INTRODUCTION
The Concern for Sociality—Practicing Equality and Hierarchy in Denmark

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A Concern for Sociality

Equality is one of the concepts that people often associate with Scandinavia. Within anthropology, the works of Marianne Gullestad (1946–2008)—particularly, her monograph *Kitchen-Table Society* (1984) and the anthology *The Art of Social Relations* (1992a)—are among the few attempts to contribute to the theoretical debate on egalitarianism and sociality. With her concept of 'egalitarian individualism', Gullestad inscribes Scandinavia within broader comparative studies of ideological systems revolving around two dichotomies: hierarchy-equality and holism-individualism (Béteille 1986; Dumont 1970, 1986; Kapferer 1988; Robbins 1994). Gullestad (1992b: 183) developed a theory of a specific "Norwegian, Scandinavian or Northern European variety" of modernity and of the general modern themes of individualism and equality. Exploring egalitarian individualism from different angles, she argued that equality is cast as 'sameness' in Scandinavia (Gullestad 1992d: 174 ff.), meaning that people develop an interactional style that emphasizes similarity and under-communicates difference in order to feel equal and to establish a sense of community. In Gullestad's (1992b: 197) view, 'equality as sameness' is a central cultural idea that balances and resolves the tensions in the Norwegian ideological system between the individual and society, independence and community, equality and hierarchy.

This collection of articles takes a critical look at Gullestad's concepts. We propose that equality as sameness is merely one among several valued forms of sociality in Denmark and that social hierarchies take shape through people's concerns for mastering and conforming with these forms of sociality. Rather than seeing equality and individualism as general cultural values or considering which ones are dominant or paramount (cf. Dumont 1986), we call for a more complex understanding of everyday sociality. Our understanding of

sociality considers different cultural and social ways of being together and styles of relating to each other as basic dimensions of human life, just like time, space, and materiality. Thus, instead of analyzing Scandinavian ethnography in terms of equality, we have chosen to analyze equality in terms of sociality.

The articles reveal that proper forms of being together in everyday life are the object of constant speculation and reflection in Denmark. Different ways of initiating, encouraging, and cutting social relations (cf. Strathern 1996) are considered appropriate at particular moments and in different social spaces. People value not only individuality and equality in social interaction, but also the authentic and accepted forms of 'proper sociality', such as *hygge* (coziness), *fællesskab* (community), *rummelighed* (spaciousness), and *hjemlighed* (hominess).[1] More than anything, it seems to be the shared engagement in reflection on and concern for these highly valued social forms that unites people. In this discussion, we draw on German sociologist Georg Simmel's (1950) notion of 'sociability', which implies that forms of sociality become purposes and carry value in themselves.[2] Simmel does not, however, address the social sources of this valuing of certain forms of sociality. We add an important dimension to Simmel's notion of sociability by analyzing the everyday social relations in and through which these social codes become valuable. Our perspective allows us to analyze how such forms of sociality involve mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, as well as finer-grained processes that form hierarchies.

Building on Dumont's (1970: 20) insights that equality and hierarchy always combine in some way in any society and that adopting social values (such as equality) in itself introduces hierarchy, we argue that forms of proper sociality create hierarchy. Equality as sameness and other forms of sociality do not involve simply conforming to social values but also introduce a hierarchy. 'Value-mastering hierarchies' is the term we use to denote the hierarchies introduced as a consequence of the differentiated ability to master the proper forms of sociality. These hierarchies operate even in spaces that are otherwise understood to be egalitarian.

We use the term 'Scandinavia' to denote the ethnographic region out of which the anthropological debate on egalitarianism and hierarchy grows. Native Scandinavians use two terms to denote their region: 'Norden' and 'Scandinavia'. The two concepts evoke different images. 'Norden' encompasses a wider region—including Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Arctic areas such as the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Iceland—and evokes images of folk spirituality, featuring trolls, wood nymphs, and 'wild nature'. This focus on human-nature relations, environment, and landscape is also reflected in the ethnography of the region and the anthropological theory concerning it (e.g., Hastrup 1987, 1992; Hornborg and Pálsson 2000; Pálsson 2007).

The term 'Scandinavia' evokes political history in that it covers Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, which formed different national communities during the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. It also directs attention toward the modern welfare state. Today, all three countries share similarly active welfare institutions, with a strong emphasis on rationality and regulation, which are at work at the state level and in municipalities and small communities.

This version, generally known as the 'universalist' or 'Scandinavian model', is based on an egalitarian ideology (Jöhncke 2011; Löfgren [1984] 2003; Vike, Lidén, and Lien 2001). Just as colonialism provided a critical frame of reference for anthropological studies in developing countries, the Scandinavian welfare states are an important context for anthropological studies in modern Scandinavia (Gullestad 1989).

