



Lower Benefits to the Refugees in Denmark: Missing Recognition?

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Abstract

This article is a study of the contrast between the Danish law concerning reduced economic benefits for newly arrived refugees and immigrants (known as Start Help or as introductory benefit) and the idea of recognition as the condition for individual self-realization and justice. Our assumption is that Start Help both implies economic discrimination against newly arrived persons in Denmark (especially refugees and their families under family reunification rules) and symbolizes a lack of recognition. We have chosen to adopt the theories of recognition (and redistribution) propounded by Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser to explore our queries about Start Help and the discriminatory impact on its recipients. Empirically the article is based on in-depth qualitative interviews with six refugees who all receive Start Help.

The article begins by providing an introduction to the debate about integration legislation in Denmark. Subsequently we present and discuss our main theoretical concepts, namely the theories of recognition and justice which function as clues for our empirical analysis. From this theoretical perspective we present finally an empirical analysis of Start Help recipients' experiences.

Danish social policy measures towards ethnic minorities

Traditionally Denmark has treated all people as equal citizens with the same civil, political and social rights. This tradition also involves respect and good opportunities for newcomers and minority groups. However in more recent years we have witnessed a change in the way Danish society describes and treats refugees and other immigrants. Furthermore, the legislation on immigration has changed, and today it is difficult to be granted asylum or family reunification in Denmark.

Until the mid-1960s the number of immigrants in Denmark was small. In 1956 Denmark received the first group of refugees from Hungary, followed by some refugees from Chile in 1973 and the 'Boat-refugees' from Vietnam in 1975. But from the beginning of the 1970s, the pattern of immigration changed as many low paid workers, known as 'guest workers', from the former Yugoslavia, from Turkey and Pakistan were invited to come to Denmark to help

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solve the country's labour shortage. It was assumed that these 'guest-workers' would leave Denmark again after a period and therefore no integration programmes were initiated for them. However, many families settled down, and they were joined by other family-members coming to Denmark.

From the 1970s and onwards unemployment grew in Denmark and people from ethnic minorities in particular lost their jobs. Many were marginalized in the labour market, in the housing market and in society generally and when in the 1980s Denmark received large numbers of refugees from Iran, Iraq and later from Bosnia, it became clear to the authorities that Denmark had to devise policies for the integration of ethnic minorities. Already in 1973, the Danish Parliament passed a bill for 'de facto' ending immigration to Denmark from countries other than the EU. Since then, the only possibility to get a residence permit for citizens outside the EU has been to arrive by means of family reunification or via asylum (Skytte 2008:11).

According to Danish Statistics, on 1st January 2008, Denmark had a population of just over five million (5,475,791), of these 114,581 persons were from other EU countries or the USA³ and 176,707 persons from countries other than the EU and the USA⁴ (Statistics Denmark, Population and election. Table KRBEF3). This means that the number of ethnic minority members is still relatively small. However, the presence of these people has caused great anxiety in the population and since the 1990s ethnic minorities and their access to Denmark have become hot political issues.

For that reason, immigration politics have been tightened. In the year 2000, the number of asylum applicants was 12,200 persons of which 4,443 were granted asylum (Statistical Overview 2006). In 2006, the number of applicants had fallen to 1,960 out of which only 1,095 received asylum⁵ and in 2007 the number of application was 1,872 of which only 970 were granted asylum⁶ (Tal og fakta på udlæningeområdet 2007: 37-39). The same tendency can be seen with regard to family reunification. In the year 2001, 15,370 foreigners applied and 10,950 were accepted. In the year 2006 the numbers of applicants were 5,533 and 3,582 accepted (Statistical Overview 2006: 25). In the year 2007, the numbers were 5,552 and 4,454 respectively (Tal og fakta på udlæningeområdet 2007: 30-32)

The Start Help law

The first Integration Law was passed in 1999 followed by the appointment of the first Minister of Integration in 2001. The new law gave social workers certain instruments to deal with newly arrived refugees such as how to establish introduction programmes, language education, courses and job training. Besides, a very low level of social benefits was introduced for the newly arrived refugees, so that their benefits were much lower than the benefits for Danish citizens. The official argument was that the level of benefits should function as a positive incentive to integrate refugees into the labour market (Frederiksen 2002).

³ Number of immigrants 107,036 and descendants 7,545.

⁴ Number of immigrants 146,843 and descendants 29,864.

⁵ It is worth not that Denmark, like other European countries, has committed itself through UNHCR to accept a quota of 500 persons.

⁶ The data does not include the Iraqi interpreters as asylum seekers.

Already in the first year of this legislation, the UNHCR told Denmark that this new treatment of refugees did not correspond to its obligations according to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Section 23 of the Convention says that *'the signing countries must give legal refugees living inside their territory the same treatment as their own citizens regarding social assistance'*. Therefore the lower benefit level for newly arrived refugees was abolished in January 2000 only 13 months after its introduction. The official argument was that it was not possible to demonstrate that the lower rates had given work to more refugees and that the rules might be contravening the 1951 refugee convention (Ejrnæs 2001, 2003).

In autumn 2001, the political scene in Denmark changed as the social democratic-social liberal government lost power and a liberal-conservative government took over. The discussion about the lower integration rate was taken up again not least as a result of intense debates in the media about refugee families receiving extremely high rates of social security benefits. In the summer of 2002, a lower benefit level for refugees was re-established based on the argument that this would motivate refugees to start a career. To avoid raising the question of ethnic discrimination, the new reduced rates were called Start Help⁷ and included all citizens who had lived abroad for more than one of the last eight years.

