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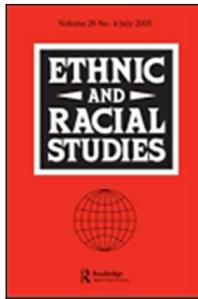
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Denmark between liberalism and nationalism

Per Mouritsen and Tore Vincents Olsen

Abstract

What explains the restrictive turn towards immigrants in European countries like Denmark? Are countries returning to nationalism, or are they following a general European trend towards a perfectionist, even 'repressive' liberalism that seeks to create 'liberal people' out of immigrants? Recent developments in Danish policies of integration and citizenship, education and anti-discrimination suggest a combination of these two diagnoses. The current Danish 'integration philosophy' leaves behind a previous concern with private choice and equal rights and opportunities to emphasize other historical elements, especially the duty to participate in upholding democracy and the egalitarian welfare community, and to promote autonomous and secular ways of life. However, the virtues of this 'egalitarian republicanism' are seen by right-of-centre intellectuals and politicians as rooted in a wider Christian national culture that immigrants must acquire in order to become full citizens.

Key words: citizenship, Denmark, immigration, integration, liberalism, nationalism

Introduction

Denmark was once known as a liberal Scandinavian country, tolerant towards alternative lifestyles. It was the first to legalize pornography and recognize gay marriages. Its 1983 immigration law was one of the most liberal in the world at the time, giving legal right to asylum and family reunification. Immigrants enjoyed the full rights of the welfare state and could vote in

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3 local elections after three years of residence. While minority practices conflicting with Danish
4 laws were not accepted, immigrants had equal rights to make choices about their private lives.
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6 A degree of paternalism towards 'alien' cultures was paired with a principled tolerance that
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8 politicians wanted to nurture among the electorate. Using the 'immigrant question' for party
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10 political purposes was considered illegitimate. Perhaps for this reason or out of genuine con-
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12 viction, some politicians vaguely noted the benefits of cultural diversity, though without argu-
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14 ing for multicultural policies like those in Sweden and the Netherlands; though native-
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16 language instruction in public schools, a long-established faith school tradition, and subsidies
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18 to immigrants' associations might be seen as gestures in this direction. Most Danes were gen-
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20 erally tolerant towards immigrants and supportive of their equal rights, though sceptical to-
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22 wards any idea of multiculturalism (Togeby 1998).
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30 In the late 1990s and especially after the 2001 election, things changed. The 'immi-
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32 grant question' now topped the agenda, and parties competed at being tough on immigration;
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34 the Danish People's Party (DPP) won. As the third-largest party after the 2001 election, it
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36 became the stable parliamentary support for the new liberal-conservative minority govern-
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38 ment. In a series of steps, all forms of immigration were restricted as much as possible and
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40 onerous obligations were placed on immigrants to adopt Danish values in order to remain in
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42 the country and obtain permanent residence and citizenship. Social rights of immigrants were
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44 reduced in order to scare off 'welfare refugees' and to induce 'self-reliance' among those who
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46 did come. Islam and Muslims are now the main Other of Danish democracy and society.
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51 What happened?
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54 There are two competing explanations of what is happening in European countries like
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56 Denmark. One is that 'national identities in Europe (...) remain (...) blood-and-soil based,
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58 accessible only to those ethnic groups who initially populated the country' (Fukuyama 2006,
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60 p. 14). Denmark simply became very nationalistic and left its liberal traditions behind (Hervik

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3 2006). The other, by contrast, is that European countries are converging on a liberal paradigm
4 for integration. However, this is a 'tough' form of liberalism, which is perfectionist, even re-
5 pressive in its ambition to create liberal people out of third-world Muslim immigrants (Joppke
6 1998, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). Here, the restrictive turn in European immigration and integra-
7 tion policies does not reflect the old-style nationalism assumed to have prevailed before (Jop-
8 pke 2008).

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18 In this article, we want to show through a detailed study of Denmark that these expla-
19 nations need to be modified, or in a sense combined. In the Danish case, both tendencies are
20 simultaneously visible. On one hand, the national integration philosophy is moving towards a
21 civic perfectionism that promotes not only liberal character-building, but a society of equal
22 social and democratic participation, ideals which are in fact more republican than liberal. This
23 shift leads away from a more classical liberal concern, prevalent in the eighties, for individual
24 rights, equal opportunities and state neutrality.

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34 On the other hand is a movement towards a reinvention of Danish national identity in
35 light of problems with immigration/integration. The two movements, moreover, are intimately
36 connected. Components of national identity defined in the recent perfectionist citizenship dis-
37 course have been presented as particularly constitutive of what is most valuable and distinct in
38 Danish national identity and 'culture' *and* as presupposing familiarity with and loyalty to-
39 wards a deeper Danish culture that includes language and history (Mouritsen 2006). This pro-
40 duces a particular Danish nationalism that is increasingly liberal and civic in terms of norma-
41 tive semantics, yet remains ethno-cultural in terms of membership and instrumental pursuit of
42 cohesion-as-homogeneity.

