Chapter 1

Introduction: Postcolonialism and the Nordic Models of Welfare and Gender

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Theoretical debates within postcolonial theory have largely been concerned with the cultures and societies of former colonies (see, for example: Said 1993; Bhabha 1994; Spivak 1988). This collection examines colonial histories and mentalities that shape gendered and racialised power relations in European countries; countries which represent themselves as outsiders in relation to colonial power relations. This book offers analyses of the ways in which present-day Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland in particular) are marked, both culturally and economically, by colonial relations; a fact which has material, political and ethical consequences. The colonial ties of these countries are usually regarded as weak and their international relations are seen to be characterised by development aid, peace building and cooperation, rather than colonialism or imperialism. The region is often described as a cluster of nations where welfare, democracy, and more recently economic competitiveness are seen to be highly developed. Instead of taking this idealised image for granted, the authors of this book critically examine the Nordic colonial past, as well as the policies and practices and national imaginaries of present Nordic welfare states.

This book develops the concept of *colonial complicity* (see Vuorela in this book) to highlight the manifold ways in which North-European countries have taken, and continue to take, part in (post)colonial processes. The lure of an enterprise as powerful and authoritative as the Western civilising project, attracts even those who never belonged to its centre or were its main agents. Nations, groups and individual subjects are drawn by the promise of power to adopt the discourses, imaginaries and material benefits connected to this project. The Nordic countries see themselves as part of the Western world, drawing their value systems from the Enlightenment, and showing themselves to be willing to defend these values sometimes even more forcefully than the former colonial centres. The recent cartoon affair in Denmark and Sweden is evidence of this willingness. In 2005 the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published cartoons of Prophet Mohammed as a terrorist with reference to 'freedom of speech' leading to large demonstrations and boycotts in many Muslim communities and countries. Colonial complicity refers to processes in which (post)colonial imaginaries, practices and products are made

to be part of what is understood as the ‘national’ and ‘traditional’ culture of the Nordic countries. For example, a number of Finnish citizens have recently signed petitions and engaged themselves in campaigns to save liquorice wrappers (and other products with racist images), introduced during the colonial period all over Europe, because these wrappers are seen as part of traditional Finnish culture (see Rossi in this book). This example also shows that the idea that the country was an outsider to the colonial project makes it possible to claim that in the Nordic/Finnish context such images and products are not racist.

The concept of colonial complicity also includes the idea of multiple power relations in motion within societies and between nations in a postcolonial context. Although the Nordic countries participate in the key political and economic organisations of the West (such as the OECD and the European Union), the Nordic countries are also subjected to the rules of these organisations and the powerful forces within them. The transnational enterprises that occupy a leading role in global capitalist economies are not bound to nation-based loyalties, but move their production between different continents, according to where they can maximise profit (see Mulinari and Räthzler in this book). The concept of colonial complicity seeks to capture the political ambiguities and changing power relations within the Nordic region. However, the applicability of the concept is not restricted to the analysis of the Nordic region, but provides a basis for postcolonial studies of other regions with a similarly uncertain relationship to the colonial project.

This shifting position in relation to the colonial project has also had an effect on the critique of colonialism and neo-colonial ties in the Nordic countries. These countries never went through a clear period of critique of colonialism and its presence in everyday environments and encounters, as did the colonial centres in the aftermath of the dismantling of the empires. Anti-racist and anti-imperialist movements, and academic commentary on issues of race and colonialism, have been part of the Nordic societies since the 1970s, yet these countries have managed to retain an image of themselves as untouched by colonial legacies.

