

“Together across borders” and “Reunification”. Two buzzwords between German-Danish Friendship Year and Covid 19 Pandemic 2020

#### Bakgrund/Frågeställning

The year 2020 will be remembered as the Covid year. In addition to the worldwide individual and social burdens, the border regions were particularly affected by border closures and different ways of dealing with the virus. In the German-Danish case, however, “2020” should mark something quite different: The border anniversary of 1920.

In the preparation, a multitude of committees created events north and south of the border, but they did not have a common language for the anniversary. What is “Genforeningen” in Denmark, Germany cannot call “reunification”. The national minorities, that emerged from the border demarcation, also had to find their language for the historical event. That is why they celebrated their 100th birthdays, the state of Schleswig-Holstein promoted the slogan “Together across Borders”, Denmark worked with “Genforeningen”, and the first Cultural German-Danish Year of Friendship was proclaimed at the national level. Especially south of the border, “Together across borders” was intended to make the border visibly invisible and to celebrate the common region. In early 2020 several events took place, but in the background, the pandemic already became the main actor. On the 100th anniversary of the second referendum in Schleswig, exactly on 14 March 2020, Denmark closed its borders, followed a few days later by Germany. The inhabitants of the border region were surprised by decrees from Copenhagen and Berlin, and only in the second lockdown in autumn there were special rules for the border region. In the summer of 2021, parts of the anniversary events were caught up, and Denmark in particular tried to convey the original image of “Genforeningen”. Even though there are many pictures of waving personalities and colorful flags, “2020” was not a year of the open region, but closed barriers.

In my lecture, I would like to use the example of the border anniversary to show the significance of buzzwords and political decisions for the German-Danish relationship. For many Germans, Denmark is considered the “gateway to Scandinavia”, and the consistently enforced entry restrictions were discussed in all German media. Despite the rhetorical emphasis on the model border region, the word from Copenhagen prevailed, and Danish border controls still speak a different language than the symbolic “Together across Borders” sold with great success. 2020 therefore serves as a wake-up signal that the border region has long lived as something unique - which perhaps must gradually be perceived as such from the capitals.

#### Metod och Resultat

#### Konklusion