Mobilization in crisis – demobilization in peace: protagonists of competing national movements in border regions

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Schleswig – a borderland?

Border zones are characteristic for being the site of competing national movements' struggle on a territory and its population: a population did not only have to awaken to a nationality, but also to the 'correct' nationality. Studying national protagonists of competing national movements in border regions therefore promises solid evidence of the reasons underpinning national movements' success and/or failure to attract the masses. While the existence of European state borders' normative influence on nation state building cannot be underestimated, some national movements which transcend European borders have been astonishingly pertinent during the centuries following the French revolution. Research has strongly focused on open secessionist movements such as the Irish, Basque and Catalan national movements.

In this article, I will focus on pacified national minorities, i.e. national movements incorporated into a national minority, with no direct secessionist or border revisionist agenda. They are pacified by a liberal

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minority regime in their state of residence, but continue to survive and recruit, even though there is high emigration from the region, and frequent assimilation into the majority nationality. I am connecting biographies of Danish and German national protagonists from Schleswig, a Danish-German border zone until its division after the 1920 plebiscite. The biographies cover life spans from the early nineteenth century until the present, with a focus on twentieth-century nationalization processes. These biographies represent all phases of the 'Hrochean stage',[1] and they also include a fourth stage, which I will call the 'post-national' regionalist-European movement. It is a stage during which protagonists as national dissenters move away from both the mainstream majority national identification as well as from 'national minority' identification to a binational (or European) one.

The duchy of Schleswig poses an interesting case here as it demonstrates the volatility of identity, identity changes as well as the concurrence of multiple identities, but also conflicts with nation- and region-building projects throughout history.[2] Historically well-researched because of the long-lasting national conflict on and in the region (at least from the 1840s until the 1950s), it is a good example to analyse national protagonists' role and function in periods of conflict as well as détente.

It will be demonstrated that a moment of crisis is decisive for a successful mobilization of the national movement, while periods of peace and prosperity lead to de-mobilization, indifference or (as the latest examples show) post-national identification.

National protagonists

National protagonists are defined here as persons who mobilize, reinforce, transform and disseminate national identity. I will not go deeper into the scientific discourse on identity here, but just adhere to the consensus that

identity is a self-concept and self-categorization in relation to other human beings,[3] and is multiple, fluid and multifaceted. National identity is never the sole character, but always one of several expressions of a human being's concept of the self. This article will include another concept of spatial identity, which is probably older than "modern" national identity: *Heimat* as place and region as space.

Just as nineteenth-century historiography contributed greatly to the apparent success of the nation state in the twentieth century and the creation of national identity, there is a renaissance of regional history that contributes to the invigoration or (re)discovery of regional identity;[4] an identity that is often assumed to just be there, but moved into the background by or aligned with a superimposed national identity.[5] Only recently have a minority of historians (and social scientists) challenged the 'victory' and supremacy of national identity by focusing on indifference, documenting how the elite concepts of nation and nationalism did not disperse through twentieth-century Europe as fast and all-encompassing as claimed by mainstream historians.[6] Indifference to elite concepts of identity is a key focus to have in mind when trying to assess identity history in pre-literate times. It is the key variable that can be applied to the few sources we have on local, regional, national and/or monarchical or imperial identity before and long into the so-called period of national awakening during the nineteenth and even the twentieth century.

For this article, I use biographies of three types of national protagonists: newspaper editors, politicians and spiritual leaders. The biographic approach however is not unproblematic as a methodology. A successful application would require a more in-depth study of the presented persons, their personal forming and their actions and reception in the community. Nevertheless, the persons chosen here represent locally exposed protagonists of national identification and reception in periods of crisis and change and demonstrate how identity was adapted, transgressed and mobilized.

The role of mass media in the mobilization of people since the second half of the nineteenth century is considered to be a decisive factor of national mobilization.[7] On the regional level, newspapers became an important element in the shaping of opinion as well as identity formation. For Schleswig, newspapers named *Dannevirke*, *Hejmdal*, *Dybbøl-Posten*, *Schleswigsche Grenzpost* and *Grænsevagten* underlined their national mission; even the region's Danish social democrat newspaper was named *Sønderjyden*. The crucial role of newspapers in national mobilization has continued until the present day in the region's two daily newspapers published by the respective national minorities (*Flensborg Avis* and *Der Nordschleswiger*), and combine the function of being regional newspapers with being a forum for minority identity debate and development.

Nationality was also a political question in Schleswig. A division of the Duchy along national lines had been contemplated as early as the 1840s, and all elections since the election to the North German Bundestag in 1867 – when universal male suffrage above the age of 25 had been introduced – were keenly evaluated to ascertain the strength of each nationality. Election results are thus an important statistical source to document national mobilization, albeit nuanced by emerging class issues after the strengthened labour movement from the 1880s. The Danish movement already organized politically in the Kaiserreich, and the tradition for separate minority parties has been uphold until the present day. Here, I have picked out four decisive minority politicians who very well can be characterized as national protagonists, each in their own time, in their political role as 'front and bridge'. While 'Front and Bridge' (*Front og bro*) was a journal published by the Danish minority of South Schleswig in the 1950s and 1960s, the concept itself also encapsulates the role of minority politicians. On the one side, they had a mobilizing function within the national movements they represented, while on the other they depended on negotiating with majority politicians to secure political influence for their constituents.

