The Co-operative Movement in Denmark - between national identity and globalization

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The term "globalization" became a central theme in the election of the Danish Parliament February 2005. The closing of a well-sized town’s slaughterhouse is to blame. The slaughterhouse was owned by the Danish slaughterhouse-concern Danish Crown. This message was brought forth to the public along with the firing of approximately seven hundred workers. The reason for the closing was that slaughterhouse-production was to be made at a cheaper price outside the country’s borders. Suddenly it was clear to everybody that globalization did not simply take place far away from Denmark, but was rather a real phenomena with great significance to the Danish economy.

The closing of the slaughterhouse resulted in the flocking of a long range of Danish politicians, including the Danish Prime minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, all promising more developments and extra-grants to the workers-association, spiced with a critique of the irresponsibility of the slaughterhouse. What was most noticeable was how the newspaper "Politikken" a few days later published a front page with the following headlines "Danish flag on pork will save slaughterhouse jobs". The content of the article was to describe how there was a political majority in favour of the marking of all Danish pork in the future (Politikken the 22/1-2005)! Besides from illustrating the disability of the politicians, this also shows the relationship between globalization and national identity – especially considering the fact that the Danish pork production almost exclusively is geared to the global market, with an export percentage of 90%.

The slaughterhouse-giant Danish Crown quickly became the most scolded Danish business and thereby overthrew the Danish dairy-giant Arla. Since the end of 2003 Arla was exposed to enormous amounts of complaints concerning their unfair treatment of their close-to monopoly sized business by bounding the farmers to the soil and using illegal methods of competition. Cases have already resulted in a charge from the rear-ranking-police in March 2005, as well as in the decrease of up to 10% of the production in Denmark in one year, as a consequence of significant consumer boycott by the Danish population. This might be a significant offer to the business- an offer which contrasts the international strategy followed by Arla. This is a strategy that inspires Arla to be a dominating actor in the global market. Thus, Arla declared in December 2004 to join "the largest business-fusion in Danish history" which was an amalgamation with the Dutch dairy plant Campina. Together, they were supposed to become the world’s largest dairy-corporation. Nevertheless, the idea never made it to reality, and the
project did not exist any longer by spring 2005 (Jyllandsposten 2005-04-21). The goal of this paper is to examine the reasons why the large corporations of Danish Crown and Arla, which traditionally were considered to be important milestones in the development of the Danish welfare, have been exposed to such opposition.

The food-industry’s importance in Denmark
A significant characteristic of the Danish economy is the agriculture and food-industry's dominating position. Thus, Denmark is number eight on the global list of production-exporters, while only inhabiting a population of only five million people. More than a third of the Danish export-income is due to the food-industrial sector, and agriculture was the largest sector until the 1960's. Though, it would be wrong to assume that Denmark is a non-industrialized nation on decline. On the contrary, Denmark is one of the most technological advanced countries in the world. Also, agriculture is highly industrialized and uses a wide range of computer technology and is amongst the worlds most effective. As a few examples, all cattle in Denmark have a chip incorporated, with the purpose to attend each cow in order to optimize its milk-production.

The present provision-production is rooted in a long historic tradition that reaches back hundreds of years. Since the ending of the 1800's, dairy and bacon production have been the primary products. They made up for more than 80% of the Danish export and thus been an economic foundation for the development of the Danish welfare state. Today the slaughterhouse business and the dairy production are concentrated in the above mentioned corporations- the bacon factory Danish Crown and the dairy plant Arla, both having a home market share above 90%. These two corporations are amongst the number five largest corporations in Denmark and are likewise, on a global scale, amongst the leading corporations in their areas. Viewed from this perspective, the Danish provision-industry is a noteworthy success-story. It tells the narrative of a relatively poor country in the outskirts of Europe, which with time evolved to be one of the richest welfare societies in the world. It also tells of a country where it might not “overflow with milk and honey” but instead with butter and bacon. This is a narrative which apparently fits well to the fairy tail of Hans Christian Andersen where the little ugly duckling transformed in to a beautiful swan. Thus, this illustration is to be found in most of the Danish history-literature.

Yet, as implied above, the story which has been dominating the media the recent years, has rather been that of "the Big Bad Wolf", as the two corporations have met a lot of disparage in the
media, amongst the politicians and within the consumers. Different analysis's of the media’s comments on agriculture in general and on the two corporations clearly illustrates how almost all articles have negative tendencies.

The decreasing status from heroes to bad guys has been a noticeably rapid process. Some observers seek to explain the opposition against Arla and Danish Crown with a general resistance against large corporations, which is to be found especially in a country like Denmark. Historically it has been characterized by small and mid-sized businesses. Thus, the media and the consumers have illustrated the conflict between Arla and the smaller dairy plants as David’s fight against Goliath, Arla being the evil Goliath and the small dairy plants being the brave ‘Davids’ who, unselfishly, take up the fight. Yet, this is not a sufficient explanation. This becomes clear if one is to compare the largest Danish corporation, the shipping concern A.P.Møller, which has made a virtue of being an extremely closed and hierarchal corporation never hesitating to use its power against politicians or competitors. Still, the A.P.Møller corporation is mentioned positively as a modern global corporation and the leader himself is honoured as being a primary citizen and is surrounded by a respect that otherwise is only given to royal families in Denmark. This is the thesis of the paper - that the understanding of the fall of Arla and Danish Crown and to the present criticism is to be found in the historical understanding of the agriculture and in its position in Denmark. The narrative’s concern is not solely agriculture, yet it constitutes a key-element in the traditional Danish history-narrative and is therefore also closely tied to the Danish national identity and self-perception. The story is built up around certain actual relations and events, where some of them go as far back as the end of the 1700s. This is how the events have been tied together through historical stories which construct the story as a particular Danish narrative. A part of this is that Denmark historically has been known to incorporate global challenges of different times in a unique and particular "democratic" way, through the maintenance of national traditions - traditions, which are related to our history as an agriculture nation. A key-element in this narrative is how the organization of the raw material preparation primarily has been through co-operatives.

Denmark produces and boasts this image of being the “country of co-operatives”, and the movement of co-operatives is often mentioned as a Danish characteristic (see e.g. the Danish minister of foreign affairs www.um.dk/Publikationer/UM/English/Denmark/kap2/2-13.asp). This refers to the large influence which co-op-organizations have, partly in retail business, but more so in the agricultural-based preparation industry. Yet the “Co-operative Movement” does not indicate all sort of co-operation. In Danish the word “koorporation” is used of undertakings which historically have been
linked to the workers movement, whereas “andelsbevægelsen” is associated with the rural community. In the following Co-operative Movement will be used in this sense, that is, rural community “Andelsbevægelsen” translated to Co-operative Movement.

