

APPENDIX A

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Masquerading!

By Benny Lihme

(Book review and reporting of the author to the Committee on Ethics of the Danish Psychologist Association)

At the City of Copenhagen's juvenile detention facility *Sønderbro* the psychologist Nicolai Sennels masqueraded as the friend and therapist of the youths. In reality he cunningly conducted anti Muslim fifth column activities, at the behest of the ideology of the publisher of the book, the anti-Muslim *Trykkefrihedsselskabets Bibliotek*. In the book "Blandt kriminelle muslimer" Sennels have displayed a blatant disregard for the dignity and integrity of the youths, in as much as he has used knowledge obtained in confidential conversations in a manner that abuses the youths and Muslims as a whole – a practice light years away from the principle of "informed consent". One of the youths, who has been at *Sønderbro* at the same time as Sennels, protested this breach of confidence by the psychologist to *Hodjas blog*. Despite the language being foul, this young lads protest is repeated here, because at the core of the protest, language aside, lie the core of the abuse of the integrity of the youths:

"Nicolai you little pansy. Inside *Sønderbro* you act the friend of the youths, but when you get off work you are a fucking racist you son of a whore...
Best regards, Young bloke who has been to *Sønderbro* facility"

Based on three years work at the City of Copenhagen juvenile detention facility *Sønderbro* the psychologist Nicolai Sennels has written the book "Blandt kriminelle muslimer". The title is, along with most of the content it turns out, misleading.

As no sections at *Sønderbro* are divided by religion youths co-exist whether they are of Christian or Muslim background. The master framing of him self as an anthropologist visiting a strange tribe is thus misleading but has none the less painted a picture of the author among the general public of one who finally knows what he is talking about, because he is the first psychologist in Denmark to mix with the "savages".

The truth however, which is evident from the book, is that the authorised psychologist had a separate room for therapy, in which the therapist, as some kind of Freud figure, had a couch for the "hundreds of deep, therapeutic conversations" he managed before being sacked by the City of Copenhagen.

"The many immigrants on my psychologists couch", as Sennels writes (pp 14). To the reader it remains a mystery what they are doing on that couch, as it is the author's cultural hypothesis that Muslims cannot profit from Western style treatments. It remains equally obscured why only "immigrants" got on the couch.

The authorised psychologist Sennels does not as such have a psychologically professional basis for his understanding of the youths. He neither substantiates his

professional initiatives nor his theoretical and methodical deliberations, which is required to receive authorisation from the Board of Psychologists.

In the very years of Sennels working at *Sønderbro*, nationwide research into the psychological condition of the youths has been conducted, resulting in some rather alarming findings. In the book little mentioning of this specifically psychologically professional issue is found: "Some are drug addicts and mentally unstable as well" (pp 23) and "many among them have serious mental issues" (pp 116). That is all the mentioning of the psychological "instability" and "mental issues" of the youths!

Regardless of whether one compares Sennels to e.g. the neuro-psychologists who diagnoses and treats ADHD or to the psychodynamic psychologists who diagnoses and treats youths, like the ones at *Sønderbro*, suffering from personality disorder (e.g. the psychologists Felding, Ungar and Møller in *Weekendavisen* on January 8th 2010), Nicolai Sennels comes across as a bizarre and bare psychologist, because he fails the youths regarding their mental ailments, in his search for cultural characteristics. The absurdity of the course of events is therapeutically speaking, that since no cases of mental illness are present in the diagnoses he presumably have made, no treatment can be described in the book.

The explanation to this absurd blind spot of a psychologist with a Freudian couch can be found by taking a look at the man behind the psychologist title. *Google* provides once again! It takes only a few clicks of the cursor to see that Sennels is a member of *Dansk Folkeparti* and a practicing Buddhist – two standings joined together by their understanding of Islam as a threat.

Islam is according to Sennels inherently more criminal and violent than other religions. Violence and terrorism in the name of Islam is constitutive of "the good Muslim" – an extremist is someone who has understood and follows the Koran with rigor.

"Vulnerable youths easily becomes extremist", Sennels writes (pp 137). This basic theme and the fear-inducing primary message of the book, is spelled out on the cover where the two "l's" in "kriminelle" are shaped like the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. In the book Sennels writes that his experience with the just short of 200 young Muslims he met at *Sønderbro* is that "the cultural as well as the religious extremism is very common in Muslim circles" (pp 128).