The contributors to this issue are interested in the practical and everyday workings of the egalitarian ideology that is fundamental to the Scandinavian welfare states. Rather than being restricted to specific domains such as the home and the state, the authors focus on situated social practices of equality and hierarchy in major arenas of the Danish 'welfare society' (*velfærdssamfund*).[3] The collection is based on a series of seminars in which the participants explored Scandinavian concepts of sociality through the lens of Danish ethnography in contexts as diverse as housing associations and private homes, families on vacation, left-radical activists, and newly arrived refugees, as well as kindergartens and other public institutions. All of the ethnographic studies presented here are from Denmark; however, the authors draw on the region's general anthropological debate on egalitarianism, hierarchy, and the Scandinavian version of modernity and qualify their arguments by engaging with ethnography from Sweden and Norway. While Norwegian anthropologists have a strong tradition of comparing studies within Norway (e.g., Brox and Gullestad 1989; Vike, Lidén, and Lien 2001), Gullestad was one of the few who attempted to compare her own and other Norwegian studies of communities and neighborhoods in that country with studies of class culture and urbanization in Sweden and of life forms in Denmark. She identified a common focus on everyday life and a tendency to let small facts speak to large issues and to larger debates in anthropology regarding processes of modernization (Gullestad 1989). We similarly adopt a regional perspective—one that is based on recent ethnographic studies in Denmark.

In this introduction, we will first examine how Scandinavia has been charted as a region within anthropology. This provides the background for rereading parts of the anthropological literature on Scandinavia in order to identify how equality as sameness has become a gatekeeping concept. As an alternative to this one-sided focus on equality, our ethnographic studies illuminate how value-mastering hierarchies are created through people's concern for equality and other forms of proper sociality. Finally, we summarize how this exploration of value-mastering hierarchies suggests the need to look at sociality in a way that goes beyond the individual-society dichotomy and distinctions between public or state institutions and private homes.

Scandinavia: A Weakly Charted Region

Familiarity with regional ethnography has traditionally been considered one of the trademarks of good ethnography. In the wake of the new ethnographic criticism of the 1980s, Richard Fardon (1990) drew renewed attention to the

regional traditions in anthropology that are fundamental to the discipline and its ethnographic analyses. Fardon pointed out that anthropologists do fieldwork and encounter informants not just in different geographical places but also in conventionalized regions: Amazonia, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and so on. Ethnographers enter regional fields that are imaginatively charted and charged with cross-references by other anthropologists who have previously worked there (ibid.: 24–25).

Arjun Appadurai (1986: 356–357) has warned that anthropology's "practice of going *somewhere*, preferably somewhere geographically, morally, and socially distant from the theoretical and cultural metropolis of the anthropologist" has led to colonial and/or Western constructions of certain 'elsewheres'. These 'elsewheres', he argues, are often approached with place-specific gatekeeping concepts, such as hierarchy in India and honor and shame in studies of the Mediterranean (ibid.). Gatekeeping concepts are simplistic theoretical handles that have become metonyms for whole societies or regions and thus limit anthropological theorizing about the places in question.

As an area of anthropological interest, to date Scandinavia has not taken off. Ethnographic work on Scandinavian countries has not been synthesized as 'regional'.[4] To paraphrase Fardon, Scandinavia is relatively 'weakly charted' as a region in anthropology. One reason for this may be that few anthropological field studies with a focus on social relations were conducted there from about 1920 to 1980.[5] Most of the comprehensive descriptions of Scandinavian ways of life from this period stem from a strong tradition of European ethnology. By the time that an increasing number of anthropologists started doing fieldwork in Scandinavia, the discipline at large was engaged in an international confrontation with the conflation of space, place, and culture (Gupta and Ferguson 1997), and studies of globalization, migration, urbanization, citizenship, and the welfare state had gained in prominence. Community studies were discounted as analyses of artificial 'cultural islands' in a debate that somehow pulled down regionalizing and localizing strategies as well. Culture was increasingly defined as cultural flows without reference to places,[6] while anthropological fields began to be identified without reference to ethnographic regions.

Instead, most anthropologists working in Scandinavia have tended to define their fields as thematic domains of inquiry or to frame their studies according to theoretical interests that draw on general social science theory (Olwig 2002). One of the few regional concepts that Scandinavian ethnographies have referred to is that of equality. Marianne Gullestad's thesis of equality as sameness has become one of the most central and most frequently cited attempts to generalize about Scandinavian culture on the basis of anthropological research. Gullestad's concept has been widely applied in ethnographic studies, and while it might have served the purpose of giving such studies a regional cultural flavor, it has rarely contributed significantly to a nuanced regional contextualization of the analyses. As a result, the notion of equality as sameness has become the region's own gatekeeping concept.[7]

In the following, we consider the various regional ethnographies of egalitarianism and equality as sameness as an important point of departure for our

discussion of the concern for sociality in Denmark. Apart from the seminal work of John Barnes (1954) and Marianne Gullestad (1984, 1992a), our discussion focuses mainly on studies after 1990. We do not support a regionalism that seeks to collect knowledge about a culturally or geopolitically defined region in order to map its characteristics and essences. Rather, we seek to link knowledge of this particular area to a general debate about sociality (cf. Guyer 2004).