This book aims to deepen the understanding of European colonial past and present eras. It broadens the perspective of former colonizing and colonised nations by focusing on the often invisible participants in the (post)colonial order. The book also raises the question of the relationship between postsocialism and postcolonialism. Since the fall of the socialist system at the beginning of 1990s and the intensified economic, political and scientific cooperation across the former ‘iron curtain’, many feminist researchers from Central and Eastern Europe have pointed out similarities in the ways in which the ‘Third World’ and the ‘Second World’ are constructed by the ‘First World’. In much the same way as the Orient and Africa were constructed as the ‘other’ by the Europeans of the colonial period, Eastern and Central Europe have now been represented as the underdeveloped and dependent opposite of Western Europe. These othering processes are supported by the economic and political domination, as well as the discursive power, of the Western countries (Regulska 1998; Slavova 2006). Women from postsocialist countries have, in particular, been confronted with images of themselves as

sexualised, and engaged in prostitution (see Sverdljuk in this book). Postcolonial analyses in the Nordic and other European contexts should therefore also look at the intra-European histories of racism, as part of the racialised and colonial order of things (see Griffin and Braidotti 2002).

We seek to rethink the relationship between colonial centres and margins to include diversified and shifting positions within this global order. One example of this is the colonial complicity of the Nordic countries described earlier. Another example is the complex position of the postsocialist countries in Central and East Europe. On the one hand, they are constructed as the 'other' of the developed and wealthy Western European nations, but on the other hand many of them are now member states in the European Union. Thus they take part in the economic and political power that the EU commands, especially towards non-European nations and people. The postsocialist countries also make visible the multiplicity of colonial ties and histories in the European region. For example the colonial layers of Bosnia include the influences of the Ottoman Empire, the Soviet Union, Western Europe and Middle Eastern countries (see Huttunen in this book).

This collection brings together recent postcolonial feminist research in the Nordic countries. The authors investigate both the nature of race formations and the extent of racial discrimination in these countries, where social, economic and gender equality is inscribed in a particular welfare state model, and also in specific ways of negotiating class conflicts, popular struggle and political resistance. The essays show how changes over time and the interwoven strands of 'race', class, gender and sexuality serve to create specific patterns of disadvantages and privileges. The collection allows for a critical discussion of the Nordic models and current integration and diversity policies, thereby demonstrating the places these countries take in the postcolonial order.

Rethinking 'Nordic' and 'gender' in Nordic gender studies

Postcolonial Nordic feminism is a theoretical and political endeavour that has emerged in the last twenty years to explore, emphasise and challenge the links between racism(s) and gender discrimination within the Nordic welfare states (especially Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark). This research field evolves from the collective efforts that have been inspired by pioneering work in black feminist thought which challenges the framework that for many years has dominated Nordic gender studies and Nordic feminist theory. In this framework, 'race' or ethnicity has been seen as a marginal issue, and mainly relevant to studies conducted on 'others'. Central to postcolonial Nordic feminist arguments is the claim that the denial of gendered racisms as a central principle of social organisation in Western democracies in general, and in the Nordic countries in particular, leads to a distorted analysis of the (diversified) meaning of gender.

This theoretical approach investigates the fractures in Nordic whiteness discourses where the construction of (exclusive) national identities is built upon a

notion of belonging grounded in 'race'/ethnicity, and where distinctions, such as the one between 'the nation' and 'the immigrants', are systematically created and reinforced. Building on these insights this collection explores ways of thinking about the relationship between the welfare state and its gendered and racialised 'others'.

Postcolonial Nordic feminism has become possible since a growing number of feminists with migrant backgrounds, particularly in Sweden, have challenged both the exclusion of gender analysis from antiracist postcolonial studies, and the monolithic narrative of gender evolving in Nordic gender studies. Far from being a mainstream perspective it has, however, become an important critical voice in Nordic studies on race and gender relations. Postcolonial feminism in the Nordic context has emerged from critical dialogues with anti-racist, postcolonial and queer scholarship and it owes a considerable conceptual debt to the field of Race critical theory as well. This scholarship explores the complex ways in which varied forms of racism(s) are interwoven with social inequalities and exclusions.

The efforts to deepen the understanding of racism (Omi and Winant 1986; Gilroy 2004) alongside theoretical debates on the concept of racialisation (Miles 1989; Murji and Solomos 2005) are at the heart of the Nordic postcolonial feminist understanding of the interaction between nation-states, labour needs and migration processes. The notion of racialisation refers to the process of differentiating people and stabilising these differences, as well as legitimating power relations based on these racialised differences. The use of the notion of racialisation in this sense acknowledges the connection between racism in the form of historical racial biology, which has legitimised colonialism and the extermination of minorities, and the contemporary cultural racism that marginalises in particular those who have migrated from outside of Europe to the Nordic countries (Molina 2004, 95).