Traditionally the dairy plants and the slaughterhouses have been the spearheads in “the Danish Co-operative Movement”, which since its breakthrough in the end of the 1800’s has been viewed as a particular Danish model for the establishment of a modern society (see Bjørn, 1998). A model which has assured Denmark not only to be a rich society, but also a nation who successfully has been able to navigate through both the large scale industry’s alienating, undemocratic and socially twisting tendencies, and also through socialisms planned economy and individuality rejecting tendencies. In other words, a model built up around certain liberalistic virtues in self-organization, the market, freedom, small-scale operation, democracy and respect for the individual. Thus, the co-operative
organization and the Co-operative Movement in Denmark play a much more vivid role than just being a sort of doing business. Using the words from the Danish encyclopaedia:

“An understanding of the co-operation (in Denmark) can not be based on its particular legal, financial or organizational characteristics alone, but most also include the historical and cultural community, which has its roots in the structure of the rural community in the late 19th century. In the minds pf the public, the Co-operative Movement is viewed as a unique economic/democratic Danish tradition, which is important for the rise of modern Denmark”.

The declaration of this paper is that the resistance towards Arla and Danish Crown is to be sought in these historical cultural relations, rather than in the relevant cases. The two corporations are bound to these historical narratives due to the fact that they historically constitute the center of the Danish Co-operative Movement and are still organized as co-operative businesses. These are narratives which gave the very same corporations a positive image and assured them political and public support through a century – and thereby also sponsored their economic position. Yet, today it is continuously more difficult to relate the corporations with a particular democratic business-kind, and the narrative does therefore appear to be blocking the development of a strategy on a global scale.

Theoretical considerations
Business-history has traditionally put the business as its’ economical focus. The aim has been to examine different kinds of doing business in order to explain the unique growth which the capitalistic society has created through the firms. Even though I, under no circumstances, undermine the relevance of these studies, in my opinion it is a too narrow perspective to use. Karl Marx claimed that the modern society and capitalism is characterized by being pregnant with its own opposite. If one is to continue with this metaphor, then the firm is the schizophrenic child of capitalism, which incarnates the modern society’s sides and oppositions. This means that the corporation is not just an economic unit but is also a significant actor when it comes to the construction of our identities and cultural understanding. In other words, the corporation is an obvious unit of analysis when the multiple facets of the modern society shall be enlightened. Yet, this requires the development of a theoretical concept-framework in which traditional economic history and business-history are combined with more recent cultural-historic analysis.
In the following I will combine elements from three different traditions: The concept of memory as it is formulated by Pierre Nora, theories that source in “linguistic turns” and New Institutional Economic using traditions from Douglas C. North. Using three such different traditions can be quite risqué as it can easily become a self-opposing construction devaluing its own claims. As such, a short enlightening of the theories and the possibility of combining these, are included in the following:

In the history of memory the key element is rather the way that we construct our conscience about the past than it is the past in itself. The focus is thereby shifted from past time to present and from history, as the truth about the past to the history as conscience constructing in the present (Mordhorst 1998, 136). Since business-history is to be found in the cross-section between social science focusing on present and humanities focusing on the past, then memory politics appears to be an obvious focal point. The history of memory research has in modern time mostly been tied to the tradition of Pierra Nora who focuses on analysis of realms of memories (Nora 1996). These realms of memories, typically monuments and jubilees, have been connected to political events which play a central part in the fellowships of national memories. In Nora’s research the French Revolution has thus been a dominating theme, while Denmark, amongst other things, has focused on jubilees in relation to Second World War and the Danish Constitution (Bryld, Warring 1998. Warring 2004). Yet, an essential point in the memory tradition is how conscience of history and memory not are primarily created by specialized historians or large events, but rather through a widely ramified net of actors where all become both producers and consumers of history conscience (Jensen 1999). Corporations also play a role as a memory creationist, as the latest years increase of sold goods also means increase of selling a certain lifestyle and history comprehension. This is explicit in marketing strategies, branding and storytelling. Thus it becomes rather logical to examine the corporations in general and in particular the Co-operative Movement from a history of memory perspective. Recently this has also led to the creation of memory historical analysis of corporations (see as an example Lundstrøm 2004).

The other theoretical perspective which I include is the “linguistic turn” and the new cultural history, which has set a serious focus on how our world and the understanding of the world is discursive and linguistic constructed, but also covers a wide range of positions and theories. The inspiration to this article particularly originates in the German history of concepts (see Koselleck 1972, Nevers 2004) and in the narrative theories (see Czarniawaska 2004; Modhorst 2004). The concept - history focuses on central concepts in the discourses. One of the essential points is that concepts gain
their meaning and their content through the contrast to other concepts. I will include in the article both a range of concepts which are essential in the Co-operative Movement and also concepts that illustrate their opposites.

The underlying axiom much of the research in discourses and stories has been that the recognition of the world as being socially constructed would result in “the death of the great narratives” as Loyard expressed it (Loyard, 1996). As narratives are not “reality” there is always the possibility of changes to the storyline which means that they are not necessarily the only narratives about a single case. An underlying thesis has therefore been that this would bring forth a yet more fragmented world, where each individual or group would be able to construct the precise narrative they feel accurately represents themselves and their narrative. In addition to this, it is important to mention the tradition of Hayden White which has influenced in a way that narrative analysis mostly has been concentrated around analysis’ covering the rhetoric / topologic construction of scientific history, which has brought along the impossibility to maintain a clear divide between scientific history and literature (White, 1973). A shift towards storytelling has recently occurred in science. Much of the earlier research, with which White was concentrated, was occupied with showing the world’s linguistic construction where present day research has shifted towards the epistemological position aiming to examine the function of narratives and how they are used. This is also explicit in the research of corporations with an increasing focus on branding and storytelling. The interesting aspect in relation to this shift, in my opinion, is that the world has not been divided in unlimited amounts of atomistic narratives. There is, on the contrary, a surprisingly continuity and correlation over time in many stories. This might be what provides the stories with a memory political potential, which assures that national identity and nation states still function, with or without the ‘revelation’ of being social constructions. or not. Instead of understanding narratives as purely contingent, and changing, I will examine how stories maintain stability over time.

