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Explaining the Emergence of Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties: The Case of Denmark

JENS RYDGREN

This article aims to explain the emergence of the Danish People's Party, a radical right-wing populist party, by using a model combining political opportunity structures and the diffusion of new master frames. The article shows that because of dealignment and realignment processes – as well as the politicisation of the immigration issue – niches were created on the electoral arena. The Danish People's Party was able to mine these niches by adopting a master frame combining ethno-pluralist xenophobia and anti-political establishment populism, which had proved itself successful elsewhere in Western Europe (originally in France in the mid-1980s). In this process of adaptation, a far right circle of intellectuals, the Danish Association, played a key role as mediator.

Denmark became famous in the early 1970s as the home of the strongest right-wing populist party on the continent, the Progress Party, which emerged in the landslide election of 1973 with 15.9 per cent of the vote. Today, the Progress Party has withered away, whereas another rightist party, of a new kind – the Danish People's Party – has taken its place, with 7.2 per cent of the vote in the 1998 election and 12.0 per cent of the vote in the 2001 election. Contrary to earlier studies on Danish right-wing populism (e.g., Goul Andersen and Bjørklund 2000; Bjørklund and Goul Andersen 2002), which treat the Progress Party and the Danish People's Party as almost synonymous – and emphasise the continuity between them – I will argue that they belong to two different party families and that they must be treated accordingly if we want to explain the recent emergence of the Danish People's Party. Contrary to the Progress Party – which was a tax-populist, anti-bureaucracy, protest party – the Danish People's Party is as much akin to the new extreme right as to populism. In fact, I will argue that it should be seen as a member of the new party family of radical right-wing populist (RRP) parties that have emerged in Western Europe during the 1980s and 1990s (and which comprises parties such as the French Front National, the Austrian FPÖ,

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among several others). To use a minimalist, generic definition of the new party family, RRP parties share the fundamental core of ethno-nationalist xenophobia (based on the so-called ethno-pluralist doctrine) and anti-political establishment populism (Rydgren 2003a).¹

The fact that the Danish People's Party is a member of this new party family has certain theoretical and methodological implications, which have largely been disregarded in earlier studies. First, in explaining the emergence and electoral success of the party, we should not treat it as a discrete entity arising independently of RRP parties in other countries. Second, and related, we should not only search for explanatory causes within Denmark – today, in our open globalised world, there are no reasons to assume that *explanans* and *explanandum* are always to be found within the same delineated geographical territory (of the nation-state). By following these guidelines, we increase the chances for not only explaining the Danish case, but also contributing to an increased, accumulated understanding of the emergence of the new party family of RRP parties generally.

More specifically, I have in an earlier study (Rydgren forthcoming) argued that the emergence of the RRP parties can be explained with a model combining two groups of mechanisms: First, the innovation and successful cross-national diffusion of a new, potent master frame – combining ethno-nationalist xenophobia (based on the so-called ethno-pluralist doctrine) and anti-political establishment populism – which enabled parties of the extreme right to (1) mobilise on xenophobic and/or anti-immigration attitudes without being stigmatised as racists, and (2) to pose serious critique on contemporary democratic systems, and thereby foment political protest, without being stigmatised as antidemocrats. Second, in order to reach a full explanation of why the RRP parties emerged when they did in respective political system, and why RRP parties have failed completely in some countries, we must also consider a group of mechanisms falling within the composite notion of *expanding and contracting political opportunities*. This model has the advantages of being as suitable for explaining so-called 'positive cases' as it is for explaining 'negative' ones – and of being general enough to escape ad hoc explanations of singular cases, while at the same time flexible enough to be applicable to empirical cases all over Western Europe.

Since this model has been presented in detail elsewhere (Rydgren forthcoming), I will only summarise the central parts (in sections 1 and 2). In the following sections the model will be applied to the Danish case. The aim of this paper is twofold: to understand the emergence and electoral success of the Danish People's Party since the mid-1990s, and to evaluate the usefulness of the model by testing it against empirical data.

POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES

Following Tarrow (1998: 19–20), political opportunities will be seen as ‘consistent – but not necessary formal, permanent, or national’ – resources that are external to the party or movement in question. If an RRP party is to emerge, some – but not all – of the various political opportunities presented below would have to be present.

- (1) Most general – and most important – the emergence of niches on the electoral arena (Rydgren 2003b). This is a composite notion, and overlaps in significant parts with mechanisms that will be discussed below, under the headings of ‘dealignment/realignment’ and ‘politicisation of new issues’. Nevertheless, we may assume that no new parties will emerge and sustain their electoral support over time if (i) there are no sufficiently large *niches*, defined as gaps between the voters’ location in the political space and the perceived position of the parties (i.e., the party images and/or position on crucial issues) in the same space, and (ii) the proportion of voters with a high degree of party identification is close to 100 per cent (see Rydgren 2003b).
- (2) Dealignment and realignment processes may present favourable political opportunities (cf. Kriesi *et al.* 1995). Decreased trust in (established) political parties, and increased salience of alternative (or even conflicting) cleavage dimensions, constitute political opportunities for emerging RRP parties. Of particular importance in this case is the relative strength of the socioeconomic cleavage dimension vis-à-vis the sociocultural cleavage dimension.
- (3) Politicisation of new issues – most important the immigration question – is of great importance, not the least because it may grant RRP parties increased media coverage.
- (4) As Kitschelt (1995) has argued, the degree of convergence in the political space also provides expanding political opportunities for new political parties (see Abedi 2002 for an empirical assessment). First, a convergence may result in a feeling that the established parties ‘are all the same’. This, in turn, may fuel popular distrust and discontent in politicians and political parties, and create an audience receptive to parties ready to mobilise protest votes. Second, of course, a convergence may also have direct effects, in that it facilitates the emergence of niches within the political space.
- (5) The relative openness or closure of the institutionalised political systems (see e.g. McAdam 1996) plays a role, as well. Whether a political system has a proportional or a majority voting system, for instance, and how high the thresholds are, all make a difference (cf.

Katz 1980; Weaver and Rockman 1993). Unless a country has undergone changes in voting systems etc., this mechanism is of no use in explaining changes within a political system over time (but better suited for explaining differences between different countries). As a result, this question will not be discussed in this article. Suffice it to say that Denmark has one of the most open access structures of the political systems in Western Europe, with a proportional voting system, and a threshold of only two per cent. This has without doubt facilitated the emergence of new parties in Denmark, the Danish People's Party included.

- (6) The presence or absence of elite allies (see e.g. McAdam 1996; Tarrow 1998), which can give increased legitimacy (Rydgren 2003a) and/or increased visibility. Situations in which the established parties chose to collaborate with emerging RRP parties – or associated actors – lend legitimacy to these parties. By being controversial, such events are also likely to arouse the interest of the mass media, and hence give RRP parties increased coverage. On the face of it, this is potentially in conflict with points (1) and (4) above, since cooperation with the mainstream right may also lead to shrinking niches. Consequently, it should be kept an open, empirical question whether this turns out to be beneficial or not for emerging RRP parties.
- (7) The state's capacity and propensity for repression (see e.g. McAdam 1996; Tilly 1978: chapter 4). This is of no importance for the Danish case, and will not be discussed in this paper.
- (8) The availability of a potent master frame (McAdam 1994), or more generally, prevalent strategies external to the party (cf. Kriesi *et al.* 1995). The political opportunities listed above have in common that they lead to the emergence of successful RRP parties only if embryonic groups or networks identifying with an RRP party programme have the capacity to take advantage of them. If they fail to do so, no successful RRP party will emerge. In order to exploit existing niches and other favourable political opportunities new parties must present political programmes – and, even more important, use a political rhetoric – that fit the available niches. A potent master frame helps to form such a political profile. Potent master frames and useful strategies for mobilisation are seldom invented *within* embryonic parties and movements, although this does happen on rare occasions. More commonly, emerging parties and social movements try to make use of master frames and strategies already 'out there', which they try to modify in ways to fit the specific political and cultural context in which the adopter is embedded.