Finally, the Hrochean stage of nations as mass movements demands us to look at spiritual leaders mobilizing the masses, suggesting the desirability of belonging to the 'us'-nation and not to 'them'; which in this case is a sense of belonging to the national minority, despite the lack of objective criteria which divides the border region's population. I have picked three leaders of minority associations reflecting their varied contemporary visions of how minority life should be.

Crisis of the monarchy

Phase A: cultural protonationalism

The Oldenburg monarchy ruling the conglomerate state of Denmark, Norway (until 1814), Schleswig-Holstein and Lauenburg (from 1814) had been in crisis since the end of the Napoleonic wars. The loss of Norway implied not only a loss of power: A Norwegian cultural protonationalism challenged the five hundred years' union under the Danish crown, and provoked a Danish cultural protonationalism which challenged the status of the duchies Schleswig and Holstein and their dominant cultural affiliation with the German cultural sphere. Along with the general post-Napoleonic challenges to absolutism, this Danish cultural protonationalism resulted in the attempt to introduce measures strengthening the role of the Danish language in Schleswig, which was administered exclusively in German, even though about 50% of its population was Danish-speaking. Moreover, a bourgeois movement in the core kingdom – the so-called *Eider-Danes* – challenged the idea of the conglomerate Oldenburg monarchy by demanding a Danish nation state.

Peter Hiort Lorenzen (1791-1845)

Hiort Lorenzen was a merchant and member of the Schleswig Estates' Assembly, a consultative proto-parliament, elected on the base of a

restrictive census, introduced in 1835. Lorenzen was interested in constitutional issues and municipal self-government. While originally elected to the Estates' Assembly as a liberal, he was re-elected in Sønderborg as a Danish national liberal in late 1840, because he believed democratic reforms would be easier to accomplish within the Danish monarchy. He is remembered for his speech in Danish in the Schleswig Estates' Assembly on November 11, 1842, which provoked an outcry since the language of the educated elite in the duchy was German.

Hiort Lorenzen was a representative of the educated elite in the duchies and perceived himself to be a loyal subject of his sovereign, but at the same time he was striving for improvements to deal with the economic and political crises of late absolutism. He was concerned with the administrational deficits of late absolutism and its legitimacy crisis. The narrative constructed around his name however focussed on a single event: his persistence to speak Danish (or rather the local Southern Jutian dialect) in the Estates' Assembly of Schleswig, drawing attention to the prevalent discrimination of the Danish mother tongue of many Schleswigians and challenging the bourgeois and administrative elite's consensus on the duchy's exclusive cultural affiliation with Germany. Hiort Lorenzen could thus be reduced to a simple story, 'he persisted speaking Danish', aligning with the narrative of Danish national emancipation from the German cultural sphere which had been dominating the country since medieval times. Lorenzen was praised at public national parties during the ensuing years, when a cultural proto-nationalism in Northern Schleswig eventually paved the way to be adopted by Danish nationalism and the *Eider-Danish* movement.

Phase B: political mobilisation

When Prussia annexed the duchies Schleswig and Holstein in 1867, it reduced them to a single province, neglecting the local elites' dream of a Schleswig-Holsteinian state under the leadership of the duke of Augustenburg. Nationality policies were not a priority of the new rulers

either: language in primary schools as well as church services remained Danish in the northern districts. This only changed during the German Empire's continuing economic and political crisis in the late 1870s, which were marked by political unrest (Socialist Laws) and high overseas emigration rates, especially from the rural districts. The Danes in North Schleswig had organized politically (see H.P. Hanssen below), had a sustainable press to communicate, as well as a network of cultural associations and town halls (*Forsamlingshuse*). Furthermore, many Danes who had been reluctant in the 1870s, now acquired Prussian citizenship under the guise of their national leaders (protagonists). Similar to the strategies in the Polish provinces, Prussia now chose to embark on a strict Germanization policy, hoping it would strengthen the German community and convince the Danish to change their national allegiance; or at the very least educate a new generation of Germans.

National mobilization and political organization in North Schleswig peaked in the so-called Köller period (1898-1903), when Prussian authorities unsuccessfully tried to break the Danish movement and its organizations, probably even strengthening at least its core by the exercised political pressure. In urban Flensburg, on the contrary, Danish nationalism faced a serious setback when working class members were increasingly integrated into the growing labour movement. Election results show a clear trend from votes for the Danish party to the social democrats in the 1880s.[8] But relations also normalized in North Schleswig during the last decade before the outbreak of WWI, when Germany and Denmark concluded a treaty solving problematic issues around the citizenship of residents of North Schleswig, and one of the most ardent German national protagonists was removed from his position (Karl Strackerjan, see below).

