

## **The historicity of (anti-)racism and the politics of integration in Denmark**

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The aim of this paper is to describe the various aspects of the history of (anti-)racism and the politics of integration in Denmark. The paper consists of two parts. The first part discusses the international literature on concepts of (anti-)racism, citizenship and tolerance. The next part focuses on (anti-)racism and Tolerance in the Danish context. The paper thus deals with the historicity of (anti-)racism and the politics of integration in Denmark from four angles:

- A discussion of international literature on the concepts of (anti-) racism, citizenship and tolerance
- An outline of a Danish grammar of diversity.
- An overview of concepts (vocabulary) of (anti-)racism and tolerance in Danish anti-discrimination politics, and a Danish grammar of diversity.
- A description of the historical roles of racism and tolerance in Denmark

### **PART I: THEORIES**

This overview explores the concepts of race, (anti-) racism, citizenship and tolerance from different theoretical perspectives. The presentation provides a historically informed understanding of the persistence and durability of racism in Western societies and focuses on themes such as the silencing of race and racism in contemporary Western societies, Islamophobia, and discriminatory discourses and practices. The presentation also discusses the aims and limits of tolerance, and examines how the concept is assigned meaning in different political, social and cultural contexts.

#### **1. Race and (anti-)racism**

##### *1.1. Racism as the exception and as a problem of extremist ideologies*

In the 2006 article "Racial Europeanization", David Theo Goldberg explores the concepts of race and racism in a European context by suggesting the concept of *racial Europeanization* as constituting regional (European) models or mappings of registered racisms linked to dominant state formations. The argument is that "race" and "racism" are not – as often claimed – non-existing, but deeply interwoven into Europe societies. "Race" is thus not only about ideas and understandings but about being in the world, a way of thinking and living, a disposition. The main question of concern is how Europe has been shaped as a specific region through race, emphasising regional and historical constructions of race and racisms.

Even though European countries differ in how race and racisms are expressed, Goldberg maintains the existence of basic similarities that forms this racial Europeanization. One of these similarities is that race and racism have been silenced since World War II, which – with the Nazi execution of Jews – in the European consciousness represents the (only) real manifestation of race. Anti-Semitism remains the mark and measure of racism, and Europe's colonial history dissipates and eventually disappears. Furthermore, racism is seen as the exception in European societies, the expression solely of the "extreme" right, loony extremists, individual or collective (p.353). In this way racism is buried, but "buried alive". Instead "tolerance" has taken over, but as essentially representing the tolerating actor's position of power (p. 338).

According to Goldberg, racial Europeanization represents a mix of institutional and individual racisms, and is sewn into the fabric of civil society (p. 354), which represents the prevailing site of "everyday racism". In contemporary Europe this is expressed in immigration laws, panic of terror and securitization, immigrants' lack of educational and employment opportunities (structural racism interpreted as social problems), etc. Barnor Hesse (2004) expresses a similar view in the article 'The Im/plausible deniability: racism's conceptual double bind', where he demonstrates how the dominating intellectual and political conception of 'racism' rest upon a model based on the Jewish experience. This leads to a 'racism as exception' approach, which simultaneously forecloses other experiences of and approaches to 'racism'. Thus experiences of, for instance, colonial inclusion, Orientalism and exoticism that are inassimilable or incomprehensible to the privileged paradigmatic experience, are foreclosed and silenced in majority discourse.

In his discussion of the concept of 'racism' Hesse proposes that in western critical intellectual thought the concept is characterized by a conceptual double bind, however with one understanding of 'racism' dominating the other. At the same

time the intellectual hegemonic heritage of racism as a concept has been surrounded by political silencing of other experiences and perceptions of 'racism' that have worked to secure the privileged coherence of the concept of racism (p.11). Hesse proposes two critical understandings of 'racism' (p.10):

1. 'Racism' as based in 'race thinking' as an ideological exceptionalism – the illustrative case being the Jewish experience in the Second World War Nazi death camps
2. 'Racism' as based in 'race relations' as colonial conventions – the illustrative case being how Western societies today are built on practices of racism that go back to colonial ways of governing

Thus, the main conflict inherent in the concept of racism, rest in the question whether 'racism' is to be understood as pathology, 'a profound moral deviation from the western liberal and democratic ethos and ethnos' (p.10) – or as a *political technology of empire* based on 'race' as an administrative and anthropological category developed since sixteenth century in European colonies such as the Americas, Africa, and Asia (p.13).