During the past decades some of the most important contributions to the analysis of the category of 'race' came from writers within the field of feminism. Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill (1996) assert that, since the late seventies, women of colour, speaking simultaneously 'within and against' both women's liberation and antiracist movements, challenged the hegemony of feminist theory constructed primarily around the lives of white middle-class women. These critics argued that continuity with old paradigms could be traced in both the themes and explanations provided by feminist researchers exploring the lives of migrant and 'Third World women'. Largely in response to these criticisms, work that links gender to other forms of domination has increased since then (see for example: Anzaldúa 1991; Ware 1992; Brah 1996; Alexander and Mohanty 1997; Ahmed et al 2004; Lewis 2000).

Postcolonial Nordic feminism draws from an intersectional perspective (de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005; de los Reyes et al 2002). The notion of intersectionality was introduced into gender studies to make it possible to explore the connections between distinct axes of power, as well as to expand earlier analyses in which gender was the only focus. With the help of this perspective, feminist researchers

have repeatedly shown how gender, class and 'race' or ethnicity are mutually constituting, coming alive in and through one another.

In critical dialogue with other postcolonial and queer feminist researchers, we work to expand understandings of the diverse ways in which the Nordic welfare states and their institutions construct families, gender(s) and nationhood. For example, the concept of subordinated inclusion developed by Mulinari and Neergaard (2004) grasps the specific position of migrants within Nordic welfare systems, where formal citizenship rights go hand in hand with ethnic discrimination in all spheres of social and political life. Nordic postcolonial feminists have also problematised the complex ways in which the discourses on nationhood and belonging, along with the welfare systems, create specific categories of people, such as 'the immigrants'. In this book we use the term *welfare state nationalism* to refer to the kind of nationalism typical for the Nordic countries.

Several Nordic postcolonial feminists have suggested that the notion of gender equality is at the core of the discourse on nationhood, and is central to defining who belongs to the nation and who does not (see for example Bredström 2003; de los Reyes et al 2002). These researchers argue that the discourses on gender equality are closely linked with ideas of 'bad patriarchies' located in distant places and in racialised bodies. These discourses of nationhood and belonging serve to marginalise and exclude (or alternatively, to subordinate and regulate) 'others'. This can be seen, for example, in the increased criminalisation of racialised men, and the homogenisation of highly diverse groups of racialised women into particular kinds of subjects – those not belonging to the nation. Several policies based on the notion of 'risk groups' have been developed recently, specifically targeting 'migrant families' based on assumed cultural differences (see Larsen, Keskinen and Tuori in this book) The culturalist discourse constructs 'immigrants' as an undifferentiated whole in terms of assumed uniform cultural traits that distinguish the 'West' from the 'Rest'. These policies not only increase the criminalisation of racialised men but silence issues of poverty, institutional racism and political exclusion.

Postcolonial feminist intellectuals have criticised the hegemonic trends within Nordic gender and ethnicity research; especially the (colonial) desire to know the 'other'. The concept of cultural difference is often used to name, describe and research the ways in which those who are not European, white and heterosexual, are different. The desire to understand the 'other' reinforces the assumption that 'race' is one kind of minority experience, the kind of thing researchers 'find' or 'study' in the field. This longing to know may lead to the dangerous Christian desire to save the 'other' from the assumed cultural restrictions of patriarchal family forms and religious fundamentalism. Another consequence of reifying culture is that feminists (carrying privileged forms of femininity) tend to re-read highly politicised forms of ethnic mobilisation that include patriarchal constraints, as 'traditional' cultural forms. In Sweden in particular, postcolonial researchers have systematically resisted the development of an academic field for the study of

'migrant women', their 'culture' and 'social problems', which would be guided by the interests of policy making and political bureaucracy.