At *Sønderbro* it was evident that "a large number of the criminal youths had extremist tendencies" (pp 118). Even though the majority was not practicing Muslims, "a number of them read the Koran, and some prayed to Allah" (pp 119). While the concerns of most professionals regarding juvenile detention facilities are whether or not the youths infect each other in terms of crime, Sennels worry that those who lived by Muslim precepts had an elevated status among the other youths, who began "leading more religious lives while at *Sønderbro*, through the inspiration by others".

This might definitely have been a relevant theme, had there been just the faintest hint of documentation backing the claim of the "increasing extremism among young Muslims" (pp 133).

There is not. Vague phrasings such as "a large number of the criminal youths had extremist tendencies" (pp 118) and we "had quite a few youths, who the staff feared to be extremist" (pp 120). These vague phrasings and imprecise statements result in Sennels

having encountered "one highly troubling case" (pp 120) and having "held therapeutic conversations with just one religious fanatic" (pp 125).

While Sennels in his book is trying to cover the fact that he dragged the youths into a separate room for therapy – safe occasions where "I accidentally overhead their conversations" (pp 124) – an anthropologist and a sociologist have stayed among the youths in the sections of *Sønderbro*, while conducting their participant observations in connection with their research project at The Danish National Centre for Social Research.

In an article in *Weekendavisen* (August 2009) Tea Torbenfeldt Bengtsson and Gitte Frydensbjerg denies Sennels' book any truthfulness: It is a "testament to his political affiliations, and has nothing much to do with reality at the juvenile detention facilities. Happily so."

Participant observations and conversations with the youths and the staff at four facilities over the course of months, prompts the two researchers to describe Sennels' book as "a black-and-white" caricature of the youths" and "a political project in disguise".

Authorised or not, Sennels is constructing a hypothesis regarding the young Muslims of *Sønderbro* and the Danish treatment efforts directed at them, based on his particular ideological tunnel vision and preconceptions. The hypothesis is that the City of Copenhagen does not take cultural and religious differences into account. Sennels claims that since the focal group of the book comes from a different culture they require a different form of help than the group of Danes.

Sennels is talking nonsense on this crucial point. Suffice it to quote the view of the book that the acceptance of punishment is significantly greater in Muslim societies than in the Western World. "We are dealing with people who are used to external "regulation" as Sennels writes (112).

Just as professor Dominique Bouchet in 1999 through the *Odense Report* and the book "The broken mirror" did away with the "teddy bear pedagogy" towards the "arab boys (the Danish term is derogatory *ed*)" of Odense. Sennels is now a decade later taking a similar stance towards the apparently Danish "let's-talk-about-it" syndrome (pp 102): "Too long have we treated violent criminals for their problems, as if they are not themselves responsible for these problems. We tell them "we take pity on you. It is because you have had a troubled childhood and because you are split between two cultures. It is not your fault."

This comes from the psychologist behind the tall walls, where the keys of the staff rattle, with surveillance cameras, barbed wire fences and so on, at this closed form of social facility that has spread over the last years as a panicky political response to the leniency towards youth crimes. Despite this profound "prisonisation" of the social institutions – it is stated off hand (pp 12) that the youths of *Sønderbro* does not receive more than a couple of hours of schooling a week, in direct violation of the law – Sennels perceives our irresponsible social policies as something that "aims at providing relief and money for people in need" (pp 112). "Everyone in Denmark has a social worker at his or her disposal, if one is in need of a piece of advice or a chat about one's issues, and who readily provides psychologists etc. if one is unable to cope with social issues on one's own" (pp 103).

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The high point of Nicolai Sennels' charades is when he claims to be speaking on behalf of "humanism". It is a professedly humanitarian endeavour when he tries to convince the reader that we can better meet the needs of the Muslim youths by focusing on the Muslim part.