The dominating view among Western intellectuals and in Western politics of 'racism' has been that it is an exceptional ideology. In support of this view of racism as ideology, conceptual discrepancies have been silenced, in order not to threaten the privileged coherence of the concept (p.11). The article cites (from Todorov, 1993) five internal and linked propositions of 'racism' – accounting for how racism has been understood in political and intellectual discourse from the second half of the twentieth century onwards – demonstrating the undecidability of the concept:

1. The *existence of 'races'* – expresses the idea that there are such entities as physically constituted, self-evident 'races' distinguishing human groupings
2. *Continuity between physical and character* – suggests that ostensible physical differences determine cultural differences
3. The *action of the group on the individual* – contends that individual behaviour is a form of 'collective psychology', where individual acts are determined by racial belonging.
4. A *unique hierarchy of values* claims that not only do 'races' differ but some are superior to others based on a universal scale of values
5. *Knowledge-based politics* - gives social force to the other propositions: constitutes 'the need to embark upon a political course that brings the world into harmony with the description provided. Thus, the subordination of inferior

'races' or even their elimination can be justified by accumulating knowledge on the subject of 'race'.' (p.12)

Hesse states that the last proposition is in particular representational of the Jewish experience of discrimination and persecution in Nazi Germany. Further, he adds *practices of racism* as representational of the colonial experiences (still going on today both in the old colonies and in the west), e.g. racialized organisation, administration, segregation. 'Competencies of these forms of administration involve(d) the making and unmaking of 'race' as categories of cognition, organisation and prescription. This suggests that the historical emergence of 'race' through various administrations and governance took the form of a political-technological, if not ideological organisation (p.13). The double bind of the concept of 'racism' consists of:

- Revealing (nationalism) and concealing (liberalism)
- Foregrounding (sub-humanism) and foreclosing (non-Europeanism)
- Affirming (extremist ideology) and denying (routine governmentality).

In this double bind lies the paradox experienced by ex-slaves and Blacks currently living in liberal democratic societies (thus springing from the colonial experience): that of being *both* 'equal and inferior'. Moreover, the conceptual double bind of the concept of racism contains a Eurocentric system of representation, in the sense that the concept:

1. Privileges the European experience of 'racism': while the racism and genocide taking place under Nazi Germany wasn't very different from the violations and atrocities deployed, carried out and sanctioned under French and British colonial rule, only when Europe itself was the centre of these procedures, it was objectionable (and gave rise to a concept of 'racism', with the Jewish experience as paradigmatic of 'racism') (p.19).

2. Makes 'racism' stand in opposition to (rather than being constitutive of) western modern societies: 'the inheritance of the foregrounded Eurocentric concept of racism by western social scientists, educators, religious leaders and politicians has led to a particularistic marking of racism as morally, intrinsically indictable: an aberrant ideology affront the enduring ideals of Enlightenment and the values of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The formulation of a Eurocentric concept of racism symbolises not so much the philosophical failures of modernity, but the fascist undermining of the west.' But, Hesse underlines: if the modern state is a racial state (Goldberg, 2002), then racism has a much more

conventional polity design, in terms of practices, relations and institutions that the Eurocentric concept is capable of revealing.

Hesse invites to a continuing dialogue between two understandings of 'racism' (the Nazi-exceptional – the colonial-conventional). A central question is why we keep ('why scenarios western political regulation, marked by European and North American technologies of 'race oblige us to') conceptualizing contemporary practices of racism in the intellectual *history of racialised ideologies* rather than the *colonial genealogy of racialised governmentalities* (p24).

## **2. "Islamophobia" and racism**

In the article "Refutations of racism in the 'Muslim Question'", Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood (2009), elaborates over the concept of "Islamophobia" in relation to the concept of racism. The article also discusses the role of written and broadcast media in conveying stereotypical ideas of Islam and Muslims – and how the media in some cases seek to break down such stereotypes. Meer and Modood's reflections over the concept of racism mainly include reflections over how we should *prevent* understanding the concept:

we should guard against the characterization of racism as a form of 'inheritism' or 'biological determinism', which leaves little space to conceive the ways in which cultural racism draws on physical appearance as one marker, among others, but is not solely premised on concepts of biology in a way that ignores religion, culture and so forth. (2009: 344)

Historically, there may even – as Modood illustrates by referring to his historical account of anti-Semitism (p. 343) – be a historical link between previous forms of cultural and religious prejudice and discrimination and later days' racism.