THE INNOVATION AND DIFFUSION OF A NEW MASTER FRAME

Following Snow and Benford (1992: 137), I see frames as an ‘interpretative schemata that simplifies and condenses the “world out there” by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action within one’s present or past environment’. A frame, therefore, can be seen as an interpretation model, presented by actors (in discursive or pictorial form) in order to influence people’s perception and understanding of social events and situations (see also Kahneman and Tversky 1984; for the use of the concept within communications studies, see Iyengar 1991). Collective action frames, employed by social movements and political parties, function as modes of attribution and articulation. They attribute blame for perceived social problems by identifying individuals, social groups or structures that are believed to have caused the problem in question (diagnostic framing); and they also suggest a general line of action (prognostic framing). Master frames can be seen as encompassing, generic frames that have the potency of constraining more specific (derivative) frames used by specific social movements or political parties. Master frames are of importance because they have the ability to synchronise – and in fact give rise to – *families* of movements or political parties.

In the case of the RRP parties, I will argue that such an innovative master frame was constructed in France during the late 1970s and early 1980s, and was made known as a *successful frame* in connection with the electoral breakthrough of the Front National in 1984. As the old master frame of the extreme right – containing elements of biological racism, anti-Semitism, and an anti-democratic (radical) critique of the political system – was rendered impotent by the outcome of the Second World War, it took the extreme right a long time to establish a new, potent master frame that simultaneously met the conditions of: (1) being flexible enough to fit (in modified form) in different political and cultural contexts, (2) being sufficiently resonant with the lived experiences, attitudes and preconceptions of many people, and (3) being sufficiently freed from stigma (for the two first points, see Snow and Benford 1992). The master frame combining ethno-nationalist, cultural racism (based on the so-called ethno-pluralist doctrine) and anti-political establishment populism met these requirements.

The notion of ‘ethno-pluralism’, which constitutes the foundation of the so-called new racism (Barker 1981) or cultural racism (Wieviorka 1998: 32), was developed by the French New Right as an alternative to the old frame of ‘biological racism’. The doctrine of ethno-pluralism states that in order to preserve the unique national characters of different peoples they have to be

kept separate. Mixing different ethnicities only leads to cultural extinction (see Minkenberg 1997; Taguieff 1988). In this doctrine, culture and ethnicity are deterministic and monolithic; chances for individual change and in-group variation are believed to be slight. The Front National adopted this notion from the *Nouvelle Droite*, and Le Pen picked the other element, the populist anti-political establishment strategy, from the populist Poujadist movement.

A party using this strategy tries to construct an image of itself as in opposition to the 'political class', while trying actively not to appear anti-democratic. A party that is viewed as anti-democratic will be stigmatised and marginalised as long as the overwhelming majority of the electorate is in favour of democracy per se (Schedler 1996; cf. Mudde 1996a: 272). In order to create distance between themselves and the established political parties (i.e., both the government and the anti-incumbent opposition), populist parties aim at recoding the political space, with its diversity of parties, into one single, homogeneous political class. One way of achieving this goal is to argue that the differences between government and established opposition parties are irrelevant surface phenomena. According to RRP parties, in reality the established parties do not compete but collude. However, at the same time RRP parties must be cautious not to step over the line into opposition to democracy per se. This is the second part of the anti-political-establishment strategy: to position the party between the 'normal opposition' (i.e., the presently non-incumbent party or parties) and openly anti-democratic groups. Since an overwhelming majority of the Western European voters are in favour of democracy and view anti-democratic parties and movements as illegitimate, the ability of parties that are perceived as anti-democratic to win votes is slight.

As this new master frame proved itself successful in France, it inspired embryonic right-wing extremist and/or populist groups elsewhere; and it consequently came to lay the ideological foundation of the new party family of extreme right-wing populism. As will be demonstrated below, the Danish People's Party has – via the influence of other actors – successfully adopted this master frame (as well as 'derived' frames, and other ideas and practices) from the Front National, which helped the party to take advantage of the niches available for electoral mobilisation.

THE CASE OF DENMARK: EXPLAINING THE EMERGENCE OF THE DANISH PEOPLE'S PARTY

Denmark, as the other Scandinavian countries, lacks a legacy of strong extreme right parties and movements. Fascism and Nazism were never strong during the 1930s and 1940s in Denmark. However, as we will see below, since

the mid to late 1980s, right-wing extremism of a new kind has grown increasingly strong.

The Danish Progress Party (which emerged in 1972, and which received 15.9 per cent of the votes in the 1973 election) was during the 1970s a populist anti-tax protest party, and propagated for a neo-liberal economic policy. However, during this period, the party could not be classified as a radical or extreme right-wing party on socio-cultural issues. The pamphlet from 1973 – which functioned as a substitute for a party programme – did not mention immigration at all, and nationalism was not much of an issue either (see Goul Andersen and Bjørklund 2000: 204). However, since the mid 1980s, the Progress Party has adopted a rhetoric that approximates the discourse of RRP parties (cf. Kitschelt 1995: 121), not the least being the strong focus on (anti-)immigration themes, which have been among the most important issues during the last two decades. Below, I will argue that the changing character of Danish right-wing populism, from 1985 and onwards, was at least partly caused by the fact that the Progress Party – as well as smaller networks of right-wing extremists – learned from the experience of the Front National, which had its electoral breakthrough in 1984.

Yet I would argue that Denmark did not have a pure RRP party until the foundation of the Danish People's Party in 1995. Although the Progress Party focused on (anti-)immigration themes as well, its political programme was not built on the core of ethno-nationalism and the doctrine of ethno-pluralism – as is the case for the Danish People's Party. The Danish People's Party was founded as a breakaway faction of the Danish Progress Party. The party leader, Pia Kjørsgaard had been a leading figure of the Progress Party since the mid-1980s. In fact, she was called in as a temporary replacement for Mogens Glistrup when he was imprisoned for tax fraud in 1984. When Glistrup was released in 1987, Kjørsgaard had created a strong platform within the party, and was reluctant to give up her leading position. Although Glistrup's position was weakened – he was actually expelled from the party in 1990 (although he returned later) – Kjørsgaard had to fight against the shadow of Glistrup, as well as against strong factions identifying with the more anarchist protest-oriented profile of the Progress Party's earlier days. In the mid-1990s, a group led by Kjørsgaard left the party and founded the Danish People's Party. In their first election, in 1998, the party received 7.2 per cent of the vote, and in 2001 the share of the votes increased to 12 per cent (see Bjørklund and Goul Andersen 2002; Andersen 2004; Karpantschov 2002). Below, I will discuss the emergence and electoral successes of the Danish People's Party in the light of the explanatory model outlined above.

THE AVAILABILITY OF NEW MASTER FRAMES – AND THE ABILITY TO ADOPT THEM SUCCESSFULLY

As will be shown below, the Danish People's Party has been able to adopt the master frame, combining an ethno-pluralist, xenophobic nationalism and the anti-political establishment strategy, initiated by the Front National in the early 1980s. However, in the Danish case, a far-right circle of intellectuals, the Danish Association, largely mediated the influence. That being the case, let me start with a short discussion of the ideology and strategy of the Danish Association, and how it was linked to the Danish People's Party.