Anthropology in Scandinavia: A Genealogy of Equality

Anthropologists conducting fieldwork in Scandinavia often have been born and raised in the region. A notable exception is the British anthropologist John Barnes, who carried out a study of the small fishing community of Bremnes in western Norway. His work has influenced, both directly and indirectly, most of the contemporary regional ethnography, especially by establishing the notion of equality as a gatekeeping concept. In his essay on social organization in Bremnes, Barnes (1954) describes how people are connected and engaged in different social networks that he divides into three social fields, each of which displays different patterns or logics of social interaction. The first two fields, public administration/politics and labor relations on board fishing vessels, are described as hierarchically organized, while the third field, which is constituted by networks of kinship and friendship, is defined as egalitarian. In short, different social fields are connected with different modes of association and sociality. Nevertheless, Barnes came to privilege the egalitarian field of kinship and friendship as embodying the ethos of Norwegian sociality. He was struck by the seemingly classless organization of social life in Bremnes. Instead of a set of fixed status categories, he found networks of social ties between kin and friends who regarded each other as approximate social equals. He therefore suggested that Norwegian society is characterized by a strong "egalitarian dogma" (ibid.: 47).

Equality was especially interesting to Barnes due to Norway's history as a Danish colony. He found that the local villagers identified the egalitarian dogma with Norwegian society, contrasting it with the hierarchically organized bureaucratic system that they associated with the former Danish colonial regime. As Barnes himself indicated (1954: 56–57), his focus on equality should be interpreted as mirroring much broader political processes that were taking place outside academic anthropology while he was writing his famous essay, such as the decolonization of the former British colonies. In light of these events, there was an interest in examining the potential for creating egalitarian societies in a range of countries around the world after the withdrawal of the colonial elite. Barnes's essay thus laid the groundwork for an understanding of Scandinavia that posits equality as a crucial factor and for domain-based analyses whereby local communities are associated with equality and bureaucracy with hierarchy.

Barnes's egalitarian dogma was later taken up by Gullestad (1984, 1992a), who was more interested in the ideology of egalitarianism as a generalized cultural value than in equality as a characteristic of certain forms of social

organization. On the basis of several studies in urban middle- and working-class areas, Gullestad shows that Norwegian society is characterized by what she referred to as egalitarian individualism. In Norway, as in other modern Western societies, the individual is understood as the fundamental building block of society. In this, Gullestad follows Dumont (1970: 2–4; 1986), who in his comparative studies of ideological systems defines India as hierarchical, whereas Europe is described as egalitarian. The major difference concerns the relationship of the parts to the whole, that is, of the individual to society.[8]

According to Dumont (1970: 11), modern societies of the Western hemisphere are characterized by equality and liberty, following from an understanding of people as individuals (see also Dumont and Béteille 1987: 669). The notion of individualism is, however, surrounded by ambiguity in Norway. Individualism is cast as independence, autonomy, and freedom, which are valued positively, while individuality, expressed as egoism and self-assertion, and originality are not held in very high regard (Gullestad 1992b: 184). With regard to egalitarianism, there are at least three different translations and understandings of the notion of equality in the Scandinavian languages: (1) *enshed* (Danish) or *likhet* (Norwegian), which means 'sameness' or 'similarity'; (2) *ligeværd* (Danish) or *likeverd* (Norwegian), which means 'of equal value'; and (3) *ligestilling* (Danish) or *likestilling* (Norwegian), which means 'of equal status' (ibid.: 185). Gullestad privileges the first as culturally significant to Norway and Scandinavia at large. Equality as sameness means that people cast social relations in quotidian life in terms of sameness. In Scandinavia, equality is considered as both a part and an outcome of social life, not as a starting point for the development of differences, as 'equal opportunity' is viewed in the United States (ibid.). Gullestad suggests that this notion of equality can be found throughout Scandinavia and that it is closely related to national ideologies emphasizing Scandinavian countries as classless societies.

Not only does Gullestad identify differences in notions of equality within the West, but her focus on everyday social life and styles of interaction also differs from theories of egalitarianism and individualism in other Western countries, such as France, Germany, and the United States. In these analyses, individualism and egalitarianism are studied in light of philosophical and legal traditions (e.g., Béteille 1986; Dumont 1986)—that is, equality is seen as a product of the relationship between individuals, and the state is viewed as the entity that guarantees freedom and equality for its individuals (cf. Robbins 1994). Kapferer's (1988) study of Australian nationalism and egalitarianism presents a notable exception in that he too focuses on social relations between people and shows how hierarchy is encapsulated within egalitarianism.

We have identified two bodies of anthropological literature in more recent ethnographic studies in Scandinavia that relate to the heritage of Barnes and Gullestad and draw on the concept of equality. They are, on the one hand, studies of everyday life in local communities and the home that focus on the production of equality and, on the other, studies of various welfare state institutions that emphasize how hierarchy is disguised behind the ideology of equality. The two lines of empirical investigation have linked particular styles

of relating with specific societal domains, but both have elevated equality as the gatekeeping concept for the region. Our collection of articles comments on both lines of empirical investigation and shows that as anthropologists we cannot stick to this distinction in our analyses, even though Scandinavians may essentialize the domains as respectively egalitarian and hierarchical.