The concept of Islamophobia gained political prominence with the UK report entitled *Islamophobia: A Challenge to Us All* (1997). It was defined as "an unfounded hostility towards Islam, and therefore fear or dislike of all or most Muslims" (p.340). More specifically, the report defines Islamophobia according to eight statements:

1. Islam is seen as a monolithic block, static and unresponsive to change
2. Islam is seen as a separate and 'other'
3. Islam is seen as inferior to the West
4. Islam is seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism and engaged in a 'clash of civilizations'
5. Islam is seen as a political ideology and is used for political or military advantage
6. Criticism made of the West by Islam are rejected out of hand

7. Hostility of Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society
8. Anti-Muslim hostility is seen as natural and normal

Modood and Meer's article adds dimensions to the understanding of Islamophobia by pointing out our need to analyse how concepts function rather than spending too much time deconstructing them (p. 340). In terms of the *function* and social situatedness of Islamophobia the article points out that racism against Muslims is based on an understanding that such acts are valid since:

1. Choice of religion is based on choice whereas race is not
2. Religion is frowned upon by contemporary intelligentsia
3. While ethnic minorities are welcomed in public spaces, there is more unease about religious minorities
4. Some find it difficult to sympathize with a minority perceived as disloyal or associated with terrorism (e.g. validated according to events such as 9/11 and 7/7).

### *2.1. Citizenship and the construction of excluding categories*

A central theme across most of the articles is how lines are drawn between "us" and "them" within nation states and within the borders of Europe. Categories such as "immigrants" or "foreigners", applied within both research and politics, constantly claim that we are not all the same. They denote the absence of the attribute – never made explicit, though – that makes an individual a "true national", and thereby demarcate who belongs and who does not. While the pretended visibility of "the foreigner" is constantly emphasised and problematized, the racial and cultural traits of the "true nationals" remain invisible (Balibar, 1991:60). Some of the categories of demarcation, which are depicted in the literature, are: Europeans and non-Europeans, liberal and fundamentalist, Muslims and Christians, nationals and immigrants, the civilized and the baric etc.

One example of how lines are drawn in today's society is given by Meer & Modood in their description of how Muslim people are looked upon as disloyal and how Islam is categorized as separate and 'other', inferior to the West, aggressive, violent etc. Another example can be found in the article by Brown, who argues that in the United States the domestic and the international tolerance discourse becomes more and more the same, designating certain beliefs and practices as civilized and others as barbaric. Goldberg offers a third example, arguing that race serves as a borderline demarcating who belongs or does not belong to a community. The border line is

invisible and inscribed in the formal relations of power, in educational standards, in citizenship requirements etc. As a consequence slaves, Jews, Muslims, people who are not “white and Christian” tend to be associated with conceptions of “beastliness,” and with actions of denial, exclusion, and annihilation.

At the European level new borders are rising between members and non-members, Europeans and non-Europeans. According to Étienne Balibar (2003) this results in a new mass of second-class citizens, who is discriminated against on basis of their nationality and are deprived of fundamental human rights. In the collected works *We, the People of Europe? – Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, he discusses the challenges and opportunities associated with the ongoing redefinition of borders, sovereignty, citizenship, and community within the European Union. He argues that the term “border” is undergoing a profound change in meaning and function in the western world, which requires a redefinition of terms like “citizenship”, “sovereignty”, and “community”.

Balibar fears that the efforts to develop a common European border, identity, and citizenship will lead to a “European apartheid”, where “new Europeans” are dissociated from the “actual” European population. What is happening concurrently with the abolishment of internal borders between member states is an intensification of external border controls and surveillance policies directed at the immigrant population. This new form of “apartheid” creates a massive division between the rights granted to nationals of member countries and those of non-member countries, who are included economically, but are excluded politically.

Therefore, Balibar proposes a redefinition of the term “citizenship” at the European level, so it becomes open and inclusive to immigrants. He introduces the concept ‘Droit de cité’, which he defines as: “a right of entry and residency of foreigners and, in particular, of ‘immigrants’, in the diversity of collective situations and individual trajectories covered by this term” (p.47). ‘Droit de cité’ is an intermediate stage before full citizenship status. It is a shared construction of citizenship by the diverse habitants of Europe, where the historic relation between territory and population is abolished.