THE DANISH ASSOCIATION

The Danish Association was founded in 1987. Among the founding fathers was Søren Krarup, who in 1984 had founded the Committee against the Refugee Law, which may be considered the first anti-immigration organisation in Denmark (Karpantschof 2003: 11). Several articles in the journal published by the Danish Association, *The Dane*, as well as books published by individual members, express great sympathy for RRP parties like the Front National, Die Republikaner, and the FPÖ (see Karpantschof 2002: 44), and *The Dane* reports regularly on 'nationalist' activity abroad.

The main goal of the Danish Association is to 'secure Danish culture, language and mode of life in a world threatened by chaos, overpopulation, violence and fanaticism'. The association furthermore warns 'against the disintegration of our cultural and popular unity, which is caused by an excessive influx of people from overpopulated countries', and stresses the need to 'stop dismantling Denmark as a home for the Danish people' (Den Danske Forening 2003a). With reference to the international Declaration of Human Rights, the Danish Association claims the 'right of the peoples of Western Europe ... to their own homelands and their own resources. The fundamental principle is that nobody has the right to force one's way into another country at the expense of the people of that country' (Den Danske Forening 2003b). According to the Danish Association, it is 'pointless to worry about the human rights of other peoples or persons, as long as this will result in that the rights of the own people are set aside' (Den Danske Forening 2003b). The Danish Association presents several reasons to stop immigration. The four most important of them are identical to frames used by the Front National: First, in line with the ethno-pluralist doctrine, immigrants are conceived of as a threat to the homogeneous and peaceful Danish nation, as well as to the Danish culture and norms. According to the official programme of the Danish Association,

when a foreign culture is pressed on another country, there will be a shower of sparks. Those who today are intruding our country do not want to become 'integrated'. They are too many. And experiences from other European countries, which have had mass immigration for a long time, show us what will happen: disturbances, violence, and conflicts. The majority of the immigrants have another view of life than we have. For most Muslims there is no equality for women and people of other religions. And the supreme law is not the one that is stipulated by our democratic institutions, but Allah's law, the Koran. This order they will try to implement here – when they are many enough. (Den Danske Forening 2003b)

Hence, according to the Danish Association, because integration of immigrants from 'culturally distant' countries is not likely to be successful during the first two or three generations, integration policies should be avoided. The Danish Association also points to the low birth-rates for Danish women, which – because of the combined effect of immigration and high birth-rates of immigrant women – will have the result that 'Denmark very soon . . . will be dominated by immigrants' (Den Danske Forening 2003b). In the light of this and similar statements, the Danish Association presents itself as heir to the resistance movement working against German invasion during the World War II. Now, according to the rhetoric, Denmark has to fight against another dangerous invasion – that of immigrants.²

Second, and related, immigration is believed to lead to increased criminality: immigrants are overrepresented among criminals and the mafia has established itself in Denmark because of immigration. Third, in line with the so-called welfare chauvinist frame, immigrants are seen as a threat against the welfare state, because of the cost of immigrants living on social subsidies. The result is a drain on resources and deteriorating conditions for the Danes. Finally, in line with another frame stressing clashes of interests and competition over scarce resources, immigration is believed to cause increased unemployment for Danes: 'If they are employed, there are normally others that will be unemployed in their place' (Den Danske Forening 2003b).

As a result, the Danish Association only wants to grant citizenship to immigrants that can support themselves and that are fully assimilated. The rest should be repatriated as soon as possible. Hence, this is by all standards a pronounced ethno-nationalist and neo-racist programme, very much in line with the master frame (and related frames) employed by the Front National and the New Right in France.

Concerning the other main element of the new master frame, the populist anti-political establishment strategy, the programme of the Danish Association differs somewhat from the RRP parties. Being an interest organisation

aiming at opinion moulding and agenda setting, rather than a political party wanting votes, the Danish Association tries to present itself as an organisation that collects support from individual members from all political parties and currents. On the other hand, however, the Danish Association also makes use of the same kind of conspiracy discourse that is common in the anti-political establishment strategy. It groups together all parties, organisations and persons that in one way or another disagree with its view on immigration under the concept of ‘the goodness industry’ or ‘fellow travellers’. These actors, according to the Danish Association, present themselves as humanists and idealists, while in reality they want to preserve high immigration rates because they ‘can make good money on it’. What is called the ‘immigrant lobby’ is believed to play a key role here. This group of organisations, parties and other key actors, are lying to the Danish people, and are employing censorship in order to exclude other voices from the debate. The Danish Association makes use of the other part of the anti-political establishment strategy, as well, in its effort at distancing itself from Nazism and openly racist organisations. Neo-Nazis are among the actors that are depicted as enemies to the Danish Association. The Danish Association also ‘proves’ that it is not a racist organisation by putting its own programme against definitions of ‘old’ biological racism.

As we will see below, in terms of political discourse there are great similarities between the Danish Association and the Danish People’s Party, although the Danish People’s Party – constrained by being a party running in public elections – has been forced to tone down some of the more controversial ideas propelled by the Danish Association. Yet, when it comes to the central master frame, there is a straight line from the Front National to the Danish Association to the Danish People’s Party. We also know that, in 1997, the chairman of the Danish Association declared that the Association would give up the strategy of organising public meetings, and instead would intensify the strategy of systematically influencing the media, as well as supporting the Progress Party and the Danish People’s Party (Karpantschov 2002: 38). Furthermore, a number of prominent members of the Danish Association have joined the Danish People’s Party since the mid-1990s, such as Søren Krarup and Jesper Langballe, who were both elected MPs for the party in 2001 (see Karpantschov 2002: 44). As we will see below, frames used by the Danish Association – and the Front National before that – have been re-used almost literally by Pia Kjøersgaard. More specifically, in claiming that the ‘ordinary Danes’ are fooled by ‘the establishment’, and by claiming that Denmark and Danish national identity is threatened by immigration and multiculturalisation and by the EU, the Danish People’s Party evidently has adopted the master frame from the Front National, partly via the influence of the Danish Association.

THE DANISH PEOPLE'S PARTY

As in the case of other RRP parties, ethno-nationalist and ethno-pluralist xenophobia is at the core of the ideology of the Danish People's Party. According to the party, Denmark and Danish culture is threatened by immigration and supranational entities like the EU. In their party programme, the Danish People's Party states:

Denmark is not a country of immigration, and has never been one. We cannot therefore accept a multiethnic transformation of the country. Denmark is the country of the Danes, and its citizens should be granted the opportunity to live in a safe community founded on the rule of law, which is evolving in line with Danish culture. . . . The Danish People's Party is in favour of cultural cooperation with other countries, but we are against giving other cultures, building on completely different values and norms than ours, leverage in Denmark. The way of life we have chosen in Denmark is outstanding. It is conditioned by our culture, and in a small country like ours it cannot survive if we permit mass immigration of foreign religions and foreign cultures. A multicultural society is a society without coherence and unity, and, consequently, existing multicultural societies over the globe are characterised by a lack of solidarity and often by open conflict, as well. There are no good reasons to assume that Denmark would escape the destiny of other multicultural societies, if we let ourselves under the sway of foreign cultures. (Dansk Folkeparti 2002; 2001)³