Exploring Nordic welfare-states from a postcolonial perspective

Feminist researchers in the Nordic countries and in Europe more generally, have made central contributions to the understanding of the relations between welfare and gender which are relevant to our project. They have pointed out the limitations of welfare models that take the male breadwinner as the norm, and have argued for the need to develop alternative models (Sainsbury 1996; Lister et al 2007). While these alternative models have illuminated the gendered nature of social policies, as well as the tensions between social policies and the gendered lives of citizens, their focus is mainly on one dimension of differentiation, namely gender. Such a focus does not, in our view, provide a broad enough basis for understanding the ways in which cultural notions of normality and (national and ethnic) belonging are embedded in social policies targeting families and households.

A number of recent studies in the field of social policy have highlighted the significance of 'race', as well as the central role that welfare states and their institutions play in the creation and reproduction of specific categories of people (Lewis 2000). As researchers within postcolonial and cultural studies have argued, social policies are also policies about the creation and regulation of specific populations. Colonial politics of exclusion, Stoler (1997) suggests, were based in the construction of legal classifications which designated who was 'white', who was 'native', who was a citizen, who could become a citizen, which children were legitimate and which were not. These kinds of classifications are at the core of the policies of Nordic welfare states (Helén and Jauho 2003), although this fact is rarely acknowledged.

Welfare state policies are not simply created and implemented, but they are both constituted by and constitutive of intersecting and unequal relations that affect the construction of (welfare) subjects (Fink, Lewis and Clarke 2001). This understanding of the nation and national belonging as a cultural and social formation always in the act of becoming (Billig 1995) puts the connections between certain (subordinated, stigmatised, excluded) femininities and masculinities, and the regulation of citizenship rights, at the centre of the feminist agenda.

A number of researchers have suggested that the Nordic public and political landscape has changed drastically in the last twenty years. Issues related to 'race' and ethnicity have moved from a peripheral role to the centre of the agenda. 'Race' is central not only to the debates about migration and national identity, but also in articulating political identities and political movements. While it can be argued that there is a marked presence of populist xenophobic parties (successfully) entering hegemonic political discourses in Denmark, and to a lesser degree in Norway, the achievement of a similar political party in the Swedish elections (at the municipal

level), as well as the continued neo-Nazi and other racist attacks in all the Nordic countries (targeting refugees and homosexuals in particular and human rights activists more generally), constitute structural fractures to the Nordic model.

The Nordic welfare states are often wrongly assumed to have similar class and gender profiles. When racial formations are introduced to the analyses of the Nordic welfare regimes, the assumed similarity becomes even more problematic. In relation to the number of migrants encountering racialisation the countries can be divided into three groups. Comparative data from 2005[1] shows that the foreign-born population of the total population is rather small in Finland (3.4 per cent), whereas it is of medium-size in Denmark (6.5 per cent) and Norway (7.8 per cent). Sweden has a higher ratio of foreign-born citizens (12.4 per cent of the total population). For a long time Iceland had a very small percentage of foreign inhabitants, but in recent years the share of foreign citizens has rapidly increased to 6.8 per cent of the total population in 2008.[2]

The countries have different histories and policies of migration. Sweden has a history of work-related migration since the 1960s, and has had relatively liberal refugee policies from the 1970s onwards. Finland, on the other hand, was a country of emigration (particularly to Sweden) until the 1980s, and has had extremely restrictive migration and refugee policies even in the 1990s and 2000s. In the 1960s and 1970s migration to Denmark was mainly work-related, but in the 1980s migration related to family reunification and asylum seeking became more prominent (Andreassen and Siim 2007, 9–10). Since 2001 Denmark has employed one of the strictest immigration policies in the European Union. Norway experienced immigration from Third World countries at the end of the 1960s, but imposed an immigration ban in 1975 (Gullestad 2002, 47). Since then migration has been restricted to those who are seeking employment, seeking asylum, wishing to join their families or wanting to study. Both in Norway and Denmark populist, anti-immigration parties have managed to influence political debates and government policies significantly – their impact has been greater than their share of the votes would indicate. Iceland joined the European Economic Area (EEA) with the EU countries in 2004. In a short time work related migration from Poland and other Eastern European countries has increased considerably.