For Balibar the formation of the European Union contains both possibilities and dangers, and he identifies two contradictory tendencies. One is the possibility of an exclusive “Fortress Europe”, and the other is the possibility of reinventing the very idea of sovereignty, citizenship, and political belonging.

### **3. Tolerance**

Tolerance has become a central concept in an increasingly diversified and globalized world, where liberal democracies are forced to come up with answers to the question of

how to deal with differences in culture, traditions, beliefs, religion etc. But what does tolerance really mean? Is the concept always used to protect the weak and those in an exposed position? And how wide should the scope of tolerance be?

### *3.1. Tolerance as a political discourse and practice*

In her book *Regulating Aversion. Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (2006), Wendy Brown discusses the concept of tolerance and proposes an understanding of tolerance as a political discourse and practice. A discourse, both producing and positioning subjects, she claims, is context specific and creates boundaries between “them” and “us” through practices of inclusion and exclusion. The central question posed by Brown is “What kind of political discourse, with what social and political effects, is contemporary tolerance talk in the United States?” (p.4).

Brown depicts a tendency to depoliticize the concept of tolerance, thereby detaching it from its historical emergence and the powers that produce and contour it. As a consequence it is frequently understood as a transcendent and universal concept or principle, which is shared across cultures and societies. However, Brown proposes a different understanding, which appreciates tolerance as protean in meaning, and historically and politically discursive in character (p.4-5). Furthermore, she argues that tolerance as a political discourse has significant cultural, social and political effect that exceeds its surface operations of reducing conflict or protecting the weak and minoritized. One example hereof is how the event of September 11 by political actors has been used to mark an opposition between liberal and fundamentalist orders and to legitimate Western cultural and political imperialism. While such actors associate Western societies with concepts of tolerance and the tolerable, they describe non-liberal societies and practices as fundamentalist, intolerant, and barbaric (p.6-7).

This demarcation are confirmed and reinforced by a culturalization of politics. Such discourses claim that every culture is defined by a tangible essence: politics is explained as a consequence of that essence. As a result culture is summoned to explain the motives and aspirations leading to certain conflicts, and a division is made between those who are said to be ruled by culture (non-liberal societies) and those who are said to rule themselves, but enjoy culture (the West) (p.19-20).

Brown argues that in the United States the domestic and the international tolerance discourse becomes more and more the same, designating certain beliefs and practices as civilized and others as barbaric. Domestically, in the United States, tolerance becomes a mode of incorporating and regulating the presence of the threatening “other” within: What is tolerated remains distinct even as it is incorporated –



the tolerated can never become one with the host, and therefore remains a threat. Tolerated individuals will always be those who deviate from the norm, never those who uphold it, but they will also be further articulated as deviant individuals through the very discourse of tolerance (p.28, 44).

Brown does not negate the worth of tolerance in reducing violence or developing civic cohabitation, but contests the way the concept has been depoliticized and used by Western societies to mark oppositions and to legitimate Western cultural and political imperialism.

### *3.2. The aims and limits of tolerance*

In the article from 2000, "The End of Tolerance: Engaging Cultural Differences" Richard Sweder, Martha Minow and Hazel Rose Marcus focus on the ends and aims of tolerance, and on how free the exercise of culture is and ought to be in liberal democracies. They are particularly interested in the role played by constitutional and legal frameworks in the ongoing struggles over cultural differences.

The authors claim that struggles are taking place in all nation states between different ethnic groups and between different cultures, religions and traditions. What becomes identified as unacceptable group practices may vary over time and from nation to nation, but some familiar sites of cultural collision over difference are: women's status, clothing, and scope of options and treatment of children. The question posed by the authors is, how much government agents can or should intervene in such issues? (p.2-3).

Another core issue is how liberal democracies deal with the clash between individual and group rights. According to the authors this depends on the particular history of prior struggles over racial and religious diversity within each nation, since these struggles set the legal and political framework for responses to current immigrants (p.9). Depending on the specific history of each nation it might be more or less open to and supportive of group based rights. At the two extremes we find the liberal individualist approach and the communitarian approach, whose adherents have different opinions on, whether people should have distinct legal status based on their membership in particular groups or not. In the liberal individualistic view any affiliation with a religious or ethnic group is seen as a voluntary choice by an individual, and no exemption or accommodation should be granted due to religious or ethnic membership unless the same goes for any other type of group. The communitarians on the other hand share the view that society is composed of not only distinct individuals but also social and ethnic groups, whose cultural traditions and religion is best preserved and protected through group rights (p.9).