When looking in more detail at the anti-immigration rhetoric of the Danish People's Party, we see that it has adopted at least three of the four frames used by the Danish Association (and by the Front National). First, as already evident from the quotation above, immigration is seen as a threat against Danish culture and ethno-national identity. Like the Front National (and like the Danish Association), the Danish People's Party is concerned not only by the influx of immigrants, but also by the high birth-rates of immigrants already living in the country (and the low birth-rates of native Danes). Muslims in particular are believed to present a threat to the Danish culture. In their party programme, the party states: 'To make Denmark multiethnic would mean that reactionary cultures, hostile to evolution, would break down our so-far stable, homogeneous society. . . . Nowhere on the globe has a peaceful integration of Muslims into another culture been feasible' (Dansk Folkeparti 2001). In an even more explicit way, Mogens Camre – who is a member of the European Parliament – expressed the party's view on Muslims:

It is ... naïve to think that you can integrate Muslims into the Danish society. ... Only a few of them have come here in order to be integrated. Most of them have come here in order to create a Muslim society. ... [Islam] is not only a religion but a fascist political ideology mixed with a religious fanaticism of the Middle Ages, an insult against the human rights and all other conditions necessary for creating a developed society. We cannot force another culture on the Muslim countries, we cannot prevent them from ruining their societies, but we ought to protect our own society. People wanting to fight a holy war should not be in Denmark. (Camre 2000)

Like other RRP parties – the Front National in particular – the Danish People’s Party equates immigrants from Muslim countries with Muslim fundamentalists; no within-group variation is acknowledged – e.g., the fact that most migrants from Muslim countries do not support ‘circumcision of young women’ and ‘brainwashing of school children’, which according to the party (Dansk Folkeparti 2001) is characteristic of Islam.

Moreover, as is common in the rhetoric of the Front National – and, in fact, for right-wing extremists in general – the Danish People’s Party gives its neo-racist rhetoric a conspiratorial tinge. In a speech at the annual meeting of the Danish People’s Party, Mogens Camre (2001) stated:

For the Muslim political-religious movement it is all about world domination, as it has been for other fanatic ideologies during the history. They cannot obtain world domination militarily, but they try to do so by flooding the world with people. All Western countries are infiltrated by Muslims – and some of them talk nicely to us while they are waiting to become many enough ... The enemy is here amidst us, and he is everywhere in the Muslim world.

Second, immigrants are believed to be a major cause of criminality. Although criminality and safety issues are important elements in the political profile of the Danish People’s Party for their own sake, these issues are often interwoven with anti-immigrant rhetoric. In 1997, for instance, the party launched the campaign ‘Safety now – The Violence out of Denmark’ (see Karpantschof 2002: 47). Under the heading of ‘legal policy’ in the party programme the Danish People’s Party claims that ‘it is important [to link] with a well functioning immigration policy. The development shows that it takes increased resources to fight criminality among the foreigners’. In its 2001 book, the Danish People’s Party presents a 14-page list of crimes committed by immigrants against native Danes (Dansk Folkeparti 2001). The message is clear, and it is also spelled out explicitly in the text: immigrants

are not only criminal, but also indulge in racist criminality (i.e., they do not rob or rape other ‘foreigners’). Since no list of crimes committed by native Danes is presented, the uninformed reader might be persuaded by the argument that immigration is the main reason for criminality and social unrest. The alleged link between immigration and criminality is sometimes pointed out even more explicitly, as by the MP Per Dalgaard:

Sometimes one wishes that the situation of this nation was like it used to be ‘in the good old days’, that is, before we had 400,000 foreigners contributing daily to make life hard for many people . . . that it again would be possible to go on with life without the risk of assaults and attacks . . . We want our old Denmark back. We try with all our means to have these wild people, which are impossible to integrate, sent home. Home to the conditions they prefer for a society: chaos, murder, robbery, and anarchy. (Dalgaard 2002b; 2002a)

Finally, the anti-immigration rhetoric of the Danish People’s Party is sometimes presented as welfare chauvinism: immigrants drain the welfare state of resources that otherwise could have been used to help old and sick (native Danish) people.⁴ As Mogens Camre stated, for instance, ‘the influx of people from abroad will destroy the welfare state: Denmark has become an insurance company where all are compensated without ever having to pay the insurance premium. Such an insurance company will fall’ (Camre 2001). Pia Kjærsgaard echoed this theme, saying ‘the Prime Minister stands on his head to produce all the necessary homes, when citizens of foreign countries are knocking [on our door]. No expenses have been spared. The government is not all that interested in other homeless. It is believed that several thousands of Danes are without a roof over their heads. Who will build asylum-cities for them . . .?’ (quoted in Karpantschov 2002: 54–5). As Karpantschov (2002: 54–5) shows, Kjærsgaard has apparently borrowed this line from the Danish Association, which in a flyer stated, ‘There are 30,000 homeless Danes. When will there be asylum-cities built for them?’

The other component of the master frame, the populist anti-political establishment strategy, has played an important role for the Danish People’s Party, as well. Although the attacks on the ‘political establishment’ have become less aggressive since the 2001 election – when the party obtained a pivotal position and a de facto role as an unofficial coalition partner to the non-Socialist government (see Goul Andersen 2004) – the Danish People’s Party commonly presents itself as an outsider to the establishment (in which all other parties represented in the parliament are included). Even after 2001, the MPs of the Danish People’s Party typically refer to politicians as ‘they’ rather than as ‘we’ (Goul Andersen 2004). Much of the party’s populist

rhetoric is directed against the Social Democrats, partly as a result of the struggle over the same voters: the workers. In a campaign film from 1998, for instance, Pia Kjærsgaard states: ‘The Social Democrats are today governed by a group of academic theorists that do not understand, and that would not dream of trying to understand [the worries of “ordinary people”]’. Moreover, like the Danish Association, the Danish People’s Party uses the concept ‘goodness industry’ and ‘flabby humanists’ for parties and organisations not sharing the party’s view on immigration policy.⁵ Finally, like other RRP parties, the Danish People’s Party wants to increase the use of referenda and other measures of direct democracy.

Concerning the second step of the anti-establishment strategy, the Danish People’s Party has been anxious to keep anti-democratic and overtly (biological) racist groups and organisations at a distance. For instance, in 1999 the Danish People’s Party expelled 19 persons, one of whom held a high position within the party, that were members of the racist organisation Danish Forum (Bjørklund and Goul Andersen 2002: 112).⁶ This process was facilitated by the fact that the party – contrary to many other RRP parties (e.g., the Front National, the Sweden Democrats) – originated not from a right-wing extremist milieu but from a populist protest party.⁷ Moreover, the Danish People’s Party benefited from ‘a radical flank effect’ (see, e.g., Tarrow 1998) in its use of the anti-establishment strategy. Its efforts to present itself as ‘radical, but not extremist’ were facilitated by the radicalisation of the Progress Party’s anti-immigration rhetoric, in which the party crossed the line of the *comme il faut*. In 1999, for instance, Mogens Glistrup stated:

... people from the Muslim countries should be thrown out, even if they would be good Christians. That is the reality of war. They are our deadly enemies. This is not a matter of individual justice; it is a matter of military operation. ... You can call it what the heck you want. Racism is a word of honour for me. All people wanting to defend Denmark are called racists. Therefore, you are free to call me racist. (quoted in Andersen 1999b: 22–3)

Moreover, during the election campaign of 2001, the Progress Party campaigned for a ‘Mohammedan-free Denmark’, which should be created by the means of ethnic cleansing and concentration camps. Phrases like ‘Mohammedan parasites’ and ‘Mohammedan pest’ were used in the campaign. Although the difference between the Progress Party and the Danish People’s Party was not always so much in *what* they said (the underlying themes and claims were often similar), but in the *ways* they said it, the brutal rhetoric of the Progress Party pushed the party too far on the

extremist side, which made it impossible to use the anti-political establishment strategy in a successful way. However, at the same time it gave the Danish People's Party a chance to appear more moderate (in comparison to the Progress Party) – which favoured its successful use of the anti-political establishment strategy.