Alongside the harmonisation of migration policies within the EU, reformulations are taking place in all Nordic countries.[3] Even Sweden, the country

1 Migration Policy Institute, http://www.migrationinformation.org/DataHub/charts/1.1.shtml (accessed 23.5.2008). No information on Iceland was provided in this database.

2 Statistics Iceland, http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Population/Citizenship-and-country-of-birth (accessed 6.6.2008). The proportion of foreign born inhabitants was at the same time 10.8 per cent, but also includes a large share of children whose parents moved temporarily from Iceland to study abroad. We wish to thank Thoroddur Bjarnason for informing us about the Icelandic data.

3 Norway and Iceland do not belong to the EU, but cooperate with the EU in their immigration policies. Both countries have signed a cooperation agreement with the Schengen

often portrayed as the most inclusive of the Nordic countries, with a more open migration and refugee policy than the other Nordic countries, has experienced a change in the ideological climate, bringing the country's policies more in line with the rest of Fortress Europe (Schierup et al 2006). Despite their policy and population differences, all Nordic countries share an ethnically segregated labour market and housing market, as well as everyday and institutional racism.

Since the 1980s, differences between the North-European welfare states widened due to different responses to the processes of (neo-liberal) globalisation (Harvey 2005). The social democratic parties that historically embodied the 'Nordic model' have become less inclined towards welfare expansion. As the neo-liberal economic agenda has gained ascendancy, the conflicts between competitive economic strategies and social democratic politics have intensified. In a consecutive series of governmental decisions, subsidies and benefits have been cut, causing a drop in living standards for some people, with gendered and racialised effects (see for example Eräsaari 2002; de los Reyes 2006).

The self-image of the Nordic countries as 'the good agents' in international relations, has perhaps been most pronounced in Sweden and Norway, which have emphasised their roles in development aid and peace building since the 1970s. In the national media the Norwegian self-image has been built on being the 'superpower of human rights' and the leading provider of development aid in relation to the Brutto National Product (Eide and Simonssen 2008). The Swedish self-image has been linked to the idea of 'folkhemmet' – the social democratic ideal of the equal, safe and harmonious 'home of the people' (Hultén 2006). Finland, too, has stressed its role in peace building and as a mediator of international conflicts; however its national self-image has included economic competitiveness more than other Nordic countries. Finland suffered from a severe economic depression in the 1990s, during which the discourse of securing national competitiveness was established as the cornerstone of Finnish policies (Kantola 2002). This rhetoric has been further strengthened in recent years with reference to the effects of globalisation, one of which is that industrial production is relocated to countries with cheaper labour-costs.

The authors of this anthology represent different disciplinary backgrounds and different positions, but they all share a postcolonial feminist approach. 'The Nordic' is understood partly as specific set of politico-spatial locations, but also as a group of imagined spaces, and their attendant ideologies. Here the relationships between the Nordic region and other regions, such as Central and Eastern Europe, East-Africa and Central-America, are considered, as well as transnational relations and migration. All chapters show how certain representations of 'the Nordic' encompass a 'colonial' perspective.

The book consists of three sections, presented below.

Agreement countries, allowing their citizens to travel on the same terms as citizens in these countries. Norway and Iceland also belong to the EEA which guarantees their citizens the same rules to work and live as EU citizens.

1 Postcolonial histories/Postcolonial presents

The chapters in this section attempt to theorise both the continuity of and changes in modes of global dominance as well as to describe the specific situations of Nordic countries, both historically and today.

The debates within the social sciences over the last two decades about societal transformations, are often identified as globalisation debates. Researchers disagree on a number of issues, ranging from the impact of the processes of globalisation (especially on the location and the future of nation-states) to their uniqueness (given that internationalisation has taken place since the sixteenth century). It is evident that there can be no easy and uncontested definition of globalisation and that the purposes for which the concept is used and the evaluations of the processes described vary substantially (Gibson-Graham 1996). What is disputed is the significance and meaning of these changes and whether globalisation represents a qualitatively new phenomenon.