Stability over time is a central element in New Institutional Economic. This being perhaps most clear in the understanding that the economist and Nobel-receiver Douglas North represents (North, 1990). North is also an interesting choice in a historic analysis because he, as an economist, has a historic perspective and views economic processes as a part of a more broad context of the society. In some ways, North has a conservative foundational conviction of institutions as what create stability over time:
“History matters. It matters not just because we can learn from the past, but because the present and the future are connected to the past by the continuity of a society’s institutions…Institutions are the rules of the game in a society, or more formally, they are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction. In consequence they structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social, or economic.” (North 1990 vii, 3)

North separates formal and informal institutions, where the formal institutions are e.g. a country’s constitution, while the informal are constituted of routines, traditions and cultural codes. According to North institutions are primarily rules which create our framework and controls our behaviour, while individuals, associations, and organizations are actors that acts within and according to the formal frames. Yet, as well as the institutions create stability and safety they, on the other hand, also create inertia in a society because of the development of certain, almost unbreakable, patterns. This means, that institutions will not always be the most rational or profitable systems. North calls this “path-dependency” – a concept which North has taken from the technological history, and which has spread itself to organization-history where it is increasingly used as a tool of analysis (Cambell 2004).

An often very used illustration of path-dependency (David 1985), is the development of the typewriter-keyboard, which was developed in relation to the mechanical typewriters. First a keyboard was developed aiming to make the writing as fast as possible. Unfortunately the keyboard was so efficient that the letters mechanical arms could not follow track. In order to lower the speed of the secretaries so that the mechanic could keep up, a keyboard was constructed, where the letters were placed in a less logical manner. This keyboard became the standard version, and is still the one we use today. Thus even though we use computers today where technology would have no problems in following even the fastest secretary, yet we still use the slower version, and almost couldn’t imagine changing it now. We are used to this version now, and it would be too difficult and cost-consuming to make the many hundreds of millions of people who uses keyboards today get used to a new version. A path-dependency was created a long time ago, which brings consequences today which no one was able to predict when the keyboard was first developed.

North’s concept of path-dependency is primarily geared to examine how the paths are functioning to find an explanation to stability in the society, just as he aims to separate one factor which is observed as the one which creates and determines the path.
Yet, the recognition-interest of this paper is a bit different. In front of the somewhat single causal explanation model is the focus here the creation of the paths, as well as path-dependency is seen as a complex game between a range of different technological, economical, jurisdictional and not to forget cultural and linguistic factors, which collaborates in the construction of a path. In other words, it is a net of relations which creates the path. A net, where it very fast becomes pointless to try to determine what is the cause and what is effect. On the contrary, it is still possibly to examine the origins of the net or how it was created (path-creation) (Garud and Kranøe, 2001). How is it then possibly to combine this institutional perspective with storytelling and memory-history? Put very simply - by viewing the language as an institution. This does in many ways continue the “Philosophical Examinations” by Wittengenstein, which is one of the linguistic turn’s earliest expression in which he understands the language as a game with learned and practised rules, and also the punishment if one is to break the grammatical and cultural rules. Thus a thought parallel to that of North’s comparing the institutional frames of a society with the formal but also informal rules of fair play and good sportsmanship that exists in a game of football.

The essential idea in the linguistic turn is that it is the language which is creating us rather than it is us who are creating the language. According to the perspective of the linguistic turn is the language is the most increasing institution existing today. We are surrounded in and by the language daily which causes us to overlook or forget the influence of the language on our possibilities of action, as well as it can be difficult to include in actual analysis. Yet, if one is to continue to “translate” recognitions from the linguistic turn to the concepts introduced by North, it is clear that discourses and narratives exist on the organizational level. My statement is that the language, according to North, is considered an institution. It is the actors who make discourses and narratives, made under the formal rules, which creates path-dependency and effectively limits our possibilities of action and influences the choices we make.

To the corporations of Arla and Danish Crown this means that narratives about being a co-operation were created in the beginning of the 20th century as a cause of the establishment of the Co-operative Movement. The narratives still exist, function and are co-determining how the corporations act and how other institutions such as the media, laws and consumers reacts when these narratives are troubled, regardless of whether Arla or Danish Crown approve of this or not. In order to state the origins of this path-dependency it is necessary to look at the early Co-operative Movement and include some of the historical elements which caused its creation, and also articulation of the Co-operative
Movement and especially which consequences this brings to globalization today. The following four elements will be analyzed: The concept “Co-operative Movement”, “The agricultural nation of Denmark”, the relationship between agriculture and industry, and the idea of the Co-operative Movement as a model of doing democratic business. I will concentrate the analysis on two periods: The first one is the time between 1880-1920 where the Co-operative Movement was first established and later spoken off as a movement. The other is present time, where elements of the previous movements story still exists but is exposed to pressure. As the end of the paper is to demonstrate how the co-operative narrative’s national elements are influencing present possibilities of action, a natural beginning is a discussion of the concept globalization and its relationship to the national level.

**Globalization and the national state**

In the mid 1990’s the term globalization began to characterize the time we live in now. By making globalization to a concept of the epoch, it implicitly will also be something to characterize our present time in contrast to all other times. This is about as far as agreement of the term “globalization” goes. Even though it usually is used in third person singular it is far from being a monocular term. On the contrary, the term is used to cover a wide range of tendencies and is used differently depending on the discourse. The goal of this paper is not to do an actual concept analysis of “globalization” but rather to imply the spreading use of the concept in different discourses.

In economical discourses does this, most often, cover the idea of a rapid development of the capitalistic market economy, as 4 billion people are taking part in the global economy, compared to 2 billion only fifteen years ago (Clausen 2004). Besides events like the ‘Fall of the Wall’, development of the economy in China and the rest of Asia has this been facilitated by a large decrease in transportation and transactions-costs. Knowledge and service has become the central goods and an increasing internationalization of the capital market has taken place. This has caused an expansion of international division of labour, which means, that in particular traditional industry and low-technological work have moved to low-salary areas.