Hence, in its political discourse the Danish People's Party has largely used frames that had already proved themselves successful elsewhere: the combination of ethno-pluralist xenophobia, welfare chauvinism and anti-establishment populism. As we will see below, these frames provided a good strategy for taking advantage of expanding political opportunities during the late 1990s to mobilise votes on xenophobic/anti-immigration sentiments and political protest.

EMERGENCE OF NICHE ON THE ELECTORAL ARENA

As mentioned above, this is a composite point, and will largely be discussed below, under the headings of 'dealignment/realignment' and 'politicisation of new issues'. I will argue that because of the decreased salience of the socio-economic cleavage dimension and, correspondingly, of the increased salience of the socio-cultural cleavage dimension, niches for parties promoting authoritarian socio-cultural politics were created on the Danish electoral arena. The immigration issue, and the opposition to the multicultural society more generally – which were politicised during the mid-1980s – have been of particular importance. Although some of the established parties, the Liberal Party in particular, have tried hard to exploit this niche since the mid-1990s, the Danish People's Party has successfully outbid them with a more radical politics. The Danish People's Party has furthermore benefited from a niche on a protest dimension – created already in the wake of the 1973 election, by the emergence of the Danish Progress Party – comprising voters defining themselves as being 'outside the political establishment'. Finally, the Danish People's Party has been able to benefit from an EU-sceptical niche. The Danish People's Party is the only Danish party combining EU-scepticism with an authoritarian position on the socio-cultural dimension. In this way, the party can attract EU-sceptical voters not sharing the cultural liberal positions (on for instance immigration and multiculturalism) taken by the other EU-sceptical Danish parties (cf. Andersen 2000: 7).

The fact that many Western European countries – Denmark included – have seen a more volatile electoral arena during the last decades, and often radical changes in the distribution of voter attitudes and preferences, is partly the result of the profound macro-structural transformation from an industrial towards a post-industrial society (see, e.g., Kitschelt 1995; Rydgren 2003a; 2003b). Denmark, like the other Western European countries, has gone

through a process of post-industrialisation in recent decades. Between 1973 and 1994, for instance, the proportion of people employed in the service sector increased from 57 per cent to 68 per cent, whereas the proportion of the workforce employed in the industrial sector decreased from 34 per cent to 27 per cent (OECD 1996: 191). Although this is nothing unique for Denmark and hence of little value for explaining cross-national variation in electoral support for the RRP parties (cf. Rydgren 2002), it might help us understand variation over time. First, traditional working class milieus have been decomposed, as a result of both the shrinking size of the industrial sector and the increased diversification of the working class, being the result of specialisation and a growing demand of technical skills (see Dahrendorf 1959). As a sign of this development we see declining levels of class voting, especially among young workers. Second, the post-industrialisation process has created new 'loser groups' – not coping with the increased demands of education, internationalisation and flexibility – which are prone to support political programmes promising a return to the stable values and virtues of 'the status quo ante'.⁸ Finally, combined with the decreased strength of the political left, which will be discussed below, this development resulted in a situation in which many voters sensed that their old frames for understanding the social world became increasingly inadequate – and consequently became more open for alternative frames.

DEALIGNMENT AND REALIGNMENT PROCESSES

Several cleavage dimensions always exist simultaneously (see Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rokkan 1970), most of them ultimately based on social identity or interests. Although these cleavage dimensions exist side by side, either manifest or latent, their salience increases or declines during certain periods (Hout *et al.* 1996: 55–6). Contemporary Western European democracies are characterised by two major cleavage dimensions: the economic cleavage dimension, which puts workers against capital, and which concerns the degree of state involvement in the economy, and the socio-cultural cleavage dimension, which is about issues such as immigration, law and order, abortion, and so on (see Bell 1996: 332–3). The relative strength of these two cleavage dimensions influences RRP parties' chances for successful electoral mobilisation. For instance, we may expect that the relative strength or salience of old cleavages influences the possibilities to mobilise on issues and frames connected to new cleavages (Kriesi *et al.* 1995). As old cleavages lose salience, frames connected to these cleavages become less effective for people's interpretation of the world. As Kriesi *et al.* (1995: 4) have stressed, therefore, old cleavages may provide 'a shield against the framing attempts of rising collective actors'. Schattschneider

(1975: 63) makes a similar point in arguing that a 'shift from the alignment AB to the alignment CD means that the old cleavage must be played down if the new conflict is to be exploited. . . . The new conflict can become dominant only if the old one is subordinated, or obscured, or forgotten, or loses its capacity to excite the contestants, or becomes irrelevant'. As we will see below, this has increasingly been the fate of the socio-economic cleavage dimension in Denmark.

A defining characteristic of the RRP parties – in particular during the 1990s – has been their ability to mobilise working-class voters (see, e.g., Rydgren 2003b; Mayer 1999) and the Danish People's Party is no exception. In 2001, for instance, the proportion of workers among the Danish People's Party's voters was 56 per cent (and 49 per cent in 1998), which should be compared with 43 per cent of the Social Democrat voters in the 2001 election (Goul Andersen 2004: 25; Andersen 1999b: 14). This is largely an effect of the decreased salience of the socio-economic cleavage dimension. As Lipset (1981) has argued, although manual workers traditionally have been at odds with the left-wing parties' positions on socio-cultural issues – they have on average been considerably more authoritarian – this does not have any practical effect on their voting patterns as long as they identify with the socialist parties' economic positions (i.e., see them as defenders of their class interest). In such a situation, they will vote for them despite their humanitarian and liberal positions on socio-cultural issues. However, as the economic cleavage dimension has lost in salience – and, correspondingly, as the socio-cultural dimension has gained in salience – this has started to change.

Moreover, the level of class voting (i.e., the percentage of the workers that vote according to their class interests – for the left-wing parties) has decreased in most West European countries, Denmark included (e.g., Clark and Lipset 2001; Nieuwbeerta 2001: 126). Between 1966 and 2001, working class support for socialist parties in Denmark decreased dramatically, from 81 to 41 per cent (Goul Andersen 2004: 14). The loss of working class support was particularly great among young workers (Andersen 1999c: 86). Consequently, the Social Democratic Party has lost its hegemonic position. Although Danish social democracy was never as strong as that in Sweden, it peaked in 1960 with 42.1 per cent of the votes. Since the early 1970s, however, support for the Danish Social Democratic Party has dropped below 30 per cent on several occasions – most recently in the 2001 election – and during the last 30 years the non-socialist parties have been in power nearly as often as the Social Democrats. Moreover, the salience of socio-economic issues has decreased, partly as a result of the politicisation of alternative issues, such as immigration, security and the EU (cf. Blomqvist and Green-Pedersen 2002: 11). In 1998, for instance, only nine per cent answered

'economic policy' when asked to mention the most important political issues of the day (Nielsen 1999a: 21). Yet 'welfare' has kept its position as a salient issue, although the Social Democratic Party has lost its 'issue ownership' of it (Goul Andersen 2003; see Petrocik 1996 for a discussion of 'issue ownership').