Jens Jessen (1854-1906)

Jessen's family background appears to be situated in the conglomerate state loyalists, but there were German sympathies amongst some of his

mother's family. Educated as a teacher, he worked in Schleswig, Denmark and Sweden. In line with the policy to eliminate the Danish language from education, Prussian authorities closed the private Danish secondary school in Haderslev just when Jessen was supposed to become its principal in 1881. After 1882, he became the editor of the Danish newspaper in Flensburg, *Flensborg Avis*, during the time of Danish decline in the city. Jessen was frequently imprisoned for articles that were criticized by the Prussian authorities. He secured *Flensborg Avis*' position as the leading Danish newspaper in Schleswig, arguing that the newspaper had to be 'the uttermost Danish banner on its most southern redoubt'[9] and it should 'guard the mother tongue at the people's border'.[10] This strong emphasis on language however accelerated the Danish decline in the city of Flensburg, where loyalty to the Danish monarchy had not been a contradiction to cultural affiliation with Germany and the daily use of German. Nevertheless, *Flensborg Avis* became the leading weapon in the national struggle during Jens Jessens' editorship. The frequent imprisonments (all in all forty-three and a half months) took a toll on Jessen's health, and attempts to get elected into political offices were not crowned with success. Jessen was not considered to be *folkelig* (folksy), lacking the popularity at the ground level in the predominantly rural Danish movement.

In his early articles, Jessen warned North Schleswigians to feel attracted to the impressive development of the German empire, as this meant nothing compared to patriotism and *folkesind* (ethnic mentality in a spiritual sense). Southern Jutians would risk becoming spiritual cripples if they closed out their Danish-ness in order to become German.[11] Later, as editor of *Flensburg Avis*, he remained an avid, stubborn proponent of article 5 of the Prague Peace Treaty of 1866. This article acknowledged the North Schleswig Danes' right to express their will to be reunited with Denmark in a plebiscite. It was included in the treaty at the request of the French emperor Napoleon III, but rescinded by Prussia and Austria in 1878. Jessen's staunch attitude brought him into a conflict with more pragmatic

Danish leaders such as H.P. Hanssen. Furthermore, he was not able to hinder the reduction of Danish workers' votes who were absorbed into the German labour movement.

Karl Strackerjan (1854-1921)

Karl Strackerjan became editor-in-chief of *Schleswigsche Grenzpost*, formerly *Haderslev Folkeblad*, in 1899. He was considered a nationalist fanatic, even by his contemporaries, and his frequent verbal attacks on Danish and German political opponents resulted in several court cases for verbal slander.[12] Principally, his mission was to secure the difficult borderland against 'unjustified' Danish claims and irredenta and to make the resilient part of the population realize that they now had to become Germans, including via linguistic assimilation. His tool was a steady supervision of all perceived Danish activities connected with a harsh line of application of Prussian law and the suppression of everything Danish to extinguish all hopes of a border revision. This policy was implemented in association with the German national associations, especially the Pan-German *Deutscher Verein für das nördliche Schleswig*. Strackerjan's salary was paid through subsidies of the Prussian government.

Strackerjan and *Grenzpost* continued with their alienating rhetoric of national confrontation, arguing for a 'tough hand' and no reconciliation with the remaining 'stubborn' Danes who did not want to accept Germanization, even after Denmark sought better relations with Germany from 1900 onwards, concluding treaties to regulate citizenship for residents of Northern Schleswig. In his eyes, liberalizing national policies meant supporting the continuing (but pre-WWI very unrealistic) Danish strive for a border revision.[13] In 1909, though, Strackerjan was removed from his post by the Prussian authorities after a court sentence for verbal slander and departed from the region.[14] He continued to support his likeminded peers from afar until after World War One.[15]

H.P Hanssen (1862-1936)

Hanssen was a farmer, and later also a newspaper editor. He was a member of the Prussian *Landtag* (1896-1908), the German *Reichstag* (1906-1919), a minister in Denmark (1919-1920), and a member of the Danish *Folketing* (1924-1926). Hanssen grew up in a home of Danish activists. In his youth, he decided to opt for Prussian citizenship and serve in the military as a way to demand for full national rights instead of emigrating from Schleswig as many of his contemporaries did. He encouraged the young people to stay, take over their fathers' farms and vote as he considered this to be the only way to preserve a Danish North Schleswig. At the same time, he gave up central Schleswig as it assimilated into German culture – which became *the* source of conflict within the Danish movement later on. In 1893, he bought the Aabenraa newspaper *Hejmdal*, and would ultimately become the leading figure in the political organization of the Danish movement.[16] Hanssen was never deterred from taking up legal cases to assure a fair treatment of the Danish population in North Schleswig.

In the German Reichstag, Hanssen allied himself with Polish members and members of the liberals (*Deutsch-Freisinnige Partei*), and later also with the Social Democrats. Hanssen saw politics as the art to focus on what is possible, and successfully managed to find allies in the Reichstag who criticized the Prussian authorities' actions against minorities. On the other hand, he was critiqued for having given up the Danish legal demand of a re-unification. During the winter of 1916-17, though, he already conferred with Danish leaders on policies to assure a reunification after the end of the war. Consequently, the political association was well prepared when the Kaiser abdicated in October and Germany surrendered in November 1918 – which stands in stark contrast to the Germans, who were lured by propaganda into dreams of victory. H.P. Hanssen's network secured good will for his policy to secure a plebiscite for North Schleswig with the parliamentary German government that was established in October 1918. Moreover, he was a part of the Danish delegation at the Paris Peace

Conference, and the implementation of the plebiscite followed the design he had envisioned and recruited a majority for within the Danish political organization of North Schleswig. His later political career in Denmark however was hampered by the fact that he had difficulties adapting to a party system because of his former functions as a minority politician and a national protagonist uniting all Danes in North Schleswig.