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The next section describes the movement over 30 years from a relatively liberal, even
vaguely difference-accommodating stance, towards the present policy of strict civic integra-
tion. Section 3 takes a step back. It details features of Danish political culture that originated

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3 with the emergence of the early modern state yet have been peculiarly re-politicized in the
4 contemporary 'tough' immigration and integration regime. This 'forward-to-the-past' selec-
5 tive rediscovery of a national tradition in the face of integration challenges is discussed in
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10 subsequent sections on citizenship acquisition and integration programmes, education policy,
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12 and anti-discrimination. In each area, transformations within and beyond 'liberalism', and
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14 towards a national-cultural framing of civic integration, are demonstrated. The conclusion
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16 revisits some conceptual ambiguities of both the nationalism and liberal-convergence theses
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18 that are illuminated by the case of Denmark.
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25 **Policy history: From human rights to fundamental values**

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27 Immigration and integration policies in Denmark since the late 1970s are marked by three
28 stages. The first is characterized by a concern for the human rights of immigrants. The next,
29 dominated by the larger number of immigrants (refugees) coming to the country in the 1980s,
30
31 briefly saw immigration and integration high on the agenda, with increasing emphasis on in-
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33 individual immigrants' obligation to make an effort to integrate into Danish society. The third
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35 stage from the late 1990s is characterized by a permanently high political saliency of the im-
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37 migrant question and by the notion that immigrants must be induced to acquire the 'funda-
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39 mental values' of Danish society.
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46 Like most West European countries, Denmark halted immigration completely in 1973,
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48 reversing the short trend of inviting guest workers from Turkey, Pakistan, Yugoslavia and
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50 Morocco in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Immigration did, however, continue for family
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52 reunifications and political refugees. Following Sweden, Denmark introduced local election
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54 rights for immigrants after three years of residence in 1981. In 1983, a new, very liberal im-
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56 migration law provided the legal status of *de facto* refugee and broad access to asylum and
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58 family reunification (Pedersen 1999). During the recession of the 1980s, 'guest workers' and
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3 their families enjoyed comprehensive social citizenship rights, reflecting a general principle
4 of welfare community inclusion. As the pinnacle, arguably, of internationalism and humani-
5 tarianism, and in line with notions of emerging post-national membership (Soysal 1994), the
6 immigration law expressed ‘the political will of the majority in the Danish Parliament to pri-
7 oritize the individual immigrant’s legal rights and legal certainty above the state’s ability to
8 decide who and how many could come to Denmark and stay’ (Hvenegaard-Lassen 2002, p.
9 157). The law created a consistent link between fighting for human rights ‘in the big world’
10 and not discriminating on the basis of nationality ‘here at home in our own house’ (Bjørn
11 Elmquist, Liberal Party, in Jensen 2008, p. 50)

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Already at its inception, there were concerns that Denmark would be receiving ‘fami-
lies with roots in cultures which deviate strongly from the Danish [culture],’ which would
‘lead to many tragedies for the families in question,’ as one conservative MP noted in an
early-1980s parliamentary debate (Hagen Hagensen, cited in Hvenegaard-Lassen 2002,
p.150). At the time, however, concerns were mainly focused on how immigrants might come
to live on ‘an equal footing,’ given the different ‘cultures’ they were assumed to maintain,
despite the fact that they were somewhat condescended to in society. High unemployment
rates, language barriers and low education levels were particularly painful issues.

With the arrival of refugees from the Iran-Iraq war and the civil wars of Sri Lanka and
Yugoslavia in the mid-1980s and early 1990s, and growing local concerns over residential
segregation and social problems, this perspective began to change. Government reports and
parliamentary debates showed a continuing emphasis on equal rights, but more weight was
placed on the duty of immigrants to make an effort to integrate and become economically
self-supporting. At the same time, positive concern for immigrants’ cultural backgrounds de-
clined significantly (Jørgensen 2006, pp. 239-242).

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3 By the mid-1990s, immigration/integration had become a very salient political issue.
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5 The Social Democratic government introduced the first ever ‘integration law’ in 1999, which
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7 aimed ‘to contribute to the newly arrived foreigner’s possibility for participating on an equal
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9 footing with other citizens (*‘borgere’*) in the political, economic, work-related, social, reli-
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11 gious and cultural life of society’; to induce economic self-reliance and to provide the ‘indi-
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13 vidual foreigner [with] an understanding of the fundamental values and norms of the Danish
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15 society’ (Integration Law, article 1). Alternative aims such as ensuring equal rights and op-
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17 portunities and promoting a society of mutual respect were deliberately excluded from the law
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19 (Hvenegaard-Lassen 2002, p. 251). Hence, it shifts the obligation to ‘integrate’ more one-
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21 sidedly to the immigrant, presents demands on immigrants as societal benevolence, and
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23 makes the language of ‘fundamental values’ explicit.
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30 With the law, three-year integration programmes became obligatory for obtaining
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32 permanent residency, and only people with permanent residency status were eligible to apply
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34 for family-reunification immigration of relatives. It also contained the first break with the
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36 principle of equal social rights, instituting a lower ‘introduction benefit’ for refugees and the
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38 possibility of repatriating welfare-dependent non-permanent residents. Tougher demands on
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40 refugees (including a duty to remain in a designated municipality for the first three years)
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42 were to help them to become whole persons, with the government offering ‘the possibility of
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44 retaining or regaining the self-esteem that is the basic condition of any human being’s life’
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46 (Bennedsen 1998, in Hvenegaard-Lassen 2002, p. 262). In 2000, restrictions on family reuni-
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48 fication followed (especially for people under 25) in order to improve integration, counteract
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50 forced marriages and reduce immigration.
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56 These changes finally reversed the liberal law of 1983. The state’s right to decide who
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58 and how many should enter was asserted against immigrant rights and legal security. The em-
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60 phasis had begun to shift from a liberalism of equal rights and opportunities towards the de-