Gullestad's studies, as well as many others inspired by her work (e.g., Ekman 1991; Lien 2001; Reddy 1991), can be described as community studies. They may have been inspired by the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1972), who viewed communities as the most important arena in which people create society and culture (cf. Gullestad 1991). Norwegian anthropologists' interest in small and often remote communities and their strong tradition of doing fieldwork in Norway can also be understood as an expression of how a relatively young nation-state, which became fully independent in 1905, is struggling to define its own national identity in opposition to its former colonial rule by Denmark and Sweden. Norwegians came to idealize aspects of community and everyday life, such as solidarity and commonality, authenticity and closeness, equality, self-reliance, and independence—all of which anthropology participated actively in reproducing.

In community studies, equality has been identified mainly in spaces that are located at a distance from state institutions and in everyday sociality that is seemingly unmediated by the state. Following Barnes's identification of different social fields, Gullestad argues that people in Norway associate the state, the market, and the public sphere with formality, impersonality, and hierarchy (Gullestad 1991, 1992b). In the literature, equality is frequently encountered in the home, the community, and nature, particularly the mountains (*på fjeldet*). These spaces have been sacralized as holding out the promise of utopia (Gullestad 1991; Löfgren 1980), that is, they are spaces where the good or perfect life may come true. Festivals and holidays have been interpreted as reinforcing equality, local sociality, and experiences of belonging (cf. Ekman 1991).

It is striking that the concept of equality has been applied in studies in all of the Scandinavian countries, both the former colony and the former colonial powers. In Denmark, whose colonies spanned the globe, anthropological research has generally focused more on the welfare state and its various institutions and less on communities. These studies have unmasked the inequalities embedded in the welfare state's bureaucratic institutions, despite its claims to foster equality (Jöhncke 2011). Studies of institutions such as kindergartens and schools have particularly proliferated (Anderson 2000; Bundgaard and Gulløv 2008), alongside studies of social welfare workers in municipalities and public initiatives (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2003) and analyses of relations between patients and doctors or other medical professionals (Jensen et al. 1987; Johansen 2005). Some works have also focused on the politically sensitive subject of how difference is handled in the interface between public institutions and ethnic minorities (Hervik 1999; Olwig and Pærregaard 2011). Recent Norwegian studies have taken a similar approach (cf. Gullestad 2001; Vike 2001). Although they have been influenced by the rise and maturation of the welfare state in

Denmark and Sweden since the 1960s and in Norway since the 1980s, these studies have also taken a critical stance toward the state apparatus and how it reproduces power relations.

The articles in this special issue aim to demonstrate the problems involved in using Gullestad's thesis of equality as sameness as a gatekeeping concept, describing the style of Scandinavian interaction par excellence that is found in some societal domains but is absent in others. The role that this concept has acquired has involved, we argue, a reduction in and loss of complexity; as a result, empirical settings all across Scandinavia have been approached with simplistic questions regarding equality. Instead, certain logics of interaction associated with specific fields of social interaction can be drawn on and made to work in other fields. We wish to emphasize this point by showing how varying values and forms of sociality intersect, clash, and are contested across different domains and institutions and how they emerge in different spaces.

Several contributors show that the experience of equality can take many forms. In Vacher's article, freedom, equality, eternity, and infinity are spatially framed and created through the shared experienced of the coastal landscape and seaside horizon during periods of leisure. Similarly, left-radical activists perform and experience moments of autonomy during street protests. In doing so, the widespread ideal of societal spaciousness (*rummelighed*) is materialized in time and space (Krøijer and Sjørslev, this issue). During work parties and seasonal celebrations, a sense of egalitarian community is created in otherwise conflict-ridden urban neighborhoods (Bruun, this issue). Equality, autonomy, and community are thus experienced neither 'out there' (in particular, rural, faraway places) nor in particular fields of social relations such as local communities or the home. Rather, equality, autonomy, and community can be achieved in temporary spaces that people strive to create in many different settings and situations. Barnes (1954: 56–57) himself came close to this view by noting, for example, that forms of sociality associated with friendship and kinship sometimes come into play on board fishing vessels—in other words, that egalitarian logics of interaction are put to work in the hierarchical field of labor. Even when we consider the home, we have to be attentive to the special situations or temporal spaces in which egalitarian *hygge* and authenticity are materialized by lit candles and homemade food (Linnet, Højlund, this issue).[9]

The question of egalitarian spaces and social interaction is central to Gullestad's work. Given the significance of sameness as an ideal and condition for social interaction, Gullestad (1984; 1992d) contends that people in modern Scandinavia avoid difference through distancing or 'symbolic fencing'. Symbolic fencing means that people signal inaccessibility to avoid 'unequals', whereas they signal accessibility in order to associate with 'equals' who are similar to themselves. According to Gullestad (1992d), distancing or symbolic fencing has largely replaced another method of showing accessibility and inaccessibility that she calls 'territoriality', a spatial mode of relating to others that "divides people into two categories, those who belong and those who do not belong" (ibid.: 179). Urbanization and modernity in Norway have been accompanied by a move from

territoriality to distancing because processes of urbanization make it impossible to relate to others in a territorial fashion (ibid.: 180). Larsen's article (this issue) on the integration of refugees in Danish villages does, however, show that the two modes of relating—distancing and territoriality—can co-exist in concrete social settings, even in the modern Danish welfare state. Teaching refugees how to draw curtains and tend gardens means teaching them how to signal accessibility and inaccessibility, as well as how to properly 'belong' within a territory, this desire to belong being taken for granted by both the locals and the municipal authorities. Thus, spatial modes of relating are still practiced in modern settings, both urban and rural, even when they are not connected to specific, stable, or closed territories. In this issue, we also show that space and social relations cannot be conceptually separated: sociality has both spatial and temporal dimensions (cf. Krøijer and Sjørslev, this issue).