Self-Determination: a new border, new minorities, a new form of subnational protagonism

In 1920, Schleswig was divided after two plebiscites.[17] The dissenters (around 25% north of the new border, 20% south of it) were accommodated into the framework of a national minority to cater to their linguistic and cultural needs.[18] Both groups experienced their defeat in the plebiscite as a deep crisis, but national protagonists successfully mobilized a large share, but not all the dissenters into the newly established national minorities. The German minority party, for example, only mobilized up to 15% of the electorate. In South Schleswig, political mobilization for the Danish minority candidates remained marginal. The working-class background of many Danish resulted in a close interplay with the proletarian milieu in Flensburg, including political activities for the two working class parties, the communists and the social democrats.[19]

Mobilization of a national minority constituted a special challenge during the interwar years. Schleswig had not been a homogeneous linguistic space: up to five dialects were spoken, with further small-scale variances. Daily language use did not necessarily converge with national affiliation. Furthermore, both countries used material and immaterial support to implement the border and promote the economic, cultural and institutional integration of their parts of Schleswig into their respective countries.[20]

Ernst Christiansen (1877-1941)

At the age of 28, Christiansen became Jens Jessen's successor as editor in chief of *Flensborg Avis* after the latter's death in 1906. Contrary to H.P. Hanssen (see below), Christiansen was a national hardliner. *Flensborg Avis* became the mouthpiece of a generation of self-conscious, young Danish 'all-Schleswigers' who protested against continuous German suppression.[21] He was heavily disappointed that Flensburg was lost in the plebiscite, and worked for a revision or at least internationalization the following weeks. He received a very warm welcome when he arrived in Copenhagen the day after the plebiscite,[22] indicating his strong position as a national protagonist for a Danish Schleswig. As a strong proponent of the Flensburg and Central Schleswig faction (opposing H.P. Hanssens's Aabenraa-faction) he did not want to give up Denmark's 'historic right' and continued to work for a more southern border in the future. He thus became a symbol for a national renaissance in South Schleswig.[23]

After the plebiscite, Christiansen decided that *Flensborg Avis* should stay in the city, even though more than two-thirds of its subscribers as well as its advertisers were located north of the new border.[24] Christiansen and the paper became the core of the new Danish minority that was established in South Schleswig, and tried to influence its identity as a minority, in line with his ideas of what a nation should be: as a spiritual community, not predominantly blood-based, but as a necessity for each human being. Individual self-realization demanded self-consciousness of a people's spiritual substance. Denmark had deceived South Schleswig, and its population risked spiritual decay.[25] Christiansen saw it as his task to disseminate to the people of South Schleswig that they were actually Danes, and unveil their hidden Danish spiritual identity.

In May 1940, he was removed from his post and prohibited to continue writing by the Nazi authorities because of an obituary he wrote on a Danish journalist who had died under uncertain circumstances while in custody of the Gestapo.

Johannes Schmidt (-Wodder) (1869-1959)[26]

Schmidt-Wodder was a Lutheran minister, and during his studies at German universities was formed by liberal theology. He grew up in Schleswig in a Schleswig-Holsteinian family with respect for Danish language and culture. From 1896 to 1920, he was the Lutheran minister in the Vodder parish, a thoroughly Danish-minded parish where a free Danish congregation had been founded just as he had taken over the parish. Schmidt had not really been involved in the national struggle before he took over this parish. A German national, Schmidt never was a hardliner and publicly criticized German nationalist policies against the Danes in 1907. In 1909, he started a minor opposition association against the Pan-Germanic Deutscher Verein, the *Verein für Deutsche Friedensarbeit in der Nordmark* in order to reconcile Danes with Germans. His advocacy of reconciliation, respect for the Danish language and culture, and working towards a slow, voluntary and sustainable assimilation remained an absolute minority position among the Germans in North Schleswig before World War One.

Schmidt somewhat coincidentally became the lead person within the German minority after the separation of Schleswig in 1920. He was also elected to the Danish Parliament as the minority's only representative, serving there until 1939. His organizational talents, which contributed to mobilizing the committed youth, helped to shape a united bourgeois German minority,[27] though he never succeeded in recruiting German social democrats into the minority associations.[28] Schmidt's political aim was a return of North Schleswig to Germany, albeit not by force. He functioned as chairman of the minority's *Schleswigscher Wählerverein* from 1920 to 1934. From 1920 to 1929, he was editor of the German *Neue Tondernsche Zeitung*. More concrete, his political ambitions circled around cultural self-administration, in which the minority was quite successful. He was also active in the *Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland*, an association that was established to support the many German minorities in Europe and align them with the policies of the *Reich*. Schmidt maintained his central position

within the minority by his frequent contacts with supporters in the Weimar Republic, but also because he was a good diplomat navigating between different factions within the minority.[29] Still, Schmidt never became a supporter of parliamentary democracy. He despised political parties and longed for a strong, ethnonational corporate state led by a strong leader.[30] A national-conservative with a social conscience, he was partly sympathetic to the Nazis' political ideas, but disagreed with their methods.

After 1933, Schmidt tried to prevent a Nazification of the minority, but was soon set aside by younger members, who saw him as a representative of the old times. He only narrowly won the seat in the Folketing in 1935 against a Nazi-opponent, and ultimately did not seek re-election in 1939, when the seat was overtaken by the now official *Volksgruppenführer* Jens Møller (see below). During the occupation, though, he served the Nazis with articles in the *Nordschleswigsche Zeitung* and two lectures on the radio. Temporarily arrested in 1946, he was not tried and lived in solitude until his death in 1959.