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3 mand that immigrants become self-supporting, acquire (knowledge of) Danish values, and
4 participate in society—all for their own benefit.
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8 The rest is history. The Danish People's Party became the third-largest party in the
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10 2001 'immigration election' with twelve per cent of the vote, commencing its role as a stable
11 coalition partner of the new liberal-conservative minority government, its strategic position
12 keeping immigration issues on top of electoral agendas and impacting the (new) rightward
13 drift of Danish politics. While largely continuing along the now-established policy avenues,
14 the new coalition's main goal was to tighten not only immigration, but also access to citizen-
15 ship and permanent residency by steadily increasing conditions and regulations (Adamo 2008;
16 Lex, Lindekilde and Mouritsen 2007).
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27 The seismic shift in the overall Danish integration and immigration policy – from a
28 'soft' liberal equality-of-rights and (modest) room-for-diversity towards a stricter civic inte-
29 grationism – is visible especially in official civic integration and citizenship acquisition pro-
30 grammes, education policy, and anti-discrimination initiatives. Examining the details of these
31 policy fields and accompanying semantics, we find that the 'tough' Danish integrationism
32 does not merely represent a shift within 'liberalism', but also a turn towards a peculiarly cul-
33 turalised and national identity-infused citizenship approach. Moreover, this approach looks
34 backwards as much as forwards. Before looking at the policy areas, a brief historical detour is
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51 **Elements of a Danish philosophy of integration**

52 Danish conceptions of migration and cultural-religious diversity remain embedded within
53 discourses from the development of the nation-state (Hansen 2002, Mouritsen 2006), and in-
54 deed before (Korsgaard 2004). The heavy-handed Reformation (1536) created a *Christian*
55 people as the God-fearing household of the Christian king. Freedom of religion was realised
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3 in the 1849 constitution. However, the latter also instituted a state church,¹ significantly called
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5 ‘The People’s Church’ (*Folkekirken*), which retains membership of a large (non-believing and
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7 religiously inactive) majority and enjoys a privileged position in cultural life.
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11 Danish nationhood emerged as a dual development of territorial consolidation and
12
13 democratic reform. Following the very liberal and early (1849) constitution, a borderland war
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15 ended in military defeat in 1864, leaving a territorially reduced, almost one-language nation.
16
17 While all political forces in the conflict favoured constitutional rights and extensive (male)
18
19 democracy, they disagreed over the linguistic and territorial identity, but not the religion – of
20
21 the new democratic people. The ‘national liberals’ who thought that only Danish speakers
22
23 could be part of the nation (but that certain German-speaking territories were actually Danish
24
25 and their populations should learn Danish) prevailed over a ‘cosmopolitan’ position favouring
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27 a multi-lingual citizens’ nation. This led to the disastrous war with Germany. Much of con-
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29 temporary Danish historical narrative (Østergaard 1992) can be traced to the period that fol-
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31 lowed. Here, a rural-based, inward-looking national reawakening combined with this-worldly
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33 Lutheran spirituality and Herder-style romantic celebration of *Volksgeist*, language and heri-
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35 tage. It elevated the peasant virtues of a small and poor society and sought inward modernisa-
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37 tion through co-operative farm movements and popular folk high school education for the
38
39 young. This peculiar cultural-ethnic-civic mix in an emergent political-cultural vocabulary,
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41 often idealized by politicians and public intellectuals, is now recycled in debates on migration
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43 and integration.
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51 First, mastery and public (or even private) use of the *Danish language* remains a
52
53 strong parameter of national belonging both socially and legally, over and above ‘functional’
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55 considerations of public communication and labour-market flexibility. Secondly, the *small-*
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57 *ness, cultural homogeneity*, and tight-knit ‘cosiness’ of Danish society, which owes a great
58
59 deal to 20th-century homogenising processes through schools and monopoly TV, remains a
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3 staple of recent discourse on national *cohesion*, the valuation of sameness, and the mistrust of
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5 cultural pluralism *per se*. Thirdly, homogeneity and smallness tie in with *egalitarianism* and
6
7 *democracy*. Associated with the peasant movement, values of anti-authoritarianism and social
8
9 levelling became influential elements of public culture. These also entered the post-war con-
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11 struction of a civic nationalism of ‘conversational,’ ‘consensual,’ ‘co-operative’ or ‘way-of-
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13 life’ democracy (Koch 1945) and of comprehensive social and cultural equality (through so-
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15 cial informality, gender roles, child education); these are resurfacing in debates on the civic
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17 (in)capacity of newcomers. Fourth, and closely related, is pride in a *welfare society* (not state)
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19 in which solidarity is conditioned (if one is not sick, handicapped, retired or temporarily un-
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21 employed) on working and paying taxes.
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27 Finally, *Lutheranism* remains significant. The narrative of peasant liberation from the
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29 rural class society into status as peasant-citizens is one of spiritual *awakening*, manifested in
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31 farmers’ sons and daughters ‘lifting their eye from the plough to heaven’ (as they left home to
32
33 attend folk high school), and is associated with a more temporal Christianity (shaped most by
34
35 the priest, writer, and hymn author N.F.S. Grundtvig). In contrast to the emphasis on reason
36
37 and enlightenment in French nationalism, the Grundtvigian-Lutheran notion of awakening
38
39 stresses the individual as well as the collective, national *struggle*, and growth through such
40
41 struggle. This struggle, while spiritual, is linked to liberalism: ‘free-spiritedness’ (*frisind*)
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43 challenges citizens not only to ‘struggle for all that you hold dear’, but also to tolerate, with
44
45 both goodwill and confrontation, the beliefs of others. Liberty here becomes a deep public
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47 autonomy – which may have both spiritual and national content – rather than mere privacy
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49 and rights. Religion is today not a very explicit element of dominant Danish discourses on
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51 ‘who we are’ except within the far right and some influential elements of the governing Lib-
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53 eral Party. Yet, despite declining traditional religiosity, discourses of ‘cultural Christianity’
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55 and ‘Lutheran individualism’ have recycled some of the elements above in a manner placing
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3 Islam in an unfavourable light. These discourses present the ability to separate religion from
4 politics as *presupposing* the specifically Danish brand of Lutheranism (Mouritsen 2006).
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8 Each of these elements are constitutive of the new and still developing civic-
9
10 integrationist turn that characterises the present government's approach to a range of policy
11 areas, to which we now turn.
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15 16 17 **Creating good citizens**