The globalisation of capital, transnational production, biotechnology, and the acceleration in the flow of cultural products and people, are all gendered. These changes have affected and transformed the lives of women and men in ways that are both similar and different. Feminist researchers have illuminated recent changes related to the transformation of gender relations in the global economy (Acker 2006), and in the international organisation of reproductive labour (Glenn 2001), as well as relevant transformations in the cultural meaning of gender globally (Franklin 2001).

In our view, one central contribution of Nordic postcolonial feminist thought is its exploration of the connections between gender and sexuality regimes at 'home', and the dynamics of colonialism. In anthropologist Anne McClintock's words:

> Imperialism cannot fully be understood without a theory of gender power. Gender power was not the superficial patina of empire, an ephemeral gloss over the more decisive mechanics of class and race. Rather gender dynamics were from the outset, fundamental to the securing and maintenance of the imperial enterprise. (McClintock 1995:7)

In her chapter in this book, Ulla Vuorela develops the concept 'colonial complicity' to theorise a situation in which a country has neither been historically situated as one of the colonial centres in Europe, nor has it been an innocent victim of, or stood outside of, the colonial project. The writer takes examples from the history of anthropology, children's literature, and development discourse, and argues for 'colonial complicity' as a term that captures the links between Nordic history and the wider European colonial project. She also stresses the complexities of simultaneously taking part in colonial endeavours and in some ways being subjected to them.

Mai Palmberg analyses the grand narratives through which the history and present of the Nordic countries have been constructed as exceptional and exemplary

in relation to the rest of the West. This chapter revisits Nordic history by focusing on, for example, the Nordic presence in the colonisation and evangelisation of Congo, and the Danish role in slave trade. The author, however, warns of the danger of taking these examples as proof that Denmark would have a 'more colonial mind than Sweden because it possessed a few more islands in the West Indies'. Instead, the chapter emphasises the importance of a generalised identification with, and share in, the colonial project that characterises the Nordic countries.

The chapter by Bolette Blaagaard links the cultural memory and national self-image – white, strong, and masculine – produced in Danish public discourse and media, to an iconographic history of white supremacy. The author argues that this cultural imaginary can be traced to a genealogy that runs from the interest in eugenics at the beginning of the twentieth century, through the fascist and Nazi imaginary about the Vikings. Blaagard shows how subtler versions of this theme persist today, and discusses the political and social consequences of this persistence.

Diana Mulinari and Nora Räthzel explore the role that discourses of gender, race and nation play when (Swedish) transnational corporations relocate themselves on the periphery, using the case study of an industrial plant in Mexico. The researchers analyse the complex links between discourses on nation and gender, showing that gender is by no means peripheral to the dynamics of global inequalities. They argue that the exploitation of Mexican workers at the industrial plant they studied is not marginal to the Nordic model, but is a key part of the Swedish capitalist nation-state.

Johanna Latvala's chapter focuses on the establishment and maintenance of, and the negotiations involved in, the unequal relationship between Finnish 'hostesses' and their female domestic workers in Kenya. It asks whether and in what ways domestic workers become family members or remain outsiders. The author analyses Finnish women's views on being 'hostesses' – that is, women who give orders to other (less privileged) women in the intimate sphere of home – and focuses on the awkwardness and uneasiness some Finnish women express in relation to inhabiting a privileged position in the global social and economic hierarchy.

The chapter by Laura Huttunen explores the layers of colonial histories and colonial-like power relations that regulate life in a refugee diaspora. The chapter is based on ethnographic fieldwork among Bosnian refugees living in Finland. The author asks what colonial powers need to be taken into account when trying to understand the diasporic lives of Bosnians, and investigates the meaning of local and global racialisation, as well as the gendering discourses that surround Islam.