However, the aim of the law was to promote the labour market participation among ethnic minorities as these suffer from much higher unemployment rates than Danish citizens. The government's conviction was that the remedy for this was stronger incentives to work, as unemployment was seen as the result of the high level of social welfare in Denmark. This can be documented by a number of statements made by important members of the government during parliamentary debate on the law: *'The Danish level of social welfare is so high that people in other countries are given the impression that Denmark is a land of milk and honey, where you can pick up gold from the pavement if you care to bend down'*. (...) *'This proposal aims at adding incentives for work by making it less attractive to come to Denmark only to live on social welfare'* (Debate in the parliament 2001, www.ft.dk). The question is if the law concerning Start Help actually works as an incentive that promotes refugees' motivation to work. Has it a positive effect on the integration process as a whole? Or does it have the opposite effect to its declared intention and create disintegration and new poverty among ethnic minorities?

In April 2005, the first report on Start Help was published by the Ministry of Integration (Effekten af kommunernes integrationsindsats målt ved udlæniges selvforsørgelse 1.03.05). The conclusion was that Start Help had been successful and had helped many newly arrived refugees to get a job. This conclusion was based on the fact that after two years 36 percent of the Start Help recipients had left the social security system, which was about 10 percent more if compared with the figures for recipients of normal social benefits. What the report did not mention was that the rules concerning Start Help mean that if one partner in a marriage gets a job the other will often have to leave the Start Help-system too. Thus the official report does not say how many newly arrived refugees actually have gained employment.

⁷ Start Help' - the reduced benefit - has different levels that depend on the refugee's age and marital status, but it is 15 to 57 % less than the Danish social benefits for other citizens. 'Start Help' provides a monthly amount of 4,787 DKK per person for married couples who are over 25 years of age and 5,773 DKK for a single person over 25. For persons under 25 the benefits are 2,380 DKK for those who live with one or both parents and 4,787 for those who do not.

While the official governmental report concludes that Start Help works (Frederiksen 2002) critics have denied this and have described the law as a barrier to social integration of refugees that increases their poverty (Hansen and Hansen 2004). Other studies suggest that the consequences are not only material poverty but also immaterial feelings of humiliation or misrecognition (Ghosh 2005; Blauenfeld, Johansen and Hansen 2006). The assumption of this article is that Start Help creates an underprivileged group who are both denied an equal share of material goods and experience lack of recognition. The aim of the article is to confront this idea which is inspired by theories of recognition and redistribution with the moral experiences of Start Help recipients: How do the newly arrived refugees actually experience the lower level of benefits they are entitled to?

Honneth's theory of recognition

The idea of recognition goes back to the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel's work *The Phenomenology of Spirit* published in 1807. (Anderson 1995: xi). Hegel's idea is that an individual (a) can only get recognition from another person (b), if the person (a) recognises the other (b). Thus recognition develops in reciprocity. Mutual recognition is a prerequisite for human freedom and for the development of a positive self. This notion of recognition found in the works of the early Hegel is taken up by Honneth who interprets it with the help of George Herbert Mead's empirically founded social psychology.

Honneth takes from Hegel the idea that full human flourishing is dependent on relations of recognition within three analytically separated spheres: love, law and ethical life. The first form of recognition is a precondition for basic self-confidence which is founded on relations of love and care among children and their parents and on adult relationships of love and friendship (Honneth 1995: 107). This fundamental self-confidence is, according to Honneth, the structural basis for morality and makes the individual able to communicate and participate successfully in other social relations.

However, a well-functioning identity is dependent on other forms of recognition too, not least on legal recognition. This second form of recognition consists, according to Honneth, not only of respect for the individual as a member of an abstract and morally degenerated system of rights, but must be understood concretely as respect for the citizens' rights in practice. Self-respect can only be developed if the individual is recognised as an autonomous legal subject who is ascribed the same moral sanity as all others (Honneth 1995: 114). Thus legal recognition is about the universal and equal treatment of each and everybody. To be recognised as an equal member of the community of rights provides people with self-respect and makes it possible for them to make claims on equal terms with others⁸.

The third form of recognition, which is about social appreciation, is the prerequisite for self-esteem. This involves a sense of what it is that makes one special, unique, and (in Hegel's term) 'particular' (c.f. Anderson 1995: xvi). The strengthened pluralism and individualism of society has, according to Honneth, led to an increased need for the social appreciation of individually chosen lifestyles and ways of living. Unlike legal recognition, which is about equal recognition of each and everybody, we are here dealing with peoples' personal qualities and performances, which they do not share with others. Honneth also uses the term 'solidarity' to describe this form of recognition and claims that a good society is a society in

⁸ Thus Honneth assigns law a greater importance for the development of a positive identity than is usually the case. Legal recognition is not only seen as a protective shield, which makes individual self-realization possible but is given an independent meaning for the formation of identity.

which all individuals have a real opportunity to achieve recognition and hence possibilities for self-realization (Honneth 1995).