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19 The 2001 Liberal-Conservative government initially followed the neo-liberal path in integra-
20 tion and immigration policy already laid out by its Social Democratic predecessor, further
21 undermining social citizenship, intensifying employment and education incentives, and fur-
22 ther restricting the entry of unprofitable immigrant segments. In 2002, the government rein-
23 troduced the lower 'introduction benefit' for new immigrants entering the introduction pro-
24 gramme as well as lower 'start-help' payments for those unemployed (including Danish citi-
25 zens) who had not spent 7 of the previous 8 years in Denmark. This was followed in 2005 by
26 a new labour market and education-oriented integration programme ('A New Chance for
27 All'). It also introduced 'integration contracts' to be signed by immigrants that specified in-
28 creased obligations (attending language school, active job-seeking) as conditions of financial
29 support, clearly signalling the Liberal-Conservative government's *quid pro quo* proven-
30 ability-to-contribute philosophy. The legal right to family reunification was also withdrawn,
31 and a controversial 24-year rule (requiring both the Danish-resident spouse and the new im-
32 migrant spouse to be at least 24 years old for residency to be granted) was introduced in order
33 to prevent forced (and arranged) marriages and to reduce numbers of immigrants from lower
34 socio-economic backgrounds.
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57 Beyond these measures of socio-economic integration, the key immigration-related
58 policy contribution of the Liberal-Conservative government – pushed by the Danish People's
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3 Party – is its *citizenship policies*. These are designed to pressure or motivate immigrants into
4 becoming model citizens *before* they achieve actual citizen status (naturalisation), and even
5 before they can earn the right to permanent residence. They also serve as civic screening and
6 exclusion devices: some people just cannot and should not become members. In 2006, the
7 government introduced mandatory declarations on ‘integration’ and ‘active citizenship in
8 Danish Society’ for applicants for family reunification and permanent residency respectively.
9 These affirmations of ‘Danish’ values (Lex, Lindekilde and Mouritsen 2007) lay out the con-
10 ditions of belonging to newcomers in a somewhat hectoring and, arguably, even insulting
11 manner. The 16-point ‘Declaration on Integration and Active Citizenship’ (Ministry of Inte-
12 gration 2010) makes explicit individuals and families’ responsibility to become self-
13 supporting and acquire knowledge of Danish language and society, including norms of gender
14 equality with the right and duty of both men and women to contribute to society through
15 work, education and paying taxes. The Declaration continues into the private realm of reflec-
16 tive autonomy and egalitarianism – highlighting sexual liberation, anti-authority and modern
17 families. It underlines the bans on domestic violence, physical punishment of children, female
18 circumcision and forced marriages, and emphasises the constitutionality of the right of ‘equal
19 opportunities for men and women’. It stresses equal parental responsibility of men and
20 women for their children and that all children ‘be given equal respect and self-expression – be
21 they boys or girls’. Reflecting the recent significant discursive shift, the Declaration is even
22 stronger on *active* and democratic citizenship, depicting societal activity and civic engage-
23 ment as starting in the responsible egalitarian family and extending outwards into the family-
24 and child-friendly micro public spheres (institutions and schools) of the welfare society. The
25 Declaration reminds newcomers that ‘men and women have an equal right to take part in de-
26 mocratic processes,’ and children must ‘grow up and become active and responsible citizens
27 who are capable of making their own decisions’.

