt fra folkeregisteret i det pågældende land over Deres bopælsadresser siden fødslen.

Udfyldes af ministeriet eller Den danske repræsentation	Indfødsretskontoret  20 /32 -
Modtaget den:	

Oplysning om Deres eventuelle ophold eller bopæl i Danmark, herunder så nøjagtigt som muligt om tidspunktet for opholdene, opholdenes varighed og karakter (f.eks. ferie, skoleophold m.v.) samt oplysning om, hvem De har haft ophold hos.  
(Disse oplysninger kan eventuelt gives på særskilt bilag).

Oplysning om, hvorvidt De herudover har bevaret en særlig tilknytning til Danmark.

Navn og adresse på mindst to personer bosiddende i Danmark, som kan bekræfte Deres oplysninger.  
(Disse oplysninger kan eventuelt gives på særskilt bilag).

Oplysning om Deres danskundskaber, herunder i hvilket omfang De kan tale og forstå dansk.

Side 2



**2. Oplysninger om ansøgerens børn**

Barnets navn	Fødselsdato	Har barnet et andet statsborgerskab

**3. Oplysninger om ansøgerens ægtefælle**

Ægtefællens navn	Ægtefællens fødselsdato/cpr.nr.
Ægtefællens fødested	
Ægtefællens statsborgerskab	
Vielsesdato	

**4. Oplysninger om ansøgerens forældre**

Faderens navn	Faderens fødselsdato/cpr.nr.
Faderens fødested	
Faderens statsborgerskab ved ansøgerens fødsel og senere	

Moderens navn	Moderens fødselsdato/cpr.nr.
Moderens fødested	
Moderens statsborgerskab ved ansøgerens fødsel og senere	

Forældrenes vielsesdato
-------------------------

Denne erklæring udfyldes af ansøgerens danske forælder/forældre.

Jeg **erklærer herved på tro og love**, at jeg, da mit barn \_\_\_\_\_ blev født, havde dansk indfødsret, og at jeg ikke siden har søgt om eller erhvervet fremmed statsborgerskab.

Jeg erklærer endvidere, at jeg ikke på vegne af mit barn har søgt om eller erhvervet fremmed statsborgerskab.

\_\_\_\_\_

Dato

Underskrift

Jeg **erklærer herved på tro og love**, at jeg, da mit barn \_\_\_\_\_ blev født, havde dansk indfødsret, og at jeg ikke siden har søgt om eller erhvervet fremmed statsborgerskab.

Jeg erklærer endvidere, at jeg ikke på vegne af mit barn har søgt om eller erhvervet fremmed statsborgerskab.

\_\_\_\_\_

Dato

Underskrift

#### 5. Dokumentation

Kopi af følgende dokumenter vedlægges (sæt X)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ansøgerens og forældrenes fødselsattester samt eventuelle vielsesattester vedlægges | <input type="checkbox"/> Eventuelt statsborgerretsbevis udstedt til ansøgeren eller ansøgerens forældre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ansøgerens eventuelle børns fødselsattester vedlægges                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Eventuel dokumentation for dansk skolegang, herunder eventuelle højskoleophold |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kopi af ansøgerens og forældrenes pas   |   |

Eventuelle bemærkninger:

#### 6. Oplysninger til ansøgeren

Det bemærkes, at behandlingen af Deres ansøgning indebærer, at ministeriet indhenter oplysninger om Dem, Deres forældre og Deres eventuelle børn under 18 år, som er registreret her i landet, elektronisk med henblik på at undersøge grundlaget for sagens afgørelse.

I den forbindelse indhenter ministeriet oplysninger fra Det Centrale Personregister om blandt andet nationalitet, fødested, bopæl og familieforhold.

Det bemærkes endvidere, at De har adgang til efter anmodning at få indsigt i de oplysninger, som indgår i sagen.

#### 7. Underskrift

Jeg anmoder med denne ansøgning om bevis for dansk indfødsret/om bevarelse af dansk indfødsret.

\_\_\_\_\_

Dato

\_\_\_\_\_

Underskrift

Er ansøgeren **under 18 år eller umyndig**, skal ansøgningen underskrives af forældremyndighedsindehaverne eller værgeren.

\_\_\_\_\_

Dato

\_\_\_\_\_

Underskrift

\_\_\_\_\_

Dato

\_\_\_\_\_

Underskrift

Jeg **erklærer på tro og love**, at alle oplysninger i dette skema er korrekte.

Oplysningerne afgives under strafansvar, jf. straffelovens § 161.

\_\_\_\_\_

Dato

\_\_\_\_\_

Underskrift

Er ansøgeren **under 15 år**, skal denne erklæring underskrives af forældremyndighedsindehaverne eller værgeren.

\_\_\_\_\_

Dato

\_\_\_\_\_

Underskrift

\_\_\_\_\_

Dato

\_\_\_\_\_

Underskrift

#### Straffelovens § 161

Med bøde eller fængsel indtil 2 år straffes den, som udenfor det i § 158 nævnte tilfælde for eller til en offentlig myndighed afgiver falsk erklæring på tro og love eller på lignende højtidelig måde, hvor sådan form er påbudt eller tilstedt.

(Document can be accessed at <http://uim.dk/filer/Statsborgerskab/ansoegningsskema-bevis-for-og-bevarelse-af-indfoedsret.pdf>)

### Appendix 3. - Extract from journal

Picture → Birthday

From all over the World →

- Round the old table, flag & presents. Wrapping paper, Cakes in foreign languages.

Observed voices? (Dad?)

- Mom, Just, Mum, me, who's taking?

Developing memory?

- Home has changed but the scene is still repeated yearly
- Denmark in the UK!

Search for an atmosphere

- Dad → English boy. In this all that makes it Danish?

- The flag pole

- Whose is it now?
- Still is the dinner?
- Hint of balloons outside

English tradition? Left outside

Who would have & go to an English school afterwards, transition between national spaces

- The space becomes fluid

- Probably 8<sup>th</sup> birthday

Two contrasting space of performance?

↓

How was the 9<sup>th</sup>?

Picture → NYE & M. O'Brien's B-Day

(In Bangla - France - Being Danish in France!)

- Where is dad? → Taking photo?

How is it? → Lighting, what's the joke?

Key point: Flag in the top

- Could this be anyone???
- Mum: "U bande det hyggeligt!"

Being accepted

- Age Difference?
- Who was this? 2001/2002
- Day in the far left! → France?

Quote

- Spine to be Danish & performance external

- Clearing off of outside

- Never felt like France

- Danish Choir

- From H?

- from Kerkel?

- Danyfome?

- In photograph? Involvement?

- In on the joke?

Continuation of flag through national recordings memory in nationality

Dad?

Involved?

This used to explain Danish culture?

(Hanna)

## Appendix 4. – Ethical Acceptance

This Application has been marked as accepted, so no further edits can be made.

**DETAILS** Summary Consent Participants Groups Animals Track A Attachments

### Project details

#### Conditions of acceptance

The project information and consent form require revision to put them into more appropriate everyday language. Please see the FAQ on the Geography Ethics website for more information.  
Gail Daives

® Title of Project (max 25 words)	why I continue to identify myself as Danish, even once my nationality is taken away from me.
® Type of Project	Undergraduate ▼
® Names of researchers	Thomas Paulsen
® Correspondent's Email (separate with a semi-colon if providing more than one)	tp298@exeter.ac.uk
Estimated start date (dd/mm/yyyy) and duration of the project	22/10/2016