Honneth's (and Hegel's) three forms of recognition are consistent with three forms of disrespect, which threaten to destroy personal identity and thereby make it difficult for the individual to realize him- or herself. In this respect, Honneth talks about *bodily violation*, *violation of rights* and *violation of forms of life* (Honneth 1995: 131ff). As an example of the first type, he mentions physical molestations of people's bodily identity – the negative reflection of love. Such molestations could be violence or torture which cause damage to the individual's mental integrity and basic self-confidence. The other form of disrespect consists in the denial of rights often motivated by group membership (ethnicity, gender, social client etc.), which means that the citizen is not recognised as a legal person, that is as an equal member of the legal community. This loss, which may show itself as judicial discrimination, destroys the individual's self-respect. The last form of disrespect consists in debasement and the stigmatization of certain forms of life or perceptions of reality. Such violations destroy the individual's self-esteem and cause feelings of shame, indignation and anger. Often, of course, there is a connection between disrespect for the person as a bearer of rights and as a valuable ethical person and the denial of rights may be the result of degradation of certain life styles or forms of life (Honneth 1995: 134).

These reflections seem to be highly relevant for the topic of this article. From the idea of legal recognition we should suspect that Start Help recipients (that is ethnic refugees who do not have equal rights) would suffer from loss of self-respect. The question is can we expect these people to create a sense of belonging and a positive attitude to society if they are not recognized as equal legal persons? To the degree that the law on Start Help symbolizes missing recognition of ethnic forms of life we should also suspect recipients of these benefits to experience a loss of self-esteem. How should they feel appreciated for their personal performances and contributions to society at large if they are constantly met with suspicion and are disrespected as ethical persons, that is, as persons with a moral right to be seen and taken seriously? And if these assumptions are right, should we not then expect the law on Start Help to create disintegration and social exclusion?

According to Honneth's normative theory, recognition in the form of love, rights and social appreciation provides the basis for the good life. However, the theory does not specify what recognition actually is in concrete and historical situations. The theory is a formal one which enumerates the most common conditions for a successful life, but says nothing about how this life should be led. In that way, it *a priori* gives no priority to any particular form of life. A good society is a society that gives all human beings an opportunity to lead a good life.

The question is whether a theory of the good life is sufficient to formulate a critical normative theory. We understand Honneth's theory as an important correction to liberal theories of justice, which see justice as fairness but say nothing about the good life (Rawls 1971). Without a theory of the good life the idea of justice becomes empty and without reference to human beings' moral experiences. Nevertheless a normative social theory must also build on abstract (deontological) principles of justice. It must have something to say about how the good life for me can be coordinated with the good lives for others in a just way. This is exactly Nancy Fraser's criticism of Honneth. According to her, his theory of recognition as the general condition for self-realization leads to the conclusion that all demands for

recognition should be complied with (Fraser 2003: 28)⁹. Although this is hardly a correct description of Honneth's position (c.f. Honneth 2003: 121), it is true that he does not say much about how concrete demands for recognition should be judged. Here it is worth to consider Nancy Fraser's theory of redistributive justice and recognition.

Fraser's theory of recognition and redistribution

Fraser suggests that the concept of recognition be considered as an ingredient of a broader theory of justice (Fraser 2003: 28). Instead of saying that missing recognition harms the individual's opportunities to develop a well-functioning identity and hence the possibilities for self-realization one should, according to Fraser, say that misrecognition is unjust since it prevents 'parity of participation'. The normative core of her theory is this ideal which according to Fraser presupposes both redistribution and recognition. The task is to devise a two-dimensional conception of justice that can accommodate both claims for social equality and for the recognition of difference: *'Practically, the task is to devise a programmatic political orientation that can integrate the best of the politics of redistribution with the best of the politics of recognition.'* (Fraser 2003: 9).

Recognition is often seen as belonging to 'ethics' as opposed to 'morality,' that is, as promoting substantive ends of self-realisation and the good life, as opposed to the 'rightness' of procedural justice. (Fraser 2003: 10). Fraser however points out that redistribution and recognition have both a philosophical and a political reference and that two concepts can go together if they are considered in their political, rather than in their philosophical meaning (Fraser 2003: 11). As 'folk paradigms' they are usually associated with specific social movements: The politics of redistribution is equated with class politics, while the politics of recognition is associated with 'identity politics,' which in turn is equated with struggles over gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity and race (Fraser 2003: 11).

Thus the two 'paradigms' operate with different conceptions of injustice. The redistribution paradigm focuses on socio-economic injustices rooted in the economic structure of society, for instance when people are denied an adequate material standard of living. The recognition paradigm associates injustice with cultural patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication for instance cultural domination, non-recognition or disrespect (Fraser 2003: 12f). In the redistribution paradigm, the remedy for injustices is an economic restructuring of some sort. In the recognition paradigm, the remedy is cultural or symbolic change. This might involve upwardly revaluing disrespected identities or transforming societal patterns of representation in ways that would change patterns of social esteem (Fraser 2003: 13).

Honneth has a critical attitude to Fraser's distinction between redistribution and recognition (Honneth 2003). According to him, struggles for material redistribution have the same logic as other social struggles and distributional injustices must be understood as expressions of institutionalized patterns of recognition which value certain performances more than others. According to Honneth, struggles for recognition arise when particular groups struggle for social rights and social esteem as a response to experiences of disrespect - whether it takes the form of material or cultural injustice.

⁹ Rainar Forst, who has developed a theory of different contexts of justice on the basis of a thorough analysis of liberal and communitarian principles of justice and thus tries to bridge the gap between the two traditions, raises a similar critique (Forst 2002).

Although Honneth may be right, we still find Fraser's distinction between the politics of material redistribution and the politics of cultural recognition fruitful when we deal with the consequences of Start Help. Our assumption is that the recipients both face distributive injustices and cultural disrespect. Start Help labels these people as a group unworthy of receiving the same level of benefits as the majority. In this respect there is a need for both a politics of redistribution and a politics of recognition.