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3 The symbolic civic screening and disciplining at work is reflected more broadly in the
4 cultural terms of political participation. This was evident – before, during, and after the car-
5 toons controversy – in disputes over proper conduct in societal debate, in which Muslims
6 have met a dual front *against* ‘religious arguments’ in politics and *for* a right to offend, which
7 may be interpreted (Meer and Mouritsen 2009) as a civic virtue of religious mockery, as re-
8 flected in Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen’s 2006 New Year’s speech to the country:
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11 In Denmark, we have a healthy tradition of putting critical questions to all au-
12 thorities, be they of a political or religious nature. We use humour. (...) and it is
13 this inclination to subject everything to critical debate that has led to progress in
14 our society. (...) That is why freedom of speech is so vital. And freedom of
15 speech is absolute. It is not negotiable. (Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen 2006)
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19 The symbolic screening and disciplining has also been seen in several controversies over
20 Muslim electoral candidates who have been asked to stand down after having made overly
21 complicated statements about *sharia*. Similarly, self-styled secular ‘democratic Muslims’
22 have been much more welcome in government ‘dialogue meetings’ than religious and devout
23 ones.
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27 Nonetheless, in light of the onus on democratic participation, including ‘regular’ elec-
28 toral activity, the difficulty of moving up from the school of democratic citizenship in the
29 integration process towards real citizenship remains striking. The criteria for gaining access to
30 citizenship were tightened in consecutive agreements between the DPP and the government in
31 2002, 2004, 2005 and 2008. They now include a residence requirement of nine years, a loy-
32 alty affirmation, a written citizenship test without any publicised questions that can be prac-
33 tised beforehand, a stiff language requirement (minimum grade D (ECTS) in a ‘level 3’ Dan-
34 ish test), and tough restrictions and waiting periods in case of previous welfare dependency,
35 public debts or criminal offences.
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3 The gradual, cumulative move of Danish integration policy and rhetoric from neo-
4 liberal emphasis on employability and self-support to one on liberal values and practice to a
5 focus on 'active' citizenship has been extended by pushing for integration into 'deep' national
6 culture, exclusive loyalty, and *ethnos*. The citizenship test includes trivia (football champion-
7 ships), high culture (painters, authors) and early national history (e.g., the introduction of
8 Christianity in Denmark). The language test also goes beyond tests of 'functional' compe-
9 tence with regard to labour-market and political participation and tests for a level of language
10 competence that many non-Western immigrants, especially the lower educated, will not be
11 able to reach. Most conspicuously, Denmark rejects dual citizenship, but provides special
12 fast-track naturalisation procedures for 'culturally close' applicants from Nordic countries and
13 northern Germany.
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29 As noted, this tightening owes a great deal to the DPP, who think that citizenship
30 should 'only be granted to those who belong to the Danish people' (Krarup, DPP, 2005).
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32 However, the idea that citizenship requires emotional attachment and is a very special 'prize'
33 at the end of a long road is much more widespread. The wait and the tests, it is argued, help
34 them to 'function better as citizens; it makes sure that they love Denmark and prefer Den-
35 mark' (Hvilshøj, Minister of Integration, 2007).
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44 The trouble is that the tests have become so difficult that a growing majority of other-
45 wise well-integrated, hardworking, and 'participating' immigrants – let alone the old, the sick,
46 the dyslexic, and the traumatised from torture – will *never* qualify for citizenship and the right
47 to choose their governors, let alone be elected to national office. Even more illuminating, in
48 March 2010, a new law further tightened rules on access to (and forfeit of) permanent resi-
49 dency along several factors, including the introduction of a required sustained course in Dan-
50 ish society, culture and history. Though it shortened the required minimum residence period
51 from seven years to four, it also introduced a point system whereby immigrants can earn per-
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manent residence only if they meet increased requirements of labour market activity and language test scores, with points added for active citizenship (i.e., voluntary work in schools and local associations), taking this most recent element of integration beyond the merely symbolic.

Here is the beginning of a new type of two-tier membership. A societal 'citizenship' is made available for those who can integrate well in terms of work, active participation, and significant cultural knowledge and adaptation. However, full citizenship and a Danish passport, including rights to fully participate politically, move freely across EU and other borders, and receive social transfers without implications for one's rights to remain, remain privileges for an even more select inner circle.

Integration through education

The field of primary and secondary education reflects a similar development from liberal laissez faire, with some minority-oriented policies like mother-tongue instruction and faith school rights, towards policies which see the school as a key vehicle of civic – and national – integration for immigrant children. Broadly speaking, while immigrant schooling was somewhat neglected until the late 1990s, the area is now a target of considerable administrative effort and financial resources. The key impetus for this policy reappraisal has been public alarm over the very low academic achievements and high drop-out rates of children of immigrants.

Observers have ascribed these problems to cultural and structural features of the Danish primary and lower-secondary education system (few daily lessons, informal teaching with unclear academic demands, over-reliance on parental assistance for homework, the absence of formal marking and exams, and few measurable teaching outcomes), which systematically handicap immigrant children as well as children from non-academic backgrounds generally. Some of these issues have been addressed by government initiatives, which are seriously in-

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3 tended and comprehensive by international standards. However, these initiatives also reflect
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5 the cultural and discursive boundaries of a particular Danish *take* on school integration, where
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7 the very real problems of academic underachievement invariably become linked to Danish
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9 language education as the high road to labour market integration. Moreover, government pol-
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11 icy shades into wishes for greater national cohesion and increasing worries over cultural and
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13 religious diversity, and – reflecting a broader association of integration problems with illiberal
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15 parallel societies (‘ghettos’) – ends up focussing on civic deficits and the dangers of radicali-
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22 It is the government’s aim to improve integration. There must be general
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24 support for the basic values in society, such as democracy and gender equal-
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26 ity. More immigrants must get a job, and young immigrants and second-
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28 generation immigrants must get an education to the same extent as Danish
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30 students; and we must put an end to the creation of ghettos. (Ministry of Inte-
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32 gration 2005, p. 5)
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39 Three parallel developments have highlighted the discursive and cultural boundaries of the
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41 Danish approach to education. First, the Danish educational system recognises only one form
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43 of diversity, namely bilingualism. Immigrant children are categorised as bilingual. Bilingual-
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45 ism, moreover, is treated entirely with a view to approaching a Danish normal standard of
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47 language proficiency *and*, through this, to acquiring norms and knowledge adequate for edu-
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49 cational success and market functionality: being bilingual is never recognised as either a so-
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51 cial asset or a legitimate parameter of (multi)cultural identity for the individual student. This
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53 has implied an increased emphasis on teaching Danish through obligatory language stimula-
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55 tion and screening at preschool level, targeted teaching of Danish as a second language, an
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57 improved focus in teacher training colleges on second-language teaching methods, the disper-
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3 sion of bilingual students ('bussing') to avoid segregated learning environments, and full-day
4 schools integrating the schoolday with after-school periods. At the same time, the government
5 removed state-supported mother-tongue language teaching in 2002, denying any pedagogical
6 connection between mother-tongue teaching and language acquisition in general. Indeed, it 'is
7 in conflict with the value foundation of the Danish school to teach in another language than
8 Danish' (Tørnæs, Minister of Education (2001-5), cited in Togeby et al. 2005), and 'it will
9 have the effect of a cultural cage which impedes integration' (Haarder, Minister of Education
10 (2005-2010), cited in Schmidt 2005).