Politically, Schmidt remained an outsider in the Danish parliament. He did not participate in committee work and restricted his speeches to matters of the minority. Nonetheless, his appearances in parliament were carefully watched by the Danish majority. His work in parliament focused on three tenets: respect for German culture and the German people, cultural freedom for the minority, and a border revision.[31] Unfortunately, his strive for German-Danish reconciliation remained contradictory to his continuous demands for a border revision.

Crisis of the Republic

Phase C: Mass movement

The political crisis of the German republic in the late 1920s coincided with an agricultural crisis in both North and South Schleswig. German South Schleswig became a stronghold of the NSDAP with election turnouts well above 60% in the last free election in 1932.[32] In Denmark, contrary to Germany, the Nazi-movement remained a niche phenomenon. The Danish National Socialist Party, founded in 1930, remained a mere copy of the German original. It managed to secure enough signatures to participate in the national election of 1935, but collected only 1% of the vote nationwide – but 4.4 % in the border region of North Schleswig.[33] Unlike in Norway, the installation of a Danish Nazi collaboration government was never seriously contemplated during the German occupation of Denmark from 1940 to 1945.

In the minority, the hope for a return *Heim ins Reich* was violently expressed after the Nazi takeover of power in Germany and a subsequent mobilization and alignment of the German minority to Nazi institutions in North Schleswig.[34] It peaked during the election campaign for the Danish national election in April 1939, when the minority alluded to the *Führer's* recent political successes (i.e. the Austrian *Anschluss*, the annexation of the Sudetenland, Bohemia, Moravia and Memel), kindling hope for an impending return to the Reich. The minority received 15.9 % of the votes, their best result, but remained definitely short of a majority, and even short of the 25% German votes in the plebiscite of 1920.[35]

Jens N. Møller (1894-1951)

Jens Møller was born into a Danish oriented family, but became staunchly German during his secondary school education in Flensburg. He volunteered in 1914 and served in the German army through all of WWI. A

veterinarian practicing in Gråsten since 1924, Møller became fascinated by the *Führer* when attending a May 1 mass meeting during his sojourn in Berlin in 1933, and would ultimately become a leader of one of the Nazi-factions in North Schleswig. In 1935, he became chairman of NSDAP-Nordschleswig, unifying the different NSDAP affiliations in the region at the time, by presenting himself as a candidate of compromise.

In 1938, he was officially named *Volksgruppenführer*, leader of the German minority. In April 1939, he took over the minority's seat in the *Folketing,* but he never actively participated in the Danish parliament.[36] Møller deliberately and more and more explicitly demanded a relocation of the border after the German occupation of Denmark on April 9, 1940, even though military personnel as well as other German officials refused because of the guarantee on territorial sovereignty given to Denmark in the ultimatum of 9th April 1940. Nonetheless, Møller encouraged and kept up hopes within the minority for a return to *Großdeutschland* in the near future. Arrested in 1945, he was sentenced to fifteen years in prison, but was pardoned in 1950. His attempts to restart his political career in the minority were crushed by a fatal car crash in 1951.

Wilhelm Jürgensen (1902-1972)

Jürgensen was a principal at different German minority schools from 1931 to 1945, and a frequent contributor to the minority's Nazified newspaper *Nordschleswigsche Zeitung* under the pseudonym Asmus von der Heide. In 1934, he became a member of NSDAP/AO, as a German citizen residing in Denmark. After the summer of 1940, he had a regular column in *Nordschleswigsche Zeitung*, *unsere Stimme* – Our Voice – in which he viciously commented on events in Denmark, regularly slandering Danish national activists and demanding for their persecution.[37] Jürgensen became *'Landesschulungsleiter'* for the minority's Nordschleswig affiliation of NSDAP, and was responsible for the political schooling of the minority youth (and others), and also became member of its politburo *kleiner*

politischer Rat. He overtook the minority's *Amt für Presse und Propaganda* in May 1943, becoming North Schleswig's equivalent of Goebbels, since he decided on the minority paper's editorial line. In his regular column, he slandered several people, one of whom was later murdered, others were arrested or removed from their office, and one committed suicide to prevent betraying comrades under torture.[38]

After the war, Jürgensen was sentenced to ten years in prison, which was later reduced to seven. In 1949, he was released and expelled from Denmark. He became a committed member and activist of Schleswig-Holstein *Heimat*-associations in the 1950s. From 1954 to 1958, he was a member of the Schleswig-Holstein diet, and was elected on the ballot of *Schleswig-Holsteinische Gemeinschaft*, a regionalist group which was later absorbed by the conservative CDU. An obituary would ultimately describe him as not a 'cool intellectual', but a person that was convincing through his zealous commitment.[39]

Crisis of the nation – time for post-national borderland identities?

