

"Denmark and the World at the Dawn of 2008"



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Theme 1: Guilt, shame, impotence

Guilt, shame, impotence are feelings which crop up when thinking of Denmark and the world at the beginning of 2008. It is also hard to find an addresser and an addressee in the political enthusiasm that is demonstrated. Who are we and they, who do we and they represent? Are we just members of the white, affluent middle class or is it possible to identify with something more passionate? There is an abundance of feelings, desires for action, for giving support or backing out, but shortage of clear-cut causes, of unequivocal villains.

In the recent national election in Denmark the good powers lost, but this did not attract much attention. The only heroes are young immigrant women who dare stand up against the government, get politically involved and state in unambiguous Danish terms that both racism and the suppression of women in all cultures are unacceptable. The presidential election in USA is different. Here there is hope in the possibility of electing either a woman or a black person.

Hypothesis:

One source of the feelings of guilt and shame is a fear of those who look different, who think and act in ways that you yourself would never do. The well-to-do and educated 'ghetto' to the left of the political centre feel despondent and tend to withdraw in resignation as they do not know how to deal with such emotions, and xenophobic and aggressive feelings are projected onto another political ghetto: *The Danish Folk Party*. As a willing recipient it frees the rest of us from being in contact with these unpleasant feelings.

Hyphothesis:

Another source of the above mentioned feelings of guilt and shame is the economic progress that has taken place over the last many years and which – as one thing – has resulted in an accumulation of equity. This has made all the travelling and flying possible and directed energy towards ever more intricate gastronomic adventures. It seems as if it cannot go on like this. Some sort of retribution will occur. There are economists who have warned the world that an economic stagnation or degradation is close at hand, and some people hope this might make us get together again in loyal fellowships, whereas others look for the climate change to make people once more gather round something important.

Theme II: The search for grand narratives

A general religious mobilisation in the country has taken place. The number of candidates for confirmation has risen dramatically and young families also spend time in the church when it is not one of their own or their relatives' red letter days. It is as if the Islamic mobilisation encourages Christian mobilisation. The Christian mobilisation

can be seen as both a sign of an aggressive polarisation where the idea is that the more differences there are the better – and as a friendly identification: we just forgot about all that religious stuff, thank you because you reminded us.

Conveners: Åse Lading, Zanne Lorenzen and Steen Visholm