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Second, changes have been made in the ideological foundations and the key curriculum of the primary school. The preamble of the primary school law has been changed to underline the need to 'prepare pupils for participation' (Law on Primary Schools 2006) in light of 'pressure from groups that have entered Danish society and that do not recognize or respect the basic values upon which the Danish society is built' (Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen 2004).

The shift towards 'medborgerskab' (responsible, active citizenship) and political literacy (distinct from the schools' traditional emphasis on learning democracy by practising deliberation, co-determination, group-work, and low power distance in the classroom), is also evident in the creation of citizenship studies within a new teacher college subject, and in the hotly debated issue of a state-sponsored *canon of democracy* of books and writings said to be foundational to Danish democracy. In each case, civics in schools is invariably conceptualised as a fixed body of values and outlooks, i.e. as *culture*.

The need to acquire Danish culture through the school is also evident from the conceptualisation of subjects such as Danish, history, and Christianity within the national cultural revival. The case of Christianity instruction is perhaps most telling. Traditionally taught in a non-preaching way and, for a long time, even as part of a broader 'Religion'

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3 curriculum, Christianity has become demonstrably reemphasised. The impetus is still *not*
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5 on faith teaching – hardly possible to children of non-believing parents and by teachers
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7 with little church background – but on Christianity, including Christian scripture, music
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9 and church liturgy, as foundational of Western and Danish *culture*. Here, there is also a
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11 tendency to conflate ‘religion’ with ‘culture’. A series of new official guidelines establish
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13 the semantic connections between ‘civic’, ‘cultural’ and ‘Christian spiritual’ in the field of
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15 educational integration. For instance, these guidelines note ‘the importance of the religious
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17 dimension for each person’s attitude to life and relationship to others, the importance of
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19 biblical narratives for the value foundations of our [sic] cultural sphere’, and, perhaps most
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21 noteworthy, the express ambition to link ‘questions and answers about life that are found in
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23 Christianity and other religions and outlooks’ to ‘giving pupils the foundations for personal
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25 autonomy (*stillingtagen*) and responsibility in a democratic society’ (Ministry of Education
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27 2009).

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34 A third and final, much politicised controversy in the field of education has concerned
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36 Muslim schools. Denmark has a long-standing tradition (since 1855) of private, self-
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38 governing independent schools, originally used by religious minorities and sects, but widen-
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40 ing during the 20th century to accommodate other political, pedagogical and parent group in-
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42 terests as well (substantial state subsidies render them affordable to most parents). The inten-
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44 tion of this Danish institution was never to celebrate the value of cultural or religious diversity
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46 *per se*, but to protect the rights to self-determination of individual, dissenting groups from the
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48 state. At the same time, it enabled the state to maintain a more national, unitary school. The
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50 schools are based on a principle of separation between ideologies (religion, opinion) and aca-
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52 demic practice. Nonetheless, as more and more Muslim schools have been created, the legiti-
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54 macy of this dimension of tolerated diversity has increasingly come under pressure. Some
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56 criticism (in some instances justified) of the schools relates to poor academic quality. How-
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ever, the main criticism is based on two concerns which testify to the civic-integrationist turn. One contends that the schools have not taught liberal values of freedom of speech, equality of the sexes and anti-authoritarianism, and that they might indeed be seedbeds of fundamentalism, or even terrorism. The other concern is that the schools themselves stand for cultural segregation and separatism. In light of this, state inspection of the schools has been reorganised and intensified, leading to the closure of a few. In addition, the law on independent schools was changed in 2002 to include a statement that they ‘shall prepare children to live in a society such as Denmark, which is based on liberty and democracy, and shall strengthen the pupil’s familiarity with and respect for fundamental human and rights and freedoms, including equality between the sexes’ (Law on Free Schools 2010).

Ironically, research indicates that students in Muslim independent schools do quite well and a great deal better than students of equally *de facto* segregated public schools in immigrant-dominated neighbourhoods (Ihle 2007). Indeed, concern over segregation, which also informs recent bussing initiatives in the major cities, appears rather one-sided in light of other tendencies towards segregation in which Danish middle-class parents create their own independent schools or opt out of their local public school in favour of a more ‘white’ school in the district.