If we follow Fraser, the recipients of Start Help must be regarded as two-dimensionally subordinated people who suffer both maldistribution and misrecognition where neither of these injustices is an effect of the other. In their case, neither a politics of redistribution alone nor a politics of recognition alone will suffice. Two-dimensionally subordinated groups need both (Fraser 2003: 19). Ethnic minorities suffer disproportionately high rates of unemployment and poverty and these problems can only be remedied by a politics of redistribution. But as Fraser shows (with examples from the US), Eurocentric patterns of cultural value privileges associated with 'whiteness' tend to stigmatize everything coded as 'black,' 'brown,' or 'yellow'. As a result, ethnic minorities are constructed as deficient and inferior others who cannot be full members of society. The remedy for this is a politics of recognition.

The core of Fraser's normative theory is, as mentioned, the ideal of 'parity of participation'. The realization of the ideal depends of the satisfaction of at least two conditions. First, the distribution of material resources must be so that it precludes forms of economic dependence and inequality that impede parity of participation (Fraser 2003:36). Second, the cultural patterns of recognition must express equal respect for all participants and ensure each and every one has the same opportunity to achieve social esteem: *'Precluded therefore, are institutionalized value patterns that deny some people the status of full partners in interaction- whether by burdening them with excessive ascribed 'differences' or by failing to acknowledge their distinctiveness'* (Fraser 2003: 36).

Both these conditions seem to be threatened by the Start Help Act. This lower benefit is introduced as an economic incentive aiming to promote refugees' willingness to work. But as the law fundamentally is based on the mistrust of ethnic minorities' moral character, there is reason to believe that it also strengthens unjust patterns of recognition and subjectively is conceived as lack of recognition. Therefore, we assume that the law effectively works as an obstacle to the newly arrived refugees' possibilities to create a sense of belonging as fully included members of society.

Combining Honneth and Fraser

According to Honneth, the individual's moral experience of recognition is a prerequisite for a successful development of identity. This we consider to be of vital importance for the fulfilment of Fraser's ideal of 'parity of participation'. Therefore this noble ideal cannot be rooted in abstract principles of justice as Fraser suggests when she claims that recognition is better viewed as a matter of justice than as a matter of self-realization (Fraser 2003: 33). We fundamentally agree with Honneth that the normative ideal must be based on a formal perception of the conditions for the good life and we consider it to be a theoretical problem for Fraser's that she is silent about this.

But although Honneth and Fraser in their joint book argue strongly against each other, it is our view that when it comes to the political consequences of their theories, they are more in agreement than disagreement. It would be totally misleading to interpret Honneth as

uninterested in the distribution of material goods as it would be wrong to claim that Fraser gives greater priority to the redistribution of material goods than to recognition. What separates them and places them within the frameworks of two moral philosophical traditions is that Honneth is primarily interested in the conditions for the good life, while Fraser primarily focuses on social justice. Both are in our opinion important elements of a critical, normative social theory.

Although we basically agree with Honneth's critical objections against Fraser, we still find Fraser's two-dimensional theory relevant, as it offers a double perspective, which we consider of relevance for an analysis of the subjective consequences of Start Help. Thus her ideal of 'parity of participation' which requires both redistribution and recognition functions as an important guideline for the following empirical analysis.

The analysis will be based on six in-depth qualitative interviews in which Start Help recipients express how they experience the reduced benefit. This obviously does not provide the basis for statistical generalisations but our conviction is that the narratives of the Start Help recipients represent a voice, which is important and often neglected in studies and debates on the integration of ethnic minorities in Denmark. Our idea is that these studies and debates focus too narrowly on the distribution of material goods but fail to see the importance of the distribution of opportunities for moral recognition - and hence for self-realization and participation. The following analysis focuses on both and considers Start Help to be a material problem as well as a problem of psychological harm and sufferings.

Brief presentation of the interviewees

Before embarking on the analysis, we shall briefly introduce the interviewees: three women and three men who are hardly representative of all refugees in Denmark but probably represent experiences which are widespread. The contacts to the interviewees were achieved through one author's (F.G.) work as a student in sociology and as social worker. She also carried out the interviews in spring 2005. All of the interviewees received Start Help or are affected by Start Help through their partners. The selection of the interviewees mirrors an effort to contact a relatively broad and differentiated group, but of course it was necessary to take their language skills and motivation to participate into account. We have here given the persons fictive names to hide their real identities.

Ahmed is a 45 year old refugee from South Asia. He came to Denmark and applied for asylum in 2002 and got it in 2004. Before he was a government employee in his country of origin, but when the fundamentalists came to power, he was imprisoned because of political activities. He escaped and fled from his country. He attends a Danish language course and participates in an activity programme in a factory where he packs products.

Amina is 40 years old (married to Ahmed). She and their four children came to Denmark as a family which was reunified in 2004. She had to leave their 17 years old daughter in their home country as she had disappeared during the war. Before she came to Denmark, Amina was a housewife. Today she attends a language course and participates in the same activity programme as her husband.

Hassan is a 45 years old refugee from East Asia. He came to Denmark in 1998 and got asylum in 1999. He has a bachelor's degree from his home country but used to work as a cleaner in Denmark. He suffers from a chronic disease.

