

The issue network as a site of politics:

Deliberating the Danish Asylum Issue on the Internet

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Abstract

Through an analysis of the Danish asylum issue on the Internet this dissertation seeks to test how issue network analysis can be applied to studies of political deliberation online. The analysis is conducted firstly, through a network analysis of the actors deliberating the issue online and secondly, in a deeper assessment of the various claims and framing processes that the actors present in the network. The network analysis finds evidence that the interlinking between the various types of actors create a deliberative space online around the asylum issue, but that the interaction largely takes the form of coalition or policy network. In the analysis of the claims-making and issue framing this evidence is supported by findings that the antagonistic actors present contentious and adversary statements within the same sub-issues. In that sense the issue network proves to be a site of political deliberation. The subsequent discussion of the results shows that there are some major shortcomings in applying multi-website approaches, like issue network analysis, to the study of political deliberation on the Internet and that further research is needed to establish how the Internet can function as a site of politics.

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Introduction

On the night of the 13th of August, 2009, a group of police officers forced their way into a church in the center of Copenhagen. The police apprehended the 19 rejected Iraqi asylum seekers that had sought refuge in the church some months prior out of fear of being sent back to Iraq. After a few minutes, all of the asylum seekers were escorted out of the church and onto a bus toward an asylum prison that was to be their final destination before the plane ride to Baghdad. A bus trip that typically lasts less than one hour ended up taking far longer, because a group of sympathizers formed human blockades on the road to the prison. Equipped with sticks and tear gas, the police formed a passageway through the crowd to allow the bus to pass. Twenty days later, these 19 Iraqi asylum seekers formed a caveat of a larger group that boarded a plane toward their war-torn “homes” in Iraq; many of them were separated from their families and began fearing for their lives¹.

This incident from 2009 received extensively media coverage and instigated a debate among politicians and civil society actors alike on the limits on Danish asylum policies and the methods adapted to enforce these policies. Furthermore, it gave birth to a variety of advocacy groups (e.g. Church Asylum) that tried to provide a voice on behalf of the asylum seekers. Throughout the past years, these actors, alongside the more established NGOs, international organizations and other advocacy groups, have tried to influence government policies by spreading information and formulating political claims. Since not all of these actors have had easy access to the mainstream media, these attempts of deliberation with the state have taken place elsewhere - through demonstrations, happenings, petitions and other activities. Most of these actors have also presented their claims in the online sphere - on websites, documents and articles – and through that, connected with other actors relevant to the asylum issue. It is this aspect of

¹ Summary from Wikipedia.dk/kirkeasyl and various Danish media sources (Eltard-Sørensen 2009 ; Lindhardt and Søndergaard 2009)

political activity – the articulation of political claims on the web – that will be my focus in this dissertation.

To study these political actors online, I will use a multi-website approach called issue network analysis. It is a theoretical framework that is designed to analyze the connections between websites surrounding an issue and it builds on both quantitative network traditions and the qualitative interpretative approach. Online issue networks are, in short, the engagement of civil society actors, NGOs and government organs in the formation of political issues through online networks (Marres 2006). Formation should here be understood as the deliberation that occurs between the actors in the network through the provision of links to other relevant actors and the presentation of claims related to the issue. Therefore, it is necessary both to analyze the interlinking between the actors – linking as deliberation - as well as the political claims articulated by the actors – deliberation through framing - for the issue network analysis to be complete. One of the common methods that is being deployed to map the links between websites on the Internet is quantitative web-crawling.

To draw up the network of actors that participate in the deliberation of the issue, I use the specially designed web-crawling tool, Issue Crawler: it is a computer programme that conducts an analysis of the hyperlinks between websites online and presents the result in an issue network map. Accordingly, the research will not only focus on the Internet as an object of study, but it also uses the Internet itself as a tool for the research. In this study, I focus both on the methodological aspect of drawing up issue network maps and on the empirical discussion of whether issue networks can be said to function as a “site of politics” (Marres 2006) where different actors interact with each other in the deliberative space around the political issues. Through a critical review of the theory and method, as well as the empirical case study, the overall goal of the project will be to assess how the issue network analysis can be applied to understand political deliberation in the online sphere.

For the test of the usability of issue network analysis, I apply the theoretical framework and the methodological tool to the case study of the asylum issue network in Denmark. I have chosen the asylum issue in Denmark as my case study since this issue has been politicized extensively throughout the past decade by the established political parties (see e.g. Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008 ; Seeberg 2009). It has also received a great deal of attention from organizations domestically (e.g. NGOs) and internationally (e.g. international organizations) as well as ad hoc advocacy groups in Denmark. Traditionally, advocacy groups and organizations have less access to the mainstream media than official actors, such as government organs, which give them a higher incentive to make their claims visible elsewhere (e.g. on their websites). At the same time, the government and other official actors are expected to release statements on their policies and disclose information about practices to the public that should be available in the online sphere. Because of these assumptions, it seems realistic to assume that the asylum issue will be active on the Internet among actors from different layers of the political sphere (government, organizations and other civil society actors) and that the issue network will encompass adversary actors. In this respect, the case has been chosen as a “most likely” case (Flyvbjerg 2006), since it should exhibit the main characteristics of a political issue network on the Internet and, therefore, is suited for a test of the issue network approach.

In order to assess the research question, I will start with a discussion of the theoretical background for the analysis of networks online, followed by a definition of the concept of issue networks (as opposed to other types of networks) in the context of this research project. At the basis, issue networks resemble social networks and information networks² in the sense that the network consists of actors (nodes) that are linked together through hyperlinks (edges). At the same time, it differs from these approaches in the interpretation of these links and the relationships between the actors. In issue network analysis, the raw network data is not sufficient

² Social networks are generally understood as networks between actors that have a direct (you and your friend) or indirect (e.g. you share a common friend) relationship with each others, whereas information network encompass the various physical systems that carries information around (e.g. the cables between computer routers or telephones).

to explain the relations between the actors; it is necessary to interpret the various claims that the actors present on the issue. Therefore, it is necessary to supplement the quantitative web crawl with a qualitative text analysis of the claims on the web pages in the network in order to understand the relationship between the actors. A theoretical framework suited for this part is framing analysis, which I use to describe how the different claims are being presented. Since the theoretical and methodological foundations of issue network analysis are closely interlinked, I discuss method and theory within the same chapter. This means that I discuss the theory and method of the network analysis first and then proceed to a discussion of framing analysis and the operationalization of the claims subsequently. Accordingly, the overall structure of the analysis will be divided into two steps: the broader issue network mapping and the deeper framing analysis. The analysis of the network will establish the connections between the actors on the issue and functions as a sampling tool for the subsequent framing analysis. This analysis will be a comparative study of the claims that the different type of actors present and how they frame these claims in the issue network. By triangulating the results from the network and claims analysis, it is possible to get a better perspective on the structure and nature of the online issue network. In the concluding part of the study, I evaluate the overall validity of the research method and provide some suggestions for further research in the field. First, there is a need to clarify the meaning of online issue networks.

The network as an act of deliberation

The concept of issue networks is not unfamiliar to political science. The fact that it has developed consistently over the years shows that there is a need to further elaborate on the meaning and usage of issue networks as analytical tools. Originally, the term “issue network” was described by the American political science scholar, Hugh Hecló, as a network of professional actors forming around a policy issue that interacts directly with each other to debate, redefine and find new policy options (Hecló 1978: 103-04). The concept primarily addressed the lobbyism by interests groups and other political actors, which was characterized as “disorderly and unpredictable” and as such a liability for the general democratic governance in the US (Carpenter, Esterling, and Lazer 2003: 412). This idea of the organized network of actors that act deliberately and try to bring issues to the forefront of the political scene resonated with studies of policy networks (e.g. Gormley 1986 ; Kirst, Meister, and Rowley 1984 ; Skok 1995). Likewise, in the field of international relations studies, the concept has been used to refer to transnational networks of organizations that are “driven primarily by shared values or principled ideas” (Sikkink 1993: 412). Common among these conceptions is the general idea that issue networks consist of more or less organized actors that in synergy try to achieve a shared political end-result. Recently, this idea has been challenged by a number of scholars, most notably Richard Rogers and Noortje Marres, who have stipulated that issue networks should be treated as inherently contentious – that is, encompassing actors with conflicting views on the issue – rather than consensual (Marres 2006, 2007 ; Rogers 2003, 2010 ; Rogers and Marres 2000). This view of issue networks as an arena of contention rather than an act of consensus seems well-suited for an analysis of political deliberation on the web. Therefore, this conception of issue networks will be the framework in my study of the asylum seeker network in Denmark.

Following Marres (2006: 5), issue networks can be defined as “open-ended alliances” that are constituted by antagonistic actors who engage in the articulation and (re)formatting of controversial issues to influence the politicization of these issues in the formal political space. Actors in the network are connected through the issue – and do not necessarily agree with or know of each other in the network – and the issue itself is constituted by their expressions of opinions, claims or knowledge about the issue. Issue networks in itself are the site of politics where actors express views, ideas and knowledge about certain issues and “attempt to put these issues on the agendas of political institutions” (Marres 2006: 5). In this sense, issue networks can be seen as act of deliberation by actors in the political field. Accordingly, the goal of a study of issue networks will be to map the relations between the actors in the network and to analyze the various statements on the issue made by the actors. This requires an operationalization of issue networks to be able to conceptualize and observe the network on the web as well as a closer definition of what constitutes political statements by the actors in the networks. Therefore, I will begin with an examination of social and information network analysis and how these traditions contribute to an understanding of networks online. Thereafter, I will discuss in what ways issue networks differ from these types of network analysis and why a qualitative analysis of the actors in the network is needed. This will lead to the discussion of the subsequent framing analysis.

Networked content on the Internet

Generally speaking, network analysis is a broad term for approaches that seek to identify the relationships between different actors (human, technology, financial etc) that are constituted in networks. As such, network analysis can be seen as both a theoretical perspective on social ties and communication channels, as well as a methodology relying on advanced models (graph theory, clustering, centrality and modeling) adopted from mathematics and physics in particular (Park and Thelwall 2005: 171). The basic assumption in most network analyses is that the specific

links (or edges) between the actors (or nodes) that constitute the network is of great importance for the way people (in social network analysis), infrastructure (in information networks) or both (in issue networks) operates. In short, the way things are linked to each other matters for the power position, visibility, access or necessity of the actors in the network.

Social network analyses have been used to compare the nature of social networks online to the offline world. The social network is characterized by the links between social actors and studies have shown that these links do not appear to be randomly connected (there is a greater chance that a person knows certain actors in the network better than others, e.g. the friends of friends) nor fully connected or ordered (not everybody in the network knows an equal amount of other people) (Watz and Strogatz 1998). The theory of ‘the strength of weak ties’ (Granovetter 1973) describes the social world as consisting of strong ties (friendships) and weak ties (acquaintances). The strong ties connect us in clusters of friendships, but it is through the weak ties that we are connected in the larger social network and that makes most of us more closely connected to each other than we initially perceive; this has been coined the “small world” phenomenon (Albert, Jeong, and Barabási 1999 ; Dodds, Muhamad, and Watts 2003).

In the study of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), researchers have found “small world” tendencies in the networks as well. Albert et al (1999) have described the small world nature of the world wide web (hereafter, the web) and how this affects access to information online. They found that websites with a high number of hyperlinks coming from other websites not only occupy a central position in the network, but also that this position is getting stronger as the size of the network grows. New websites entering the network simply have a higher probability of linking to already existing central websites (Albert, Jeong, and Barabási 1999). The quintessential observation in the small world phenomenon is that some actors (people or web sites) seem to be better connected than others and thereby occupy a more central role in the network. This makes them more important for the sustainability of the

network than the rest of the actors with fewer connections (Watz and Strogatz 1998). Not all actors in the networks are of equal importance for the network.

The network structure of the the web functions as the basis for an issue network analysis, but there are several areas where issue network analysis differs from the previous network approaches. The key difference between the social network and issue networks is that the actors involved in an issue network need not know each other nor be on the same side of an issue – often an issue network will include oppositional or directly adversary advocacy groups, organizations or governmental actors (Marres 2006 ; Rogers 2010). So where the structure and cohesiveness of a social network is threatened by internal conflicts and disagreements among the central actors, (Coleman et al. 2009: 12) issue networks often exist as a consequence of these controversies between actors. The issues simply do not exist before they have been articulated by actors in the public space (Marres 2007), which in this study is seen as the online sphere.

For this reason, it is important to attend to the descriptions, theories and labels presented by the actors themselves instead of applying rigid theoretical frameworks that disregard the complexities surrounding the issue (Latour 2005: 11-12). By articulation or formatting an issue in the network, the civil society actors engage in the formal politics of defining and delineating the realm of the political (Marres 2006). In a way, issue networks also hold some resemblance to what Cammaerts has described as e-protests in that it is a decentralized and conflict focus process for civil society actors “to mobilize and distribute alternative discourses” (Cammaerts 2008: 94). The difference is, however, that where E-protests signals some form of contentious actions against established policies, the concept of issue networks refers to the interaction of different civil society actors with government organs in the network. The articulation of the issue will be discussed more extensively in the chapter on framing below.

The actors in the issue network also differ from traditional network analysis in another aspect. Whereas information networks focus on the ICTs themselves, the issue network incorporates human actors as well as non-human actors (e.g. web documents, pictures or videos) as potentially important nodes in the network (Rogers 2010: 8)³. The focus in issue networks is on how certain actors “come together in networks to produce particular outcomes” (Halford, Pope, and Carr 2010: 3). In general, ICTs (and the Internet in particular) serve as an active tool that mediates the exchange between the actors, e.g. through interlinking online, while at the same time affecting by its very existence the formatting of the issue, e.g. through the technological capacities or constraints available for the actors (Marres 2006: 17). Therefore, it is necessary to attend to the various forms of expression that actors can utilize in the network, whether it is video messages, blog discussions, text documents, policy statements or other forms of communications. However, since it would be virtually impossible to encapsulate all the relevant material available on the web, this aspect requires a reasonable and valid sampling method. This will be discussed further in the methodological section.

The last area that issue networks represent a novel approach is in the scope of the study. Whereas classical network studies are an overtly large-scale analysis form that is best conducted through quantitative methods (such as graph analysis and large-scale web crawling), issue network analysis focuses more on the qualitative aspects of the links and the actors involved. The theoretical framework of issue networks opens up to a method on the meso-level (as opposed to micro and macro level studies) that maintains the multi-website analysis, but at the same time, tries to maintain the context-specific information in the actors and links of the particular

³ In this aspect especially, the concept of issue network draws heavily on a tradition in Science and Technology Studies (STS), called Actor-Network Analysis (ANT). The fundamental understanding in actor-network analysis is that actors and networks are not separated entities, but rather co-constituents in the same process; Every part of the social world is always part of a network and at the same time the result of a network itself – hence the hyphen in the name, actor-network (Latour 2005: 9). Actors themselves (e.g. a scientist) are constituted by “patterned networks of heterogeneous materials” (e.g. consisting of computer programs, research institutions, books, journals, colleagues, offices and so on) without which they would not be able to perform the specific role of the actor (e.g. producing knowledge, given lectures and attending conferences) (Law 1992: 4). Whereas the network in issue network analysis functions as an object of study, it should be seen as a purely methodological tool in ANT (Latour 2005: 142).

network. Instead of conceiving the web as just a pathway of interlinking (as it can be reduced to in quantitative network studies), it is important to approach the web as a “selective associational space” (Rogers 2010: 5) that is being created by the choices of actors and which hold communicative value. Here, a link should be understood as more than just a reference to another webpage - it is an act of communication in itself. These findings open up for an interesting discussion of what links between web sites mean, which I will touch upon briefly here.