As a result of these developments, the Social Democratic Party has become increasingly ideologically and strategically disoriented (cf. Karpantschov 2003: 8). Seeing the issues the party traditionally 'own' decrease in salience – and seeing its traditional voter constituency slowly wither away – the party has increasingly tried to exploit authoritarian attitudes on the socio-cultural dimension (see below). However, it has failed to obtain unanimous support within the party organisation (or even within the party elite) for the party's line on issues such as immigration policy and the EU.⁹ Combined with a development in which economic policy has gradually become less ideological, and more attuned to 'third way' British social democracy (Green-Pedersen and van Kersbergen 2002), the result has been increased confusion and frustration – and a weakening position making the party unable, or unwilling, to present strong alternative frames, or counter-frames, of how to define social problems in contemporary Denmark. Instead, the diagnostic and prognostic frames proposed by the Danish People's Party (and the Danish Association and the Progress Party before that) – i.e., that social problems largely should be interpreted in ethnic terms and/or as being the result of moral lassitude (and not in terms of social class and economic marginalisation); and that they should be resolved by implementing stricter immigration policies and more law and order – has become hegemonic in the political as well as mass media discourse, at least since the mid-1990s.

Also, the dealignment process has resulted in weakened bonds and loyalties between the voters and the traditional, established parties: the number of 'floating voters' has increased and the electoral arena has become more volatile. Without this development, there would be fewer voters available for new parties to mobilise (as issue voters or as protest voters), and the likelihood for new parties to escape electoral marginalisation would be much slighter. In Denmark, the period of a more volatile electorate started – very dramatically – in 1973, when the newly founded Progress Party obtained 15.9 per cent of the votes in the legislative election. There are several possible answers to why this happened, of which I will discuss the two most important. First, referendums are exceptional events in the Danish political system, and may weaken the ties of identification between the voters and the parties by cutting through established party lines (see Goul Andersen and Bjørklund 1990; 2000: 198). The referendum over membership in the European Community (EC) – which created internal divisions within both the Social Democratic Party and the non-socialist parties – was held in 1972,

which may have facilitated the dealignment process leading to the emergence of the Progress Party. The referendum on membership in the EU in the 1990s may have had similar effects. Secondly, a non-socialist coalition was in power between 1968 and 1971, that is, during the most expansive period ever of the Danish welfare state. This government did little to present an alternative to the Social Democratic policy – the taxes actually increased more than ever before – which created frustration and discontent among bourgeois voters who had hoped for a change (Goul Andersen and Bjørklund 2000: 195). It also fed the feeling that there were no substantial differences between the established parties, and that a new, fresh alternative was needed. Although the Danish voters are the least politically discontented voters in Western Europe – in 1996, 84 per cent of the Danish voters were ‘very or fairly satisfied with the way democracy works’ (Holmberg 1997: 338) – and despite the fact that trust in politicians actually increased in Denmark between 1991 and 1998 (Nielsen 1999b: 239), it is plausible to assume that the Danish People’s Party, too, has benefited not only from the presence of ‘floating voters’ but also to some extent from protest votes. We know that the voters of the Danish People’s Party are characterised by relatively low trust in politicians (see Goul Andersen 2004).

POLITICISATION OF NEW ISSUES

Following Budge and Farlie (1983), we may assume that parties try to benefit from issue-voting not so much through opposing each other’s issue positions as through trying to shift public (and media) attention from one issue to another. Hence, agenda-setting, politicisation and framing play a crucial role for modern parties. As discussed above, issues belonging to the socio-economic dimension have lost salience in Danish politics, in particular since the mid-1990s. Part of the reason for this was the politicisation of the immigration issue. Although xenophobic attitudes were widespread in Denmark during the 1970s, immigration did not become a politicised, salient issue until the mid-1980s (Bjørklund and Goul Andersen 2002: 109), when these feelings were articulated by the Progress Party and related actors employing a partial interpretation of the new master frame adopted from the Front National. The anti-immigration rhetoric turned out to be highly resonant, because it coincided with a – from a Danish perspective – dramatic increase in the number of asylum-seekers (see Goul Andersen and Bjørklund 2000: 204), and with a change in the character of Danish immigration; from labour market immigration to (non-European) refugee immigration. Although Denmark was, and still is, among the EU countries that have the smallest immigration population – in the late 1980s less than four per cent and in 2001 about seven per cent were born abroad, half of them originating from non-

European countries (Goul Andersen 2003; Togeby 1998) – the number of asylum-seekers increased from 800 in 1983 to 4,300 in 1984 to 8,700 in 1985 (Goul Andersen 2004: 3). Hence, it was a good time to politicise the immigration issue. The Danish media picked up on the issue immediately, and content analysis shows that the press and state television framed immigration to Denmark mainly as a problem (see, e.g., Gaasholt and Togeby 1995; Hussain 2000). The ethno-nationalist/ethno-pluralist framing of the immigration issue also had great impact at the voter level: in 1985, 23 per cent of the voters agreed with the statement ‘immigration is a serious threat against our distinctive national character’, in 1987 the percentage had doubled to 47 per cent (Andersen 1999a: 203). Yet, it was not until the 1990s that the issue of immigration became the dominant topic in newspapers and, indeed, in political discourse and public debate generally. In this process, not only the Danish People’s Party but also the Danish Association played a key role. When celebrating its tenth anniversary in 1997, the chairman of the Danish Association concluded that the goal to bring the immigration issue ‘into the public and political debate as a crucial problem of Danish society’ had been attained (Karpantschhof 2002: 38). The way to achieve this had been to collect and present information for political actors, and by producing numerous letters to the editor and reports to the press. Søren Krarup, for instance, one of the founding fathers of the Danish Association and later on MP for the Danish People’s Party, has been interviewed frequently in the media, and has been the author of about 200 feature articles in the tabloid *Ekstrabladet*, which is one of Denmark’s most widely read newspapers (Karpantschhof 2002: 43). Also the Danish People’s Party was given a great deal of media coverage on immigration issues: many articles and items in television news programmes dealing with immigration include statements and comments from representatives of the Danish People’s Party. As a consequence, next to the minister responsible for immigration, the party leader Pia Kjærsgaard was the person most quoted on immigration matters during the second half of the election year of 2001 (Karpantschhof 2002: 29).

However, another reason why the immigration issue has come to dominate Danish political and mass media discourse since the mid-1990s is that some of the established parties have joined the discourse, which had the effect of revealing for the voters the indirect influence and power of the Danish People’s Party, as well as lending legitimacy to the previously marginalised party. The Liberal Party, for instance, campaigned against the immigration policy of the incumbent Social Democratic government in the period between 1997 and 2001. In 1998 it made prominent announcements on refugee policy in several major Danish newspapers. According to Bjørklund and Goul Andersen (2002: 129), these announcements ‘went unusually far for an established party; in fact, they resembled the claims of the [right-wing

populist] Norwegian Progress Party'. The Social Democratic Party, for its part, became increasingly divided over the issue of immigration during the 1990s. Originally a defender of refugee immigration and (some sort of) multiculturalism, the party drifted towards a more unsympathetic view of these matters as the Danish People's Party gained ground in the opinion polls – to a large extent at the expense of the Social Democrats – and as the party was attacked by not only the Danish People's Party but also the Liberal Party for being too generous on immigration. The Social Democratic government responded with 'both symbolic and real tightening of refugee and immigration policies' (Bjørklund and Goul Andersen 2002: 128). For instance, in 1997 the Social Democratic Minister of Interior Birte Weiss was replaced by Torkild Simonsen, who had gained a reputation of being hard on immigrants and a critic of the government's refugee policy (Andersen 1999b). The weakness of the Social Democratic Party, and how divided it was over the issue of immigration, became even more pronounced when the former MP and leader of the Social Democratic party group, Mogens Camre, in September 1998 stated in a TV show that:

many of the immigrant women are wrongly fed, because their men want to show their wealth and fortune by keeping their women big and fat. When I see immigrants driving around in big cars, it pops into my mind that they have not earned their money in a way I can accept. . . . They are highly criminal; they drive around in big cars; wear too expensive clothes, and their fat wives give birth to lots of kids. (quoted in Andersen 1999b: 5)