2 The welfare state and its 'others'

The chapters in this section re-read Nordic welfare state policies and discourses, and challenge eurocentrism in Nordic/Western feminism. The assumption that the Nordic countries are 'good' and 'advanced' stems from the construction that the

welfare state is a fairer way of organizing a society. The analyses of the Nordic welfare states have, however, been predominantly conducted from a majority perspective. As these chapters show, central welfare state policies and discourses, such as those related to working life, families and reproduction of the nation, are deeply embedded in notions of 'race', gender and heterosexuality.

Several feminist researchers have claimed that the Nordic welfare states are 'women-friendly' due to the high level of women participating in the labour market, education and politics, the developed systems of public child care and parental leave, as well as gender equality legislation in these countries (see Bochorst and Siim 2002). The development of 'women-friendly' policies and practices has been linked to strong state feminism in the Nordic countries. While recognizing the benefits of the Nordic model, other feminist researchers have been more critical towards the model. They have argued that the development of the welfare state has had contradictory effects on the position of women, and that Nordic state feminism has been blind to diversity and in particular, to multiculturalism (Bochorst and Siim 2002; Siim and Skjeie 2007). Furthermore, it can be argued that the 'women-friendly' policies are based on a heteronormative perspective, providing services and benefits mainly to women living in heterosexual nuclear families. The chapters in this section take a step further by analysing the ways in which the Nordic welfare states are racialised and sexualised, as well as the effects of this on the construction of specific types of families.

These chapters also explore how widely circulated discourses in the Nordic countries portray the 'others' of the welfare states, and the colonial legacies embedded in these imaginaries. Some of the chapters analyse how racialised subjects deal with such representations by representing themselves in ways that both reproduce and challenge othering discourses.

In their chapter, Tobias Hübinette and Carina Tigervall examine the public images of adoption, as well as the recently expanded textual material produced by adult adoptees and adoptive parents in Sweden. In the public imagination, international adoption is seen as an act of solidarity, building bridges between cultures, whereas the personal narratives of adult adoptees and adoptive parents have shown their racialised experiences in everyday life. This chapter argues that international adoption is nowadays a contested practice in Sweden, and that a discursive struggle is being waged over how to write the history of international adoption – and how to understand Sweden as the world's leading adopting country.

Jana Sverdljuk analyses how Russian women married to Norwegian men respond to the 'prostitution stigma' which is present on a daily basis. The chapter focuses on these women's narratives which challenge and resist the widespread Norwegian media image of the Russian prostitute or 'mail-order bride'. The author shows how the interviewed women draw on common discourses about intimate relations, families, heterosexuality, gender and multiculturalism to contradict these othering images.

In her chapter Salla Tuori explores the connections and discrepancies between the discourses on queer families and those on migrant families in the context of multicultural politics. Although most European nations are worried about declining population rates,neither migrant families nor queer families have been seen as an answer to the problem. On the contrary, both have been presented as a threat to the reproduction of the nation. This chapter examines the ways in which families figure in multicultural women's politics in Finland, and how heteronormative discourses and practices are formative, but also challenged in this context. The empirical case in this chapter is an EU-funded labour market project for 'migrant women'.

Sari Irni argues for the need to focus on the construction of an 'ageing Europe', and the way in which this is connected to debates and policies on migration. This chapter shows how ageism is mobilised in arguing against a 'Fortress Europe', and how assumptions about ethnicity and race creep into the debate on the ageing population. As an attempt to answer the supposed challenge of the ageing population, the Finnish government launched a programme campaigning for the retention of those over 45 years old in the workplace. This chapter analyses how nationality, 'race' and gender are intertwined in the assumptions concerning 'ageing workers'.

Leena-Maija Rossi examines how discursive and visual complicity in colonialism is still vibrantly alive in some layers of Finnish culture. Her analysis of case studies shows that commercial imagery in the Finnish media, naturalises the notion of race by emphasizing differences between white people and people of colour. In the rare instances where people of colour are represented, their physiology and behaviour is caricatured, thereby retaining and reproducing traditional stereotypes.