Interpreting the meaning of links

At the most fundamental level, a link between web sites signals recognition of existence. As Rogers puts it: “Somewhat akin to a footnote in a manuscript, a hyperlink is thought of here as an acknowledgement by one organization of another organization’s relevance to the discourse, based on some appreciation for that latter organization’s knowledge and reputation. A link indicates ‘belonging’” (Rogers 2003: 204). The number of links coming to a specific website can be interpreted as an indicator of the authority given to that site or to the trust or prestige granted to that site. Likewise, in networks where a few pages receive a majority of all the links the links can be seen as a sign of popularity – “the winner takes it all” (Park and Thelwall 2005). They can also be a sign of importance or usefulness of a given website for the community within a particular field (determined by a key word query) as is the basis for search algorithm in the dominant search engine at the moment, Google (Brin and Page 1998). Among professional actors, e.g. in the political sphere, links between websites are often a result of ‘strong ties’, i.e. the social / professional relations of the people, groups or organizations behind the websites (see e.g. Rogers and Marres 2000). Large-scale studies of the linking patterns between websites show that there exists a high degree of homophily – that is the tendency to prefer other actors of the same type as yourself - among the different types of users, e.g. political actors linking to other political actors, organization linking to other organizations and so on (Park, Thelwall, and Kluver 2005 ;

Wu et al. 2011) as well as a tendency to prefer other actors with the same ideological stance on politics (Adamic and Glance 2005).

The homophily between the different type of actors in the network has proven to be the case in issue networks as well. For example, certain well-known organizations (e.g. Greenpeace) receive links from other less organized organizations (e.g. civil society groups) without returning links to those organizations (Rogers and Marres 2000: 10). Accordingly, in an issue network, the direction and the reciprocity of links matter a lot for the interpretation of the interaction between actors. In one context, bi-directional linking means one thing (i.a. recognition) and can therefore be undertaken without much worry, e.g. in the blogosphere where it is normal to provide a link to a blog that links to your blog. In a different context the linking process is much more politically loaded, e.g. in the case of links between organizations, advocacy groups and government organ, and therefore one can expect more uni-directional (one-way) linking taking place. Furthermore, the decisions to provide links often rely on very different reasons; some links - to attribute importance to another actor, e.g. to acknowledge an actor's central role in the issue, others, in the hope of obtaining reciprocal recognition.

It is, however, important to mention that linking online does not mean social relations per se, and that social relations exists in the offline world that are not being reflected in corresponding linkage online (Thelwall 2006). Likewise, links connecting different websites might just as well be the result of discrepancies or disagreements between the actors as well as they might be a sign of acknowledgement. The goal of the linking process can also solely be to spread the message of a certain message (e.g. a petition) online to as many as possible. In the latter instance, the linking action can both have the effect of making more people in the network aware of a given piece of information (through the direct link) and of raising the general visibility of the particular information on the web in general (since more links to the relevant page increases its rank in the search algorithms, e.g. in Google) (Marres 2006: 7-8). As such, different actors in

different contexts will interpret linking function on many different levels as acts of political deliberation, and the meaning and importance of the links differently. This makes linking a ‘politics of association’ (Rogers 2009: 14) through which it is possible to “trace the associations”(Latour 2005: 5) between the actors that constitute the issue. Here, I focus mainly on the role that hyperlinks play in establishing the issue network and determining the importance of the various actors for the deliberative space to function. It is especially the interlinking between the different actor types in the network that is important to analyze, since the direction and amount of links can provide information about the interests of the actors in keeping the network alive.

Before digging into the methodology of mapping the network, I will briefly summarize the main theoretical foundations of issue networks on the Internet. As opposed to social and information networks, issue networks encompass various antagonistic actors that interact with each other through that particular issue and try to influence the political agenda by articulating view points and spreading knowledge about the issue in the network. The actors in an online issue network are identified through their websites - they perform the issue by presenting claims on these sites. For the network to actually be composed around an issue (instead of being a social or information network) it has to fulfill two conditions: First, the issue has to be active among different type of political actors (e.g. advocacy groups, organizations and official actors) who interact with each other through hyperlinks; and second, the actors represented in the network have to actually debate the issue, e.g. by providing statements, policies or spreading information about the specific issue. The latter criteria I will discuss in the framing analysis, but the first criteria merits a few clarifying words here. It would be utopian to expect the linking interaction to be evenly distributed. As the literature review showed, the distribution of hyperlinks among web sites is quite unequal, especially when it comes to larger organization and state actors. Therefore, it is possible to formulate two basic hypotheses about the constellation of the issue network:

- 1a) different types of actors link more often to other actors of the same type (e.g. official websites to other official sites); and
- 1b) the direction of the links go mainly from less organized actors (e.g. civil society advocacy groups) to more organized actors (e.g. organizations and official sites).

Mapping the network with Issue Crawler

The imperative task of issue network analysis is to map the issue network. This is a complex task in itself that involves deciding what counts as relevant and what is irrelevant to the issue and making sure that the actors included in the network in fact discuss the issue. Since it is very hard to decide why different web sites link to each other online – as discussed in the previous chapter – it can be difficult to establish whether a network is indeed an issue network or merely a social or information network. Furthermore, it is desirable to map the issue where it is actually happening (Rogers 2010), which means that even though a network is located does not mean that this network is the most representative, active or influential version of that particular issue online. Likewise, it is not necessarily the case on the WWW that the deliberation around the issue is occurring and that certain type of actors are completely left out of the network – as turned out to be the case with the gun control issue network in Canada (see Devereaux et al. 2009). The problem Devereaux et al. (2009) found was briefly that there existed a big discrepancy between the amount of the actors from the adversary political positions that engaged in the issue online, which meant that the issue was less of a deliberative space and more of a policy network occupied primarily by one side of the issue. Some of these challenges are hard to solve completely, since the ideal typical issue network only exists in the minds of the researchers. However, as it is with all methods in social science, there will never be an objective answer to what will be the best issue network representation. That decision will rely mainly on the context

of the specific case, but also on the strength of the particular research design. Therefore, it is essential to use a sound method for capturing the relevant actors for the further analysis..

To identify the issue network I will do an analysis of the relevant web pages using a quantitative web crawling tool called the “Issue Crawler”. The tool has been developed by Richard Rogers and is publicly available at www.Issuecrawler.net. Issue Crawler looks through the relevant part of the web (whose boundaries are defined by the initial starting points, i.e. websites, which the user has selected) and searches for co-links between the actors. All the actors that share at least two links with other actors in the network will be included in the resulting issue network (Rogers 2010). So, if a web page receives a sufficient amount of hyperlinks from other web pages that are recognized as part of the network, then this web page will be considered as relevant to the issue. Likewise, if a web page provides links to other webpages, the recipients will achieve a higher relevance for the network. The more hyperlinks a given webpage receives from other relevant actors, the more important it will be for the sustainability of the network. Furthermore, Issue Crawler registers the amount and direction of the links between the actors and visualizes these relationships in a graphical map. This quantitative data can be used for the analysis of the structure of the network, that is to say, which actors occupy the central positions in the network and what are the directions of the links between the different types of actors. Another advantage of this co-link analysis is that it functions as a good sampling tool for the qualitative frame analysis. It basically provides the researcher with the most important webpages - seen from the network perspective - that can be retrieved from the starting points.

There are a number of challenges in using Issue Crawler as a methodological tool. First and foremost, this network approach assumes that any web site on the web uses hyperlinks to other sites, whenever they consider other web sites relevant to their own function. This is obviously not the case in all instances. Some websites link rarely, or never, to pages outside of their own web domain even in situations where a link would make sense - an example could be

news websites where news agencies quote actors in an article often times without providing hyperlinks to the actor's site. However, this is a kind of error that must be expected from large-n statistical research⁴, and should be relatively insignificant as long as our sample of web pages in the crawl is sufficiently high. Furthermore, a thorough analysis of in the literature and empirical data forming the issue in the offline world should be able to inform the researcher about potential problems with assuming online presence by the expected actors in the network. Likewise, as was discussed in the theoretical part, we do not expect all actors to contribute equally or in the same manner in the network. This is not a problem for the analysis – it should rather be seen as a mere reflection of the propensity of the actors from different layers of the political sphere to contribute to the deliberation online – but it does pose some clear-cut challenges to the validity of the method. For instance, it would be absurd to conclude that because certain political actors (e.g. parties) do not appear in an issue network these actors have no relevance for the deliberation of the issue; they simply might have chosen a different medium (e.g. radio, television or newspapers) to spread their messages. Again this speaks directly to applying the method to issues that are actually being deliberated in the online space.

Another fundamental challenge is how to select valid starting points to draw the issue network from. Since the starting points are very determining for the shape and character of the issue network, it is very important for the researcher to be able to make a motivated selection based on prior knowledge about the issue. Starting points can, for example, be chosen based on the thorough literature review or by retrieving the top results from a search engine query (Rogers 2004: 68). It is very difficult to establish beforehand which starting points will draw the most interesting network. Therefore, one has to be conscious about the selection. In that sense, this dilemma resembles a classical problem in the philosophy of science, the hermeneutic circle. We cannot understand the parts (here seen as the starting points) detached from the whole (the issue

⁴ Here we assume that these errors are random and not systematic (e.g. linking patterns being correlated with certain kind of web sites). However, this is an under-studied field that merits a thorough research project to test this assumption.

network) and vice versa. Therefore, it is advisable to draw up as many networks as possible and then compare the results to find the most suitable network for the specific research question at hand (Rogers 2004). A related problem is that the issue network map always only will be a visual (and statistical) account of how the relevant section of the web looked like at the time of the crawl. This means that a network of an issue that is developing fast (e.g. surrounding big news stories) will quickly become obsolete. On the other hand, if one tries to map an issue network that is not active anymore (e.g. a time specific issue), then there is a bigger risk of finding dead or broken links (i.e. links to webpages that are no longer active). Each of these problems come with some benefits attached as well. If one carefully maps a quickly evolving network on a continuous basis, then these issue networks can provide valuable material for a time-series analysis of the development of an issue over time. Likewise, by analyzing an issue network some time after activity around the issue was at its height it is possible to analyze the aggregated data (distribution of links among actors) that encapsulate all the actors, which at a given time have debated the issue online and interacted (through their linking activity) with other actors in the network⁵. In the case study I apply a strategy for the network mapping like this, where I focus on the multitude of political statements that the actors in the network have presented throughout one year.

⁵ Assuming that the time-span of the issue is relatively limited. If the activity surrounding the issue has been going on for a longer time (e.g. years) then it seems feasible to only include actors that have been active within a more specified period of time.

Making the claims and framing the issue

Even though the spread of information in itself can be important to sustain the issue network, it is the deliberative acts that are central to determine how active the political issue is in the online sphere. I understand deliberative acts in this context as arguments posed on the websites that make political claims about the asylum seeker issue. To categorize and interpret these deliberative acts I use the conceptual framework of “political claims”. This concept has mainly been developed by Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham in a series of co-publications, where it has been used in large scale content analyses of political statements in newspapers and other traditional media (see e.g. Koopmans and Statham 1999). The political claims should be understood as utterances, actions or other statements made in public and can be defined as “the strategic demands made by collective actors within a specific contested issue field” (Koopmans and Statham 1999:206). This definition fits well within an issue network scope with one adjustment; instead of restricting the analysis to collective actors alone, I include every actor in the issue network as potential claims makers, whether they are government representatives, organizations, advocacy groups, institutions or individuals. With this small adjustment, the political claim is an especially suited concept to analyze the deliberation that takes place among antagonistic actors by means of various forms of media (e.g. press statements, policy papers, reports and audiovisual materials) on the web.

The claims provide a good basis for the analysis of the deliberation, but they do not contain sufficient information alone to explain how the different actors position themselves on the issue. Therefore, it is essential to attend to the ways these claims are being presented – the framing of the claims so to say – to be able to understand how the deliberation takes place. In the traditional studies of political claims, the authors operate with large samples that make it possible to conduct statistical analyses (e.g. regression) of the claims making made by the different actors

types (see e.g. Koopmans and Zimmermann 2010). In this study, I operate with smaller a sample size that is less suited for statistical analyses of the various sub-groups in the sample, but that makes it possible to attend more closely to the framing of the claims, which is difficult to include in the broader political claims analyses (Koopmans and Statham 1999:218). Here, I see framing as the process through which meaning is assigned to the claim (Benford 1997). The meaning expresses the attitude that the actors take on a given issue and the understanding of the issue that the claim-maker would like other actors to adopt. In other words, whereas claims are to be understood as nouns – the result of an act - framing should be seen more as an adjective – the way a certain claim is presented. The concepts of frames and framing processes have been used in a variety of contexts in social science. Therefore, there is a need to clarify how I understand framing by reviewing some of the major strands in frame analysis.

The use of frames as analytical concepts in social science began with the works of the sociologist Erving Goffman, who saw frames as an important mental process through which we understand the world around us. Frames guide our interpretation of events in the social world by enabling individuals to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” these phenomena (Goffman 1974: 21). This approach to the analysis of social meaning processes has received extensive attention from as varied fields as psychology (Tversky and Kahneman 1981), cognitive science (Lakoff 2006 ; Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and social movement studies (Gamson 1992 ; Sikkink 2009 ; Snow et al. 1986 ; Tarrow 2005). The studies within psychology and cognitive science continue more directly in Goffman’s track by highlighting the power of metaphors (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and word sequence (Tversky and Kahneman 1981) to influence our attitude to specific policies as well as our opinion of the proper choice of action. The social movement tradition builds on this interpretative basis, but extends the scope of research from the individual’s framing to how movements use frames collectively to gather support and adherents

to an issue (Tarrow 2011: 246) ⁶. Here, I continue in this social movement tradition, but instead of focusing on frames as fixed entities, I focus on the framing processes that happen in the claims making by the actors. According to Benford, framing can be defined as “processes associated with assigning meaning to or interpreting relevant events and conditions in ways intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” (Benford 1997: 416). It is especially the latter function, the antagonistic framing, that I will pay close attention to in this study.

The literature on frames has focused predominantly on social movements and collective action, but the framing process is not at all confined to this aspect of the political sphere; it is a process observable in the media, within state actors as well as other political actors (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). In fact, framing analysis has been criticized for being too focused on frames as things rather than processes and for having a bias toward the frames of the elite (Benford 1997). For this reason, studies of framing should place more emphasis on the frame disputes and counter-framing between different antagonistic actors and, in this, include the perspectives of less organized political actors, e.g. advocacy groups, that arise around specific issues (Benford 1997). Furthermore, framing analysis in social movement studies have focused primarily on the development in the framing of issues over time, instead of paying attention to the diversity of frames used by different actors to position themselves on the same issue at one point in time (Snow, Vliegenthart, and Corrigan-Brown 2007: 388). I believe that issue networks can provide an interesting test field for a framing analysis that transcend both the shortcoming of limited variety of actors and the lack of proper comparative studies. By focusing on the Internet instead of the mainstream offline media, the analysis is not restricted to the actors that have

⁶ A major part of the social movement frame analysis focus on the “collective action frames”, which are seen as important tools that various political actors can utilize to garner support and attention to a certain issue (Snow et al. 1986). Therefore, these scholars put emphasis on the various strategies that social movements adopt to create frames that resonate with their (potential) supporters. Snow has identified four major strategies that can help align the collective action frames with the public’s individual frames: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation (Snow et al. 1986: 467-74). The concept of collective action frames is indeed useful for analyses of mobilization and resonance, but in this context, where the focus is on framing as a sign of deliberation rather than strategies of collective action, I find that it misses my objective.

access to editors and gatekeepers, and thereby it is possible to incorporate a variety of actors from different levels of the political sphere (individual, advocacy, organization and state level) that often are opaque in the mainstream media.