Although this event provoked a discussion on whether to expel Camre from the Social Democratic Party, that did not happen. The probable reason was, aside from opposition from several leading Social Democratic mayors to such a decision, the risk of losing voters that shared Camre's opinions on immigrants. However, when Camre left the Social Democrats for the Danish People's Party in 1999, the effect was increased legitimacy not only for the ideas he expressed but also for the Danish People's Party.¹⁰

As a result of the dominant position of the immigration issue in Danish political and mass media discourse, the salience of the issue for voters' decisions on how to vote has increased dramatically. In 2001, 20 per cent of the voters mentioned 'immigration' when asked which problems of the day they considered to be most important when deciding how to vote. In 1990, it was only four per cent, in 1994 it was eight per cent, and in 1998 it was 14 per cent (Goul Andersen 2004: 22). Furthermore, in 1987 only four per cent mentioned immigration when asked about the issue most affecting their decision how to vote. In 1994, it was eight per cent, and in 1998 it increased

dramatically to 25 per cent – which actually made it the single most important issue (Bjørklund and Goul Andersen 2002: 110).¹¹

At the same time, the proportion of voters sharing xenophobic and/or anti-immigration attitudes was still high. In 1998, 42 per cent of the voters agreed with the statement ‘immigration is a serious threat to our unique national character/national identity’. Similarly, 43 per cent agreed with the statement ‘in the longer run, the Muslim countries are a serious threat to Denmark’s security’, and 50 per cent agreed with the statement ‘refugees that have been given residence permits here in Denmark should be sent home as soon as possible’ (Andersen 1999b: 17).

As a result, there was a niche of voters susceptible to the xenophobic, ethno-nationalist message of the Danish People’s Party. As demonstrated above, the Danish People’s Party tried hard to exploit this niche by using frames and strategies adopted from the Front National (via the mediation of the Danish Association). It is no doubt that the Danish People’s Party had a sharp enough profile for taking advantage of the available niches: the party was given a score of –97 of the voters on an index ranging between –100 (most hostile to immigration) to +100 (most open to immigration) (Goul Andersen 1999b: 167). We also know that the voters of the Danish People’s Party are exceptionally hostile to immigration: in 1998, for instance, 75 per cent of them believed that immigrants are a serious threat to the unique Danish national identity (Andersen 2000: 7).

DEGREE OF CONVERGENCE BETWEEN PARTIES IN POLITICAL SPACE

Although this was an important factor for the emergence of the Progress Party in the early 1970s, as has been discussed above (see also Kitschelt 1995: 125–6), it played only an indirect role in the emergence of the Danish People’s Party in the 1990s. Although we may argue that there was a convergence – towards the middle – between some of the largest parties (i.e., the Social Democrats and the Liberal Party) in the economic dimension (see Goul Andersen 2003), this dimension was of a minor importance per se for the emergence of the Danish People’s Party. The indirect importance of this convergence, however, was that it contributed to the *depolitisation* of socio-economic politics. In line with the argument of Schattschneider (1975) referred to above, through the convergence between the main parties the socio-economic cleavage dimension lost its ‘capacity to excite the contestants’, and was seen as increasingly irrelevant. This process increased the salience of the socio-cultural cleavage dimension, thus benefiting the Danish People’s Party which ‘owned’ issues belonging to this dimension.

On the socio-cultural dimension, on the other hand, we have witnessed a polarisation, where the parties to the left of social democracy have moved towards the cultural liberal position (not the least on multiculturalism), whereas the other mainstream parties have moved in an authoritarian direction (in particular on the issues of immigration and law and order). Hence, the Danish People's Party has been able to benefit from niche issues on this dimension *despite* the competition from mainstream parties – whom they have succeeded in outbidding with a more radical politics, partly because of claiming that the Danish People's Party is the only party with 'clean hands', that is, the only party that had no part in previous (more or less generous) immigration and asylum policy. Moreover, the effect of legitimisation being the result of the mainstream parties' policy changes has arguably compensated the Danish People's Party for the lack of convergence in political space.

THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF ELITE ALLIES, INCREASED LEGITIMACY AND/OR INCREASED VISIBILITY

After the 2001 legislative election, the Danish People's Party was given a pivotal position, and received recognition as the support party for the Liberal–Conservative coalition government that was formed after the election. In fact, the party has functioned as the government's main coalition partner in day-to-day politics ever since. In return, the Danish People's Party was given five chairmanships and six vice-chairmanships of parliamentary committees, as well as great influence on reform packages radically tightening the immigration policy (Goul Andersen 2004: 1; Karpantschof 2002: 26). It should come as no surprise that the Liberal Party was prepared to make far-reaching deals with the Danish People's Party, as the party leader Anders Fogh Rasmussen had in 1999 published an article in the Danish People's Party's journal *Dansk Folkeblad*, indicating that co-operation with the party might be an option for obtaining the prioritised goal of 'system change' (Fogh Rasmussen 1999).¹² As the Danish People's Party gained this position without giving up its xenophobic, neo-racist rhetoric, the effect was increased legitimacy not only for the party per se, but also for this kind of political rhetoric.

Furthermore, as we have seen above, some of the mainstream parties have approached the position of the Danish People's Party on immigration matters – and sometimes even employed similar frames – since at least 1997. Even the unions have from time to time aligned with the party in order to avoid government regulations (Goul Andersen 2004), although this seems to have stopped lately. Finally, as was indicated above, some of the highest circulation newspapers and tabloids have expressed sympathy for the Danish

People's Party and/or published articles and records written by members of the party (see Karpantschov 2002). Hence, in terms of a *cordon sanitaire*, the political environment has put practically no constraints on the Danish People's Party, but rather legitimised it as being 'as normal as anyone else'.

The legitimisation process was probably facilitated by the fact that the Danish People's Party emerged from a populist movement and not from an openly right-wing extremist movement tradition, as for instance the Sweden Democrats or the Front National. Although these parties are highly similar today in terms of party programmes and master frames (in particular the two Scandinavian parties), they are perceived and received differently because of their different history (e.g., the term 'extremist' is never used in Danish mainstream discourse on the Danish People's Party, contrary to the Swedish discourse on the Sweden Democrats). Put differently, the Danish People's Party has always been less stigmatised, which has been a great asset for the party.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have used a model combining political opportunity structures and diffusion of new master frames to explain the emergence and electoral successes of the Danish People's Party since the mid-1990s. Because of dealignment and realignment processes, as well as politicisation of the immigration issue, niches were created on the electoral arena. By adopting the master frame combining ethno-nationalist xenophobia (based on the so-called ethno-pluralist doctrine) and anti-political establishment populism – originally employed by the French Front National – the Danish People's Party was able to exploit the niche issues available for electoral mobilisation. The adoption of the new master frame, as well as the successful use of the anti-establishment strategy, was facilitated by the fact that the party originated from a populist movement; and not from right-wing extremist groups. As a result, the stigma was never as severe as for parties such as the Front National and the Sweden Democrats. The stigma was further removed as several of the established parties legitimised the party by co-operating with it, and by adapting similar frames and policy positions.