In political discourses the term “globalization” is often related to the term “challenge” or with a more negative connotation as in “threat” and “crisis”. The common aspect is that we are facing changes which supposedly will change our society radically. The word “threat” is often used to refer to globalization as a wave of multinational corporations creating a political, economical and cultural rectification supported by the governments of the rich countries, e.g. the MacDonalization and a larger
divide between rich and poor nations. Using the word “challenge” has a more positive connotation, demanding the national governments to come up with new quality strategies. A typical example is the “Danish innovation council’s” report of the challenges of globalization: “The Danish strategy – Denmark’s possibilities in the global society of knowledge”, published fall 2004. The report includes an analysis of how Denmark should act in the present global society through its historical and unique culture. The foundational thesis in the report is that Denmark has an ability to combine the social and democratic with what is economical innovative. This originates in a range of movements: The Folk High School Movement (the word Folk High School is a unique Danish school-program originating 1850s and is traditionally linked white the rural community), the Co-operative Movement, the Workers Movement and the Welfare Movement. According to the report, Denmark’s task is now to create an innovation movement. A task that Denmark should be very well equipped to fulfill considering our history and identity. Besides the fact that the report is building on a problematic historical analysis, to which I will soon return to, the central perspective is that the global is consistently seen as contrary to the national. This means that the “global challenge” should be solved by national identity. Why the global is tied together with the national is because the term “global”, like all other concepts, becomes powerful in relation to its opposite meaning – a contrast concept – thus what describes the non-global. In this discourse the con-concept will become the national and the historic. How this is constructed is explicit in the report’s section about the Co-operative Movement, which is described as follows:

“The Co-operative Movement was a unique Danish social innovation, which was developed when the United States of America raised as an economical superpower in the end of the 18th century and when the American great-farmers flooded Europe with cheap corn. The Danish respond to the American “large-production” was to establish “joint-production” in shape of the Co-operative Movement. The Danish respond was both so effective and so competitive that Denmark became one of the last countries to be industrialized” (Clausen 2004 p.26).

The co-operational undertaking was made a unique Danish construction. Yet traditionally this effort is attributed a group of workers in England when they created a co-operative society in Rochdale in 1843 (see e.g. Hertel 1917, 30). The report from the Council of Innovation sees, paradoxically, the Danish Co-operative Movement as a social movement. If anything is characterizing the Danish co-operational
undertaking compared to the e.g. English, it is exactly the social aspect which is withdrawn from the Danish movement. Or, as it is said by one the Danish Co-operative Movements father figures Anders Nielsen in 1910: “Under the Danish circumstances is it possible to maintain that the Co-operative Movement is a purely economical case which is only measured and judged by the pecuniary gain it brings to all participants” (Nielsen 1910,14).

The above mentioned quotation from the Council of Innovation demonstrates that the report also operates with a range of other contradictions. On one side is the “evil”: United States of America, large-production, the industrialization. On the other side is the “good” or the heroes which are characterized by words like Denmark, joint-production and agriculture. Yet on a deeper level it is rather the same contradiction that is formulated, -which is the one between the global and the national. The Co-operative Movement is thus characterized as being the national Danish respond to the early globalization which took place in the end of the 1800th century. In order to understand the memory political story about the Co-operative Movement is a short brake in the chain of events that led to the spreading of the Co-operative Movement necessary.

**Denmark and the global challenge in the end of the 19th century**

In the end of the 1800th century Denmark faced a range of crisis. In 1864 Denmark suffered a defeat in the war against Prussia, which forced Denmark to withdraw from the duchy of Slesvig and Holstein. Besides from re-establishing Denmark’s position as a small state, the defeat also resulted in the withdrawal of the most productive and technological advanced area of the country. A short time after the defeat the Danish economy was fought on its clearly most dominating export: Corn, which for thirty years had assured a stabile growth. The actual cause was the flooding of cheap corn on the international market from e.g. Russia and The United States of America. Seen in a broader perspective this was the result of industrialisms and capitalisms international breakthrough, which clearly created a significantly more global and work-divided economy. There was nothing left to do for the Danish economy and agriculture than to rearrange the entire production and correct itself according to the new global economy. To Denmark this might have been for the better since the farming soil had started to become exhausted because of the rapidly increasing corn production between 1870 and 1940 (often mentioned as the “great period of corn selling”). This had caused an increase in pet production aiming to gain more manure (Hyldtoft 1999, 48). A by-product of this production was milk which resulted in a beginning of butter production. Because of the missing
harvest structure most of this production was of such poor quality that it wasn’t geared to anything but lubricants. This gave the Danish agriculture a competitive advantage compared to the other European countries when it became clear that a shift to animal by-production was a possibility for Danish export. A range of forward-looking Danish business people on the ball realized how industrialism created new markets to these products, among other reasons, because of a growing middleclass in the more industrialized countries like England and Germany.

The shift from grain to animal by-products did, in the meanwhile, require a preparation process shaped by slaughterhouses and dairy plants. A problem in this sense was the very de-central Danish agriculture structure, which was fixed in the end of 1700\textsuperscript{th} hundred, meant that the Danish agriculture was build around middle-sized farming as the most important production unit. The economical effect of the spreading of the production was lack of concentrated capital in order to invest in production apparatus to preparations of the animal by-production. A solution to this problem was to collaborate in co-operative undertakings.

Besides the problem of lacking capital, the de-central structure created a technological problem in terms of spreading bad infra structure which did not only make the transportation of milk costly. Using the previous dairy technology the milk would be impossible to prepare since the transportation across bumpy infra structure made the process of separating milk and cream impossible. The solution to this problem became the invention of the continuing milk centrifuge in 1878 in Roskilde, Denmark. In many ways it created the technological inventions which created the fundament upon where Denmark could establish its butter export. The centrifuge was a relative cheap investment which meant that it suddenly became worth while to gather the milk from a range of farms that only had a limited amount of cows each. Four years later in 1882 the first co-dairy-plant opened, and twenty years later was more than 1,000 dairy plants spread all over the country – all using the milk centrifuge.

The society’s investment in research and development also became successful in other ways. Some of the most important technological inventions were: A control apparatus that enabled the measurement of fat level in the milk which obstructed the farmer’s possibilities of diluting the milk with water. The development of cooling technology and pasteurisation technology had a great influence on the non-spreading of infectious diseases like cow tuberculosis.

Controlled attempts with better feed resulted in increasing milk production and experiments which showed that the revenue from the butter production – the butter and low-fat milk – could be used to feed for pigs. These revelations pushed the Danish pork production to higher levels. The entire
development happened with such success that the dairy producers and pork producers have had a determining position in the Danish economy, until this day.

On a superficial level not many historians would disagree that this is the central chain of events. What is of determining character is rather how one is to view the human factor. If one is to stick to the story as a structural technological story, then the shift to animal by-products can be seen as the establishment of a farming tradition, and is, in this sense, not a continuing process of a farming tradition. If, on the contrary, one is to put the farmers in the center of the story by seeing them as the creationists of the Co-operative Movement, it will appear as a storytelling about a continuuality of a farming tradition. This also means that it is well-suited as an identity-telling narrative, in contrast to the structural narrative. In the following I will examine some of the central elements in the two constructions and do a follow-up over time. I would like to stress that my point is not to demonstrate that the structural storytelling is more truth or better, but rather to show that it is possible to make a coherent storytelling where the Co-operative Movement is not the center of attention and because of this, has other memory political consequences.