Framing processes play an important role in defining what is the real world, and more specifically for political actors, what is right and what is wrong in that world. One of the effective ways to do this is by articulating certain events, policies or government actions as unjust and thereby legitimizing the contentious action or collective response by the movement (McAdam 1999: 51). By constructing such an “injustice frame” that resonate with the public sentiments surrounding a controversial issue, actors can stir up emotions and gather support through that process (Gamson 1992). Therefore, it is important that framing clearly separates the morally just from the unjust by attributing blame and responsibility as well as identifying grievances and setting forth the proper course of action (Tarrow 2011: 249). Accordingly, framing functions well to “underscore and embellish the seriousness and injustice of a particular social condition or redefine as unjust and immoral what was previously seen as unfortunate but perhaps tolerable” (Snow and Benford 1992: 137). Likewise, it is reasonable to see governments and other pro-government actors trying to garner support and sympathy through – to stay in the same line of thought - a “justice” frame instead. This, I would argue, could be the case when government actors try to justify a certain course of action as the only viable solution with the argument that the broader system of justice and law would be endangered by opposing policies, e.g. in cases of whether to grant asylum to a larger number of asylum seekers or not.

The competing framing and counter-framing processes between adversary actors is a central part of civil society politics and in itself a fundamental part of political practice (Marres 2006). An important activity for organizations and advocacy groups is to challenge the official policy of the government and other supporting actors by framing the issues in innovative ways to “bring issues to the public agenda” (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 17). Through this activity an issue

might resonate stronger with other political actors and most importantly the public (Marres 2006: 6). In the analysis of the framing processes it is possible not only to examine the different positions of the actors involved in the issue, but also to shed some light on the mechanisms of the issue network. Framing functions well as a conceptual tool to identify how certain actors understand certain events, present the political claim and attribute blame or responsibility to other actors. Accordingly, in conjunction with the notion of political claims the framing processes functions as the framework for the analysis of how the different actors position themselves on the issue.

Operationalizing the deliberative space

Since I expect the asylum issue to be rather complex with several sub-issues existing at the same time, it is not sufficient just to register political claims by different actors for the issue to be active online. As was discussed earlier, the network has to include antagonistic actors that deliberate the issue from different political standpoints for the issue network to an online “site of politics” (Marres 2006). If the actors discuss different issues, it is a sign that the network has drifted away from the original issue, which is a problem for the validity of the network, or that the issue is hard to locate in the online sphere, and likewise if all the actors share the political stance on the issue, then it would be more fitting to describe it as a policy network or just an expression of coalition-making. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify what makes an issue network active and vibrant, or in other words, how it is possible to define when the actors discuss the same issue and at the same time, discuss it from adversary positions. In short, we need to clarify what constitutes a deliberative space and how to operationalize deliberative acts in the network.

A deliberative space can be defined as an area (offline or online) where different people meet and discuss a given issue. Here I see deliberation in a more specific way. The deliberative

space in this context means the space where politically contentious arguments are being presented to spread awareness of an issue or counter the articulation of that particular issue by other actors. In that sense, my definition of the deliberative space holds some resemblance to the “deliberative democracy” view, where deliberation among citizens and lawmakers alike is seen as a foundational element of the democratic practise⁷. A deliberative space online can therefore be seen as one of the places where politics (in the widest sense) is happening.

I see the claims as a fitting indicator for the activity of the network, because the levels claims-making shows the different areas of the issue – the sub-issues – which the actors present fewer or more claims about. If a sufficient amount of different actors presents claims about the same sub-issue, then I find it justified to see the issue as active. Given the fact that the different types of actors not necessarily present different perspectives on the issue it is necessary to establish how the framing of the issue takes place. If there is a sufficient degree of framing disputes or counter-framings found in the claims about the same sub-issue, then it makes sense to see the issue network as vibrant as well. This I will show by identifying each framing process as being mainly confirmatory of the actions by the policy-makers, oppositional to these actions or taking a more neutral stance. When these conditions are satisfied, it makes sense to talk about the issue network as a site of politics.

Accordingly, my approach will be first to establish the different claims that is introduced by the actors in the network, and secondly, to attend to the framing of these claims. Together, these two steps can clarify the level of deliberation across actors - and the nature of the deliberation. To establish the claims and conduct the framing analysis, it is necessary to develop a stringent coding scheme that is both transparent and reliable. Since this analysis only constitutes one part of the overall analysis in the study, I prefer a simple and parsimonious coding scheme to

⁷ There are numerous precise definitions of and literature about “deliberative democracy”. My understanding of the concept mainly comes from: http://www.deliberative-democracy.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19&Itemid=57 (accessed 6/1-2011)

a more complex and extensive. At the same time, I find it necessary to employ an open-ended coding strategy, which means that I will not use predefined rigid categories in the coding process, but instead construct fitting categories afterwards that encompass the central types of claims from the empirical material. The open-ended coding strategy is well suited to create claims types that better match the context sensitive information found in the material (Koopmans and Statham 1999: 216). My coding scheme, which is located in Appendix A, consist of categories for “actor”, “claim”, “context” and “source”. The first two categories contains the most important information (who claims and what do they claim), whereas the “context” category serves as the basis for establishing the framing (how do they say it). The source category only serves as proof (and to be able to test the reliability and validity of the coding results), because my objective here is not to analyze the media channels through which the claims are made. Furthermore, since the goal solely is to establish which claims that are presented by which actors, and not the frequency of these claims, I only code the separate claim once for each actor.

Case study: Deliberating the asylum issue in Denmark

After the change of government in 2001, the asylum issue has been politicized extensively by political parties as well as the media. In the past decade the issue has been one of the most important issues in the parliamentary elections (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008). The coalition government consisting of the Liberals and the Conservatives, who have remained in power since 2001, quickly introduced a number of laws and initiatives to mitigate immigration in general and the influx of asylum seekers in particular. These laws included stricter rules for family reunification and tougher conditions to obtain residence permits as well as stricter asylum laws, which were introduced directly to reduce the number of unwanted immigrants, essentially refugees and asylum seekers (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). These policies, which are among the toughest in Europe, have been criticized by opposition parties as well as civil society actors at home and abroad for violating human rights conventions as well as discriminating against certain unwanted groups (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003).

In recent years, the list of critiques have expanded with the introduction of a number of advocacy groups that have targeted the asylum procedures as well as the conditions in the asylum centers for being inhuman. The debate in the media and parliament has continued to be contentious in nature, especially around the time of the expulsion of a number of Iraqi seekers in 2009. It has remained an active topic of discussion among the NGOs and advocacy groups at home as well as international organizations abroad, who have continuously monitored the treatment of asylum seekers in Denmark. Therefore, this issue fits well as a case study to test whether the online issue network can function as a deliberative space. Before I indulge in the empirical analysis I will briefly clarify my typology of actors that will be implemented and explain my expectations to the various actors in the claims-making and framing of the issue.

In this case study, I will observe four different types of actors: official, organization, advocacy and other. The “official” type covers all the actors that are directly related to the state, e.g. the government, state institutions and other organization affiliated with the state system. Given their embeddedness in the state system, these actors are expected to primarily frame their claims in support of the government’s policies. Furthermore, since the official stance, which these actors are expected to represent, are communicated through the legislation itself, and since these actors have the most direct access to the media they are expected to present relatively fewer claims than the other actors. The “organization” type includes the established groups that engage in politics to achieve collective goals, and encompasses the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) internationally, such as Amnesty International, and domestically, e.g. the Danish Red Cross, as well as international organizations as the UN. These actors often have a broader scope than just the asylum issue and are engaged in multiple issues at the same time, which gives them less time dedicated to the asylum issue alone. At the same time they are often highly professional and institutionalized in the political process with fairly good access to the media. Therefore, they are expected to provide fewer claims than the advocacy groups, and frame these claims critically, but taking their embeddedness in the established political system into account, less contentiously than the advocacy groups. The “advocacy” type represent the actors who are comprised of civil society peoples that come together to form a single-issue group to advocate for and spread information about this issue. They are often less formalized than the organizations, but given that these groups are formed precisely to correct some perceived mistakes or injustices regarding the issue, I expect this type of actors to be the most active claims-makers in the network and also the harshest critiques of the current status of the asylum policies. Lastly, I introduce the type, “other”, to encompasses all the actors that might have relevance to the network, but that do not fall into one of the three actor types. This type of actor mainly functions as a test group to check whether the three main types of actors introduced above, in fact, comprise the central claims-makers in the network.

To do the analysis I first test different methods to construct the issue network and then present the more representative network of the options available. After I have established the most representative network of the asylum issue I will identify the central actors in the network - determined by the amount of inlinks coming from the other actors - and discuss the relationship between the different type of actors (advocacy, organization and official actors) - determined by the direction of the links and the (non-)/reciprocal linking. Since one of the basic shortcomings of this quantitative network analysis is the loss of context, I proceed to a qualitative analysis of the claims and framing by the relevant actors in the network. Here, I seek to establish the different claims that the actors present to position themselves on the issue and analyze the framing processes. In the final part, I will assess whether the findings of the network analysis confirm or disconfirm our hypotheses about the structure of the network and how the distribution of claims among the actors and the framing of these claims can shed some light on the nature of the issue network. All in all, this case study should be able to provide an answer to the question of whether the online issue networks functions as a deliberative space where politics is happening.

Mapping the asylum issue

As I mentioned earlier the most defining act in drawing up a useful issue network is to choose the precise starting points. There are obviously no objectively correct starting points, but there are definitely more or less adequate starting points in mapping a given network. Since the hyperlinks themselves cannot differentiate between relevant and irrelevant sites, it is solely up to the user to find the starting points that eventually will lead to the most interesting issue network. In that sense, Issue Crawler is like any other statistical tool – the difficult part is not to push the calculate button, but to find out what to calculate on. The tricky part is that the network might drift away from the issue, which basically means that even though some starting points have

relevance for the issue the subsequent co-link analysis performed by issue crawler might reveal a completely different issue network or a social network online. Therefore, it is not necessarily the most active websites that constitute the most appropriate starting point, but rather the websites that through links will lead the crawler toward the most representative sites for the issue deliberation. Rogers stipulates that it is advisable to choose the link pages on the websites as starting points for the crawler to function optimally (Rogers 2010). In the case of the asylum network this leads to a systematic bias, since it is only among the advocacy group's websites that it is possible to find the plethora of links needed for the crawler to locate the relevant actors. Therefore, any issue network of the asylum issue seems to require advocacy groups as starting points. This observation was confirmed in the various issue crawls that I conducted to find the most representative network for the analysis.

I tested different methods for choosing the starting points⁸ and eventually found that a triangulation approach produced the most accurate network. In this approach, I choose two web sites that had been deliberating the issue for some time, which was still active (posted issue related material within the past 12 months) and maintained a rather long list of hyperlinks to other actors that could have relevance to the issue. These two web sites turned out to be two advocacy groups: [bedsteforaeldreforasyldk.dk](http://www.bedsteforaeldreforasyldk.dk) and [afvisteirakere.dk](http://www.afvisteirakere.dk). The first group, Grandparents for Asylum, is popularly known for its creative demonstrations and work to improve the conditions for the asylum seekers⁹, whereas the second group, Rejected Iraqis, specifically targeted the Iraqis that have been denied asylum in face forced expulsion. Grandparents for

⁸ First, I used a "snowball" analysis, which does not conduct the co-link analysis, but just follows the links from the starting points in a predefined number of iterations, to get a sense of the actors that are present online (Asylum Seeker Network DK – Snowball). Thereafter, I tried to map the issue from the perspective of one advocacy group, one NGO and one official site as starting point, but that included too many irrelevant actors. An attempt to draw a transnational network failed. I also tried the query-method, where the top sites on Google in a query of "asylum seekers" (in Danish) were chosen as starting points, but that map lost to many of the obvious key actors. Likewise, my attempt to force oppositional actors in the network only dragged the network far away from the issue. The network that came closest in fulfilling my criteria was based on starting points chosen for their relevance. This network shares many of the features (actors, links and centrality) with the triangulation network, which could be a sign that the varieties of the Danish asylum seeker network are fewer than what the theory would expect. This could probably be explained partly by the size of the country and the specificity of the issue itself. All the networks are publicly available online at Issuecrawler.net or by request from the author.

⁹ http://www.bedsteforaeldreforasyldk.dk/?Hvem_er_vi%3F

Asylum have received extensive media coverage and both advocacy groups maintain a top ten ranking in a google.dk query of “asylum” or “asylum seeker” (in Danish). This should provide the crawler with a list of actors from two very active and highly credible, hence the Google rankings, actors that should have considerable relevance to the network themselves. I triangulated the lists of links from the two websites and choose the actors that were present in both lists as starting points for the co-link analysis (a full list of starting points can be found in Appendix B). The resulting issue network included 50 webpages and contained a variety of actor types (single actors, advocacy groups, organizations, official sites and other media related sites) with many actors receiving and sending links to the network, which should be seen as a sign of deliberation occurring. With this multiplicity of actors active in the network there is the possibility of finding an active issue network online and therefore I found this version of the map the most useful for my analysis. The graphical issue network map with inlinks (received links) and outlinks (sent links) can be found in Appendix C.

The overall network data showed a number of interesting findings that I find worth discussing before turning to the comparative analysis of the actors. In general, the network is relatively sparse with only 25 percent of the possible links between the actors being realized¹⁰. The average distance between the connectable actors is 2.76, which means that even though there are a number of unrealized links between the actors, there is still a relatively short route connecting them in the network. This is hardly surprising giving the small size of the network and taking into account that the average distance for entire World Wide Web is only estimated to be around 19 (Albert, Jeong, and Barabási 1999). At the same time, the network centralization for both outlinks (1.3 percent) and inlinks (1.1 percent) are very low, which shows us that the network in general is not concentrated only around a few actors, but that the central roles are dispersed out on several influential actors (Hanneman and Riddle 2005).

¹⁰ All calculations have been conducted on the data of the issue network, which is freely available at Issuecrawler.net.

When we look at the betweenness centrality, which measures which actors that most frequently figure on the shortest routes between other actors, then an interesting picture emerges. First of all, about 15 percent of the actors functions as “brokers” between the other actors, because their appearance in the network make the routes between other actors in the network shorter. More informative is the fact that by far the most frequent actor connecting other actors in their shortest path is the website of the Ministry of Integration, nyidanmark.dk. This means that the Ministry appears as an important “broker” between many actors in the network, since the distances between the actors would most likely be greater without this actor. However, since the Ministry is neither the greatest provider nor receiver of links in the network and since these measurements do not take the direction of the links into account we will have to be cautious in drawing inferences from these results. On the safe side, it seems fair from the general network data to expect that the issue network will be relative dispersed with no single actors dominating the deliberation, but with a number of central actors creating the deliberative space. I will not discuss the overall network data further here, but concentrate on the relationship between the different types of actors that is the unit of analysis here.