The second purpose of this paper was to evaluate the explanatory model outlined above. Although it would take a comparative study to 'test' it, it seems reasonable to state that this study demonstrates its potential. Moreover, it points out some factors we should look at more closely when trying to explain the emergence of RRP parties elsewhere in Western Europe. First, the strength of the socio-economic cleavage dimension: to what extent do issues and frames connected to class politics still structure political discourse and electoral choices? The Danish case suggests that the willingness and ability

of the democratic left parties (the Social Democrats, in particular) to present alternative frames of how to understand social problems and ills are of great importance. Second, the level of *cordon sanitaire*: what, if anything, do other political actors (most important: mainstream parties and the media) do in order to keep (a still marginalised) RRP party at a distance? Or, do these actors rather legitimise the party by co-operating with it? At least in Denmark, the legitimisation effect being the result of the mainstream parties' accommodating behaviour outweighed the potential cost associated with shrinking niches. Moreover, the Danish case suggests that the history of RRP parties plays an important role: the initial stigma is less severe among RRP parties (such as the Danish People's Party) that have a populist history, than among those originating from right-wing extremist milieus. Finally, this study indicates – against Kitschelt (1995) – that convergence of mainstream parties in political space is of minor direct importance for explaining the emergence of RRP parties. The convergence of the major parties in the socio-economic cleavage was of great indirect importance since it contributed to a depoliticisation of socio-economic politics, and hence created expanded opportunities for electoral mobilisation on issues belonging to the socio-cultural cleavage dimension. Concerning the socio-cultural dimension, on the other hand, the Danish People's Party emerged in a situation of polarisation, and has been electorally successful despite the competition from mainstream parties trying to utilise available niches on the authoritarian side of the socio-cultural cleavage dimension.

NOTES

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1. For a more extensive discussion on definition, see Rydgren 2003b.
2. The metaphor of 'invasion' has been frequently used by the Front National (see e.g., Rydgren 2003b), and the obsession with declining birthrates has been a recurrent theme of right-wing extremism since the industrial revolution.
3. Although the Danish People's Party – contrary to the Front National (see Rydgren 2003c) – does not want to repatriate immigrants that have already obtained Danish citizenship, it proposes a policy that would minimise the arrival of new immigrants. Practically no refugees would be allowed – the party proposes a reinterpretation of the Geneva Convention – and, as is stated in the party programme, 'asylum seekers should not be turned into immigrants'. Refugees would be granted residence permits for only one year at a time, and would be sent home as soon as possible. Like the Front National, the Danish People's Party is against what it sees as a 'desacrilisation' of citizenship (see Brubaker 1992) and believes that it should be considered as something extraordinary to obtain Danish citizenship. Before citizenship would be granted a number of conditions should be fulfilled: the applicant should have had a residence permit for at least 10 years; the applicant must be without previous jail convictions; the applicant must have contributed to the Danish society in a positive way through his/her work; the applicant must have passed a written and oral test in the Danish language and a

- written test in general knowledge about Danish culture (including knowledge about Christianity), Danish society and Danish history; and the applicant must make a written vow that he/she will conform to Danish law.
4. This frame has proven itself highly resonant; which is not surprising given the fact that 31 per cent of voters (in the 1998 election) were left-wing on socio-economic politics and right-wing (i.e., authoritarian) on socio-cultural politics (Green-Pedersen and van Kersbergen 2002: 510).
 5. One thematic strategy that has been widely used by the Front National is to accuse all other parties of discriminating against the ethnic majority (the French) while presenting itself as the only anti-racist or anti-discriminatory party. In this way, frame transformations (Snow *et al.* 1986) of the concept of racism and/or discrimination are combined with an anti-political establishment strategy. As reported by Bjørklund and Goul Andersen (2002: 113), the Progress Party started to use this thematic strategy in 1985 – that is, shortly after the Front National had shown the new master frame to be successful in 1983–84 – and it is today used by the Danish People’s Party as well.
 6. However, as Karpantschhof (2002: 55) has argued, ‘it is obvious that the Danish People’s Party was well informed about and had in fact invited the activists from the Danish Forum’ in the first place. The Danish People’s Party has furthermore been cautious not to make their neo-racist anti-immigration rhetoric appear too extreme. Yet, on some occasions the party has crossed the line. In 1999, for instance, Pia Kjærsgaard suggested that the whole family should be repatriated if a young immigrant committed a serious criminal act. In 2003, Kjærsgaard has had a hard time explaining the party’s statement that international conventions should not be seen as an insurmountable obstacle to changing the immigration laws. At the same time, Kjærsgaard lost a case where she had sued a person who accused her of being a racist. According to the Supreme Court, the accusation was not entirely unjustified (Goul Andersen 2004).
 7. More generally, when studying the effect of diffusion processes on the emergence of RRP parties, it is not enough to look at the diffusion of ideas and practices per se (Rydgren forthcoming). Two additional aspects must be taken into account: (1) how adopters manage to modify and adapt diffused items in a way that make them appealing to voters within the specific political culture characterising *their* political system, and (2) how adopters manage to make diffused items in tune with their internal party or movement history, that is, how they make activists – already identifying with certain aspects of the party or movement – accept the diffused ideas and practices. Hence, it should be emphasised that diffused ideas and practices are always being actively modified or even ‘translated’ – to a greater or lesser extent – by adopters in order to fit the unique political and cultural context in which they themselves are embedded (cf. Czarniawska and Sevón 1996; Snow and Benford 1999). For Scandinavian RRP parties, the Danish People’s Party included, this means that they have to play down some of the reactionary authoritarian standpoints concerning, for instance, women’s rights within the family and abortion prohibition, that is, on issues where there is a broad popular consensus. This has not been any problem for the Danish People’s Party, as it originates from a populist movement, and not a right-wing extremist movement tradition. As a result, there was no need for the party to negotiate with members identifying with old right-wing frames when it was trying to adopt new ones.
 8. In line with this argument, the level of education was a very important factor for explaining the vote of the Danish People’s Party in 1998: only two per cent of voters with at least upper secondary school (that is, at least 12 years of education) voted for the party (Borre 1999: 101).
 9. Moreover, data from the 1998 election show that issues such as ‘immigration’ and ‘law and order’ are typical lost issues for the Social Democrats. Considerably fewer than those who actually voted for the party believed that the Social Democratic Party was the best party to handle these issues (Goul Andersen 1999a: 145).
 10. Finally, it should be noted that the 2001 election was held shortly after the 11 September attacks, which presented a further opening for the anti-Muslim rhetoric of the Danish People’s Party (see Goul Andersen 2003).

11. When asked to select from a list the issues that were of greatest importance for their choice of how to vote, as many as 60 per cent marked 'refugee and immigration policy' in 1998 – and 68 per cent marked 'law and order', another of the Danish People's Party's pet issues (Gaul Andersen 1999: 124).
12. Although Fogh Rasmussen acknowledged that the Liberal Party and the Danish People's Party disagree on some policy areas (such as the EU and Nato), refugee and immigration policy was not mentioned at all (Fogh Rasmussen 1999: 10–11).

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