The construction of a movement
As it appears by the earlier cited report from Danish Innovation Council and from the Danish encyclopaedia about Denmark and globalization, the term Co-operative Movement is the central issue of analysis. The predicate ‘movement’ implies something national and positive, something that is beyond a way of running a business. Yet, the question appears- where and in what way it is correct to speak of a movement? There is a definite difference whether one sees a movement as a range of more or less independent initiatives, which all look alike but fundamentally differs in goal formulating, or whether one sees movement as a larger group of people all consciously working towards a common strategic goal. The last definition is what usually is understood by a national or social movement (Alberoni 1987, Bager 1992, 31).
According to the first conviction then the way the kind of co-operative grew in the end of the 1800’s in Denmark fits the definition of a movement. In general, the establishment of the first co-dairy plant in Heddinge in 1882 is mentioned as the beginning of the Co-operative Movement. Thirty years later 1,300 co-dairy plants were established. From here on the co-operative model rapidly spread out to a long range of other branches all related to the farming society; co-slaughterhouses, corn and feed businesses, manure, egg transport, insurance etc. (see Drejer 1952). It is estimated that more than 4,000 businesses in Denmark were driven on a co-operative model by the first strike of World War 1. In the Co-operative Movement’s own literature is this movement, often explicit, using the following quotation: “A wave has risen by the Northern Sea and it will be subject to diminishment but will instead flood the entire country” (Hertel 1917, 132). The quotation supposedly stems from Niels Petersen in the middle of the 1880’s, but rather typically is that no sources are to be found pointing where or more precisely when he exclaimed this. More importantly, it does not appears to be before 1900 that the term Co-operative Movement is in the Danish vocabulary – that is, in the time after the movement has been through its most explosive phase according to its amounts of co-operative undertakings. It is also in this time period that organizations which organizing the different co-operations are being created. This institutionalization accounts for both individual branches, as e.g. the

The narrative about the foundation of the Co-op-movement in Denmark is often illustrated with maps showing the fast spread of the co-op diaries in the late 19th century. But the reverse movement, from the 1960s where the structural development fast reduced the number of diaries is never shown. The tow maps show the number of co-op diaries in 1882 and 1890.
Dairy Producers United Organization in 1912, but also umbrella organizations like “the Co-operative Commission” which was founded in 1899. Also the Danish Agricultural Council which was established in 1919 has had a strong and direct influence inside the country. The co-operative undertakings have been members ever since the beginning of the Danish Agricultural Council and are practically those who determine the council’s political position.

Thus, it is at the time where the organizations are taking over the movement’s role, that the identity-creating construction takes place. Yet the organizations are both what assures people and capital to create a narrative, and also who needs a narrative in order to legitimize their activity. The term “Co-operative Movement” was originally introduced partly in the “Co-operative Magazine”, which is published as an organ to the Co-operative Commission from 1899, and in a range of books about the Co-operative Movement from 1910 and so forth (Nielsen 1910, Hertel 1917, Drejer 1926, Degerbol 1931, Ravnholdt 1934, Kruchow 1946). In the bulk of this literature is the Co-operative seen as a morally conscious movement aiming higher than just making money to the shareholders. Thus writes Severin Jørgensen, who was one of the founder’s of the Co-operative Movement in 1903: “The movement has a far higher, far more important goal than increasing the population’s economical wellbeing. The most important and most meaningful goal is to lift the population to reach a higher moral level, to make the Co-operative Movement members to more competent more independent but most importantly to make them better people” (Drejer 1952, 33).

Viewed as a genre, these books about the Co-operative Movement are always positive and often written by people who are part of or hired by the movement. In the history of memory terms this is a literature which portrays farming and the Co-operative Movement to the heroes in Denmark’s more recent history, which e.g. takes place by making the Co-operative Movement to a social, cultural and national movement which represents the best in the Danish national character. An example is Hans Hertel’s “The Co-operative Movement in Denmark” from 1917 which is the first larger correlating description of the Danish Co-operative Movement in Denmark:

“The unique prosperity of our Co-operative Movement is partly rooting in our national character. The even open plains which is Denmark, forest, field and moor, everything even and straight forward, has given the Danish man the inborn balance and evenness in mind and thought, he will not become extremely exited and then rapidly cool off, but rather he poses a practical sense of the realities of life, and he maintains what used to be in his interest. The common planned arrangement of working
towards a common goal fits well with the Danish sense of togetherness and democratic way of thinking” (Hertel 1917, 564)

This is contrasted to e.g. England:

“The Englishman has already a distinct feeling of individuality because he is an islander, and also a strong personality conscience, he has enough in himself, what is foreign only slightly interests him, only under slow and passive resistance will what is new be introduced in his methods of organization and in his work” (Hertel 1917, 565)

Though, to tie movement with national character is not something that only belongs to the past. A present day example is Andreas Nicolaisen, who amongst other things is the president of the Association of Young Businessmen’s Education, which is a powerful group of businesspeople who amongst other things ran the Copenhagen Business School. In an article from 2004, which treats the
Co-operative undertakings of the present, he expresses a similar way of thought: “The Danish way of running co-operations is deeply rooted in the associational and “Folk High School” culture, which I believe that all Danish people will approve of and accept as an essential part of our cultural heritage…That the Co-operative Movement has done so well in Denmark might be largely caused by the fact that the thoughts behind the movement harmonizes so well with the Danish national character” (Nicolaisen 2004, 96-97). It is, according to Nicolaisen, also the reason why other countries with less democratic understanding and maybe more “ill national character” have not been able to develop the co-operative model: “I believe this is related to the fact that we build it [the co-operative model] and have continuously based the firm’s internal organization on a cultural part, which other countries do not have in such a well-developed shape and can neither create, because it is a foundational element in our cultural understanding which can not be transferred in a short amount of time” (Nicolaisen 2004, 97). Thus, a narrative has been constructed about the Co-operative Movement as a national movement which is founded on a specific national trait which virtues social equality.

It has long been recognized amongst some of the leading co-operation-communities that the idea of the Co-operative Movement as a social movement could evolve itself into a serious obstacle to some co-operations. When it became clear in the end of the 1950’s that the previous structure where each village has its own dairy production had past its time, and essential structural changes had to be introduced, a plan was created to replace the entire de-central net of independent dairy plants with a joint corporation which was intended to bear the name the Dairy Production Society Denmark or MD in daily speak. The warmest spokesman of this idea was the director of the Dairy Plant’s Common Organization Thorkild Mathiassen. In an interview in 1963 he was asked whether this would be contradictory towards the spirit of the Co-operative Movement he responded this:

“Now you use the term Co-operative Movement. I don’t appreciate that expression too much even though I unfortunately can not find anything better. Co-operation, which has found its greatest and earliest expansion, is not a ‘movement’ in a late practical and present sense. It is a term to describe an economical sort of co-operation influenced by business-like principles” (Andelsbladet nr. 21 1963, 563)
Where the storytelling about the Co-operative Movement as a social movement had a positive function in relation to the building up of an institutional apparatus, it would have been less fit when large horizontal businesses needed to be created.