It is evidently relevant to address the cultural background of the youths, but not when this is done at the expense of social background or mental disposition. But let us join the author in claiming the importance of cultural analysis. If one, as Sennels does, understands the Muslim disposition to found in the mountains of Pakistan and Afghanistan, it might seem reasonable to claim that Muslims are more accepting towards punishment than Westerners. The Muslims in the case of *Sønderbro*, however, are predominantly Danish children of Muslim parents. Sennels claims knowledge about the traditions of these Muslim families, but he has not once been in touch with the families of the youths. What Sennels is claiming about the families is something he extrapolates from the conversations with the youths in the therapy room (and these are obviously manipulated). The cultural backgrounds of the youths cannot be reduced to their family upbringing. Most of them have been to Danish day-care institutions and schools – and their distinctive designer identity is primarily American (style of clothing, gold chains, rap music, poker, American gang and prison movies, American porn, violent American videogames etc.). In a cultural analysis one has to be very biased to maintain that these Americanised Copenhagen children of Muslim parents are just "criminal Muslims".

Why give such attention to an intellectually impoverished and poorly written book riddled with iterations? The answer, of course, is to be found in the extensive amount of positive attention and recognition that has been bestowed on the book and the author alike. Added to that is a genuine astonishment and annoyance with the fact that Sennels basically has gotten away with disguising his subversive right wing radical exploits as a humanitarian and professional psychological book, while using the young Copenhagen criminals in detention as Cannon fodder.

It is as such the societal and political context of the book, rather than the book itself, that has provoked my strong words. It is the meanness of the times we live in, where anything unfavourable can (and must) be said about Muslims, without consequence. Oh, the unbearable lightness of freedom of speech! Where sexuality between people liberated by legalisation of porn as an expression in 1969, and will the clerical cousins and their followers become more Christian by saying anything about Muslims?

Well, to those who do not read *Weekendavisen*, this present review has a history at this paper, where I have attempted to create a counterbalance to the indiscriminate promotion of Sennels by the paper. This earned me some rather colourful emails from people believed me to be completely off & communist, while Sennels had realised the true state of affairs in the Occident headed for downfall or the transition to Eurabia.

Nicolai Sennels himself, who I do not know personally, honoured me with a personal email that made me wonder if not the psychologist himself was in need of psychological treatment. As I consider it of interest in this context, I hereby repeat the mail sent to me by Sennels on the 12th of July 2008 at 12:56 AM:

“Hello Benny Lihme
You bask in your own ramblings¹, but the truth is that you are a communist in
opposition to your father. May you find the strength to stand alone once – as I do.
Yours, Nicolai Sennels
Ps. you deny your responsibility to a free Denmark and many agrees with me.”

Is it necessary to add that I have never been a communist – on the contrary quite a few
members of the Danish Communist Party have cursed me over the years. With regard to
my father it is true – he was a bastard.

Why the psychologist, authorised by the Psychological Association, has not chosen to be
published at the Danish Psychological Press rather than at *Trykkefrihedsselskabets
Bibliotek*. remains speculative. Even though psychologists as a profession is a long way
from the 1968 heydays of left wing engagement in society, I hope that it has not come to
it being professionally more creditable for a psychologist to be published by anti-
Muslims and members of *Dansk Folkeparti*.

A reasonable explanation to the bizarre linking of a self-professed humanitarian
psychologically professional book and a radical nationalistic enterprise might be that the
book fails to meet the minimum requirements and standards for psychologically
professional texts. And that the academic publishers therefore have refused the book,
with the towers of the WTC on the cover.

In the periodical of the Psychologists Association however, the book has been
purged and has been praised as professional literature by the reviewer, seemingly a
psychologist ideologically sceptical towards Muslims. Other than this, there has been
little debate regarding what is obviously a controversial book from a psychologically
professional perspective.

A few prominent psychologists have informally shared their indignation with me,
but they have not wished to make the Sennels-case an ethical matter in their union.
Further a psychologist who I do not know personally, sent me an email, that convincingly
presented this psychologist's professional experiences with the very target group of
youths that Sennels is writing about. The person in question, who I have not been able to
persuade to come forward. has conducted psychological research and conversations with
Danish youths as well as youths of a different origin in juvenile detention facilities over
he course of nine years. In the email he can “vehemently deny Nicolai Sennels written
and oral claims of the youths having any so-called Muslim foundation for their criminal
activities.” And further that said psychologist in but one study has been able to trace any
fundamental “Muslim” tendencies. “The causes, based on my individual studies, appears
to be multi factored” the psychologist concludes.