The simple descriptive statistics of the network (Table1) show that the network contained 47 actors that could be divided into the four different types: Official actors (N=9) that includes the government sites and official institutions; Organizations (N=11) that include international organizations, international and national NGOs; Advocacy groups (N=19) who covers a range of different groups that make political claims and distribute information about the issue, but are not formally organized as the organizations and institutions; and lastly, the other group (N=7), which encompasses all the remaining actors, such as newspapers, blogs¹¹. Table1 also gives us some hints to how the network dynamics functions. It confirms the expectations that advocacy actors constitute the largest pool of actors (N=19) and that they provide most links

¹¹ An overview off all the actors divided into the different types as well as explanations for the hosts of the Danish websites can be found in the appendix D.

to other actors in the network (7.0). These actors should be expected to be most vocal on the Internet and most focused on referring to other relevant actors, because their access to other media channels are more limited than the organizations and official actors. Likewise, it is not surprising that official actors and organizations receive more links on average from the whole of the crawled population (includes all the links that Issue Crawler has found from actors within and without the network) than the rest. However, it goes against my expectations that the organizations – and not the official actors - are the largest recipients of average links from the crawl (234) and average references from network actors (6.0). This could be an indication that the other actors regard them as very influential for the sustainability of the network. Taking together with the fact that organizations are the least participatory actors in the network with only three average references to other actors in the network, these observations become very interesting. They signal that even though their activity seems important for the network, these actors might perform their activities related to the issue elsewhere. The “other” group of actors receives by far the fewest links from the network, which could be a sign that these actors largely are irrelevant to the issue deliberation.

Table1: Average activity of the various types of actors in the network				
Type of actor	Amount (N)	Average links received in total from crawled population	Average unique links to network actors*	Average unique links from network actors*
Official	9	149	4.4	5.1
Organization	11	234	3.0	6.0
Advocacy	19	52	7.0	5.6
Other	7	35	3.4	2.4
Total	46**	112	5.0	5.1

The table shows the average amount of links that the different types of actors provide to and receive from the other actors in the network.

* Unique link means that the links from or to a given actor is only counted once regardless of how many links there might exist between the actors (min. one link).

** The valid amount of actors (N) differs from the Issue Crawler data, because I decided to remove two broken pages, facebook.com and addthis.com, from the network and exclude the web site, hrw.org, since it didn't contain links to or from the network. Furthermore, I

recorded two instances of identical web sites that occurred twice, sosmodracisme.dk and anstaendig.dk. I have collapsed these sites into two separate actors in the network. A full list of actors can be found in the Appendix D.

To estimate the more precise relationship between the actors, we need to break down the links, so we can differentiate between links that are provided and received among the same type of actors and links that connect the different actor types. The result of this breakdown is presented in Table 2. Since the average amount of linking activity by the different types of actors varies substantially, see Table 1, I find it more fruitful to present linking as the percentage of the total links provided and received within the group. In general, there is a strong homophilic tendency among all the different types, apart from “Other”, which does not constitute a coherent group and therefore cannot be expected to exhibit homophilic behavior. In the group of official actors 48 percent of the links are coming from other official actors and likewise, 65 percent of the links these actors provide are directed toward official actors as well. The corresponding numbers for organizations are 34 percent for links received from and 64 percent directed to other organizations. Compared with the low average amount of links organizations provide to the network in general, this high number of links to other organizations suggests that they have less interest in deliberation the issue online. Among the advocacy groups the homophily is also quite strong. 75 percent of links comes from other advocacy groups and 62 percent of the outlinks stay within that group. These observations are clearly in line with our expectations of a high degree of homophily among the actors. The only observation in this context that deviates from the expectations of homophily is that organizations receive a larger percentage of their links from advocacy groups (45 percent) than from other organizations. However, since the organizations sent roughly two thirds of their links to other organizations there is still clear evidence of homophily in that group as well.

Table2: Inlinks and outlinks between different type of actors (percentage of total*)										
Type of actor	Official		Organization		Advocacy		Other		Total*	
	Inlink	Outlink	Inlink	Outlink	Inlink	Outlink	Inlink	Outlink	Inlink	Outlink
Official	48%	65%	13%	21%	28%	11%	11%	3%	100%	100%
Organization	17%	15%	34%	64%	45%	20%	4%	2%	99%	101%
Advocacy	4%	15%	8%	16%	75%	62%	13%	7%	100%	100%
Other	12%	19%	2%	16%	76%	45%	10%	20%	100%	100%
<p>The table shows the average proportion of links that the different types of actors receives (inlinks) and provide (outlinks) to other actors in the network, shown in percentages of total amount of links. Note: links here are measured as unique references, which means that if any given actor provides more than one hyperlink to another actor this only counts as one link. It is only the connection between the actors that are of importance here, not the frequency of these connections.</p> <p>* The total does not add up to a hundred perfectly, because the percentages are shown without decimals.</p>										

Table2 also reveals other aspects of the interaction. On average, 28 percent of the links to the official actors comes from the advocacy groups, whereas only four percent of the links to the advocacy actors comes from the official web sites. Likewise, 45 percent of the links to organizations come from advocacy groups with a mere eight percent of links to the advocacy type being sent from organizations. This follows our expectation that advocacy groups would be active in linking to the more institutionalized official actors and organizations without a high degree of reciprocal links. Interestingly, the percentage of links from the official sites that is targeted at organizations (21 percent) is higher than the share of links that the organizations sent to the official actors receive (15 percent). This again highlights the fact that the organizations are seen as important actors and that both advocacy groups and official sites sustain the organizations central position in the network. However, it is very difficult to interpret the meaning of the links from these simple statistics alone. Therefore, I will now turn to a short discussion of the interlinking between specific interesting actors, before I continue with the more qualitative analysis of the claims and framing activity.

If one measures centrality on the number of actors in the network that provide links to a given site then the central actors in the network is one advocacy group,

invandrertraadgivningen.dk (receiving links from 15 other actors in the network), two organizations, amnesty.dk (13 actors linking) and flygtning.dk (12 actors linking) as well as two official sites, menneskeret.dk (12 actors linking) and nyidanmark.dk (11 actors linking) (See Appendix D). It is important here to note that this measure of centrality only comprises the links from websites included in the network, and not necessarily mean that they receive the highest number of links in total, nor receive links from the largest number of other pages¹². It is not very surprising that the official web site for the Ministry of Immigration is deemed central for the network, and likewise with the major NGOs, Amnesty and the Danish Refugee Council, who actively work in the field of asylum politics. It is to some extent surprising that an advocacy group that is not directly engaged in the asylum issue - the group has posted sporadic comments on the issue – maintains such a prominent position in the network. However, this site, invandrertraadgivningen.dk, appears to be an umbrella organization that represents a vast array of the relevant advocacy actors in the network, who themselves provide links to the organization, which could be a vital explanation for why the site merits this central position in the network.

Surprisingly, the web site for the Ministry for Refugees, Immigration and Integration (hereafter the Ministry) appears to be very active in the network (with 20 outgoing links to advocacy groups, organizations and other official sites in the network). However, a closer study of the nature of these hyperlinks reveals that a few of these links are directed to sites that are not relevant for the issue (see appendix D for the list of irrelevant sites). Furthermore, the links to the advocacy groups all occur on one page, namely the website for the open user forum where organizations and advocacy groups can sign up to attend briefings by the ministry¹³. In that sense the links signal some sort of recognition, which could be interesting for a study of government openness toward civil society, but given this open user forum structure, I fail to see this

¹² In the issue network map a substantial number of webpages are not included since they do receive links from at least two other core pages in the network. These pages are considered part of the periphery of the network and therefore invisible in the issue map.

¹³ <http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/myndigheder/udlaendingservice/brugerpanelet.htm>

interaction as a voluntary act of deliberation with the civil society actors. The closer study of the links also revealed that the actors that the Ministry chooses to acknowledge through links are mostly confined within the official sector (humanrights.dk, fin.dk and finfo.dk) and among the large organizations (flygtning.dk, drk.dk) as well as the official UN site on the matter, unhcr.org. The only advocacy group that is directly recognized by the Ministry, foreningen-nydansker.dk, turns out to be an independent group that works for the integration of immigrants in the Danish labor market. A quick review of the website indicates that this group is not part of the most active advocacy groups on the asylum issue and more importantly, there is no direct oppositional statements to the government policy on the issue on the web site, which probably plays a role in the decision to acknowledge the group on the Ministry's web site. Nonetheless, the trend seems quite clear when it comes to links from the Ministry's website, as well as the other official sites in general, to the more active advocacy groups on the issue. They are practically non-existent.

The organizations also seem to follow the same hierarchical structure in their linking practices. The Danish Refugee Council links solely to official sites and other organizations, apart from a link to tvaerkulturelt-center.dk, and Amnesty in Denmark and Internationally as well as the UN sites only provide links to irrelevant sites. The Danish Red Cross and the Danish United Nations Association do not interact with the network at all. Obviously, these organizations still hold a lot of importance for the network since they receive many links from especially the smaller and active advocacy groups, but in line with our expectations these organizations do not reciprocate these links. It would be too speculative to indulge in a discussion of the precise reasons why the organizations abstain from providing reciprocal links, but since they generally seem to support the same cause as the advocacy groups (more about this in the subsequent section on the claims analysis) it seems absurd to suppose that it is grounded in large disagreements or opposition. Rather, it would make more sense if these organizations would refrain from acknowledging the advocacy groups due to the political sensitive aspect of being affiliated with overtly antagonistic (to the dominant policies) actors on the political scene.

In general, the network analysis has an issue network that is quite dispersed and with more than a few actors being central nodes in the deliberation. Apart from the Ministry's site that appears to bind large parts of the network together, the analysis of the actor types showed that especially the organizations received much attention from both the advocacy and the official actors. As expected the advocacy showed to be the most active in creating the deliberative space by providing most links to the network in general. The organizations showed to be the least interested in keeping up the deliberative space since they provided fewest links to the network on average and did so primarily among other organizations. Accordingly, we can conclude that the empirical material from the issue network analysis partly support hypothesis 1b that "the direction of the links goes mainly from less organized actors (e.g. civil society advocacy groups) to more organized actors (e.g. organizations and official sites)". The hypothesis hold until we reached the organization level, where they received more links from the official actors than they returned (measured in percentages). Likewise, we also find some support for the hypothesis 1a that "the different type of actors link more often to other actors of the same type" with a higher degree of support among official and NGO actors and less support among the advocacy group actors. A more stringent regression analysis of a larger data set would be able to provide some more definite answers, but given the limited sample (n=51) it would be difficult to obtain valid results for the various subgroups (type of actors) in the study.

Deliberating the asylum issue

When I drew up the network in Issue Crawler I decided to focus on specific sub-pages on the web sites (e.g. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/AGES/DKSession11.aspx> instead of the main site [ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)) to get a better sense of which areas of the web sites had the most relevance to the issue. This made it easier to locate the interesting material on these sites. In this claims analysis, however, there is a need to slightly broaden the scope. To be able to collect all the

different claims on the sites I have looked through the various press statements, news, reports and other documents published online during the last year (from May 2010 to May 2011) as well as the general statements of purpose of the actors. Instead of operating with a fixed set of pre-determined categories, I have let the statements and their context determine the nature of the political claim. Thereby, I have adopted a bottom-up rather than top-down approach to the formation of the categories for the various claims.

This has been to ensure that my rigid categories do not constrain the material too much, although some simplification of the complexity is obviously unavoidable. Since my goal is to map the different types of political claims that the actors make, I am not interested in the frequency each actor poses the same claims. Therefore, this differs from a more traditional content analysis in that I only code every unique claim made by the actor, which is sufficient for the comparative study of the variety of claims and the framing of the claims made by the actors. Furthermore, relevancy to the issue network is here solely defined as, whether an actor presents claims or not. It is not self-evident that only active claims-makers are relevant to the issue, since the mere distribution of content in some situations can be very relevant for the politicization of an issue. However, given that my focus is on the issue network as a deliberative space I find it justified to restrict this analysis to active claims-makers. I have registered and coded every unique claim made by the actors (see appendix E for a full list of actors and claims)¹⁴ and compiled the information in the matrix below (Table3).

¹⁴ I have registered and coded all the material myself and have not conducted any tests of the intercoder-reliability. This raises some questions about the general reliability of the coding scheme, which I hope to have shed some light on my coding procedures and decisions with this extensive appendix.

Table3: Overview of political claims divided into actor type and claim categories

Claims Actors	Inter. treaty	Conditions in Centers			Asylum Seeker Process			Rejection of Seekers			Total
		Health Probl.	Human Rights	Deten- tion	Legal Prot.	Discri- minate	Child. Rights	Forced return		Supp.	
								Gre.	Oth.	Home	
Official (N=3)	3	1	1	1	0	1	2	1	2	1	13
Ministry for Integ.	X						X	X		X	4
Dan. Inst. Human	X	X	X	X		X	X		X		7
Refu. Appeal Board	X								X		2
Organization (N=7)	5	4	2	4	2	2	6	4	6	4	39
Amnesty Internat.	X	X		X			X		X		5
UN Refugee Agency				X	X				X	X	4
Dan. Refug. Council	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	10
Amnesty DK	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		8
UN Human Rights	X	X					X		X	X	5
Danish Red Cross							X	X		X	3
Danish UN Assoc.	X						X	X	X		4
Advocacy (N=10)	5	7	5	5	6	5	7	4	6	2	52
SOS against Racism		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		8
Cross-cultural Cent.										X	1
Arne Hansen	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		9
Comitt. Und. Ref.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		8
Support Asyl. Ref.	X	X		X			X	X	X		6
Grandp. For Asylum	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	8
Assoc. Rejec. Iraqis							X		X		2
Visavis		X			X						2
Citiz. decent Den.	X	X	X		X	X	X				6
Amnesty Now				X					X		2
Total (N=20)	13	12	8	10	8	8	15	9	14	7	104

The table shows the amount of claims that the actors present within the different claims categories. The colors attached to the claims represent the framing of the claims: **Red** = claims are framed against the prevailing policies and identifies solutions that are better alternatives; **Yellow** = claims are not framed against any specific responsible actor or they are framed more as policy suggestions than demands; and **Green** = the claims that are framed in support of the current policies and justify actions taken to enforce these policies. The full data used in the coding process as well as overview of the actors can be found in the appendix.

Table3 shows the distribution of claims across actor types and the general framing variations of these claims. The table reveals a number of interesting findings that need further discussion. The coding process revealed that 20 out of the 46 actors identified in the issue

network posed clearly identified political claims about asylum seekers¹⁵. This distribution of claims-making actors across the types was such that there are three official, seven organization, ten advocacy and zero actors from the “other” group. This makes the official actors underrepresented, the organizations overrepresented and the advocacy actors proportionally the same compared to the full population in the issue network¹⁶. If we see the amount of inlinks as a sign of importance to the issue, this observation follows our expectation since organizations were the largest recipients on average of links from the network, followed by advocacy groups and with official actors coming in last. Since none of the actors of the “other” type presented any claims on the asylum issue within the time frame of the study, they hold no relevance for the remainder of the framing analysis.

When we look at the overview data in Table3 we get roughly the same picture. On average, the official actors presents 3.25 different claims each, the organizations, 5.6 claims and the advocacy actors, 5.2 claims. This is interesting since on one hand it confirms that our expectation that the actors with most links to the network – the advocacy actors - also presents most claims and thereby contribute most to the deliberation. However, on the other hand the organizations that provided the least amount of links to the network (3.0) presents most claims to the network on average (5.6). This suggests that the relationship between links and deliberation is more complex than at first sight, which I will discuss a bit further in the remaining chapter. The framing confirms the expectations in general; the advocacy groups take an overtly critical stance on the official policies, the official actors remain neutral or defend the policies, and the organizations place themselves somewhere in between. In the framing of the claims there is only one really surprising observations: the official actor, the Danish Institute for Human Rights, adopts a critical stance towards the government on several sub-issues. A closer scrutiny of the

¹⁵ Originally 22 actors presented relevant claims, but since both the Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Institute for Human Rights, had the same material on their Danish (flygtning.dk and menneskeret.dk) and English (drc.dk and humanrights.dk) websites I have collapsed these sites into drc.dk and humanrights.dk respectively.