If one is to look at the factual development then Thorkild Mathiassen was right. Since he launched the idea both primary farming and the Co-operative Movement have been in a structural development, which changed the business radically. There has been a strong reduction in the primary farming’s amounts of farms and employees, which means that 300,000 less people are working today in the field compared to 1960. Also, not only the size of the farms has increased, but they have also become more specialized. A ‘farmer’ today is no longer a person with a wide knowledge of all aspects of farming rather it is a highly specialized expert with a large knowledge in a specific production, e.g. pork production. It is, in relation to this, interesting how most of the Danish pork producers no longer name their production as farming, but instead as pork factories, as well as they call themselves pork fabricants and not farmers.

The development has been even more convincing in the Co-operative Movement. While there were almost 2,000 co-dairy plants and co-slaughterhouses in 1960, they have now amalgamated into the giants of Arla and fifteen smaller dairy factories, while Danish Crown poses an almost entirely monopolistic position.

At the same time did the story about the Co-operative Movement as the little farmer’s movement locally anchored and democratic spread itself to the historic versions and in the political system. The story had become a history of memory path-dependency. An illustrative example of this was when the previous social democratic Prime Minister Poul Nyrup said in the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Danish Co-operative Society (the former Co-operative Committee): “The Co-operative Movement is the story of new and old co-operation. It is a story about a people and a Co-operative Movement who knew how to meet the challenge at the right time. And it is also a part of history of the country of Denmark, who won inwardly what we lost outwardly after the catastrophe in 1864 where we, as you know, lost two thirds of our precious country. It is the story about prosperity after setback, where the democracy seriously took rise”. From here Nyrup makes it to the present, because also in the future will “the Co-operative Movement be here, survive, grow – because it in the end is the definite, democratic founding sets of passing on thoughts which brings up the best in all of us” (Nyrup, 1999). That it is a social democratic prime minister, who normally attributes the Workers Movement and the Social Democratic party the honour of the Danish model with welfare and
democracy, clearly shows how much the storytelling of Denmark as a farming nation has become a part of the joint national memory.

**Denmark as a farming nation**

The idea of Denmark as a farming nation does not stem from the Co-operative Movement. On the contrary, it is mentionable that the Co-operative Movement both as a business-kind and as a national identity narrative is the logical continuation of a path-dependency which was founded along the reform process that took place in Denmark in the end of the 18th century, and which named this time in Danish history “the age of the Agrarian Reforms”. It was these reforms which brought the above mentioned de-central Danish farming structure. To view these reforms as a product of a power struggle between the King on one side and the aristocracy and landowners on the other is a rather controversial perspective. The land reforms were meant to stretch the landowners by laws about replacement and scattering of farms which facilitated the farmers in overtaking the land they were farming. Probably not many people predicted that this also made the middle-sized caretakers the main draw of capital in Denmark and thus determined the economical structure of the next century. In either case, it became impossible to put forth any land reforms that fundamentally made any changes to this up to the end of the 20th century.

In a history of memory perspective did the actual Agrarian Reforms never stand out as the central events, but instead the abolition of the adscription from 1788 did. The adscription was a law which forbid Danish farmers to leave the area where they were born, which almost provided the landowners with ownership over the farmers and their labour. Yet the immediate consequences from the abolition of the adscription did not hit home for once because the law was not set in effect before the next century. On the other side, the abolition of the adscription had a great symbolic value because it almost incarnated the foundational history-telling of the Danish history which was under construction and became the fundament in the national history that dominated the next two hundred years of Danish history.

The foundational storyline here was that Denmark originally had been inhabited by free and equal farmers. In the Middle age this original national Danish freedom of the farmers decreased because of suppressing foreign aristocrats and ecclesiastical. The Danish history can therefore be interpreted as the fight to regain the farmers their original freedom. To view the abolition of the adscription as a national freedom-narrative and crucial step towards the recreation of the original
freedom possessed by the farmers did this become clear and in continuation of the raise of “the Freedom support” in 1792, which is one of the most well-known Danish memorials. It apparently brings the inscription: “The King knew that citizen’s freedom decided by just law gives love to homeland, courage to its army, desire for proficiency, long for diligence hope for luck”, and “the King offered: The adscription must abolish, the laws of farming must be given order and power, that the free farmer can be brave and knowledgeable, diligent and good, honest citizen, happy”.

Viewed as a realm of memory and the function it plays in the national identity the abolition of the adscription can be compared to the role the French Revolution had in France in 1789. It is not solely a collapse of time that is similar within the two events. Both are freedom stories which articulate heroes and villains. In France the bourgeois became the heroes instead of the old class system structure. Comparably it was the farmers and parts of the new citizenry who were the heroes in Denmark, while the aristocracy and foreign landowners were the bad guys. Both narratives have later on been considered as the take off of the creation of the modern society and the stories have thus been central events in the construction of the national historic narratives and are celebrated with great jubilees, monuments and remembrance days. Although an essential difference between the two stories
are to be found in their memory political function. The French Revolution is the narrative about conflict and revolutionary solutions which has influenced French history ever since. Instead the narrative about the abolition of the adscription has been articulated as a reform history and has become the narrative about how Denmark is to solve conflicts through consensus, negotiations and democratic methods.

In a history of memory perspective it appears natural to view the entire period from the Agrarian Reforms to the creation of the Co-operative Movement as a story of continuality, which ends with the realization of the farmers Freedom support. Or if we are to use the actual words from the Freedom support, ‘when Denmark came out of its crisis in the end of the 19th century, the nation was saved by a citizenry of farmers who behaved brave, diligent and knowledgeable and thus defended themselves against foreigners’. In jubilees and jubilee-scripts from the abolition of the adscription does the Co-operative Movement often appear centrally mentioned as e.g. Alex Garde’s book ‘From togetherness to togetherness – Pictures of Danish farming life and farming mind from villain to aristocrat-farmer’ which was published in 1938 for the 150th anniversary of the abolition of the adscription. He writes, amongst other things: “It is the Danish farmers belief that if he does not himself abolish his millennium-long joint life with it, will he neither miss his common ground in the future, from which he continuously will be able to make his work to a living social value. The population layer of the farmers have always been the most constantly, most non-mixed part of the Danish population…No other class of the society stands on more sure grounds with their work around themselves. On the other hand does the industrial labour division shift the class layers and creates new group creations which brakes habitual traditions” (Garde, 1938).