Olwig and Højlund (this issue) critique the contrast between the closeness and warmth of interpersonal relations in everyday life and the cold, impersonal relations of public institutions. This distinction is drawn both in popular emics in Scandinavia and in critical social science, with its focus on the control and surveillance practiced by public institutions. Olwig's analysis of children's interactions in Danish kindergartens demonstrates that public institutions cannot, in fact, be 'totalized' as places characterized by cold, impersonal relations and surveillance because the children carve out their own spaces of 'uncivilized' sociality. These forms of sociality are often tolerated and even encouraged by the institutions' educators. Højlund argues that public residential care institutions for children are modeled on ideas about the home and 'hominess', the history of which is part of an ongoing civilizing project. By lighting candles and using kin terms, the child care institutions she describes reproduce an idealized sociality of the home that the children have lost. However difficult it is to develop home-like settings, different meanings of the home are interwoven into the everyday practices of public institutions.

Not all social relations in Scandinavia are cast as equality as sameness. People do relate to each other in spite of social inequalities; thus, equality as sameness does not offer insights into all forms of sociality. Based on her fieldwork in the rural fishing village of Båtsfjord, Norway, Marianne Lien (2001) argues that social interaction is based on verbal and material gift exchange, which does not require that people feel the same or equal. Rather than sameness, equal value is ascribed to people, which allows for differences to co-exist. As Lien (ibid.) demonstrates, everyday sociality can develop in spite of differences in status, economic capacity, and lifestyle. In this issue, Bruun reaches a similar conclusion in her analysis of the concern for community in Danish cooperative housing associations. She shows how the residents aim at creating a sense of community around their ownership of and care for common property, despite their internal differences and cross-cutting loyalties.

Yet our argument here follows a somewhat different path and seeks to reopen the debate about equality—in particular, equality as sameness—from a different angle. We do so by pointing out how hierarchy always accompanies equality when proper sociality is practiced in Scandinavia.

Proper Sociality: Value-Mastering Hierarchies

Being equal is not the only concern that Scandinavians have with regard to their forms of sociality. In the articles in this issue, we see that, in other social settings, communicating authenticity, hominess, coziness, autonomy, spaciousness, and community—as well as embodying, performing, and materializing them—is an equally important concern when pursuing the good life and the proper way of relating to others. By employing a Dumontian notion involving hierarchies of value and hierarchical difference (Dumont 1970) and by focusing on social practices and performance, we aim to show how concerns for proper sociality introduce hierarchy. Hierarchy resides in relations between those who are capable of mastering the proper forms of sociality and those who are not, and this is what we identify as value-mastering hierarchies.

Gullestad follows Dumont and Kapferer in adopting two important positions about egalitarianism and hierarchy. First, Norwegians have an egalitarian ideology and have difficulties in conceptualizing hierarchy; therefore, hierarchy is emically related to social stratification and to inequalities in political and economic power. Secondly, this does not mean that hierarchy does not exist. Dumont, Kapferer, and Gullestad all believe that egalitarianism and hierarchy co-exist in all societies. Yet Gullestad leaves the one pole, namely, hierarchy, under-theorized. In the following, we illuminate what our ethnographic studies can contribute to these arguments regarding hierarchy.

Gullestad (1992c: 93–94) agrees with Dumont that, in Western societies, egalitarianism and individualism are considered to be the norm, something that makes people feel uneasy about hierarchy and makes them encounter difficulties when trying to conceptualize hierarchical relations. According to Dumont (1970: 257): "[H]ierarchy is repressed, made non-conscious: it is replaced by a manifold network of inequalities, matters of fact instead of right, of quantity and gradualness instead of quality and discontinuity." That the emics of hierarchy is related to social stratification and to inequalities in political and economic power is apparent in Linnet's analysis (this issue) of middle-class families' sociality. Here, economic inequalities are actively downplayed; in spite of high incomes, consumption is moderated so that it does not exceed what is 'enough'. Phenomena that do not "serve needs for practical functions but exist solely to create hierarchy" are considered improper because they distract the family from 'real' things and relations, denoted by the term *hygge*.