¹⁶ Taking the small sample into account this is merely a simple observation and not an expression of statistical significance.

human rights institution reveals that its mandate in Danish politics is to be a sort of “critical watchdog” on behalf of human rights in Danish society. Therefore, they act more in line with the independent organizations, even though they are a part of the official political establishment and receive their funding directly from the state budget.

In the coding process, I identified four major categories that encapsulated the vast majority of claims that were made on the issue¹⁷: International treaties; the asylum seeking process; the conditions in the asylum centers and, lastly; the rejection of asylum seekers. Each category covers the different stages of the asylum issue from application of asylum in Denmark through the waiting period in the asylum centers and to the end result (with a special focus on the rejection of asylum that eventually leads to expulsion). The coding strategy has been such that if the actors present a claim, which contains one or more of the key phrases attached to the sub-issues, then that claim has been assigned to that particular issue. In Appendix A I have provided an overview of the content that comprises the sub-issues in the asylum issue network¹⁸:

In the claims sub-issues relating to the relationship between Danish asylum policies in general and international treaties – most prominently the UN Conventions and the ECHR – there is a clear divide between the different actors. The central official actors, the Ministry and the Refugee Appeals Board, both stipulate that Danish policies are in compliance with the international treaties, whereas some of the organizations and advocacy groups pose the counter-argument. It is hardly surprising that this claim figures prominently among the non-official actors, since it clearly identifies the government’s actions as wrong and in need of correction (hence a reason to mobilize). This seems to correspond well with the notion of “injustice” framing that was discussed earlier. By identifying the inherently unjust action (asylum policies in general) and

¹⁷ I left out a few sub-issues that seemed relevant (e.g. the case of the stateless Palestinians), but did not resonate strongly among the actors. The issue proved to be too complex to include every aspect, but the majority is coded.

¹⁸ I have tried to keep a parsimonious list of sub-issues that encompass the most important claims, but at the same time restricts itself to a reasonable size to avoid being too extensive. In a complex issue like this it is of course difficult to delineate the different sub-issues from each other, since the clear cut lines between them can only be artificial. However, in this more qualitative analysis the exact distinctions are of less importance as long as the meaning that the actors try to convey is kept clear.

the actor responsible (the government and affiliated institutions) the solution presents itself clearly (the government must be forced to change policies). In the opposite end, the official actors present the claim in a justice frame that focus on the “sovereignty of domestic law”¹⁹ over international institutions, but at the same time makes clear that Denmark follow the international legal framework in the design of asylum regulation²⁰. Furthermore, the Refugee Appeals Board and others highlight the need to streamline the plethora of conventions from different organs and institutions, so a more transparent and coherent international framework can be easily adopted by the state²¹.

One of the most central aspect of the asylum issue is the debate over the conditions in the centers. This area receives a lot of attention from both organizations (10 claims in total) and the advocacy actors (16 claims), which is a sign that the conditions in the centers are a prime source of deliberation across the actors. However, at the same time it is one of the areas, where the official actors do not contribute at all – apart from the Danish Institute for Human Rights, which once again takes a critical stance towards the government. This suggests that either the debate over this part of the issue takes place elsewhere – e.g. in parliament or in the press – or that it is a sensitive issue that the official actors choose not to comment on. Nonetheless, it is interesting to discuss how the non-official actors frame the conditions in the centers. In the sub-issue of health problems the vast majority of both the organizations and the advocacy group focus on how centers mistreat mentally ill or torture victims suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)²². The Danish Red Cross, who actually runs the centers for the state, stipulates that the long indeterminate stays in the center can lead to psychological problems for the asylum

¹⁹ <http://fln.dk/da-dk/Publikationer/Notater/Menneskerettighedsnotater/beskyttelse.htm> (all websites in the following section has been accessed between 5/24 and 5/25 2011)

²⁰ http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/nyheder/pressemeddelelser/integrationsministeriet/2011/januar/fejlslutning_om_asyl_i_danmark.htm

²¹ <http://fln.dk/da-dk/Publikationer/Notater/Menneskerettighedsnotater/beskyttelse.htm>

²² A clear example can be found in Amnesty’s Danish comment on the government’s report sent to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), where Amnesty criticizes the lack of proper medical checks of asylum seekers on arrival to screen for psychological problems: <http://www.amnesty.dk/danmarktileksamen/artikel/baggrund/hvad-mener-amnesty-om-den-danske-regerings-rapport> (accessed 5/24 2011). Other examples: <http://anstaendigt.dk/>,

seekers, especially among the unaccompanied young seekers²³. Furthermore, some actors identify the prison-like and inhuman conditions as a cause for the suicide attempts in the centers²⁴.

Others, requires the completely shut-down of asylum centers and the relocating of asylum seekers to more human conditions²⁵. The framing among the organizations and the advocacy actors is focused on how the lack of attention and proper medical treatments of these problems by the Danish authorities is not only inhuman and degrading treatment, but can actually lead to a worsening of their health situation.

Likewise, the human rights claim comprise of the various basic human rights (right to work, right to study, right to schooling and right to accommodation)²⁶ that is articulated by the actors as having relevance to the asylum issue. These basic rights are presented as being especially relevant for the number of asylum seekers that have been denied asylum, but where “repatriation” (forced return to their home countries) is impossible²⁷. A large part of these asylum seekers are detained in specially assigned asylum seeker prisons, where the authorities keep them because they are afraid these asylum seekers will try to “go underground” in Danish society and stay as illegal aliens. This practice has been widely criticized from actors throughout the political spectrum for being against international treaties on human rights as well as Danish law²⁸. Amnesty directly calls the practice as “degrading” and “inhuman” for the often vulnerable asylum seekers and urges the government to use this practice as last resort²⁹. In a similar tone, the Danish Refugee Council calls out for a limited use of detention of the ill and traumatized asylum

²³http://www.rodekors.dk/files/DRK_2011/Detgoervi/Danmark/Asyl/Rapporter%20og%20hoeringssvar/Aarsberetning_2010.pdf (accessed 5/24 2011). Grandparents for Asylum refer to a report done by a team of doctor's on the psychological condition of the asylum children that show that a large part of these children are suffering from psychological problems : http://www.bedsteforaeldreforasyl.dk/?Breve_og_avisartikler

²⁴ <http://arnehansen.net/110303Asylsoegerforsoegersejlmord.htm>

²⁵ See e.g. <http://www.flygtningeunderjorden.dk/page5.php>

²⁶ The health related human rights are treated in the “health” sub-issue.

²⁷ See e.g. the report by the Danish Refugee Council:

http://www.drc.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/IA_PDF/about_drc/our_work/returns_from_denmark_18_may_2010.pdf or <http://anstaendigt.dk/> and <http://flygtningeunderjorden.dk/page5.php>

²⁸ See e.g. Amnesty in Denmark: <http://www.amnesty.dk/nyhed/integrationsministeren-skal-forklare-faengslinger-af-asylansogere>; SOS Against Racism: <http://www.sosmodracisme.dk/?Nyheder>

²⁹ : <http://www.amnesty.dk/nyhed/integrationsministeren-skal-forklare-faengslinger-af-asylansogere>

seekers³⁰. Neither the government nor the Refugee Appeals Board comment on these practices, which again reinforces the perception that either the justification and explanation claims relating to these prison methods are taking place in another deliberative arena, or the issue is simply too controversial and incriminating for the government to discuss in public space³¹. Either way, the deliberation about the conditions in the asylum centers only takes place between the organizations and advocacy groups, that all seem to agree on the framing of these practices as a morally wrong and legally problematic.

In the asylum processing category the picture is almost the same. The lack of proper legal protection for and guidance to asylum seekers in their application process is a focus area for a majority of the organizations and large part of the advocacy actors without any participation from official actors. All the three UN affiliated actors (unhcr.org, ohchr.org and una.dk) calls for a more transparent legal system for the protection of and guidance to the asylum seekers (especially those that have been the victims of trafficking)³². A number of advocacy actors criticize the conditions on which the Refugee Appeals Board functions and demand a more transparent and fair legal system with an independent court and appeal options for the asylum seekers³³. The debate over the issue of whether the Danish system discriminates against the asylum seekers mainly takes place among the advocacy groups - apart from Amnesty in Denmark and the Danish Refugee Council, who attacks the family reunification laws and the residence permit system (both of which prefer well-educated applicants) for directly discriminating against asylum seekers (who often have less education)³⁴. The advocacy groups argue for a form of

³⁰ <http://flygtning.dk/nyheder-og-presse/nyhed/artikel/organisationer-stop-faengsling-af-saarbare-asylansoegere/>

³¹ A query on the Ministry's website containing the name of the most infamous asylum prison, "Ellebaek", only came up with one result, which was a response by the Minister to a question posed by an opposing member of parliament in 2009 (these questions and answers are required to be published for anybody to access).

³² <http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=A/HRC/WG.6/11/DNK/2&Lang=E> ;
<http://www.fnforbundet.dk/media/29571/joint%20submission%20denmark%20081110.pdf> ;
<http://www.unhcr.org/4ba9d99d.html>

³³ See e.g. <http://www.arnehansen.net/110216SOSTvangsudstiltortur.pdf> ; <http://anstaendigt.dk/> ;
<http://www.bedsteforaeldreforasyl.dk/?Pressemeddelelser> and <http://www.flygtningeunderjorden.dk/page5.php>

³⁴ <http://www.amnesty.dk/danmarkileksamen/artikel/fnsmenneskerettighedsrad/hvad-anbefaler-amnesty> and
<http://flygtning.dk/nyheder-og-presse/nyhed/artikel/strid-om-tilbagesendt-asylansoeger/>
<http://flygtning.dk/nyheder-og-presse/nyhed/artikel/offentlig-hoering-pointsystem-familiesammenfoering/>

positive discrimination, where asylum seekers should be granted exemptions of the normal requirements to gain residence permits and welfare subsidies, because of their weakened situations³⁵.

The closest the Minister comes to a commentary on these issues is a press statement, where she argues that a quicker processing time in the asylum application procedure has benefited the Danish society, since less time spent on each applicant requires fewer resources from the national treasury³⁶. The sub-issues of legal protection and discrimination have been framed directly against the laws invoked by the current government, which could have an explanatory factor for why the official actors refuse to present claims with counter-framings here. Another explanation could be that since these laws and regulations have been heavily debated in parliament as well as in the press, the official actors see no further need to engage in deliberation with adversary actors in the public space. Nonetheless, the political claims making here takes the form more of a counter-framing than as an act of deliberation across heterogeneous actors.

In the sub-issues of children's rights and forced returns the picture is rather different. Here there appears to be deliberation across all types of actors. Especially the children rights issue is interesting, because it attracts the attention of the majority of all the claims makers in the network including the prime official actor, The Ministry of Integration. The Ministry acknowledges that there is a need to strengthen the assistance in the local municipalities to unaccompanied minors arriving as asylum seekers, but at the same time maintains that these children are to be treated legally as any other asylum case³⁷. The Danish Institute for Human Rights is more direct in its criticism in demanding that the conditions for unaccompanied minors have

³⁵ See e.g. <http://arnehanzen.net/110505SOS-FNMenretkom.htm> and http://www.sosmodracisme.dk/?download=Nr104_web.pdf

³⁶ http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/nyheder/pressemeddelelser/integrationsministeriet/2011/januar/fejlslutning_om_asyl_i_danmark.htm

³⁷ http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/nyheder/nyheder/integrationsministeriet/2010/marts/modtagelse_af_flygtningeboern_skal_kortlaegges.htm

to be improved and that the solitary confinement of children has to be stopped³⁸. Several of the NGOs and international organizations criticize the practice of expelling minors when they turn 18 – some of them having lived the majority of their life in the country – and demand that humanitarian residency should be granted to these asylum seekers³⁹. Other organizations and advocacy groups focus on the need to monitor the conditions of the minors in their home countries upon return⁴⁰. In general, the advocacy groups stipulate the rights of the children to live a normal life (e.g. access to schooling) and to be treated as separate asylum cases with special rights to asylum⁴¹. Accordingly, the issue is being debated on two different levels. The government, organizations and a few advocacy groups discuss the more specific issue of unaccompanied asylum seekers and their legal status in the system, whereas the majority of the advocacy actors focus on the broader issue of children's rights as a part of the human rights discussion in the centers. Nevertheless, the sub-issue of children's rights constitutes an area online, where deliberation across the spectrum of actors occurs.

Another area that has received attention from all parts has been forced returns, especially the practice of “refoulement”, which is the practice of returning asylum seekers to countries or regions, where their lives might be in danger or where they might be subject to persecution. One country that has received extensive attention in this regard is Greece. In period of interest here (May 2010 – May 2011), Greece has played a special role, because it receives a large share of total amount asylum seekers coming to Europe and since its asylum system has been crumbling due to the massive influx of asylum seekers. The EU legislation (The Dublin

³⁸<http://www.humanrights.dk/what+we+do/focus+areas/equal+treatment/the+horizontal+approach/the+danish+equal+treatment+body/results>

³⁹ The Universal Periodic Review by the UN Human Rights Council: <http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=A/HRC/WG.6/11/DNK/2&Lang=E> and Amnesty's policy recommendations: <http://www.amnesty.dk/danmarktileksamen/artikel/baggrund/hvad-mener-amnesty-om-den-danske-regerings-rapport> . ; The Danish Red Cross: http://www.rodekors.dk/files/DRK_2011/Detgoervi/Danmark/Asyl/Rapporter%20og%20hoeringssvar/Aarsberetning_2010.pdf ; Danish United Nation association: <http://www.fnforbundet.dk/media/29571/joint%20submission%20denmark%20081110.pdf>

See also: <http://www.sosmodracisme.dk/?Nyheder>

⁴⁰ See e.g. <http://www.bedsteforaeldreforasyldk/?Pressemeddelelser> ; <http://stoettekredsen.dk/> ; http://www.bedsteforaeldreforasyldk/?Breve_og_avisartikler ; and <http://afvisteirakere.dk/>

⁴¹ See e.g. <http://www.flygtningeunderjorden.dk/page5.php>

Regulation) states that an asylum seeker should be processed in the first EU country that the person enters, which means that countries – including Denmark – has tried to send asylum seekers that have passed through Greece on their way back to Greece with reference to this legislation (Europa). Throughout 2010 the UN and several NGOs highlighted this practice as being in violation with the non-refoulement principle from the UN Convention on Torture, because of the poor protection and care that the Greek asylum system could provide⁴². These actors all propose that Denmark has a responsibility to take care of the asylum seekers arriving through Greece instead of attempting to return them to Greece. The Ministry's response has been that their practices of expulsion to Greece has been in compliance with the European Law and therefore saw no need to change this as long as the conditions in Greece were considered safe⁴³. When the European Court of Justice in the start of 2011 issued a statement that expulsions to Greece was no longer a safe return country the Minister complied with the decision, but at the same time made clear that the focus should be on the rebuilding of the Greek asylum system and not on the responsibility of Denmark to take care of these seekers⁴⁴.