Agriculture vs. industry
Garde touches, in the end of the quotation, an essential element in the agricultural storytelling and in the idea of the Co-operative Movement as its continuation: The conception of the Co-operative Movement as a Danish response to the threatening and foreign industry. It is characteristic of the Danish Co-operative Movement that it is strongly linked to agriculture, and the co-operations who are attached to the Co-operative Movement are, as mentioned before, not a part of the actual movement. The main opposition between the Co-operative Movement and industry is, hereby, clearly articulated and its relevance maintained.
The opposition between industry and agriculture must also be seen in light of the political climate in Denmark in the end of the 1900th century. At this time a conservative government, organized in the party ‘Right’ with its support from landowners and people of the industry, was in power. A power they kept by issuing decrees and provisional laws. This resulted in a strong opposition from the farming class who organised themselves in the party ‘Left’ and was able to carry on the freedom story from the age of the Agrarian Reforms under liberalistic paroles. The opposition between right and left was, besides the purely political oppositional relation, also seen as a conflict between capital, industry and centralization on one side and farming, nationality and de-centralising on the other. Obviously, the Co-operative Movement was drawn in to the conflict and places itself directly on the opposite side of the “private capitalistic corporations” (se e.g. Ravnholdt 1943, 52) as the Co-operative Movement named the joint stock companies. These are presented as undemocratic companies only controlled by profit in the literature made by the Co-operative Movement. A part of this construction is also to see the industrialisation as foreign and large, while the Co-operative Movement is presented as the local, national and de-central. Or with the words of the co-operation historian A. Axelsen Drejer: “That is, above all, the danger by that kind of joint-stock company, that each individual or each area looses its influence, or to put it in general terms, sells its self-government for a mess of pottage” (Drejer 1937). A paradigmatic example is the case of “the Danish pork slaughterhouses” in 1890 which was an attempt to create a co-operation between the private pork slaughterhouse and the co-operative slaughterhouses. This was led by Philip W. Heyman and C.F. Tietgen, the guaranteed largest Danish capitalist, who both were men of industry and right-wing politics. The attempt was rejected though, and that in spite of the fact that “Tietgen mobilized all his eloquence and took advantage of his influence, but it came short in front of the co-operative people’s strong persistency to keep their independence” (Ravnholdt 1943, 53). Yet, Tietgen got the last words in historical terms. He just wanted to contribute to the monopoly that Danish Crown has today.

The opposition between agriculture and industry is thus made more than solely a business-wise divide. It also becomes an antagonistic divide with lines that can not be crossed. You can not be both at the same time. Either, you are a part of the industry and thereby alienating and foreign, or you are a part of the agriculture and then historically and nationally anchored. A consequence of this is that the Co-operative Movement is not seen as a part of an industrialization but rather a continuation of Denmark as a farming and agricultural nation. An example of this is e.g. the cultural historic museums in Denmark in where “Co-operative villages” are presently built, amongst others on the National
Museum of Denmark where the Co-operative village is chosen to be placed in the part of the museum (Open Air Museum) that shows Danish farming culture, instead of the section two hundred meters away where an museum of industry is being built. In general, Denmark is treated as a farming nation and not for our industrial past in the museums, which historian Thorkild Kjærgaard portrayed during 2000 in “To confess to reality: The image of the industry – in a historical perspective”. As he writes “a whole lot of weight is put on the agriculture and our past as farmers, but it becomes a secret that we since 18th century has been a nation of industry (…) It appears, like there was something non-Danish about industry” (Kjærggard 2000).

Another consequence of the divide between industry and farming is how one looks at the goods that are being produced. Even though butter and bacon fundamentally must be named factory-produced, mass-produced and industrial prepared goods they are categorized as farming products. This has, amongst other things, resulted in the national registration of butter from co-operations as farmed goods, while e.g. margarine and cheese which are often produced in private businesses are registered as industrial goods. Thus, it is not the actual production of the goods, but rather the ownership and the behind-laying story, which decided whether a good is categorized as industrial or farmed.

Historically this has meant that Danish provision production has been identified with agriculture and with the products which stems from co-operations. This is also relevant on an institutional level where the co-operations, as mentioned above, are organized under the Farming Council and practically determines the council’s politics, while private provision businesses are

Lure-marked butter which is the most famous brand developed by the Danish diaries is over 100 years old.
organised in “the Provision industry” which is a line-organisation founded in 2000 under Danish Industry.

**The Workers Movement as the democratic business model**

The central element in the narrative of the Co-operative Movement is that it is a specific Danish democratic model of doing business, and that it is an opposition to the joint stock company model. This is clear, amongst other things, by the expression that one “votes after heads of people and not heads of cattle” (that is, the voting is based on persons and not on how many cows they own) which is directly opposite of the joint stock companies which are voting based on how many stocks they have. Even though this expression has been made almost synonymous with the co-operative model, in a memory political optic, this practise did not entirely cover all the earlier co-operative undertakings where a large number of different models were used, e.g. the “voting after heads of cattle” model. Though, this ended when the system was nailed to a path-dependency. Another and just as essential element in the democratic narrative is that it is de-centralized and locally anchored, compared to the industry which is looked upon as global and monopolistic. In the Co-operative Movement’s description of itself is it thus almost standard to include a section describing the fight against the monopolies and the capital, along with the link to the democracy thought which is articulated in the following quotation from Anders Nielsen, president of the, Co-operative Committee, from 1914:

“To people of co-operative undertakings the monopoly has always, been the great enemy who the Co-operative Movement had to fight as its most important assignment. Our organisation is open and accessibly to all people, we distribute to our members according to his turnover, and each member has one and only one vote.