Shabana is 30 years old. She came as a member of a family which was reunified in 2004 (married to Hassan) with their two daughters. She also has a bachelor's degree (in social science), but she has never had a paid job. She was hospitalised in winter 2005 because of mental problems.

Mustafa is a single man in his mid-thirties from East Asia. He came in 2000 and got asylum in 2003. At the time of the interview he had two jobs to earn some extra money, a part time cleaning job and one in a Pakistani kiosk. Earlier he received Start Help for more than a year.

Meera came to Denmark as an unaccompanied minor asylum seeker in 2003 from Africa. She was given asylum after six months at the age of 17 and half. She has lived on her own since then and is very good at Danish. After her arrival she went to a folk high school where she met many young people of her own age. Could not read or write before she came to Denmark.

All of the interviewees have a small or almost no network. Except Meera nobody has Danish friends.

Start Help experienced by the recipients

As mentioned one of the official arguments for Start Help is that the lower benefit is an incentive to integrate refugees into the labour market (Frederiksen 2002). However, critics have argued that Start Help is an obstacle to social integration¹⁰, which increases refugees' poverty (Hansen & Hansen 2004). From our theoretical perspective, the assumption is that when the newly arrived refugees understand that they receive less money than others as they are suspected as being lazy people who intend to misuse the social benefit system, they may become sad, angry and feel inferior to others - and hence find it difficult to develop a sense of belonging and participate on equal terms with others. Honneth describes the feelings associated with experiences of disrespect by the term 'consciousness of injustice'. This conception is intended to bring out the idea '*that the social ethic of the suppressed masses contains no ideas of the total moral order or projections of a just society abstracted from particular situations, but is instead a highly sensitive sensorium for injuries to what these masses take to be their justified moral claims*' (Honneth 2007: 84).

This seems to be an exact description of how some of the interviewees experience the lower benefits. Although some have had the reasons explained, it may still be difficult to understand and accept. As Ahmed says:

'We get lower benefits than the Danes because the government want us to get a job as soon as possible. The government knows that this benefit is not enough to have food on the table for our five children. So you have to ask the government why we are not allowed to maintain a normal standard of living. This benefit is introduced to limit the number of refugees in this country. It may be the case that the Danish social welfare system has attracted some who do not suffer a lot. I don't know. But I am a political refugee. I am here to survive in a safe and secure country. I do not wish to misuse the Danish welfare system but to be secure'.

¹⁰ In contrast to system integration which is about the functional coherence of different institutions or subsystems in society and in contrast to labour market integration which identifies integration with labour market participation the term social integration refers here to the extent to which an individual experiences a sense of belonging to a social group or a society by virtue of sharing its norms, values, beliefs, etc..

It is obvious from the quotation that Ahmed has a need to legitimize his presence in Denmark as a result of the general mistrust about the motives of ethnic minorities: He is 'a real refugee' who is not here for the money. For this reason he expresses anger and harm over the fact that the government does not allow him a decent standard of living. We read Ahmed's comment as an expression of a spontaneous frustration or feeling of injustice which is caused by a discriminatory legislation which in practice does not recognise ethnic minorities as equal legal persons. In that sense, his statement may be interpreted as a result of misrecognition or disrespect, though it in the first takes the form of scepticism towards other ethnic minorities whose motives may be less noble than his own.

Our other interviewees are more capable than Ahmed at addressing their resistance to 'the right place.' Meera expresses her anger and sadness as follows:

'My opinion is that Start Help is introduced to show that we are not like the Danes. So that people can see the difference between the refugees and the Danes. I get lower benefits so that people can see that I am just a refugee.'

Such feelings (whether or not they reflect the actual state of affairs) are obviously contradictory to social integration and we see here a much more direct protest against the discrimination caused by the Start Help act. We consider Meera to be the most integrated of our interviewees. She speaks Danish fluently, is the only interviewee who has Danish friends and soon she will start an education and a job. For these reasons we may call her less excluded than the others. Still it is she who expresses the strongest bitterness against a law which splits people up into different categories.

Other studies concerning experiences of discrimination support this interpretation. Thus *Experienced Discrimination* (Møller and Tøgeby: 99: 109) also shows that the most resourceful and linguistically integrated persons report the most discrimination. According to the authors, people who are well educated, fluent in the Danish language and well integrated experience and notice more discrimination, because they feel that they deserve to be treated in the same way as the Danes. In other words the 'consciousness of injustice' seems to be strongest when an anticipation of a recognition, which is considered deserved, actually is denied.

Thus one can hardly consider Meera to be an exception and the subjective reactions to unequal treatment generally seem to be stronger the more conscious the person in question is about her status as a person. Meera experiences Start Help as a benefit which excludes her, which freezes and labels her as a refugee. Thus her example supports Fraser's idea that as a result of Euro centric patterns of privilege, ethnic minorities are constructed as deficient and inferior to others who cannot be full members of society (Fraser 2003: 35). If we follow Honneth, the consequences of disrespect for persons as legal persons may be weakened self-respect. From the quotation above it is clear that legal discrimination may provoke anger and indignation and a sense of not belonging which works against social integration.

All our interviewees state that Start Help is an instrument used to prevent immigration into Denmark and that it makes a difference between the majority and the minority, between insiders and outsiders. Besides this, Shabana experiences that the lower benefits deepen the difference between men and women. As a family reunified without any benefits, it is hard for her to feel recognized as equal to her husband:

'I did not know the reason behind the lower benefits, which is actually zero in my case. My husband now receives unemployment benefits but I do not. Our social worker told me that I would have got social benefits if I had arrived in this country before July 2002, but now I have to depend on my husband. I am very surprised as I had the idea that in Denmark there is no discrimination between male and female or between the majority and the minority.'