The more general issue of forced returns has been a fundamental part of the issue ever since the Iraqi asylum seekers in 2007 sought refuge in a church to gain the public's attention. A number of the advocacy groups originate from the mobilization for support to the Iraqis in the church (some of the groups are not represented in the network). Therefore, it is not surprising that this area receives a lot of attention from the advocacy actors. The advocacy groups focus extensively on the threat the asylum seekers face in their home country (torture, execution,

⁴² <http://www.fnforbundet.dk/media/29571/joint%20submission%20denmark%20081110.pdf> ; http://www.rodekors.dk/files/DRK_2011/Detgoervi/Danmark/Asyl/Rapporter%20og%20hoeringssvar/Aarsberetning_2010.pdf ; <http://www.drc.dk/dk/news/news/artikel/denmark-sends-hundreds-of-asylum-seekers-to-uncertain-fate-in-greece/> ; <http://www.arnehansen.net/110216SOSTvangsudstiltortur.pdf> ; <http://www.stoettekredsen.dk/dublin.2011.html> ; <http://www.amnesty.dk/nyhed/asylansogere/asylansogere-i-graekenland-behandles-som-kriminelle> ; http://www.sosmodracisme.dk/?download=PRESSEMEDDELELSE_13_december_2010.doc

⁴³ http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/ministeren/artikler_debatindlaeg_og_taler/2011/eu_skal_hjaelpe_graekenland.htm

⁴⁴ http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/nyheder/pressemeddelelser/integrationsministeriet/2011/januar/integrationsministeren_beslutter_at_behandle_asylsager.htm

imprisonment and so on) and the harm it causes to the families in general to be sent back to these dangerous regions⁴⁵. In the opposite end, the Refugee Appeals Board argues that the expulsion in these areas can be justified – e.g. if there is no specific reason to believe that the individual asylum seekers' life or freedom would be in danger – and that asylum seekers that commits criminal offences in Denmark are not covered by the ban on refoulement⁴⁶. Several organizations and advocacy groups advocate in general for only using forced expulsions as a last resort and that especially ill and weak asylum seekers should be granted humanitarian residence permit instead of being forced back to their homelands⁴⁷. One actor directly links the fear of facing forced expulsions with the increasing rates of suicide attempts in the centers⁴⁸. The deliberation around the forced return sub-issue centers on how the different actors frame the responsibility of the Danish state. Whereas the official actors highlight the compliance of the government and institutions with international treaties and stipulate the right to expel asylum seekers, the various civil society actors (international organizations, NGOs and advocacy groups) focus on the humanitarian consequences of the individuals that are victims of the expulsion policies and through this criticism demand a more restricted use of forced expulsions. The forced return sub-issue is one of the most vital issues in the network – especially after the asylum situation in Greece was politicized in Denmark – and it encompasses adversary claims and conflicting framing processes that illuminate the complexities of the asylum issue.

The last sub-issue that needs to be discussed is the need to provide financial support to countries, where a large part of the asylum seekers come from. The Ministry argues that is a

⁴⁵ <http://afvisteirakere.dk/> ; <http://www.arnehansen.net/110216SOSvangsudstiltortur.pdf> ; <http://www.sosmodracisme.dk/?download=Pressemeddelelse%2016-09-2010.doc> ; <http://www.flygtningeunderjorden.dk/page12.php> (all accessed 5/24 2011)

⁴⁶ See e.g. <http://fln.dk/NR/rdonlyres/BC9E9918-54B1-4019-8A3C-3132C96355D2/0/CATopdateringvinter2008.pdf>

⁴⁷ http://flygtning.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/Saadn_hjaelper_vi_PDF/asyl_PDF/Evaluation%20of%20the%20Kosovo%20Programme%202011.pdf ; http://www.bedsteforaeldreforasyl.dk/?Breve_og_avisartikler ; <http://stoettekredsen.dk/> ;

<http://humanrights.dk/files/pdf/UPR/Universal%20Periodic%20Review%20of%20Denmark%202011%20-%20recommendations.pdf> ; <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e48e376>

⁴⁸ http://www.sosmodracisme.dk/?download=PRESSEMEDDELELSE_21_januar_2011.pdf

better strategy to try to provide economic support to the home countries, e.g. in Greece, to prevent more asylum seekers from ending up in Denmark, than it is to treat more people in Denmark⁴⁹. From a more humanitarian perspective the Cross Cultural Center suggests that Denmark have an obligation as a wealthy country to provide assistance locally in areas that are conflict-torn and mitigate religious persecutions there⁵⁰. The Danish Refugee Council, among others, takes a more pragmatic stance in arguing that economic support simply increases the chances of repatriation of asylum seekers⁵¹. On this issue the various actors, granted it is a very small sample, seem to agree on the end goal, although they have different motivations in their framing of the end goal.

Triangulating the results

Lastly, I will turn to a brief discussion of what the results from this analysis means and how the triangulation of the broader network analysis and more thorough claims analysis can illuminate the mechanisms of the issue network. To summarize, the analysis of the interlinking between the actors showed that the advocacy groups are the most active link providers in the network, which makes them important for the sustainability of the network and suggests that they have a high interests in the keeping the issue network as a deliberative space. The organizations received the highest amount of links, but contributed the least, which clearly signals their importance for the issue deliberation attributed by the actors through linking as recognition, and at the same time insinuated that the organizations have relatively less need of the issue network than the other actor types. However, the interlinking analysis also showed that their existed a quite high degree of homophilic clustering among all the three important actor types, even though the organizations received most links from advocacy groups and received more links from the official

⁴⁹ http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/ministeren/artikler_debatindlaeg_og_taler/2011/eu_skal_hjaelpe_graekenland.htm (accessed 5/25-2011)

⁵⁰ http://www.tvaerkulturelt-center.dk/Npt_2011_1_lowres.pdf (accessed 5/25-2011)

⁵¹ <http://flygting.dk/nyheder-og-presse/nyhed/artikel/strid-om-tilbagesendt-asylansoeger/> (accessed 5/25-2011)

actors than they returned. Again this pointed toward the importance of the organizations for the coherence of the network and its possibilities as a deliberative space. Accordingly, hypothesis 1a could be generally confirmed, whereas 1b was only valid for the advocacy groups.

The claims analysis generally confirmed the central role of the organizations. Even though the advocacy groups were most active in total – as expected – on average, the organizations presented as many claims as the advocacy actors and were more critical toward the official policies than expected. One of the reasons this is the case could be the choice of case. Since the asylum issue has been heavily politicized in Denmark throughout more than a decade and has been a vital topic in several electoral campaigns it might attract more attention and mobilization from the organizations than less popular issues. Another explanation, which I find particularly suited, is related to the current events happening during the time of study. In the spring of 2011 the UN conducted its periodic review of Denmark (UPR) – often referred to as the exam of human rights – which attracted a lot of attention from the organizations, partly because a few of them were directly involved either as reviewer (the UN actors) or as independent critiques of the Danish system. A plethora of other explanations are likely alternatives, but it would be too speculative to discuss them further here. Nonetheless, the average numbers should not hide the fact that the advocacy groups, simply by the volume of active actors that pose claims, clearly framed against the government provide the general basis for the deliberative space.

The deeper analysis of the various sub-issues showed that a majority of the critical claims remained unanswered, either because no one presented a counter-claim or none of the official actors responded. However, in a few instances, notably the sub-issues of international treaties, children's rights and forced return, deliberation among the different actor types did indeed occur with claims that were framed oppositional to each other. Measured in the activity of antagonistic actors in various levels of the political sphere, it is meaningful to argue that political

deliberation exists in some areas of the asylum issue on the web. This should of course not obscure the fact that, for especially the official actors and possibly also the organizations, this form of online deliberation is hardly the primary space for political interaction. Obviously, there is a whole offline world of media platforms and other opportunities – as well as the online possibilities of social media and web fora – that is not accounted for here. In general there is a need to conduct more comparative studies of political deliberation in offline and online media. One recently conducted study by Koopmans and Zimmerman (2010) on the political communication among different types of actors online touched upon this question. They concluded that, even though less powerful actors (e.g. civil society groups) did achieve slightly higher visibility in the online sphere compared with the offline media, it was still the official (state and party) actors that dominated the deliberation in both spheres. The link analysis here also pointed in that direction by showing how the more established actors (organizations and official actors) paid less attention to the activity of the advocacy groups. Although these groups can achieve high visibility online – as a few of the advocacy groups I discussed earlier managed, e.g. in Google Search – it would be too farfetched to conclude that this online visibility translates directly into political influence. This area is largely unexplored and needs further investigation.

Before I turn to the concluding remarks, I wish to touch upon the relationship between the results from the two different analyses. To test the relationship between the centrality in the network - measured by inlinks - and the relevance to the network – measured by the number of different claims – I conducted a simple correlation analysis of the amount of inlinks received and the number of claims presented. The correlating results are significant ($P < 0.05$, $n=46$), but rather small (0.30), which means that there is a tendency for actors that receive more links to also contribute more to the deliberation than others⁵². This observation confirms one of the basic assumptions from network analysis, namely that the centrality of the actors matters for their role in the network. However, the causality of this tendency cannot be explained from these data and

⁵² Full list of data of the network as well as calculations can be retrieved from the author upon request.

given the small correlation factor it does not provide any deeper explanation. One ironic fact, is that the most central actor in the network (measured by inlinks), The Danish Immigrant Counseling, do not present a single claim and therefore do not contribute to the deliberation at all. Nonetheless, there is in fact a significant correlation between centrality in the network and relevance to the deliberation, which could be interesting to explore in further studies of other issue networks online. An analysis of the amount of hits and visits these websites receive could provide an interesting perspective on whether the central websites in the network also maintain a high visibility and thereby importance on the wider web. This could also be used to assess how accessible the different claims and framings are online, e.g. in a number of Google searches on different relevant keywords.

From this limited case study it is difficult to draw larger inferences, but the results certainly points toward the need to conduct further studies into the nature of deliberation between websites that include both more extensive statistical studies of linking activity and deeper qualitative studies of the content and interaction between the actors online. The fundamental question that remains to be answered is the following: Can the asylum issue network be said to constitute a functioning deliberative space – an act of deliberative democracy as some would call it – or is it more fitting to see it as mainly a network, e.g. professional, advocacy or oppositional, of actors that try to provide a counter-frame to the official policies? The short answers must be: yes and yes. As I have showed throughout this analysis the tendencies have been for the actors to mainly interact with politically likeminded, which continued in the claims-making and especially the framing. The cacophony of critical voices by far outnumbered the few official actors that contributed to the deliberation in defending the policies as just and direly needed. Although, the high interlinkage between the advocacy actors and partly the organizations clearly pointed towards a form of advocacy network organizing online, these few instances of deliberation across actors showed signs of political deliberation taking place. Likewise, in spite of the fact that the actors do not respond directly to each other's claims and framings, this analysis

has indeed showed that in some instances the Danish asylum issue network on the web can function as a site of politics. The extend of these observation are rather unexplored, and therefore a field that I will turn to very briefly in the concluding remarks below.

Conclusion

Through the discussion of the theoretical framework behind issue networks and the methodological tools of web crawling and claims-making, I have assessed the possibilities of applying issue network analysis in a study of political deliberation in the online sphere. The case study of the Danish asylum issue network showed several interesting methodological as well as empirical findings. First, I turn to the empirical results of the asylum issue analysis. The web crawling tool, Issue Crawler, proved to be competent in finding an issue network that encompassed politically antagonistic actors who provided links across the political spectrum. Even though the three primary actor types, official, organization and advocacy, primarily constituted separated clusters with a high degree of interlinking among the same type of actors, there did exist a form of deliberative space across the various actors. With the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs as both an important connecting point for the actors in the network and the primary official actor in the network that otherwise largely consisted of adversaries to the government's asylum policies, it seemed fair to see the online asylum network as a functioning deliberative space.

In the second half of the analysis I showed how the claims presented by the actors and the specific framing of these claims matters for the nature of the issue network. In a few of the sub-issues of the asylum issue the deliberation could indeed be characterized as both active – with claims being presented by various types of actors – and vibrant – consisting of claims being framed in against each other. In these cases it makes sense to see the issue network as politics happening in the online sphere. However, in the majority of the sub-issues the deliberation could at best be characterized as predominantly one-sided, and in some instances directly oppositional without any contributions from the official actors. This points toward the important function of these networks largely as coalition-building or professional relations between actors with a similar

cause. Nonetheless, the issue network approach proved to be a useful tool in identifying relevant actors that engaged in the online deliberation of the issue. Whether there would be a huge difference in the type of actors and the content of the deliberation in an analysis of offline media, I can only speculate about here. In general, most of the advocacy groups and some of the domestic NGOs found the network would likely find it more difficult to gain a voice in the traditional media than on the web. However, this is an area that merits further research.

This case analysis raised several methodological challenges to the issue network approach. One of the central critiques is regarding the validity of Issue Crawler as a sampling tool for the subsequent framing analysis. The coding of the claims presented by the actors showed that less than half of the actors in the network actually participated actively in deliberating the issue online. This has partly to do with the fact that many actors, particularly among the more politically influential actors, do not use their websites as a primary platform for presenting claims and engaging in framing contests with adversary actors, but rely more on the professional media channels. However, I suspect that this is not the complete answer. A simple correlation analysis showed that even though there is a positive relationship between the amount of links an actor receives and the number of claims this actor presents in the network, it is rather small (0.30). Since Issue Crawler uses the amount of links an actor receives from other actors in the network as the criteria for designing the issue network, this finding poses some challenges for issue network analysis.

One of the main goals of this analysis was to find the place where the “issue is happening”, which in this context means to locate the most active deliberators in the online sphere. The problem is then that if the most active claims-makers on the issue are not large recipients of links from other sites, they simply become invisible in the issue network. This, I see as a serious challenge for the theory and a bit ironic, since one of the major advantages of analyzing claims-making on websites as opposed to offline news articles, should be that actors

with less access to the traditional media would be able to have a voice online. This is of course still largely true - everybody can in theory utter their opinions online – but the problem of access remains in the online sphere. The human gatekeeper (e.g. the newspaper editor) from the offline world that could determine who could gain a voice in the media still exists; it has just taken a different, more automated, appearance online in the form of search engines, most notably Google, and research tools like Issue Crawler. Links are the determinants of visibility online as goodwill from the media is it in the offline world. This poses a challenge to the validity of the method.

A related methodological problem regards the scope of issue networks. Issue Crawler, like most other web crawling tools, has troubles finding actors that do not use hyperlinks at all, or to locate links that are not publicly available. An example of the first instance that has relevance in this context would be the political debate fora, where people meet up and discuss various topics across the political spectrum. This deliberation is probably in some instances more representative for a common notion of political discourse, than the deliberation across websites, which I have focused on here. However, this form of online deliberation has a number of problems attached, such as restricted access and anonymous contributors, which pose other challenges to an analysis of online deliberative spaces. The problem with the inaccessible links poses a more serious challenge to issue networks, I think. This is mainly because the “deep pages” on web sites like Facebook, Twitter and other social media services cannot be accessed by Issue Crawler. The main site itself can be a part of the network – as was the case with Facebook.com – but the individual pages and their interlinking cannot be accessed, which renders these sites virtually useless for the issue analysis. The reason why this is a particular problem is that these social media sites encompass all types of political actors (from private persons to presidents) that freely can engage in all sorts of deliberation within these spaces. This I see as a very important challenge that will be difficult for the Issue Crawler to overcome. However, several other methods for mapping these social media spaces do exist out there (see

e.g. Wu et al. 2011), so it could be more of an ethical question about gaining access than an actual methodological barrier.

Facing all these critical remarks on the methodology behind issue network analysis it is of course relevant to take into account the complexities of analyzing political deliberation in general. No method or theoretical framework would be able to encompass all the different varieties of politics in practice that is happening online as well as offline. Issue network analysis has proven itself useful in mapping a part of this deliberative space, which contains some valuable information on the political actors and their stances on issues that neither a quantitative analysis of hyperlinks nor a qualitative text analysis of offline media can show on their own. Therefore, issue network analysis is indeed a useful tool to gain an overview of the relations between the political actors and the claims they make online, as long as one takes care in reading too much into the material. Obviously the extend and the complexity of the political deliberation on any given issue on the Internet makes it impossible to attend to all the relevant material. Furthermore, the offline sphere of politics has an important aspect that is been left out of online issue networks; physical deliberation. Whether it is Grandparents singing in parliament⁵³, NGOs discussing with the Minister or demonstrators blocking the pathway for a bus in the middle of the night, this direct contact to the decision-makers are undoubtedly still an essential part of political deliberation. The question then becomes, whether the deliberation online should be seen as equally important as the physical interaction, or whether the online still remains an underused deliberative space. My conclusions here have been rather tentative, and rightly so, because there is still a lot of research to be done before we can get a fuller picture, of whether the Internet indeed is a site of politics. The issue network analysis is only one step on the way.