When Nazi-Germany surrendered in May 1945, the German nation was in a deep crisis, as regional movements on the periphery (Rhineland, Saar, Bavaria) were empowered. Moreover, the influx (and later integration) of millions of refugees and ethnic Germans expelled from the former Eastern provinces of the Reich and other Eastern European countries challenged the Nazi-ideal of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, reflecting the social, religious, linguistic and cultural differences across the German-speaking realm. In South Schleswig, a majority of the population seemed to express the wish to be united with Denmark, and even to change nationality and become (or re-become) Danish.[40] This in spite of the fact that very few South Schleswigians spoke the Danish language, or had any in-depth knowledge of Denmark and Danish society.

Claus Eskildsen (1881-1947)

Eskildsen grew up in a Danish-oriented home in Southern Jutland. He was educated as a teacher in German seminaries, which challenged his Danish orientation. Before WWI, he taught in Sæd and Tønder, just north of today's German-Danish border. After 1909, he taught at the teacher-training college in Tønder, and joined the German political side. He served during all of WWI, and joined the Danish movement during the plebiscite period. He continued working at the college in Tønder (which had now become Danish), declining a well-paid and honorable position offered to him in Berlin. His elementary school textbook *Ole Bole ABC* (1927) became popular not just in Denmark, as the German edition also had a fair amount of success.

Eskildsen became a national protagonist through his book *Dansk Grænselære*, (1936)[41] in which he used the Nazi German *Blut und Boden* ideas to demonstrate that all Schleswig down to the Eider river was in fact Danish land. In the years following WWII, his book was used both as a theoretical background to explain the massive change of nationality in South Schleswig (or the expressed will to do so) to a reluctant Danish public, and as a tool to convince young South Schleswigians that they actually were Danes, and not Germans.

Niels Bøgh-Andersen (1908-1991)

Bøgh-Andersen grew up as son of a fisherman in Western Schleswig. He was an elementary school teacher in two Danish minority schools during the interwar years and served for Germany in France and Russia during World War II. Taken prisoner in Normandy in 1944, he helped to find POWs with a Danish minority background in the United Kingdom, and functioned as an unofficial spokesman for the Danish minority in London. He was an ardent supporter of a Danish annexation of South Schleswig following the German surrender. When he returned to South Schleswig in the summer of

1945, he became principal of the Danish public school in Flensburg, and a key mobilizer of the region's postwar movement of nationality change and "reunification" with Denmark. When the issue of reunification with Denmark disappeared from the Danish-German political agenda, Bøgh-Andersen continued to serve as the chairman of the minority's cultural association and became the principal of its *Folkehøjskole*. This was a spiritual seminary which assembled young people from the region and Denmark in order to foster their cultural ties and strengthen their minority identity. One of his most devoted pupils was his eventual successor at the post and later chairman of the minority, Dieter Paul Küssner (see below).

Phase D: navigating into a post-national era?

The mass mobilization of the national minorities during the 1930s (Germans in North Schleswig) and the second half of the 1940s (Danes in South Schleswig) was incited by the aim to revise the border and 'reunite' with the kin-state. Postwar European integration set a new agenda in the border region, as already in the 1950s and 1960s, the so-called 'European Idea' resulted in reflections on and considerations about the future identification of national minorities. The German minority in North Schleswig had been discredited for its uncritical adaption of the Nazi-ideology and its collaboration with the occupying army, so they mostly welcomed the opportunity of adopting a new identity, moving from front to bridge. This was at first represented under the term *Zweiströmigkeit*, acknowledging the minority's dual identity as Germans in Denmark, based on their bilingualism as well as their decisive intent to live as a fully socially integrated part of Danish society.

Siegfried Matlok (*1945)

Matlok was editor-in-chief of the German minority newspaper *Der Nordschleswiger* from 1979 to 2013, and was leader of the German minority's political secretariat in Copenhagen from 1983 to 2006. His

family was nationally split at the end of the Second World War, when many opted for Danish nationality. His two brothers had important offices in the Danish minority. Matlok received his education in the Danish minority school system in South Schleswig, and his training as a journalist at *Südschleswigsche Heimatzeitung*, a German language, but Danish-oriented newspaper which was closely related to the Danish minority party *Südschleswigscher Wählerverband* (SSW).[42]

Irritated by many Danish nationalists' hateful enmity against anything German, he took an explicit German standpoint in the postwar border struggle. As editor of *Der Nordschleswiger* and leader of the minority's political secretariat, he became a respected expert on Germany, German politics and German society in the Danish media. He also personified the German minority's struggle to redefine themselves as 'Europeans' after having realized their mistake of uncritical Nazification in the 1930s and subsequent collaboration with the occupying forces during World War Two. Consequently, they were now attempting to be bridge builders between the two nations (and cultures), reflecting and promoting a bicultural identification (*Zweiströmigkeit*), which should also be understood as Europeanization alongside – and not contrary to – national identity.

Hans Heinrich Hansen (*1938)

Hans Heinrich Hansen, a veterinarian, was chairman of the German minority's umbrella organization *Bund deutscher Nordschleswiger* from 1993 to 2006. From 2007 until 2016, he was president of the Federal Union of European Nationalities, the national minorities of Europe's umbrella organisation. He grew up in Haderslev, where his family had run a pharmacy for many generations and had always been considered German. In 1995, he was the first representative of the German minority to be invited to give a speech at the commemoration of the battle of Dybbøl.