From Shabana's statement it is clear that the denial of a material right is not only a material problem. It is also a symbolic problem which generates the feeling of not enjoying the status of a full-fledged partner to interaction, equally endowed with moral rights (Honneth 1995: 133). Her statement also illustrates that Start Help is not a neutral means which affects family members in the same way. In her case, it creates gender-specific forms of status subordination and Shabana is both suffering as a woman and as a member of an ethnic minority who does not have any money and is not valued by the society in which she resides. Generally her statement shows that legal recognition and social appreciation may be closely connected and that the denial of rights may also be experienced as a symbol of missing appreciation.

Shabana's experience of gender- and ethnic discrimination questions the general political rhetoric about integration. The Danish Minister of Integration often talks about teaching the immigrants and refugees about equality between men and women, but her government as well as the biggest opposition party, the Social Democrats, do not mention how some women may become victims of gender discrimination as a result of Start Help (c.f. Bred aftale om integration, 17.06.05/ Broad Agreement on Integration). This may not be surprising. According to the British/Indian researcher Avtar Brah, it is a general western tendency that processes of racialisation of gender, class and sexuality are often overlooked both in political and academic debates on discrimination (Brah 2003: 88).

Experiences of Start Help from the material point of view

All our interviewees told us that they suffer material sacrifices. They have not enough money to buy day to day goods and often have to go to more than one discount market to find the cheapest products. They cannot afford to visit or invite friends and their children may not go to birthday parties like other children, as they cannot afford to buy gifts¹¹. Let us first listen to Hassan:

'We receive only one benefit and we are two adults and two kids. If we were be able to have proper food every day then we would have to have at least 2,000 crowns extra every month. I get 9,000 Danish crowns a month after taxes. After paying the bills and house rent we have only 1,500 crowns left to manage all other expenses. We read all the sales announcements and we only buy things from the various discount supermarkets. Our food is very monotonous. I am suffering from a chronic disease and my wife is under treatment for a mental disorder. The doctor has advised us to eat fruits and vegetables, but we cannot afford those things. We are not able to buy things from an ordinary supermarket or from special shops. We don't take our kids to the shopping centres as we cannot give them toys or new clothes. It is hard to manage with this small amount of money. And it is not fair towards us: As if we are getting a job by starving.'

There can be no doubt that Start Help has contributed to the creation of a new material poverty in Denmark, which causes feelings of injustice in the recipients' minds. It does not

¹¹ These findings support the results from another study of the economic consequences for refugees who live on Start Help, based of 27 qualitative interviews (Starthjælpsnetværket 2003 /Network of Start Help).

give them many choices and according to The Counsel of Socially Disadvantaged (Rådet for Socialt Udsatte 2003) refugees who receive Start Help are generally unable to have nutritious food as they do not have enough money. Thus Hassan's comments are hardly an exception but rather the rule for families who have to live on Start Help. The last sentence of the quotation clearly signals the frustration and anger which this causes. But it also reveals that the problem is not alone the low amount of money but also the mistrust, misrecognition and disrespect this mirrors. In this respect Hassan's statement shows that he and his family do not feel recognised as equals when it is a matter of rights to basic material needs.

Start Help in reality makes the recipients invisible. It is not concerned about their special problems and needs as newcomers in a foreign country. It does not take into consideration that the people we are dealing with here are often ill and harmed by experiences of violence and torture. They are expected to manage with a lower benefit than Danes, sometimes the argument is used that they have never been used to the Danish standard of living. Thus one tends to overlook the psychological problems connected with relative poverty.

Ahmed and Amina tell almost the same story as Hassan, but add an important aspect as they strongly underline the consequences for their children:

'We are very economical and we only buy the most important things from the discount markets. Last year our children wanted to visit Tivoli. But we could not take them there. We worked out that it would cost us 1,600 crowns for the whole family in transport, entrance and for rides excluding food and drinks. Nor do we send our kids to their school friends' birthday parties, because we don't have money to buy presents. Our kids don't use good quality shoes, as these are too expensive for us. Nearly all our money is spent on food and housing.'

It appears from this quotation that Start Help, which has been introduced as an economic incentive to labour market integration, may have a negative impact on the families and their children (Hansen and Hansen 2004: 7ff). While it has been difficult to prove that the lower benefit has the intended effect, there are reasons to believe that it constitutes a serious impediment to social integration. Moreover, the recipients' children seem to be affected negatively. Thus Start Help may cause the exclusion of children in a society which is normally known for being child friendly and where the relative poverty rate among children is very low (2.4%) (UNICEF 2005: 4). Our assumption is that it means a lot to a child to take part in friends' birthday parties and the like. It helps the child to express and achieve recognition as a good friend, and this is of great importance for successful inclusion. According to Honneth social appreciation is a prerequisite for the developing self-esteem. This appreciation may be hindered by Start Help which makes it difficult for many refugee families to participate in normal social activities. For the children it may be difficult to show the gestures of friendship to their friends because of material scarcity. In this way, the lower benefit stigmatises not only the adults but also their children as second grade citizens not dignified or recognised as equal human beings (c.f. also Socialpolitisk forening and Casa 2004:98).