⁵³ The advocacy group, Grandparents for Asylum, started singing in protest in the parliament last year (2010) during session against the asylum legislation, which gave them a lot of media attention and a couple of hours in jail.

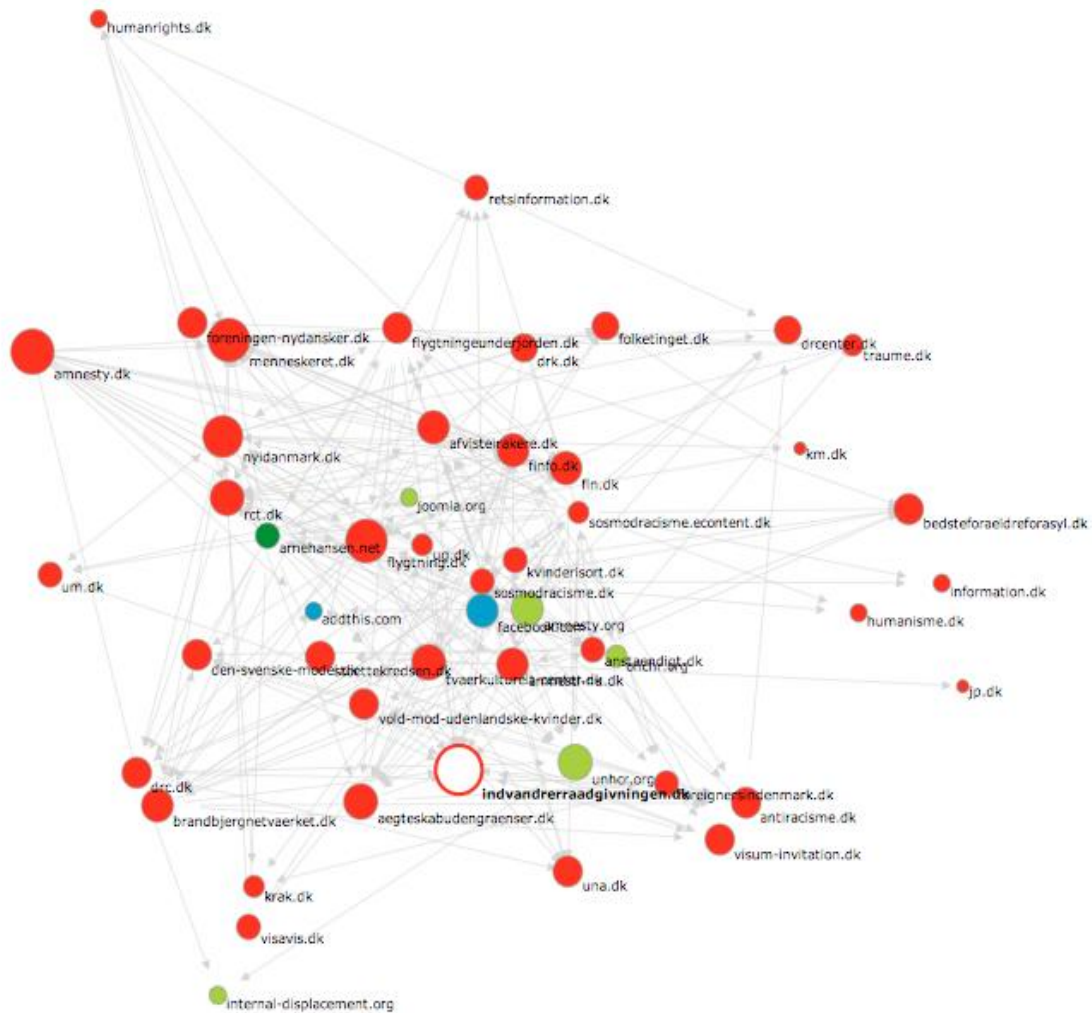
Appendix A: Coding guidelines for the claims-making

Claim / Sub-issue	Key phrases
International Treaties	The Danish asylum policies are in compliance / violation with the multitude of relevant international treaties, such as the UN treaties (e.g. the UN Convention against Torture) on as well as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); these international treaties are flawed and in need of revision to provide a sufficient backdrop for Danish asylum policies; Denmark has signed but not implemented treaties;
Conditions in Centers - Health problems - Detention - Human Rights	inhuman conditions in centers; care for torture victims and people suffering from psychological problems (PTSD), suicide attempts in centers; medical treatment of seekers; no end date for processing; detention without trial (Detention Center Ellebaek); asylum should be granted to seekers staying for longer periods in centers; detention justified; legal right to detention; Deprivation of rights to work, study and live: accommodation outside of centers, language training and basic schooling for children, further training for adults,
Asylum Seeker Process - Legal protection - Discrimination - Children's rights	proper counseling, legal representation, provision of interpreters; Refugee Appeals Board not a proper institution; opportunity to appeal; rating system makes it difficult to obtain citizenship; family reunification harder for asylum seekers; lack of positive discrimination in granting humanitarian residence permits to weak asylum seekers; sick / elderly / torture victims harder to get residence permit the need to treat children as separate case; keep unity of family; better care for unaccompanied minors; Residence permit for minors staying the majority of their life in DK; children right to health care
Rejection of Seekers - Forced Return: Greece - Forced Return: Other Support Home Country	Lack of proper safety and protection of human rights in Greece; Dublin Convention; ECHR statement to stop returning seekers to Greece; Expulsion of asylum seekers to areas, where their lives might be in danger (e.g. due to perpetual war conditions, fear of persecution and torture). Limited time frame between the decisions to expulse an asylum seeker and the act of expulsion; moral duty to; expulsion of torture victims and ill persons; refoulement: Iraq, Syria, Libya, Nigeria, Iran Provide assistance in rebuilding home countries; survey the situation of repatriated asylum seekers; rebuilding in home countries; support of asylum seekers near home country; establishment of refugee camps in home country;

Appendix B: Issue Crawler Starting points

<http://home12.inet.tele.dk/ldf> ; <http://kirkeasyl.dk> ; <http://multisamfund.dk> ;
<http://www.afvisteirakere.dk> ; <http://www.amnesti-nu.dk> ;
http://www.asylret.dk/viewpage.php?page_id=2 ; <http://www.bedsteforaeldreforasyl.dk/?forside> ;
<http://www.brandbjergnetvaerket.dk> ; <http://www.flygtning.dk> ; <http://www.flygtningeunderjorden.dk> ;
<http://www.menneskeret.dk> ; <http://www.sosmodracisme.econtent.dk> ; <http://www1.drk.dk>

CEU eTD Collection



Appendix D: List of actors in the network

Rank	Inlink*	URL	Owner	Type	Based	Claims-makers
1	24	invandreradgivning.dk	The Danish Immigrant Counselling	Advocacy	DK	No
2	17	Amnesty.dk	Amnesty Inter. Denmark	Organization	DK	Yes
3	16	flygtning.dk	Danish Refugee Council	Organization	DK	Yes
4	15	nyidanmark.dk	Danish Ministry for Refugees, Immigration and Integration	Official	DK	Yes
5	12	rct.dk	Research- and Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims	Organization	DK	No
6	13	menneskeret.dk	Danish Institute for Human Rights	Official	DK	Yes
7	11	unhcr.org	The UN Refugee Agency	Organization	Int	Yes
8	10	Aegteskabudengraenser.dk	The Association for Marriage without Borders	Advocacy	DK	No
9	10	Vold-mod-udenlandske-kvinder.dk	The Danish Immigrant Counseling	Advocacy	DK	No
10	9	drc.dk	Danish Refugee Council – English version	Organization	DK	Yes
11	9	Tvaerkulturelt-center.dk	The Cross-cultural Center	Advocacy	DK	Yes
12	9	Visum-invitation.dk	The Danish Immigrant Counseling	Advocacy	DK	No
13	9	antiracisme.dk	The Danish Immigrant Counseling	Advocacy	DK	No
24	9	fln.dk	The Refugee Appeals Board	Official	DK	Yes
25	9	Bedsteforaeldreforasyl.dk	Grandparents for asylum	Advocacy	DK	Yes
26	8	Amnesty.org	Amnesty International	Organization	Int	Yes
27	8	den-svenske-model.dk	The Danish Immigrant Counseling	Advocacy	DK	No
28	8	Flygtningeunderjorden.dk	The Committee for Underground Refugees	Advocacy	DK	Yes
29	8	Stoettekredsen.dk	Support Asylum to Refugees and Expulsed Persons	Advocacy	DK	Yes
30	8	Afvisteirakere.dk	The association for the support to rejected Iraqi Asylum seekers	Advocacy	DK	Yes
31	8	Amnesty-nu.dk	Amnesty Now	Advocacy	DK	Yes
32	7	Una.dk	Danish United Nation	Organization	DK	Yes

			Association			
33	7	Um.dk	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Official	DK	No
34	7	Finfo.dk	Library service on integration	Other	DK	No
35	7	Foreningen-nydanske.dk	The Association for the Integration of Immigrants in the labor market	Advocacy	DK	No
36	7	anstaendigt.dk	Citizens for a decent Denmark	Advocacy	DK	Yes
37	7	drk.dk	The Danish Red Cross	NGO	DK	Yes
38	6	Drcenter.dk	Documentation and Advisory Center for Race-discrimination	Organization	DK	No
39	6	visavis.dk	Unknown	Advocacy	DK	Yes
40	6	sosmodracisme.dk	Sos mod Racisme	Advocacy	DK	Yes
41	5	Kvinderisort.dk	Women in Black	Advocacy	DK	No
42	5	arnehansen.net	Arne Hansen – private person	Advocacy	DK	Yes
41	5	folkettinget.dk	The Danish Parliament	Official	DK	No
42	4	foreignersindenmark.dk	Unknown	Other	DK	No
43	3	Joomla.org	Joomla	Other	Int	No
44	3	Ohchr.org	UN Human Rights-Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights	Organization	Int	Yes
45	3	Internal-displacement.org	Internal Displacement Monitoring Center / Norwegian Refugee Council	Organization	Int	No
46	3	ug.dk	Ministry of education	Official	DK	No
47	3	km.dk	The Danish Ministry for Church Affairs	Official	DK	No
48	3	traume.dk	Various organizations (incl. the Danish Refugee Council)	Advocacy	DK	No
49	3	Krak.dk	Unknown	Other	DK	No
50	2	humanrights.dk	Danish Institute for Human Rights – English version	Official	DK	Yes
51	2	Information.dk	Information –Danish Newspaper	Other	DK	No
52	2	retsinformation.dk	The Civil Affairs Agency	Official	DK	No
53	2	Jp.dk	Jyllands-Posten (newspaper)	Other	DK	No
54	2	Humanisme.dk	Rune Engelbrecht (private person)	Other	DK	No

* The rank score is determined by the number of links a given site received from the crawled population. The list only includes sites that are represented in the issue network.

Appendix E: Overview of the various political claims presented by each actor

Actor	Type of claim	Context	Sources:
Grandparents for Asylum (Advocacy)	International treaties Health issues Human Rights Children's rights Discrimination Legal Protection Detention Home countries	Danish policies in violation with international treaties and the European Court of Human Rights; Rating system discriminates against asylum seekers – torture victims, women and elderly; Establishment of refugee camps near homeland to take avoid persecution of seekers; Expulsion of refugees to dangerous areas violates international treaties; Denmark has a moral duty to let seekers stay; Children living most of their lives in centers should be granted residence permit; People being held in centers indefinitely is harmful for their psychological health; Children being deprived of health care; Many young asylum children suffer from psychological diseases without receiving treatment; Rejected Asylum seekers that cannot be sent back should be given permission to stay; Refugee Appeals Board not a proper legal institution and fail to protect the legal rights of asylum seekers	Letters and articles: http://www.bedsteforaeldreforasyldk/?Breve_og_avisartikler Press statements: http://www.bedsteforaeldreforasyldk/?Pressemiddeler Speeches: http://www.bedsteforaeldreforasyldk/?Taler http://www.bedsteforaeldreforasyldk/?M%F8der_og_aktioner Statement of purpose: http://www.bedsteforaeldreforasyldk/?M%E5ls%E6tning%26nbsp%3B Video: http://www.youtube.com/user/KPnetTV#p/a/u/0/HPeJL0iGLDs
The association for the support to rejected Iraqi Asylum seeker (Advocacy)	Forced Return: Other Children's rights	Split up of family when rejected asylum seekers sent home is inhuman and is a violation against children's rights; refolement to Iraq is against UN conventions.	Statement of purpose: http://afvisteirakere.dk/ Articles: http://afvisteirakere.dk/artikler/irak_ofre_for%20vold efter 2009-05-13.html
Amnesty Now (Advocacy)	Detention Forced return	The extended stays in the asylum centers have deteriorating consequences for the asylum seekers' psychological conditions; Forced returns are inhuman.	Statement of purpose: http://amnesti-nu.dk
Visavis.dk (Advocacy)	Health problems Legal protection	Conditions in centers are inhuman and harmful; Lack of proper legal system to protect asylum seekers	Statement of purpose: http://www.visavis.dk/?page_id=37
Danish United Nation Association (Organization – Danish NGO)	International treaties Forced return: Greece & Other Children's rights	Denmark should Incorporate conventions and treaties into Danish law; Stop deportations to Greece until proper legal conditions and protection is prevalent; Forced returns should be stopped; Children's rights should be heard and they should be allowed to live outside of the centers; having lived the majority of their lives in Denmark	Report to the UN: http://www.fnforbundet.dk/media/29571/joint%20submission%20denmark%20081110.pdf
Support Asylum to Refugees and Expulsed Persons (Advocacy)	International treaties Health issues Human Rights Detention Children's rights Legal Protection Forced returns – Greece and Other	Danish asylum policies are violating international treaties; Return of Iraq seekers and others to dangerous areas are violating refolement conventions; Problematic to return refugees back to Greece; asylum seekers stuck in centers for many years, which is harmful to their health; Rejection of torture victims asylum seekers; Wrong diagnosis of diseases and inhuman treatment by nursing staff has to be corrected; children that have lived the majority of their lives here should be allowed to stay permanently	Statement of purpose: http://stoettekredsen.dk/ Newsletter: http://www.stoettekredsen.dk/dublin.2011.html http://stoettekredsen.dk/DKkonventionsmodarbejde.html http://stoettekredsen.dk/pdf%20filer/Flygtningenytt%202011%20nr%201.web.pdf
The Commit-tee	International treaties	Danish policies violate UN conventions and EHRC;; Asylum	Statement of Purpose:

for Underground Refugees (advocacy)	Health problems Human Rights Children's rights Legal Protection Discrimination Forced Return – Greece and Other	centers should be closed and seekers relocated to normal residence; Expulsion to dangerous areas – Iraq and Sri Lanka- should be stopped immediately; Individual counseling for asylum seekers required, rating system and family reunification laws are discriminatory, revoked residence permit to asylum seekers are unjust; Too many demands from the state on the capabilities of asylum seekers to contribute to society; asylum seekers deprived of rights to work, study and live a normal life; Illegal return of asylum seekers by the state to Greece – Dublin Regulation; Critique of the residence permit on humanitarian grounds; The Danish state have the economic and spatial surplus to accept asylum seekers; Refugee Appeals Board not a proper legal institution.	http://www.flygtningeund.erjorden.dk/page5.php http://www.flygtningeund.erjorden.dk/page12.php Newsletter: http://www.flygtningeund.erjorden.dk/download/FUJ_nyhedsbrev_40.pdf http://www.flygtningeund.erjorden.dk/download/FUJ_nyhedsbrev_41.pdf http://www.flygtningeund.erjorden.dk/download/FUJ_nyhedsbrev_39.pdf Video: http://www.bombayfc.com/amatter/
The Refugee Appeals Board (Official)	International treaties Forced returns - Other	Stop of expulsion of asylum seekers to Syria due to review from the State Department; EHRC confirms a judgment on asylum seekers from Denmark; Board against the decision of expulsion; The ban on "Refoulement" only limited: expulsion can be justified (e.g. criminal acts, non-persecution) - Criminal acts lead to expulsion; Political asylum not a natural right; State law has sovereignty over international treaties; EHCR is complex and ambiguous; EHCR and UN offer different definitions of torture	News stories and comments: http://fln.dk/da-dk/Nyheder/Nyheder/beroudsendelse_syrien.htm http://fln.dk/da-dk/Nyheder/Nyheder/EMR_K.htm http://fln.dk/da-dk/Publikationer/Notater/Menneskerettighedsnotater/beskyttelse.htm http://fln.dk/NR/rdonlyres/BC9E9918-54B1-4019-8A3C-3132C96355D2/0/CATopdateringvinter2008.pdf
Danish Red Cross (Organisation – Danish NGO)	Children's rights Forced Returns - Greece Support home country	The Government should grant residence permits to unaccompanied people under 18, Treat asylum Seeker in Denmark instead of sending them to Greece); against reception centers in home countries, because of fear of health and safety issue;	Annual Report 2010: http://www.rodekors.dk/filer/DRK_2011/Detgoervi/Danmark/Asyl/Rapporter%20og%20hoeringssvar/Aarsberetning_2010.pdf
Citizens for a Decent Denmark (advocacy)	International treaties Health problems Human Rights Children's rights Legal protection Discrimination	Asylum decisions should follow international treaties; Medical check and legal assistance upon arrival required;; better conditions in centers;; recompose the members of the Refugee Appeals Board to provide a more fair and transparent decision-process; seekers should be allowed to work, educate themselves and life outside of centers; Children have a right to a separate asylum process; rating system discriminating	Proposal to a new Danish Asylum policy (March 2011): http://anstaendigt.dk/
UN Human Rights Council (organization - international)	International treaties Health issues Children's rights Forced returns Support home countries	Denmark have not ratified all appropriate international treaties; long and indeterminate stays in centers can lead to psychological problems; Acts leading to expulsion (refoulement) should be in line with international treaties; unaccompanied minors losing right to residence at the age of 18 could be problematic; More focus on gender issues and human trafficking; recommends Denmark to minor asylum seekers upon return;	Universal Periodic Review – Denmark (May 2011): Compilation of UN information: http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=A/HRC/WG.6/11/DNK/2&Lang=E
Arne Hansen (Advocacy – single person web site giving voice to many other actors)	International treaties Children's rights Health problems Human Rights Legal Protection Discrimination Detention Forced expulsion – Greece & Other	The selection of "good" and "bad" immigrants, asylum seekers among other, against international conventions; Syrian asylum seeker exposed to torture in Syria; no agreement of refoulement with Syria ; Asylum Seekers sent back to dangerous regions and have faced torture in home countries (after refoulement); stop forced expulsions to Greece (The Dublin Regulation flawed);Expulsions to dangerous areas (Iraq) in violation with UNHCR; Prolong stays in the camps leads to suicide; indeterminate imprisonment violates international treaties and causes psychological harm to seekers; violation of treaties on	Various news articles, letters and speeches: http://arnehansen.net/110311modudvisn.tilSyrien.htm http://www.arnehansen.net/100914Syrisk-kurdSultestrejke.htm http://www.arnehansen.net/101215Amnesty-rap-EU-Libyen.htm

		stateless and the disabled; critique of Denmark by the UN (UPR); Critique of the 24-year rule as discriminatory; imprisonment of asylum seekers leads to psychological problems; illegal refugees lack visits to doctors and basic health necessities; discrimination of asylum seekers in national legislation (e.g. the laws of family reunification); positive discrimination of asylum seekers needed; individual asylum cases for children required; better conditions for victims of human trafficking; imprisonment of ill and torture victims; the right to take decisions to court; The Refugee Appeals Board a flawed institution – not a proper legal framework	http://www.arnehansen.net/110414US-rappSyrien.htm http://www.arnehansen.net/110216SOSTvangsudstil tortur.pdf http://arnehansen.net/100928udvistsyrerfaengslet.htm http://arnehansen.net/100617Genefke.SkamoverDK.htm http://arnehansen.net/100617MAukenstaleveddem o.htm http://arnehansen.net/100717BMelchiorstalevBFYl demo17.06.htm http://arnehansen.net/100617JonasChrIMRtale.htm http://arnehansen.net/100902gebyrpaafamsam.htm http://arnehansen.net/100909FN.stoptvangshjIrak.htm http://arnehansen.net/101027syredeporteret.htm http://arnehansen.net/101013asylpolnotetilSF-AK..htm http://arnehansen.net/110303Asylsoegerforsoegers elvmord.htm http://arnehansen.net/110323NerupAsylpolitik.htm http://arnehansen.net/101222udvistCong.flyg.htm http://arnehansen.net/101208Pierrenesudvisningtil Congo.htm http://arnehansen.net/1005.11MichDKdumpedei%20Menret.htm http://arnehansen.net/110505SOS-FNMenretkom.htm http://arnehansen.net/110214NerupKoldehjerter.htm http://arnehansen.net/101222Sundhedstilbudtilmen udenopholdstil.htm http://arnehansen.net/110124MBflygretudhules.htm http://arnehansen.net/101107FlyUJordentilFN.htm http://arnehansen.net/100516UdlStramning.htm
Cross-cultural center (Advocacy)	Support home country	Christian Iraqi asylum seekers are in danger in their home countries when they return, and therefore it is important to support them there and prevent persecution.	Newsletter: http://www.tvaerkulturelt-center.dk/Npt_2011_1_lowres.pdf
Amnesty International – Denmark (Organization - Danish part of the Inter-national	International treaties Health problems Human Rights Detention Discrimination Children's Rights	Violation of international treaties; Critique from the Council of Europe, UNHCR, ECHR, UPR hearing; Lack of proper EU law; Lack of humanitarian residence permit; Detention of vulnerable person in violation of Danish law and Int treaties (Ellebaek); Detention is degrading and inhuman for	Comments on UPR: http://www.amnesty.dk/danmarktileksamen/artikel/baggrund/hvad-mener-amnesty-om-den-danske-regerings-rapport

organization)	Forced Return – Greece & Other	vulnerable persons; unaccompanied minors withdrawal of residence permit when turn 18; receptions centers; family reunification and the rating system in danger of discriminating against asylum seekers; PTS patients treated inhuman; Asylum Children appears to lack proper schooling compared to Danish children; Non-treatment and identification of torture victims; non-limited stays in centers; expulsion of seekers to dangerous areas; Greece violating seekers' rights	http://www.amnesty.dk/danmarktileksamen/artikel/fnsammeneskerettighedsraad/hvad-anbefaler-amnesty News stories: http://www.amnesty.dk/nyhed/integrationsminister-en-skal-forklare-faengslinger-af-asylansogere http://www.amnesty.dk/campaign_flygtninge/artikel/frihedsberovelse/q-om-frihedsberovelse-af-asylansogere http://www.amnesty.dk/nyhed/pas-pa-de-menneskelige-konsekvenser-af-pointsystemet http://www.amnesty.dk/nyhed/asylansogere/asylansogere-i-graekenland-behandles-som-kriminelle http://www.amnesty.dk/campaign_flygtninge/
The Danish Institute for Human Rights (Official – National Human Rights Institute)	International Treaties Health Problems Human Rights Detention Discriminate Children's Rights Forced Return: Other	Improve conditions for children and unaccompanied minors; stop of solitary confinement of children; level of education offered low; expulsions should be in line with UNHCR regulation; detention only as a measure of last resort; Dispensation for refugees in getting residence permit rating system and PTSD	The institute's recommendations to the UN review (UPR): http://www.humanrights.dk/what+we+do/focus+areas/equal+treatment/the+horizontal+approach/the+danish+equal+treatment+body/results http://humanrights.dk/files/pdf/UPR/Universal%20Periodic%20Review%20of%20Denmark%202011%20-%20recommendations.pdf
SOS against racism (Advocacy – Danish affiliation of European network)	Health Problems Human Rights Detention Legal Protection Discrimination Children's Rights Forced Returns – Greece & Others	Expulsion of unaccompanied minors when they turn 18; expulsion of mentally ill persons; expulsion of Syrian to torture conditions; rejected Iraqis; Iraqis held in centers for an indeterminate time period; seekers cannot take their case to court; narrow definition of refugees; people held as prisoners indeterminately without trial; too difficult for people to obtain residence permit; suicide attempt in asylum centers; asylum seekers commits suicide in centers because of fear of being sent back; expulsion to various countries happening without proper protection; family reunification and residence permit laws are discriminatory against asylum seekers; asylum seekers deprived of rights to work and study, which is in violation of treaties; humanitarian residence permits should be granted to ill seekers; Refugee Appeals Board not a proper legal institution and cannot provide legal protection; Refoulement to Syria, DR Congo, Greece violates EHRC and UN (torture); Danish state should pay to get the asylum seekers back to Denmark that have been unjustly returned to home countries or to Greece following the Dublin Reg.;	News articles and press statements: http://www.sosmodracisme.dk/?Nyheder http://www.sosmodracisme.dk/?download=Nr%20103%20oktober%202010s.pdf http://www.sosmodracisme.dk/?download=PRESEM EDDELELSE 21 januar 2011.pdf http://www.sosmodracisme.dk/?download=PRESEM EDDELELSE 13 december 2010.doc http://www.sosmodracisme.dk/?download=Pressem eddelelse%2016-09-2010.doc http://www.sosmodracisme.econtent.dk/?download=SOS%20mod%20Racisme%20ford%20F8mmer%20%E6ndringerne%20i%20udl%E6ndringelovgivning.doc http://www.sosmodracisme.econtent.dk/?download=Bedstefor%20E6ldre%20for

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Danish Refugee Council (Organization – Danish NGO)	International treaties Health problems Human rights Detention Legal protection Discrimination Child Rights Forced returns – Greece and Other Support Home countries	International regulation (Dublin) is insufficient; The Danish Refugee Council intervenes in the expulsion (refoulement) to Greece; “accepted returns” preferred over “forced returns”; the government has the right to deny people asylum and sent them home; persons should be giving time to prepare the repatriation process; help programmes locally upon return; need of better counseling for asylum seekers ; study of the success of forced and accepted returns of asylum seekers to Kosovo; imprisonment of ill and traumatic asylum seekers indefinitely is problematic; need to recognize the special conditions of chronically ill and PTSD patients when posing demands on persons; economic support increase the chances of repatriation; need to improve legal counseling for asylum seekers; asylum seekers should have the right to work study and temporary residence if return is not possible; children should be allowed proper schooling; children should not be forced return against their interest; the rating system and family unification laws discriminate against asylum seekers;	<p>Various news stories: http://www.drc.dk/dk/news/news/artikel/denmark-sends-hundreds-of-asylum-seekers-to-uncertain-fate-in-greece/ http://www.drc.dk/news/news/artikel/stop-sending-asylum-seekers-to-greece-1/ http://flygtning.dk/nyheder-og-presse/nyhed/artikel/ny-rapport-viser-blinde-vinkler-i-asylraadgivningen/ http://flygtning.dk/nyheder-og-presse/nyhed/artikel/strid-om-tilbagesendte-asylansoeger/ http://flygtning.dk/nyheder-og-presse/nyhed/artikel/tvivils-omme-aendringer-af-regler-for-aegtefaellesammenfoering/ http://flygtning.dk/nyheder-og-presse/nyhed/artikel/organisationer-stop-faengsling-af-saarbare-asylansoegere/</p> <p>Reports: http://flygtning.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/Saadan_hjaelper_vi_PDF/asyl_PDF/Evaluation%20of%20the%20Kosovo%20Programme%202011.pdf http://www.drc.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/IA_PDF/about_drc/our_work/returns_from_denmark_18_may_2010.pdf</p>
The UN Refugee Agency (Organization - International)	No specific claims about seekers in Denmark, but general claims: Detention Legal protection Forced returns – Other Support home countries	General claim for states not to detain asylum seekers; Violation UN Refugee Convention to detain people arbitrarily; Free legal assistance should be offered to asylum seekers including the right to appeal; No expulsion before case has been decided (incl. appeal); Transparent procedures for safe countries of origin should be implemented	<p>Policy Statements: http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e48e376 http://www.unhcr.org/4dcbef476.html http://www.unhcr.org/4ba9d99d9.html</p>
Amnesty International (Organization – International NGO)	International Treaties Health problems Children’s Rights Forced return: Other	Danish policies do not comply with international treaties (e.g. the UN); Stop forced repulsions to certain areas in Iraq; monitor unaccompanied children in home countries upon return; humanitarian with illnesses should not be returned to areas without the means to provide care; refoulement to dangerous areas in Iraq; detention should only be used in last resort; UPR context	<p>Reports: http://amnesty.org/en/library/asset/IOR41/008/2011/en/37762c80-56a1-4208-beda-2c782a90672e/ior410082011en.pdf http://amnesty.org/en/libr</p>

			ary/asset/EUR42/002/2011/en/a1d06b30-b181-4770-a873-c79f4be8cd73/eur420022011en.pdf http://amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR18/001/2010/en/c6c231e0-486e-4f3d-9df6-ef5cae38b8a5/eur180012010en.pdf http://amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR01/028/2010/en/6044e775-b35e-4572-adfc-7a1835fbbac4/eur010282010en.pdf
Danish Ministry for Refugees, Immigration and Integration (Official - (government actor))	International treaties Children's Rights Forced Returns – Greece Support Home Countries	Denmark treating seekers instead of Greece following judgments by the European Human Rights Court (EHRC); Fewer asylum seekers to Denmark and higher asylum recognition are signs of progress; Denmark gives asylum in accordance with International treaties and laws; expulsion of adult seekers to Greece in accordance with Dublin Regulation; The suspension of the Dublin Regulation only momentarily until Greece achieves sufficient standards for dealing with asylum seekers; Improved conditions for unaccompanied minors (better care locally and shorter processing time); there is a need support municipalities to better take care of unaccompanied minors; Policy restrictions have been successful in reducing number of asylum seekers, Fewer resources spend and quicker processing time; Assistance to Greece rebuilding in the long run instead of treating seekers in Denmark	Press statements: http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/ministeren/artikler_de_batindlaeg_og_taler/2011/eu_skal_hjaelpe_graekenland.htm http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/nyheder/pressemeddelelser/integrationsministeriet/2011/januar/integrationsministeren_beslutter_at_behandle_asylsager.htm http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/ministeren/artikler_de_batindlaeg_og_taler/2011/fup_og_fakta_om_flygtninge.htm http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/nyheder/pressemeddelelser/integrationsministeriet/2011/januar/fejlslutning_om_asyl_i_danmark.htm http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/nyheder/nyheder/integrationsministeriet/2010/marts/modtagelse_af_flygtningeboern_skal_kortlaegges.htm

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