That hierarchy is understood among Scandinavians as economic inequality is also apparent in three other themes discussed in the contributions to this issue: (1) the concern over how the horizon has become a commodity and hence inaccessible to many Danes (Vacher, this issue); (2) the new economic inequalities among members of Danish housing associations, seen by many as an impediment to proper community (Bruun, this issue); and (3) public discontent over the sale of a social center by local authorities (Krøijer and Sjørslev, this issue). In this emic understanding, all kinds of hierarchies are ignored, suppressed, or disguised in many situations since they are inconsistent with the ideology of equality. Consequently, hierarchy easily slips into the

background—even in anthropological analyses. But as the articles in this issue demonstrate, insight can be gained by analyzing hierarchy from a Dumontian perspective, albeit with a point of departure in social relations.

Dumont has been criticized for reducing complex and heterogeneous ideas to simple, coherent schemes with certain fixed values (e.g., see Dumont and Betéille 1987). However, Dumont and those who are building on his thoughts have set out to show that hierarchy implies difference (in a total system of meaning), although not necessarily inequality or injustice, as is often portrayed in the West. Dumont (1970: 20) writes: "To adopt a value is to introduce hierarchy, and a certain consensus of values, a certain hierarchy of ideas, things and people, is indispensable to social life." We find this understanding of hierarchy in values and notions of what is good or right highly operational in Scandinavian social life. Hierarchies are created in everyday interaction between families who are capable of socializing in a *hyggelig* manner and those who are not and who consequently indulge in excessive consumption (Linnet, this issue), as well as between those who are able to perform *rummelighed* (Krøijer and Sjørslev, this issue) and *fællesskab* (Bruun, this issue) in the right manner and those who are not.

The value-mastering hierarchy is most apparent in generational relations, as older people are expected to teach proper forms of sociality to the younger generations. Families (and other generational relations) are not to be understood as 'natural' hierarchical relations. The German sociologist Norbert Elias (1998: 190) stresses that the family is "a social group." It follows from this that there is no reason why such hierarchical relations should be seen as limited to the domestic domain. Both Højlund's and Olwig's articles on public institutions (this issue) show that it is not limited to kin relations either, since relations between children and their educators are phrased in intergenerational terms (as parents/adults and children). The positions (as parents or children) may also be adopted strategically to enjoy the benefits of either of the powers ascribed to these roles. An example of how this dynamic is at work outside public institutions is Krøijer and Sjørslev's analysis (this issue) of the eviction of a social center in Copenhagen. They show how the activists were predominantly defined as young or as children and thus placed in a generational hierarchy. This allowed the young left radicals to carve out a certain space for voicing (and embodying) their dissatisfaction with the way in which formal market and private-property-based mechanisms were employed to evict them from their social center, the Youth House (Ungdomshuset). In much the same way as in the kindergarten, some degree of immature or uncivilized behavior was allowed the young activists, showing that the power in generational relations is not a one-way mechanism but involves what Elias (1998: 195) calls a "reciprocity of power chances," whereby, to a certain degree, children also have power over their parents. On the other hand, being defined as a youth or child means that one is not considered a fully fledged political subject. Applying generational or kinship terminology makes it acceptable to enact a hierarchical relationship.

The processes of socializing and learning how to master values and proper forms of sociality apply to social relations more generally. The generational

hierarchy, we argue, is an enactment of more encompassing value-master-ing hierarchies. Bruun's piece (this issue) on housing cooperatives, in which people participate in work parties in the proper way by developing a sense of community while carrying out practical work on the cooperative's communal property, presents an example of such a value-mastering hierarchy in practice. The hierarchy is especially noticeable, however, in the interaction between natives and non-natives described by Larsen (this issue), who analyzes how a Congolese UN refugee is 'civilized' (cf. Elias 1994) in order to be able to engage in the 'right' sociality. The mastering of proper forms of sociality may also become materialized. Material objects, such as home-made buns, are employed actively to evoke *hygge* and, according to Linnet (this issue), equality among middle-class families. Even so, serving such foods evokes hierarchy by placing the host in a superior position.[10] In these hierarchies, persons are positioned according to their knowledge of, experience with, and ability to master a set of values. This may have to do with seniority in the community or simply a superior ability to master the proper social forms. Along with a higher position in the hierarchy comes the right to evaluate others' ability to master a set of values and the role as educators of those positioned lower. In all of the present ethnographic studies, becoming a proper member of society is taught not only by referring to larger abstract issues, such as religion, gender, or ethnicity, but also by giving attention to everyday routines and relations in the family, the landscape, the institution, or the association.

These socially accepted and widely applied hierarchies are not tied to par-ticular domains: they are activated momentarily and drawn upon strategi-cally. However, this is not meant to imply that places are totally irrelevant. As Vacher (this issue) shows in his article on Danish second homes at the seaside, physical surroundings, by way of their materiality, offer particular imaginaries and possibilities for acting. Access to the horizon and the hori-zon's specific qualities are thus pivotal in the Danish middle class's experience of being freed from the challenges, duties, and expectations of quotidian life when vacationing by the seaside. And as Olwig (this issue) shows, hierarchies among adults and children may also be institutionalized and laid out architec-turally in the kindergarten's 'pillow room' or the children's own space behind the bamboo bushes.