Summing up, the discursive and cultural boundaries of the Danish approach to education are first of all seen in the lack of clarity in the extent to which the educational crisis has to do with ‘culture’ in the first place. Second, some in pedagogical circles recognise that cultural-civic integration might also include some measure of diversity accommodation/recognition in schools (beyond campaigns against racism), and that educational attainment, self-respect, and the well-being of immigrant children may even be enhanced by it, this does not extend to government offices. Again, within education a shift has occurred from a rights-based and vaguely difference-accommodating approach towards a focus on integration

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3 through acquisition of Danish language and civic values, including their historical and reli-
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5 gious-cultural roots.
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10 **Anti-discrimination policies**

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12 Anti-discrimination policy is the flipside of integration policy. It is the obligation that states
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14 take on to facilitate the integration efforts of immigrants (Council of the European Union
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16 2004, Joppke 2007a, p. 4). Contrary to most integration policy, anti-discrimination policy
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18 does not generally reflect perfectionist or civic liberalism, but is based on ideas of equal rights
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20 and opportunities and of neutrality between ‘conceptions of the good.’ Arguably, anti-
21
22 discrimination policies may have ‘multiculturalist effects’ because they presuppose and con-
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24 firm the existence of groups based on race, ethnicity, religion or nationality (Joppke 2007b, p.
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26 271). In Denmark, however, this is not the case. Here, anti-discrimination concerns equal
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28 treatment between individuals *irrespective* of race, ethnicity or religion. ‘Positive action’ to-
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30 wards minorities is generally only used to enhance employment skills relative to the majority
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32 population, not to further their rights and identity as groups. This highlights a Danish ten-
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34 dency to conflate ‘equal treatment’ with ‘the same treatment for all’. With ‘the same treat-
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36 ment,’ the liberalism of equal rights and opportunities moves towards (nationalist) perfection-
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38 ism: if you are treated like a Dane, you are treated equally.
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46 Danish anti-discrimination legislation has been sluggish and, until very recently,
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48 mostly driven by a need to comply with international or European conventions, signed in the
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50 belief that discrimination was a problem elsewhere (Justesen 2003). Domestically, the left has
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52 been somewhat more inclined to see discrimination as a problem and to use legislation to
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54 counter it. Nonetheless, the Danish left wing has been more concerned with ‘small racism’,
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56 i.e. prejudice and lack of sensitivity, than with ‘big racism’ based on explicit views and ideol-
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ogy; while the right has been increasingly dismissive of discrimination as a serious problem since the 1990s (Olsen 2008). Integration had to be given priority.

The last major reform of Danish anti-discrimination legislation in 2003/4 was based on the need to implement two EU directives from 2000. In the parliamentary implementation debate in 2003, the left applauded the proposed legislation for allowing minorities to participate in society and to 'live life like everybody else' (S.H. Andersen, Social Democratic Party, in Folketinget 2003), but criticised the government for not extending legislation to cover discrimination outside the labour market on grounds of religion, sexual orientation, and national origin, although this was not required in the directives. While citing, against this criticism, the principle of minimum implementation of EU directives (which in Denmark protects the traditional autonomy of social partners to regulate the labour market by voluntary agreements), the government also feared that legislation beyond the labour market might jeopardise the special status of the state church and the teaching of Christianity in public schools (B. Haarder, Minister of Integration, in Folketinget 2003), or the ability of independent schools to choose pupils on a religious basis.

Danish anti-discrimination efforts have been criticised for not giving sufficient institutional support to victims and to the investigation and reform of whole sectors, such as the housing sector (DIHR 2007). Lack of institutional support and knowledge about existing legislation may well explain the low number of legal discrimination cases. An example is the one case that made it to the Supreme Court. The Court found a supermarket's dismissal of a headscarf-wearing Muslim woman to be justified because it followed a clearly stated and consistently enforced dress code aiming at 'neutral appearance' towards customers. The verdict, which however predates implementation of the EU directives, suggests that Danish judges were simply unaware of how narrowly the 'objective grounds' criterion is construed in inter-

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3 national jurisprudence on indirect discrimination and reveals a tendency to conflate 'equal
4 treatment' with 'same treatment' and, hence, to assimilation (Roseberry 2004, p. 196).

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8 In the last years of the 2000s, the government has paid more attention to the anti-
9 discrimination issue, doubtless in part to improve Denmark's international image, but also out
10 of a domestic concerns over radicalisation of Muslim youth. In the 2007 government pro-
11 gramme, a new Equality Board was introduced aiming to strengthen the opportunity for filing
12 complaints about discrimination on all grounds. The board was a signal to ethnic and religious
13 minorities that Danish liberalism goes both ways: 'The Government wishes that, in Denmark,
14 together we support a society with the freedom to be different' (Danish Government 2007).

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18 However, at the discursive level, most attention has been paid to issues such as
19 whether state officials (judges) may wear Muslim headgear or whether niqabs and burkas
20 should be banned, also in private, because they represent non-autonomous choices by the
21 women wearing them. As a result, Muslim headgear was banned from Danish legal benches
22 in 2009, and in 2010, the government introduced a general policy against burkas and niqabs
23 among public employees even though only an estimated 200 people in Denmark wear such
24 outfits, with few of those, if any, in public employment.

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28 Beyond issues such as the religious neutrality of the courts and whether, e.g., school-
29 teachers can teach properly with their faces covered, the main concern with burkas is the con-
30 ception of women they entail: no one, it is argued, would freely choose to wear them. A ban
31 reinforces autonomy and polices the civic public realm against un-modern religions. Anti-
32 discrimination, here at least, stops where civic integration begins. More generally, anti-
33 discrimination policies reflect 'colour blind' and individualist conceptions of equal rights and
34 opportunities and are far from ideas of traditional liberal pluralism, let alone semi-
35 multicultural 'race relations' policies. Also, they reveal an assimilatory tendency to conflate
36 'equal treatment' with 'the same treatment.' Furthermore, in the public debate and at the sym-
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bolic level, the emphasis remains on integration and justified discrimination against conspicuously religious and ‘non-autonomous’ ways of life.