The other peoples organization is closed, they are meant to include as few as possibly and assure these the greatest possibly revenue on the behalf of the many. It is the goal of these organizations to gain sole and exclusive right, monopoly, in their field, and to decisively exploit the sole and exclusive right in order to gain increasing profit to the few participants”

Regarding the co-operation as de-central and democratic in opposition to the joint stock companies has also been essential in the discussions about the introduction of a co-operative law, since it is a particular draw about Denmark, that no laws are regulating the co-operatives in contrast to the joint
stock companies. When a joint stock law was introduced in Denmark in 1917 there was some
discussion whether a co-op-law should be introduced, but this failed because, amongst other things,
the co-operative societies put forth the argument that co-operations should not to subject to regulation
since they had not “been a scene of abuse in such matters that are known to be in the world of joint
stock companies” (Anders Nielsen, 1914 at the congress of co-operations, here from Just 1986, 46).
The case furthermore showed that even though the co-operational narrative viewed itself as the little
guy, they were actually rather powerful, as it can be seen in Minister of Trade Hassing Jørgensen’s
explanation of why he would not attempt to introduce a co-op law: “The powers that are behind the
Co-operative Movement in this country, are of such force, that they do not, in my opinion, let
themselves surrender” (negotiations of the Landsting 1914-15, here from Just 1986, 65).

Something does point in this direction. When a range of Danish politicians in 1986 attempted
to introduce a co-op law it failed once again. Even though it is difficult to maintain the idea of co-
operations like Arla and Danish Crown as they own market shares of approximately 90% as they
guarantee as monopolies. It is, in this relation, worth noting how Arla and Danish Crown judge
themselves as more democratic than others. As an example does Danish Crown publish a homepage
titled “elected by the people” stating: “The people-chosen organization builds upon the principals of
the co-operation, where one man – one vote, is one of the founding principles”
(www.danishcrown.dk).

The fall of the narratives
Yet, it seems like the picture of the Co-operative Movement as a particular national and democratic
organization, has failed in the eyes of the consumers. This is explicit in an interview with the Danish
Consumer Association’s president Rasmus Kjeldahl in 2001, where he spoke about the previous role
of the Co-operative Movement as:

“One is to go back in the history books in order to find the myth about “the good co-operation”, where
democracy was in focus, where voting was by heads of people and not by heads of cattle and where
the members were equal, no matter whether they were large or small, and where the companies were
the guaranties of an improvement of the quality and to assure the co-op-owners spiritual and moral
support and thereby make the farmers to the carriers of the Danish culture. When the co-op-thought
and the co-operations have been made synonymous with Danish culture, would any kind of criticism
of the farming or the companies be identical to criticise even the Danish national soul. And by this, one would have reduced oneself to a revolutionary society-fighter” (Andelsbladet, 19/11-2003).

According to Kjerdahl the situation has changed now: “The agriculture and the co-operations have lost their value as cultural silver heirlooms. One is not to count on the futures consumers to feel solidarity with neither the co-operations nor Danish goods” (Andelsbladet, 19/11-2003).

History has proven him right ever since. Both Arla and Danish Crown have lost large shares on the national market. The negative publicity of Arla and Danish Crown most definitely contributed to the companies lost of monopolistic status on the national market, which means that more shopping chains trading German milk and Polish bacon are now on the market. Arla has, furthermore, lost shares to smaller dairy producers on the national market. Interestingly are the companies marketing themselves through the Co-operative Movement’s traditional narrative, but it is Arla who is the large global industrial monopoly and thereby the evil empire, while the small dairy plants are made the local democratic alternatives which are anchored in the Danish culture and history. At the first page on the homepage of a small dairy plant is the following little story portrayed:

“The milk-transporters go all over the place. From the real estate ‘Bjørnsholm’ Øster Grønning (a well-known Danish manor house) is a free view over Limfjorden and Astrup Vig (one of the most famous images of the Danish nature). The neighbouring real estate is called ‘Jenle’ and here did the farmer Jeppe Åkjær (a famous Danish writer who is read by everybody in public school) live a couple of generations ago. Next is the farmer who lives next to “the Middle age fort Spøttrup”. The milk which is produced in Johannes V. Jensen’s Himmerland (a famous Danish writer who was given the Nobel Prize in literature) is everyday sailed across the Limfjord by the little Hvalpsund Ferry, a trip lasting 10 minutes. Going south it won’t be far from the open and broad Hjerl moor (well-known Danish Iron age landscape) and later the milk-transporter will come close to Mønsted- and Daugbjerg Chalk sources. Last mentioned was once the hide-out for the freedom fighter Jens Long-knife (the Danish respond to Robin Hood) (etc)” (http://www.thise.dk/)

In eight lines it is mentioned twelve places and persons who refer to Danish history and culture, and by this, also the national identity. Paradoxically, it is possible to claim that Arla itself opened up the possibility for other dairy plants to intake the status as the national giant. The strategy that Arla has
followed and which it would have committed to if the fusion with Campina would have become reality, was consciously made to disclaim the national narrative. The evolution is, amongst other things, articulated in the change of name from the national based Dairy plant Denmark in 1970, where the aim was to accomplish a national monopoly, to MD Foods international, and finally to the fusion where Arla entirely distanced itself from the national in the overall brand. An unintentional consequence of this has been resistance on the national home market. Thus, the president of Arla said about his strategy in an interview in 2004: “Arla is a fantastic company, and we have good prospects to win the next year’s survival-battle with the large dairy plants of Europe. But we also need to win the battle in Denmark. We have to teach the Danish population to love Arla” (Jyllandsposten 18/1 2004). Modig’s statement did not surround so much loss of market shares on the Danish market, but rather to stress the necessity to get the national image on the right track if Arla was aiming to succeed with the global strategy. Today we can conclude that the project failed: The fusion with Campina failed, Modig was fired in May 2005, and Arla increasingly appears as a super tanker lacking direction on the global ocean. The press has not waited to use this as yet another attack on both Arla and the co-operation model, printing headlines like “The co-op thought’s failure?” (Berlingske Tidende 25/4/2005). The President of “the Danish Co-operations” Been Juul Sørensen has responded by e.g. a daily paper commentary with the headline “The co-operation thought can also be used globally”. In here, he argues that the problem is not the co-operation model that is the problem since co-operations have a range of comparative advantages. The problem is rather the image, or the narrative of the Co-operative Movement: “The goals of the co-op-principles are and always have been commercial – and not, as some people believe, to be a romantic picture of past idyllic farming life”. Though, the problem is that the co-operations themselves have supported this image during a long time – and commercially exploited it, too such a degree, that they have a hard time escaping it now. They are, in other words, caught by their own narrative.

In the above paper, I have analyzed the problems in the Danish co-operation Movement in relation to their own history. As it has appeared, it is a narrative which today during the increasing globalization has become a growing obstacle to the movement. This is most likely a unique Danish way of presenting the problem. Yet, I do believe that most countries have some particular industries, and ways of undertaking activities, which plays a similar role in the country’s history and national identity. Industries, which have played a particular role in relation to the construction of the modern capitalistic
society, but which also is under present pressure from both the national identity as well as the increasing globalization.

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