The authors argue that the constitutional and legal frameworks play an important role in the ongoing struggles over cultural differences. Not only do these frameworks affect the room available for expressing and maintaining cultural differences, they also arrange how conflicts between mainstream and minority groups will be identified, addressed, and resolved. Therefore, another core discussion concerns the relationship between formal laws (domestic as well as international) and customary practices, and a central question is: How much room should be left, officially or unofficially, for the operation of customary practices? (p.11-12).

## **PART II: (ANTI-)RACISM AND TOLERANCE IN A DANISH CONTEXT**

In this part we present an outline of (anti-)racism and tolerance in Denmark. First, we explore Danish grammars of diversity, looking specifically at the public discourses and practices of ethnicity and religion. Then, we discuss the vocabulary of (anti-)racism and tolerance in a Danish context. We will look at anti-discrimination politics at the national and local level, and identify some core concepts in the legal and political terminology, when determining discriminatory and anti-discriminatory actions. Finally, we look at the historical processes of immigration and give some examples of early racism and tolerance. In conclusion, we will point out some relevant focus areas for the study of (anti-)racism and tolerance in Denmark.

### **1. Danish grammars of diversity**

Various actors in Danish public debate tend to describe Denmark as an old and culturally homogeneous nation state. Taking this image at face value, Danish public debate often negates the existence of cultural diversity. Denmark takes a position of colour-blind liberal tolerance in relation to the question of cultural diversity and equal treatment (*ligebehandling*), which includes measures against explicit discrimination i.e. through legislation against discrimination. This position is based on safeguarding rights to participate in Danish society's social, economical and political programmes and activities, guaranteed by anti-discrimination laws. It furthermore ensures rights to free exercise of one's own cultural practices, and the right to practices of collective symbols. Cultural diversity is not directly related to particular cultural rights; yet, cultural diversity is protected against discrimination in a broad sense (Mouritzen, 2006b). Immigrants' cultural rights are furthermore indirectly encouraged by Danish rules. For instance, the 1855 rules for private free schools (*friskoler*) supported by public means

have been taken into use to found Muslim free-schools, which numbered 19 in 2006, the highest number in Europe (Borchgrevink, 1999). In that sense, Denmark has to a certain extent facilitated poly-ethnic rights (Kymlica, 1995), although this circumstance was reduced by the legislation of 2002 where various areas of integration policy were regulated (Togeby, 2003: 57). The notion of equality is strongly reflected in the policies on immigration and integration as regards rights to participate in the political process, to form associations and institutions such as private free schools. These universal rights thus tend to produce rights to particular cultural practices at the private level.

Notions of equality, of having equal possibilities and rights, tend to permeate Danish culture and society. Civil culture expressed in a nation's pattern of relating to foreigners (Schiffauer, 1998) is in Denmark associated with equality in the sense of sameness as "imagined" (Gullestad, 2002; Jöhnke, 2007). Notion of equality and sameness indicate uneasiness with difference and disagreement (Salamon, 1992; Knudsen, 1996), e.g. with people who have different cultural backgrounds. This is among other things manifested in a tension between universal ideas about equality – that we are all equal – and the recognition of cultural differences, i.e. a tendency to treat everybody alike despite cultural differences. **The insistence on sameness connects to tolerance and secrecy**, e.g. in relation to foreigners who are not told about the rules for Danish life conduct which result in polite reluctance to inform them or correct their "wrong practices" (Knudsen, 1992). Likewise, a particular universalism characterises Danish civil culture (Mouritzen, 2006a), representing a discourse on universal liberal values and citizenship that in theory serve to include foreigners into Danish society but which in practice tends to have the opposite excluding results.

**The Danish model for relating to cultural diversity constitutes a certain paradox between on the one hand multicultural optimism, and on the other assimilation** (EUCM/SORA; Jensen 2009; Jensen, forthcoming). While there is a general public discourse that praises cultural diversity, in practice the room for difference is very limited, and debates on immigration and integration emphasise assimilation, i.e. that foreigners should become like us if they want to settle in Danish society (Hedetoft, 2004; Mouritzen, 2006a; Jensen, 2009). While the Danish policies on immigration and integration emphasise the necessity of being open to other cultures, it does not maintain that all cultures are equal; openness is on "our side" (Mouritzen, 2006a: 73).