Newly arrived refugees need income, jobs, networks, education and finance as means to establish themselves in their new land. The lower benefit does not give these families an easier start. Both existing research and interviews presented in this article show that the newly arrived refugees often lack the economic capabilities to participate as peers in social life. This makes the integration process difficult. If particular people are excluded from taking part in

society on equal terms with others, the result may be a weakened identity and growing suspicions and disrespect towards these people (Honneth 1995: 134).

It has been documented that today, ethnic minorities in Denmark constitute a generally poor and unprivileged group both when it is a matter of material wealth and social networks (SFI 2005). Our assumption is that the Danish government as well as the leading opposition parties do not understand the importance of this. They consider Start Help to be an incentive to labour market integration and take this automatically to lead to social integration. However it has been documented that the Danish labour market is highly segregated and that many ethnic minorities undertake jobs which the Danes do not want. For that reason many have only limited contact with ethnic Danes at their work place and it is far from certain that labour market participation is a means to social integration (Ejrnæs 2006).

The hegemonic political discourse seems to deny that economic incentives in some cases are not enough and that many newly arrived refugees need to be integrated in other arenas of life too. Our interviewees demonstrate how difficult it is for many to meet and have Danish friends and to participate in social life. Sometimes such problems seem to be prior to labour market problems and missing self-provision.

The lower benefit to newly arrived refugees not only creates distinctions between the Danes and the ethnic minorities, it also creates distinctions within the minority group between those who have arrived to Denmark before and after the implementation of the Start Help act. Thus it appears from the interviews in our study that recipients of Start Help find it difficult to understand why they suffer from the lower benefit while people who have got asylum before July 2002 do not. This may cause the feeling of being treated unjustly or being misrecognized. Ahmed expresses it as follows:

'I experience the material sacrifices created by Start Help as unjust. The backdrop of this reduced benefit is not only that it creates financial problems, but also that it creates different classes of people. Thus it has created an A and a B team among the refugees. Refugees who have come here before us get more money than we do. We know that it is the law which creates differences, but it is almost inevitable to compare ourselves with the other refugees who are not under the new law. And it is not easy to accept that we are treated differently.'

Feelings of injustice do not promote a good and coherent society. According to Honneth, a good society is a society which gives all its members the same opportunities to achieve recognition and lead a good life. According to Fraser it is a question of possibilities for everybody to participate as peers in social life. Start Help obviously is contradictory to those ideals.

The material needs in the recipients' life might undoubtedly be solved by a more equal distribution of material goods. But justice also requires rights and moral recognition which according to Honneth are the preconditions for feelings of self-respect and self-esteem. In this respect we find it questionable that Fraser makes a clear-cut distinction between material sufferings and needs for recognition. Our interviews strongly support Honneth's idea that material sufferings not only cause material poverty but also harm people's identity and create feelings of inferiority, frustration, anger and shame. This may in effect impede their chances for participation and therefore we need both a politics of material redistribution and a politics of recognition. Of course Fraser would agree on this.

We do not believe that misrecognition would vanish if the law on Start Help was changed or abolished. This might solve the momentary financial problems for many refugees and relieve the feelings of disrespect connected with this, but it would not change the social structure of recognition fundamentally, which in our view is the basis for the discriminatory legislation. Start Help must be seen as a moral and structural problem and not only as a question of material redistribution. This statement is supported by the experiences of Start Help recipients who above all seem to experience the law as a symbol of moral disrespect.

Experiences of Start Help as stigma and moral disrespect

Experiences of disrespect can be heard in all our interviews. This is how Mustafa, a graduate from a far eastern country, formulates it:

'The problem with Start Help is not only the question of survival. I like to survive with respect and dignity. It is hard to survive with this benefit and it does not give you the possibility to have a decent life with good food and some reasonable furniture. But when I came to know that newly arrived persons like me are entitled to lower benefits than others I became very angry and sad. I felt that I was not trusted, as if they believed that I would not look for job if I got the same amount of money as the Danes. Instead of being grateful for having asylum in Denmark, I feel offended of not being appreciated as others.'

Shabana utters almost the same:

'Lack of money is a big problem for us. But it also symbolises disrespect, which makes my husband and me unhappy. The economic pressure creates a mental pressure. You need money for everything in Denmark. But Start Help is not only a financial punishment but also shows that I am not as valuable as others and therefore not entitled to the same benefits. To live in a society without money and respect is very hard. It makes me very little.'

The quotations illustrate that although Start Help only provides a minimal existence, it may be the consequent feeling of inferiority in the recipients' mind which subjectively affects them most. According to Honneth, self-respect and self-esteem can only be developed if the individual is recognised as an autonomous legal subject and as a valuable ethical person. (Honneth 1995: 114f). It is obvious from Mustafa's and Shabana's narratives that the denial of equal rights raises the feeling of not enjoying the same status as a full-fledged member of society. This means loss of self-respect and gives birth to feelings of anger and shame.

The quotations also suggest how Start Help recipients may take the government's etiquettes or stigma of ethnic minorities as inferior persons upon themselves. According to Ervin Goffman, being stigmatised means precisely that people are not shown the respect they deserve and are not acknowledged for the identity they ascribe to themselves. The stigmatised self develops as a reaction or an echo of the surroundings ways to describe or define the person in question (Goffman 1963: 19). Thus Goffman's theory of stigma strongly supports Honneth's idea of recognition: When an expectation of recognition which is considered to be fair and deserved is disappointed, the consequence may be a weakened self that is feelings of being invisible and not ascribed the same moral authority as everybody else.