It seems paradoxical that the home has been appointed as the epitome of the egalitarian space in Scandinavian literature. The articles in this issue con-tend that, on the contrary, the home is 'housing' the value-mastering hierarchy among relatives in native Danish families, between foreigners and their Danish neighbors, and among residents in cooperatives. This paradox is informative in two ways. On the one hand, it supports our critique of the insistent focus in community studies on this domain (as well as on nature) as egalitarian, which seems to have impeded insight into the hierarchical relations at work.[11] On the other hand, it suggests an explanation for why the intergenerational relationship is a socially accepted way of addressing and imposing hierarchy in Denmark: from an emic perspective it is understood to be non-hierarchical since it does not build on political or economic stratification.

Ultimately, without the value-mastering hierarchies, the experience of being equal would indeed be impossible in Denmark, for egalitarianism is generated *by* these hierarchies. Drawing on Elias's (1994) work on civilization, one might say that since correct behavior is a prerequisite of equality, apprentice-like, hierarchical relations are necessary to produce this equality.

Putting Social Relations First: Society by Means of Sociality

In analyzing the proper forms of sociality that are central to the enactment of value-mastering hierarchies, we started out with Simmel's notion of sociability and have taken his concept in the direction of newer anthropological approaches to the social as sociality (in particular, see Strathern and Toren in Ingold et al. 1996; see also Kapferer 2005). In classical sociological theory, debates about sociality or the social are underpinned by philosophical questions regarding the relationship between the individual and society, both of which are reified sociological concepts. Society is viewed either as an all-encompassing social order entailing mechanisms that socialize, orient, or repress the individual or as a voluntary association of individuals pursuing their own interests (cf. Durkheim [1915] 1964; Simmel 1950). With our focus on proper sociality and value-mastering hierarchies, we have put everyday sociality at the center of our analysis, rather than taking our point of departure in the individual-society dichotomy. We have not traced people's concerns to their pursuit of individual interests, thereby reducing the richness of ethnographic accounts (cf. Kapferer 2005), or examined how individuals are repressed by society. Instead, we have focused on processes of relating.

It was not until the eighteenth century that the word 'society' acquired an abstract meaning as the totality of all relationships. This shift paved the way for representing society as an abstract whole, which also meant that the relationship between the individual and society became an issue of concern (Williams 1983). Before that, the term 'society' denoted sociability, companionship, and fellowship in smaller constellations of immediate social relations, emphasizing forms of sociality and ways of being together, which is also what we analyze in this special issue. We agree with Strathern and Toren (in Ingold et al. 1996) that the concepts of society and the individual are theoretically obsolete—or at least useless as starting points for social analysis—and that we, as anthropologists, have to attend to the complex processes of relating, rather than taking our point of departure in pre-existing wholes and parts (society and individuals). Meaning, and thus value, is inherent in social relations (ibid.), and we want to add this relational perspective on value to Simmel's notion of sociability. We demonstrate that value-mastering hierarchies are not reified or ready-made systems of meanings or general values that are transmitted to individuals through socialization, but that they are instead inherent in social relations.

Our ethnographies suggest that simple dichotomies between egalitarianism and hierarchy or between individualism and holism do not hold. Dumont (1970) has argued that in Western societies one must be an individual before

being capable of bearing value. In everyday life, however, it does seem that appropriate forms of sociality and ways of relating are the bearers of value and that social persons learn to master forms of sociality that they themselves both produce and are the products of. It is, in other words, not the individual who lays down the value-mastering hierarchy: it emerges through properly managed relations.

Even so, we have found that on the emic level the concern for sociality reflects a relationship between forms of sociality enacted in small groups of people (housing communities or groups of children or young adults) and emic concepts of larger wholes (society, community, nature, cosmos). The ethnographies in this issue point to the manifold ways in which, in the course of relating, Danes establish connections between social forms and society as a whole. Curiously, in many ethnographic studies we have found that Danes think in terms of relationships between, for example, creating a socially spacious social center and creating a better and more inclusive society (Krøijer and Sjørslev, this issue) or relating in communities centered around common property and being socially responsible to fellow citizens in need of a decent and cheap dwelling (Bruun, this issue).

This relation to notions of society is also pointed out by Sally Anderson (2008) in her study of Danish sports associations. She argues that being involved in these groups is an activity related to being a citizen. Social skills learned in the home, apartment buildings, or self-managed social centers are meant to prepare people for life outside these spaces and to serve as models for "civil sociality" (ibid.), even when phrased in direct opposition to mainstream society, as in the case of left-radical activists. Residents in housing cooperatives are nostalgic for the sense of community that they associate with village life and common work of the past, whereas the left-radical activists' model of society and proper sociality is of the future, which they seek to materialize in the present. When refugees and migrants learn how to draw their curtains and to eat daily meals together with their children (Larsen, this issue), they are regarded not only as good neighbors and good parents but also as good Danes.[12] Refugees and migrants are thus expected to adopt local neighborhood sociality and forms of sociality in the family that are also essentialized as 'Danish sociality'. In the ethnographies in this issue, emic notions of society stem not from the opposition between the individual and society but from forms of small-scale sociality—scales of being together in the family, home, summer house, or neighborhood.