Two dominant grammars of identity based on the relationship between "Us" and "Them" (Baumann, 2004) characterize cultural diversity in Denmark. One grammar indicates distance, opposition and polarization between "Us" and "Them". Another grammar indicates encompassment, or hierarchical subjection related to the

idea of assimilation, expressing that “They” should become like “Us” (Jensen, forthcoming; Sjørnslev, 2004).

### *1.1. Ethnicity*

Public debates formulate immigration as “external shock” to Danish identity (Hedetoft, 2006). **Heterogeneity, as represented by immigrants, tends to be seen as a threat to “social cohesion” and welfare within the Danish nation state.** The vocabulary used for immigrants often defines foreigners as people who do not belong. This is reflected in **the term “guest-worker” used for the wave of non-Western immigrants that arrived in the late 1960s.** This term – less common nowadays – expressed guest-host relations and, moreover, immigration as interim. The difficult acceptance of immigrants into Danish society is particularly expressed in the terms “second or third generation immigrants,” which is used for the children and grand children of immigrants. Besides, a tendency prevail to use terms such as “immigrants” (*indvandrere*), “foreigners” (*udlændinge*), “Pakistani” etc., for people who are Danish citizens and/or have lived most of their lives in Denmark. In using such terms a clear line is drawn between those who are conceived as “true Danes” and those who are not. Other prevalent expressions for relations between “Us” and “Them” is **the distinction between “Danes” and “Muslims”, in which the category of Muslim include all immigrants and become a marker for people who are not considered Danish.**

### *1.2. Religion*

From the outset, the Danish state formulated religious tolerance toward minority groups as a pragmatic device for attracting foreign immigration. The constitution of 1849 proclaimed freedom of faith, with the shift from a state church to a national church, referred to as ‘the People’s Church’ (*Folkekirken*) administered by the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs. The constitution ensures full freedom of faith while simultaneously emphasizing that ‘the Evangelical- Lutheran Church is the People’s Church (representing some 83 percent of the Danish population), and is as such supported by the state’ (*The Constitution* §4; my translation); in this sense, church and state are not separated. Denmark has freedom of faith, but not equality of faith. Different religious communities do not have the same legal rights. They are requested to undergo a process of approval, and are distinguished as either ‘acknowledged’ or ‘approved’ communities of belief. The acknowledged communities were until 1970 defined by royal resolution, with the rights of full civil validity of rituals. The only acknowledged non-Christian community today is the Jewish ‘Mosaic belief society’ (*Mosaisk Trossamfund*). No other belief society has been acknowledged since 1970,

when the procedure of approval changed from royal resolution to the provisions in the Act of Matrimony. Instead, the term `approved religious community´ is used, though in relation only to the individual religious leader, who is entitled to perform the ritual of marriage with civil validity. Approved communities represent other minor Christian denominations, Hinduism, and Islam. In the Danish religious field, Muslim congregations have only to a limited degree become integrated into the systems of religious privilege (Kühle, 2004: 202). They have not received public acknowledgement, thus they have not profited from the symbolic value associated with such acknowledgement. Therefore, **religious pluralism is limited**.

Danes´ attitudes towards religion, especially as a catalyst for conflict and intolerance, are among the most negative in Europe (Goul Andersen, 2002: 22). Particularly the image of Islam is constructed in opposition to ideas of anti-secularism, individualization and privatization of belief (ibid. 98). Both xenophobia and disapproval of religion *per se* represent antagonism against Islam. Danes´ attitudes toward Islam are interrelated with attitudes to immigration as a threat to national peculiarity, which in particular appear to be related to antagonism toward foreigners, and not to religion as such (Tobiasen, 2003: 352). With the polarization between `Danes´ and `Muslims´, Muslim identity is seen as foreign and incompatible to Danish identity. Islam is perceived as being in opposition to so-called Danish core values. What is particularly at stake in this alleged conflict between Islam and Danishness is the polarization between the idea of secular democracy and that of *sharia*. Over the years, some Danish politicians and other public figures have depicted Islam as “the dark Middle Ages,” associating Islam with oppression, religious fanaticism, anti-secularism, and (lately) terrorism. They have contrasted Islam to what they in turn formulate as genuinely Danish core values such as liberalism, individualism, secularism, and democracy. Consequently, the public debate to a large extent generates an opposition between Danish and Muslim identities, **categorising Islam and Muslim immigrants as incompatible with Danishness and Danish identity. This discussion of Muslimness in contrast to Danishness is part of the overall context for discussions on immigration and integration in Denmark.** Danish public debates hints at immigrants´ culture as an obstacle to the integration of immigrants into Danish society, and expresses a cultural fundamentalism (Stolcke, 1995) that creates a hierarchy of “foreign cultures according to their compatibility with “Danish culture.” Muslim culture and Islam in particular are seen as obstacles to integration into Danish society.