The issue of stigma and labelling also arises in our interview with Meera who as already mentioned considers Start Help to be invented *'as a means for the government to show the difference between 'us and them'. So that people can always recognise 'us' as refugees and classify us as lazy people who don't want to work.'* This stigmatisation and differentiation,

which Meera clearly experiences as an injustice, is common in Danish integration policy and the lower benefit to newly arrived refugees is just an element in a broader differentiation process between Danish citizens on the one hand and ethnic minorities on the other. According to Charlotte Hamburger (Hamburger: 97:143) most ethnic minorities in Denmark do not have Danish citizenship and this classifies them as 'outsiders' and as persons who do not have the same rights as the Danes. The distinctions between Danish citizens and non-citizen constitute not only a ground for legitimising that there are formal inequalities. It also contributes to the '*us and them*' optic which may legitimise discrimination in everyday life.

From the perspective of recognition theory, one must doubt that discrimination is in accordance with politically declared objectives of integration. Rather it constitutes a barrier to integration and an impulse to rebellion. Thus Honneth strongly emphasizes that disrespect or lack of recognition may be the impetus for struggles for change:

'The experiences of being disrespected can become the motivational impetus for a struggle for recognition. For each of the negative emotional reactions that accompany the experience of having one's claim to recognition disregarded holds out the possibility that the injustice done to one will cognitively disclose itself and become a motive for political resistance' (Honneth 1995: 138).

However there are many impediments to political resistance, when we speak of Start Help recipients who may only have one thing in common, namely that they receive a lower benefit than others. This makes it hard for them to organise political resistance against the law. Rather they will withdraw themselves from society and develop a sense of not belonging. Individually the result may be social and psychological problems.

Although it is difficult to start a rebellion as a newcomer in a foreign country some of our interviewees have not totally given up but they underline that the struggle against a law and a system, which is considered as unjust and discriminatory, must wait till the day when they are better prepared. According to Ahmed:

'I must one day shout against this law. Now I don't know the language and I don't have any status in society. My arms are not long enough and my voice is not loud enough. I'll shout against this law when I'll learn to express myself in Danish and when one day, I have a job.'

Meera expresses almost the same feeling:

'I have no choice. I have to cope and wait for a better day. I am here without my family. I am here because I did not want to lose my life or get raped by the other clans in my country. I cope with the disrespect by dreaming for a better day with an education and a job, and of course with a permanent permit to stay. I'll try hard to get an education so that I someday can protest and show the Danish government that I am not here to get their benefits but to have an equal status with others.'

The feeling of powerlessness is expressed in both quotations and of course it is not easy to cope with disrespect when one does not have the voice and language to speak against it. It may be that the two interviewees have sufficient personal resources to manage in spite of bad odds but it would be hard to argue that the Start Help works as a positive incentive. What the quotations really show is how discriminatory legislation affects people's self-respect negatively, and hence their opportunities for participation.

Zygmunt Bauman in *'Wasted Lives. Modernity and its Outcasts'* (Bauman 2004: 34), has shown how marginalized people in the present global era of modernity are - in spite of beautiful ideas of mutual recognition and global integration - treated as declassed individuals who are inferior to others. The newly arrived refugees in Denmark may be seen as an outstanding example of Bauman's typology. In the media and in political debates they are generally described as problems and there is an even stronger tendency among the population to support assimilation strategies and political parties, which advocate them. At the same time the newly arrived refugees are victims of discrimination and patterns of stigmatization as the present article documents. Both assimilation and discrimination contrast with a politics of recognition, which in our view is a prerequisite for integration.

To create differences between different groups of people is neither a new nor a particularly Danish phenomenon. Among many established nations it is common to consider refugees from other cultures with fear, hatred or contempt. It may take generations for the newcomers to be accepted as equal members of their new country (Gaasholt and Togeby 1998: 13). The question is whether we can maintain the idea of Denmark as a just welfare society which gives equal opportunities to all while at the same time tolerate governmental discrimination towards people who for obvious reasons have not stayed in Denmark for seven out of the last eight years.

Conclusion

In every interview we have found words like sad, frustrated and unhappy. The article shows that the newly arrived refugees in Denmark experience misrecognition, inequality and poverty and that Start Help constitutes an obstacle to social integration. With the aid of theoretical concepts borrowed from Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser we have analysed the experiences of the Start Help recipients. We have shown that they experience material sufferings as well as lack of moral recognition and that there is a need of both a politics on redistribution and a politics on recognition.

Based on the narratives of our interviewees, it is however difficult to draw a clear line between material problems and missing moral recognition as Fraser tries to do. In itself, Start Help is of course an especially low material benefit for a section of the residents in Denmark but as has been shown this is subjectively taken to be a symbol of moral disrespect. Though the direct consequence of Start Help is a new material poverty for ethnic minorities who in spite of the economic incentives are not getting jobs, the consequences are much broader than that. The experienced disrespect for the person as a bearer of equal rights and the missing social appreciation associated with this, lead to a weakened identity, and hence to problems of participation. This we take to be a serious impediment to social integration and social cohesion.

This may explain that the Start Help law has not been efficient as a means to promote labour market integration. Although there may be a positive relation between labour market integration and social integration it is questionable which way round this relationship goes. We have argued that refugees' participation in the labour market is sometimes hindered by lack of social integration. From this it follows that the government and other politicians must avoid the idea that getting a job is the only way to social integration. Integration and social cohesion is about much more than that, not least about recognition and equal citizen rights for all residents in Denmark.

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