3 'Doing' nation and gender: The civilising mission 'at home'

The chapters in this section provide a theoretically inspired and empirically rich understanding of the ethnocentric paternalist gaze regulating the process by which 'others' are 'educated' within the Nordic welfare states. Feminist political scientist Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) argues that most of the major theoretical approaches to nationalism in the social sciences have marginalised the role of gender, and thus neglected women's (ambivalent) role as biological and cultural reproducers of (ethnic) communities and nations, as well as women's (ambivalent) role as powerful mothers of the nation but disempowered citizens. In the following section we explore the relations between gender, sexuality and nation, and how they change over time and in different contexts. Nation and nation-states are sites of regulatory practices concerning sexuality and reproduction.

If 'exporting civilisation' has been an important part of colonialism, the Nordic countries further this mission in several ways. The chapters in this section critically examine welfare state practices and the effects of gender equality discourses in relation to 'race' and ethnicity. They show how images of achieved gender

equality can be used to construct dichotomous divisions between the 'nation' and its 'others'. The chapters provide insights as to how gender equality is linked to 'European values' and thus often to European superiority.

These chapters also problematise the narrow understanding embodied in the word 'immigrant' that links location to culture and identity in a deterministic way. The notion of transnationalism has been developed to better our understanding of the multiple ways people live their lives. It illuminates the practices of many migrant communities today, which build social fields across geographic, cultural and political borders, and maintain multiple relationships (see for example Bryceson and Vuorela 2002). Postcolonial theory also underlines the powerful position of those living in-between, by claiming that people who move between cultures, languages and the diversity of power in complex post-colonial situations, possess an oppositional consciousness, the ability to read and write culture on multiple levels (see for example Anzaldúa 1991). The emphasis on the empowering aspect of being in-between must, however, be understood as a response to mainstream social science representations which tend to pathologise transnational identities.

Jaana Vuori analyses official guide books aimed at increasing migrants' knowledge about the Finnish social system, civil rights, social benefits and services, the labour market and education. This chapter analyses how the equality discourse in the guidebooks constructs images of ethnicity. The author argues that the 'national gaze' in the guidebooks reflects both an idealised and generalised image of Finland, and a vague and blurred image of migrants. Vuori calls this a 'banal national equality discourse', and problematises how it constructs gender equality as harmonious and already achieved, while it is assumed that the only challenge lies in how migrants would be able to enjoy its fruits.

The chapter by Nanna Brink Larsen analyses parental education through a range of meetings between majority-Danish social workers and Arabic-speaking mothers. Brink Larsen discusses how 'Danishness' is constructed against Oriental images, and how this imagery results in minority Danes being assigned to a precarious position in welfare institutions. Arabic women in particular are constructed as not only representing an inferior culture, but also as the subordinated victims of this culture who should be helped to assimilate. Rather than being recognised as agents, Arabic women are constructed as the objects of an integration politics marked by assimilation practices. The author introduces the term 'institutional nationalism' to capture the centrality of welfare institutions in the exclusionary processes of the Nordic welfare societies.

Chia-Ling Yang focuses on the complexity of the construction of 'first world' and 'third world' women. The chapter examines feminist teaching in the Women's Folk High School (*Kvinnofolkskolan*) in Sweden, focusing on how 'gender equality' is represented in the educational practices of the school. The author critically examines which feminist issues are chosen, and how Swedish 'progressive' laws are represented in the feminist teaching aimed at migrant women at *Kvinnofolkskolan*. Yang develops a postcolonial feminist analysis of Swedish feminisms and the role of the equality discourse in Sweden.

The chapter by Suvi Keskinen examines the discourse on ‘honour-related violence’ in media representations and policies in four Nordic countries, and its links to nation-building rhetoric. The author shows how the discourse is created as a culturalist signifying system and used to establish hierarchical divisions between the ‘gender equal majority’ and ‘patriarchal minorities’. The chapter argues that the Nordic countries are especially liable to this kind of civilizing rhetoric since there is little space for discussing racism, but a strong emphasis on the homogeneity of these nation(s), for all of which gender equality is regarded as a central national value.

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