The battle of Dybbøl in April 1864 is probably the most important *lieu de mémoire* in modern Danish history. It was the decisive battle of the Danish-German war in 1864 and led to the loss of Schleswig-Holstein to Prussia. After a siege of six weeks, the Prussian troops stormed the Danish fortifications on April 18 and forced the Danish army to retreat to the island of Als. Celebrated annually as a heroic defeat, it marked the reduction of the Danish empire to a small nation state. Since Denmark recovered North Schleswig in 1920, the battlefield has been the scene of annual commemorations that are attended by leading Danish politicians and members of the royal family. The commemorations celebrated a narrative of heroic defeat in the face of deceitful German aggression. A more nuanced narrative of reconciliation, including the participation of German politicians and military, gained ground only after the millennium.[43]

Hansen represented a policy of reconciliation, but kept steady on perceived injustices the minority experienced after the Second World War, and also maintained a strong German minority identity, albeit Europeanized in line with postwar European integration. In order to foster the minority's relations with Denmark and the Danes, he supported the pursuit of a policy of integration without assimilation by maintaining a strong German minority identity.

Karl Otto Meyer (1928-2016)

Karl Otto Meyer, a teacher and journalist, represented the Danish minority in the Schleswig-Holstein diet from 1971 until 1996.[44] During this period, the minority party SSW managed to reverse the steady decline of votes. In 1996, it won two mandates in the diet, and, at time of writing, they have gained another one. Contrary to his predecessors, Meyer actively engaged with all contemporary political issues, both regional and federal, expressing distinctive attitudes that lean to the political left. This clear stance, as well as a general admiration for the 'Nordic Model' in parts of German society, secured many votes from outside of the core minority and

thus secured the political survival of the SSW. It became 'cool' to belong to the minority in the 1970s and 1980s,[45] not in the least because of its political support of new trends on the political left, including ecology.

While having clear political standpoints, Karl Otto Meyer remained a uniting figure in the minority and even managed to convince more bourgeois members of his voting behaviour in the diet. Furthermore, he maintained a national definition of the minority, going against popular trends to identify as a lifestyle group, or to dilute the Danishness via perceived multiculturality. This nationalist standpoint did not really harm his political image as a convincing leftist liberal, as it was expressed exclusively in Danish, not in German.

Dieter Paul Küssner (*1941)

Dieter Paul Küssner was chairman of the Danish minority's cultural association *Sydslesvigsk Forening* from 2003 to 2013. Leader of the Danish *Folkehøjskole* in Jarplund in South Schleswig from 1994 to 2014, Küssner was a central figure in disseminating knowledge on the minority to Danish and international audiences, as well as defining or influencing identity debates within the Danish minority. Moreover, he edited the magazine *Slesvigland* from 1985 to 1994, which was financed by a private Danish foundation in order to inform on the region's culture and folklore. It was sent out to all households in South Schleswig as bunk mail, and at the time heavily criticized by some Germans to be part of a perceived Danish cultural offensive. Bilingual, it promoted the heritage of the joint region north and south of the border, often pointing out commonalities as well as Danish cultural roots.

Küssner's motto for navigating the minority between national and post-national can be succinctly summarized: 'as Danish as possible, as German as necessary'. Acknowledging the necessity to integrate and function in a German society, he saw biculturality as a forced necessity, not as a desirable

surplus. Parents' choice for Danish minority education implied their commitment to the minority, and subsequently to the 'whole package' of school, language, church and politics. Defectors joining other political parties were heavily criticized, as were parents who did not learn the Danish language. Internally, Küssner tried to unify the rather loose organization of the Danish minority, with the SSF and himself in the leading position. While successful at rallying continuous support in the Danish political hinterland, this strategy did not prove that fruitful in South Schleswig, where more and more members (not only young ones) argued for the desirability of a bicultural minority, in which being Danish did not mean giving up being German.

Stephan Kleinschmidt (*1977)

Stephan Kleinschmidt was elected into the Sønderborg city council in 2009 after a career in the youth organisation of the German minority's party *Slesvigsk Parti*. His vote was decisive to elect a social democratic mayor, and he became chairman of the Cultural Committee. Both events resulted in some annoying comments from politicians from the opposition who referred to his Germanness. As a committed politician with a winning mentality he is well known locally and was re-elected with an increased share of personal votes in both 2013 and 2017. In 2015, he ran for the Danish *Folketing* on the ballot of the Left Liberals (*Radikale Venstre*) but narrowly failed to get elected. Kleinschmidt was project manager of the region's largest Interreg project from 2007 till 2013, advised the Schleswig-Holstein prime minister on cross-border affairs from 2013-2017, and presently has a leadership position in the city of Flensburg's administration.

As a politician, his most ambitious project was to make Sønderborg the European Capital of Culture in 2017, applying a cross-border perspective that focused on the region's development from an alienated borderland[46] to a cross-border region of cooperation and interaction. Competing against

Denmark's second largest city however Århus seemed to be far-fetched, and Sønderborg lost, though apparently only by a very narrow vote. Nevertheless, Kleinschmidt managed to rally important political and private actors from both sides of the border behind the project, and the application focused strongly on the cross-border aspect of celebrating diversity.[47]

Conclusion

The border perspective reflects national mobilization in a population that is supposed to be bordered after the nationality principle. Nations have to be bordered to give meaning, when national identity is supposed to serve as a common denominator in state building to secure acceptance of as well as solidarity and loyalty with the state. The Schleswig case demonstrates quite clearly how national mobilization is tied to moments of crises, when old orders are replaced with new ones, and states redefine themselves. The legitimacy crisis of late absolutism in the nineteenth century, combined with concrete administrational challenges, are reflected in Schleswig. Local protagonists of change were here transformed into national protagonists rather coincidentally.