Gullestad (1993: 151) commented on the relationship between sociality in the home and the wider society: the Norwegian home can be seen as a form of resistance to the fragmentation and anomie of modernity, a romantic folk utopia. In some instances, we have found that the home may serve as a shelter or therapeutic institution from the impersonal relations of modern society (e.g., Linnet, this issue). We have, however, also found that the sociability and sharing associated with the domestic setting of the home and family serve as models for sociality in public and semi-public institutions (e.g., Højlund, Bruun, this issue).

Conclusion

Just as there is no reason to celebrate the Scandinavian ethos of egalitarianism, we do not wish to romanticize the concern for sociality and value-mastering hierarchies, which can be limiting, exclusive, and coercive. Nor is it our goal to make moral claims against Scandinavian society for valuing equality. Our intention has been to avoid reproducing Western sociology's dichotomy between individual and society, private and public, domestic or civil society and the state, an approach that does not pay attention to the details of social life. Even though these concepts are used when people explain or reflect on the social, both in emic and etic discourse, lived life is not split up in this way.

In understanding sociality in Scandinavia, the concept of value-mastering hierarchies is an alternative to Gullestad's equality as sameness, which has unfortunately taken the shape of a gatekeeping concept in recent Scandinavian anthropology. This, we contend, allows us to attend to the hierarchical relations stemming from efforts to master shared values of equality. It also makes it possible to dissolve the unfruitful marriage between community and equality, on the one hand, and state institutions and hierarchy, on the other. Finally, investigating value-mastering hierarchies allows an ethnographically salient issue—the ever-present concern for sociality—to be addressed.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

 1. Gullestad (1991, 1992b) elaborated on some of these concepts as well as related ones, such as 'home-centeredness', 'peace and quiet', 'stability and closeness', and 'self-sufficiency, independence, and self-control'.
 2. Simmel (1950) is generally concerned with processes of sociation (*Vergesellschaftung*) in modern society, that is, the innumerable and different ways in which individuals grow together into specific forms of being with and for one another. He pays special attention to the peculiar phenomenon of sociability (*Geselligkeit*), in which forms of sociation become autonomous aims and carry value in themselves. Sociability is "the play-form of sociation" (ibid.: 43). One of his examples is the art of conversation (*sich unterhalten*), in which it is not the content or result of a conversation that is significant but rather its inclusive form, which enables all sociates to engage in meaningful and proper interaction (ibid.: 51f.). According to Simmel, different forms of sociability are regulated or framed by tact. It is, for example, tactless to let one's personal wealth, social position, capabilities, or interests dominate a conversation.
 3. 'Welfare society', rather than 'welfare state', is the term that Danes use, not only for state institutions, but also for other social institutions in and of Danish private and civil society.
 4. One of the few comprehensive efforts to investigate Scandinavia and the other Nordic countries as a region is the collection *The Nordic World* (Hastrup 1992). This cooperative project between Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Faroese, and Finnish anthropologists and ethnologists was undertaken at a time when the public in the Nordic countries was debating whether or not to aim at realizing the political utopia of a Nordic Union as an alternative to the European Union. As Fardon (1990) emphasizes, regionalization efforts in anthropology are often supported by contemporary political and ideological trends.
 5. Exceptions include Barnes (1954), Brox (1966), Barth and his associates in Norway (1972), and other community studies, which we will return to later in this introduction.
 6. For a critique of this approach, see Olwig and Hastrup (1997).
 7. The Norwegian anthology *Likhetens paradokser* (Lien, Lidén, and Vike 2001), which systemically discusses the concept of equality and its purchase in different settings, is a notable exception. This collection proves that exemplary texts such as Gullestad's need not have simple gatekeeping effects. They can be turned into productive discussions if the status and historicity of the concepts are properly accounted for and their use properly situated in social life.
 8. Egalitarianism and individualism are themselves extreme versions of a system of values that gives the individual supreme importance (Rio and Smedal 2008: 2). In hierarchical systems, however, the whole rules over the parts and determines the relationship between them. In the caste system, the whole is divided into groups that are demarcated through separation, division of labor, and hierarchical rank (Dumont 1970: 21). In hierarchies, the individual is in short conditioned by society; it is society that gives life to the individual (Kapferer 1988: 12–13).
 9. There is also, of course, a general difference between the ideals and values connected to the home and actual practices in some Danish households, where people may also experience abuse, assaults, and other acts of violence that cause suffering.
10. One might argue that this practice bears a resemblance to Bourdieu's (1984) notion of taste and distinction. The scope of analysis is quite different, though, as we are focusing

on the meaning of the practice for the actors involved, whereas Bourdieu is preoccupied with social stratification.

11. An exception is Gullestad's (1984, 1992c) work on gender roles in Norwegian working-class families.

12. None of the articles in this issue refers directly to Danish nationalism. Richard Jenkins's (2011) study of Danish national identity, based on long-term fieldwork in a provincial town in Denmark, argues that 'Danishness' can be found in such quotidian activities as speaking Danish, socialization in kindergartens and schools, and everyday uses of the Danish flag.

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