Since no psychologists apparently bother defending the integrity of their
profession, I have decided to lend myself to the task. This review is attached to the
complaint I have addressed to the board of the Danish Psychologists Association, in order

¹ Translated from the Danish “ord-salat”. A psychological term referring to the
incoherent ramblings of a patient

to get them to have the case of Nicolai Sennels tried by the Committee on Ethics of the association. My attitude has nothing to do with Sennels' political affiliations – they are his to have (in this regard I consider Sennels to be in roughly the same league as the Nazi Johnny Hansen). My complaint to the Danish Psychologists Association is solely about Sennels' abuse of his position, as was the case when he was fired/resigned from his position with the City of Copenhagen. The youths who have been to his therapy room have never been duly informed about participating in a veiled study of the cultural and religious backgrounds of their families – let alone given their consent to this.

The complaint is thus about the fact that Nicolai Sennels has failed to respect the rights, the dignity and the personal integrity of his clients, in the uneven power structure that is the relationship between psychologist and client. Not only has he omitted that his professional knowledge is being used in a way that abuse, exploit and suppress the youths in a social context. He has himself promoted the use of his psychological research and knowledge to the political disadvantage of the youths, including harsher methods and punishments, because this according to his studies is more suitable to the culture of the youths.

The second point of my complaint to the Danish Psychologists Association relates to the professional negligence that is Sennels' failure to substantiate his psychologically professional initiatives and the deficiencies of his research criteria as well as his completely inadequate theoretical and methodical deliberations, which have caused the youths to be viewed solely in the light of the cultural and religious backgrounds of their parents (without Sennels examining this empirically, as he has never been in contact with the families of the youths). The studies that are drawn on for the cultural essentialism are almost exclusively second hand references from newspapers (all of 11 from *Jyllandsposten*).

While this simultaneous review and complaint was written, the image of a continuously outraged Pia Kjærsgaard – sullen used to be the term – appeared on my flat screen TV. A so-called *Burqa Report* produced by a religious-sociological university institute had not nearly discovered the number burqa-clad women that party leader Pia Kjærsgaard needed politically. The same Kjærsgaard who in relation to the internationally acknowledged criminologist Fleming Balvig once stated that you can tell that he underestimates the scale of crime just by looking out the window. The same Kjærsgaard who ten years ago thought Dominique Bouchet to be a wise man for giving a derogative presentation of the “arab boys” of Odense, the party leader who holds Nicolai Sennels as her favourite and partisan psychologist, indeed, this very woman and politician has now entered the field of methodological critique. Pia Kjærsgaard thus dismisses the *Burqa Report* because “the use of sources is appalling”.

This is very possible and further more a completely sober agenda. The odd thing is however that critique of neither methodology nor sources applies to the studies that can promote *Dansk Folkepartis* xenophobic and Islam phobic policies.

While covered-up Muslim women must be as plentiful and covered as possible, the young boys of Muslim parents must be portrayed as if they have brought their machismo and their violence to Copenhagen from the Middle East and other Muslim provinces. Muslim-Arab import of violence!

In the book "No Life – respekt og drengeszoner" the social anthropologist Kirsten Hviid gives a thorough and identifiable portrayal of youths of immigrant background, whom she mixed with and studied in the late 90's until 2002 of a northern Zealandic housing project and the local youth clubs designed to prevent youth crimes and gang formations.

While the Muslim cultural background is virtually non-existent in the shared destinies of these juvenile delinquents (many of whom have been to juvenile detention facilities as well as prison) American-style subculture is abundant.

According to this social anthropological study the youths are attempting to master their confusion regarding identity by symbolical identification with the American gangster and hip-hop cultures (as opposed to the integrated "docile" youths in the same area who have established an identity of Turkic-Muslim second generation immigrants).

I am not out to start a "blame game" but it is baffling to see how one-sidedly Nicolai Sennels blames Muslim culture for being a violent culture, while our American Rambo friends escapes unscathed. Kirsten Hviid takes readings of the gangster and hip-hop culture of Turkic-Danish youths through their street wear, their use of hoodies, their skater pants, gang logos, their reversed baseball caps, their affection for large tinted cars, their street lingo, their graffiti, their use of Tupac etc.