Conclusion: Danish civic integration between ‘liberalism’ and ‘nationalism’

This analysis of Danish integration and citizenship policies has been framed with normative concepts drawn from two competing diagnoses of liberalism and nationalism. The alternative liberal-convergence thesis stresses the convergence of European countries’ integration policies towards a liberal content. This is usually based on a perfectionist prioritising of individuals’ private and public autonomy rather than a *laissez-faire* liberalism that stresses state neutrality, negative freedom, and equal rights and opportunities. This perfectionism aims to create ‘liberal people’ and includes both ‘neo-liberal’ aspects of economic self-reliance and flexibility, and ‘political liberal’ aspects of reflective anti-authoritarianism and affirmation of liberal values.

This article has demonstrated how the emphasis of Danish integration and immigration policy has shifted from a liberalism of equal rights and opportunities, embedded in a political culture stressing social participation and private autonomy with some acknowledgment of the cultural differences and identities of immigrants, towards a more strident civic perfectionism. The latter places more emphasis on the duty of immigrants to (re)form themselves into autonomous and active citizens and to conform to an increasingly comprehensive set of public values, practices, and norms. Whereas the liberal-convergence thesis assumes a Germany-type movement from ethno-nationalism towards liberalism, the shift has been from one form of (benign and tolerant) liberalism, towards another, tougher one.

It is also not entirely the case – as implied in the convergence thesis – that Denmark increasingly mimics other nations’ liberal ways. Some cross-national policy learning (nationality tests, civics education) and conceptual diffusion (‘cohesion’, ‘active citizenship’) does

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3 occur, and the impact of supranational (EU) norms is increasing (notably with anti-
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5 discrimination). But the Danish 'model' persists, in the sense that policies and debates shift
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7 emphasis towards elements already present in the older national public philosophy and politi-
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9 cal culture, a particular tradition of egalitarian form-of-life democracy in a small, Lutheran,
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11 mono-cultural state (cp. Lex, Lindekilde and Mouritsen 2007).
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15 In short, the liberal-convergence thesis is only partly right: there is a movement to-
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17 wards perfectionism, but in the Danish case, this takes place within the national tradition.
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19 Moreover, the movement is not only nationally specific but also nationalist, or national-
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21 identity oriented. It reflects public perceptions of a superior national (even religious) history
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23 and civic tradition, and to perceptions of Islamic traditionalism as its default Other. As such,
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25 it bears the traits of a 'return-of-nationalism' and thereby also renders the nationalism thesis
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27 partly right. However, the normative content of this nationalism is predominantly civic, e.g.
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29 tied to pride in a particular form of small-scale democracy, egalitarianism and welfare society.
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31 Ethno-cultural elements (history knowledge, Christian heritage, perfect language proficiency,
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33 exclusive loyalty and emotional conversion) also play a role, particularly on the political far
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35 right, and are entwined in more civic semantics of nationhood.
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42 The article has thus demonstrated that the liberal-convergence and nationalism theses
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44 are both right and wrong. The case of Denmark shows that both need to be modified. Of
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46 course, at the analytical level, the difficulty is that liberalism and nationalism are not neces-
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48 sarily mutually exclusive categories, especially when the 'content' of a particular nationalism
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50 is civic and liberal. Furthermore, at the level of politics and policy, various conceptual ele-
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52 ments are usually combined such that making clear analytic distinctions is difficult. This
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54 raises methodological concerns about the use, scope, number and appropriateness of general
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56 categories in analyses such as the one carried out above. Here, we venture, first, that the new
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58 integration policy in Denmark is not really adequately described by the language of liberalism
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3 in the first place. It is better described as an egalitarian republicanism that incorporates ele-
4 ments from a perfectionist, autonomy-focused liberalism when it comes to the private and
5 intimate sphere. Newcomers must not only function in the labour market, affirm liberal val-
6 ues, and practise reflective autonomy; they must also contribute to civil society as active par-
7 ent-citizens and aim for the political maturity of ‘Danish democracy’ at all its societal levels –
8 characterised by anti-authoritarianism, irony, informal egalitarianism and conversational-
9 consensual decision-making.
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20 Second, we suggest that there may indeed be different national varieties of liberalism
21 and civicness – that there is considerable particularism in contemporary western universalism
22 when we move below the abstractions of the very grand concepts and look at institutions and
23 broader political anthropologies. Our analysis has demonstrated that, in Denmark, political
24 elites, with the Danish People’s Party constantly shaping the logic of the discourse, have had
25 little difficulty in welding together historical narratives that link national history with concep-
26 tions of liberal and democratic distinctness. These have all the hallmarks of nationalism, in-
27 cluding projections of superiority, a right to cultural self-maintenance, exclusive membership,
28 and a negative ‘Other’ to help define the national ‘Self’ while preventing it reflection and
29 self-doubt.
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7 1. Some politicians and clergy dislike the 'state church' label, citing the relatively decentral-
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9 ised and democratic governing of local parishes (hence 'People's Church'). However, it is a
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11 state church in terms of financing (state funds and a church tax), government (a minister for
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13 church affairs) and constitutional status.
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