The late nineteenth and early-twentieth century showed first an economic and then societal crisis, resulting in emigration as well as a debate on national assimilation policies versus separatism. It supported 'hardliner' protagonists, i.e. agents mobilizing the perceived 'right' nationality by suppressing and alienating the other, thereby perpetuating a national struggle in line with high mobilization. Still, even during that time, regional détente was possible: the hardliner Strackerjan for example was removed when the centres revised policies aimed at pacifying the peripheries. Moreover, Johannes Schmidt, as an appeaser, became an organisational and political leader and subsequently a unifier of the newly constituted German minority after the 1920 plebiscite.

The new border, backed by a partly controversial but overall fair plebiscite, posed new challenges. National dissenters had to be accommodated as national minorities which constituted a new phenomenon, as minorities were now codified in international treaties and national constitutions. Minority mobilization proved difficult as the national differences were, if not negligible, not decisive enough. Besides, social integration contained the permanent risk of national assimilation. This is reflected in the interwar protagonists, who were all defensive.

After the Second World War, (West-)European integration opened up to more flexible concepts of collective identification. For South Schleswig, national protagonists maintained a containment strategy, shielding the minority from life-style sympathizers and others not demonstrating the necessary whole-package solidarity, although, at least in politics, sympathizers of all kind were welcomed. For North Schleswig, there was a clear policy of opening up and reversing the closed, socially bordered concept of national minority into a "Europeanized" post-national identification.

Minority political representatives have a special function, as they represent minority interests and have to build bridges to national majorities in order to obtain support. Of the four politicians presented here, all except for Johannes Schmidt succeeded in the latter, which also paved way for the former. Their function as protagonists internally reflects the conflict of simultaneously being front and bridge. Front required a supportive, united hinterland, while bridge required compromises with majority interests. Moments of tension and crisis usually eased the first: this is apparent for example from the case of H.P. Hanssen, who faced suppressive measures more or less throughout his entire time in office. Johannes Schmidt, on the other hand, did not politically survive the front and bridge dilemma during the identity crisis of the 1930s and the Nazification of the German minority. Karl Otto Meyer, a shrewd politician, solved the dilemma by communicating differently in Danish and German. Internally, he demanded unity and solidarity, while appealing to a wider political audience by having

strong opinions on central issues. In the end, this strategy proved counterproductive as it opened minority institutions to lifestyle sympathizers, thereby weakening the potential of national mobilization, ultimately leading to post-national identifications.[48] Politically, it opened up to new opportunities for participation, as an enlarged electorate resulted in more parliamentary seats, and ultimately participation in a government coalition in 2012.[49]

While Karl Otto Meyer definitely never was a protagonist for a Europeanization of the Danish minority, Stephan Kleinschmidt openly advocated for it. Both minorities have acknowledged a bicultural affiliation of their members, but are still struggling to admit its motivation because Europeanization or supranational identification is in conflict with traditional understandings of the term national minority, as well as the international conventions that protect minority rights.

So how important are borderland protagonists in influencing national mobilization? Here, I have identified four periods of crisis: the crisis of late absolutism (1815-1840s), economic stagnation and forced nationalisation (1880s and 1890s), the Great Depression and crisis of democracy in Germany (around 1933) and the postwar crisis of especially German national identity. All four crises resulted in a national mobilization that was marked by social bordering and othering, though the fourth crisis opened up to post-national identification in the borderlands, which was only fully implemented on both sides of the border after the millennium. Moreover, for the Danish-German case, it can be concluded that this border-regional development mirrors the Danish-German relations. Finally, the study of national protagonists in border regions reveals the continuing process of national mobilization and de-mobilization as reflected in Renan's definition of the nation as a 'daily plebiscite'.

Endnotes

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[10] "værne om Modersmaalet paa Folkegrænsen", DBL, 3rd edition.

[11] R. Rasmussen, *Flensborg Avis 1869-1906. Historien om en dansk avis under prøjserstyre* (Flensborg, 1994) 46.
[12] G. Japsen, *Den fejlslagne germanisering. Den tyske forening for det nordlige Slesvig - Bidrag til det tyske mindretals historie efter 1864* (Aabenraa, 1983) 74.
[13] Ibid., 122, 143-44, 150.
[14] Ibid., 189-190.
[15] Ibid.
[16] In Nordic mythology, the God Hejmdal guards the rainbow bridge connecting Asgaard, the realm of the gods, with Midgaard, the realm of humans. On Ragnarök, the Nordic Armageddon, the evil *jætter* will invade Asgaard via that bridge.
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[25] Ibid., 90.
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[29] H. Becker-Christensen, *Det tyske mindretal i Nordslesvig 1920-1932* (Aabenraa, 1990) 121-122; 129-130.
[30] Ibid., 124-125.
[31] H. Kardel, 'Pastor Schmidt-Wodder' 92-96.
[32] R. Heberle, *Landbevölkerung und Nationalsozialismus. Eine soziologische Untersuchung der politischen Willensbildung in Schleswig-Holstein 1918-1932* (München, 2010).
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