

Abstract

The *parallel society* in Danish discourse is a concept often taken for granted without further scrutiny. The dominant discourse often portrays the parallel society as a result of ethnic minority segregation, especially Muslim, and thus, as both a hindrance to integration and as a threat to the social cohesion of the classic nation state. This discourse, however, is relatively new; in fact, it only entered Danish debate in the late 1990s. But what is the concept of parallel societies? How is the concept constructed in current Danish discourse? And what is the discursive connection between parallel societies, ethnic minority segregation, ghettoisation and social cohesion? These are some of the questions this dissertation set out to answer. By combining conceptual history and discourse analysis, the dissertation analyses the concept of the parallel society in Danish discourse in the period from 1968-2013. The analysis reveals that the concept in a Danish context was most likely introduced in 1968 as a political strategy, and offered as another term for the left wing ideals of 'alternative societies'. Yet, the concept was not very prevalent in Danish discourse until 1998 when it was re-introduced into Danish discourse by member of the European Parliament, Mogens Camre. This time, however, the term was used to characterize segregated Muslim communities, which Camre perceived as a threat to the social cohesion of the Danish nation state. In the period since the late 1960s, I have identified three main discourses within a Danish usage of the term which I label: *the Utopian Discourse*, *the Descriptive Discourse*, and *the Dystopian Discourse*. I proceed to name the Dystopian Discourse the dominant discourse in Denmark today and analyse it further based on three contemporary case studies.