## **2. A Danish vocabulary of (anti-)racism and tolerance**

### *2.1. National institutions and laws*

In Denmark the major institution dealing with questions of racism and non-discrimination is the *Danish Institute for Human Rights*. The institute is by law designated the authority to promote ethnic and racial equality of treatment, and provide legal advice and assistance for victims of discrimination in filing complaints. Cases of discrimination are filed to the national *Board of Equal Treatment* or, if the case has been rejected here, to the legal courts (The Institute for Human Rights).

### *2.2. Concepts*

In Danish legal and political terminology the core concepts, when determining discriminatory or anti-discriminatory actions are *discrimination* and *equality of treatment*, rather than *racism*. The concept of racism has traditionally, and also in Denmark throughout the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, referred to an *ideology* of superiority of some biological (phenotypical or cultural) races or ethnic/cultural groups over others. While this meaning of racism is seldom used in legal and political material and debate today, a concept of discrimination is more prevalent, referring to *acts* of non-equal treatment for specific individuals or groups due to their background on a number of parameters: race, skin colour, religion or belief, political opinion, sexual orientation, age, handicap or national, social or ethnic origin. One exception of this use of vocabulary is a governmental 'Action plan to promote equal treatment and diversity and control (the fight against) racism' from 2003, which was a direct national response to the '2001 UN World Convention against racism' (Handlingsplan, 2003).

In public jargon, however, a broader concept of racism is often used to characterize hostile attitudes or acts against a specific group of people, especially ethnic minority groups. Thus, here racism refers not only to biological *races* or skin types, but more generally to different types or kinds of human beings. In these situations, however, the concepts of discrimination or xenophobia equally apply.

## **3. Historical processes - examples of racism and tolerance in Denmark**

In comparison to other European countries, Denmark has not had any consistent colonial history or represented a strong colonial power. Danish colonization comprises Greenland, the West Indian Islands, the Gold Coast (West Africa) and parts of Asia. The colonization of Greenland from 1814-1953 resulted in immigration of Greenlanders to Denmark. Still, the colonization and Greenlanders as an ethnic minority tend to be

neglected issues (Togeby, 2002). Immigration to Denmark is not a new phenomenon. However, the composition of immigrants has changed over the years. Whereas most immigrants 150 years ago came from neighboring countries, immigration by the 2000s is a far more complex social phenomenon. Although intra-Nordic migration is still prominent, immigrants also come from much more distant countries and regions of the world. A major chain of immigration started at the end of the 1960s, with the appearance of immigrants mainly from ex-Yugoslavia, Turkey and Pakistan, who came to work. Today, immigrants of non-Western countries constitute about six per cent of the Danish population (The Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs and The Danish Immigration Service, 2009).

### *3.1. Early examples of racism*

Racism as a phenomenon in Denmark is both concentrated on biological and cultural differences, and is embedded in popular imagination and culture as well as science and legislation. One example of biological racism from around 1900 was the exhibitions of “savages” in the Copenhagen amusement park Tivoli and Copenhagen’s Zoological Garden.<sup>1</sup> For a period of around 30 years people from Africa, India, China and other countries were imported and exhibited as living artefacts in the two amusement parks in Copenhagen and other places in the country. Visitors expected to encounter a distinct Other when visiting these exhibitions. When some of the exhibited people showed proficiency in German, some visitors complained. Contact between the exhibited individuals and society around them was looked upon with suspicion. Not least **Danish women who fell in love with some of the exhibited men were scorned upon and seen as disloyal to the nation.**

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<sup>1</sup> See Richter 2009. Photos from the exhibitions are available online: <http://www.information.dk/fotobloggen/204513>



By the late 1800s and first decades of the 1900s, Danish researchers were engaged, as was the case in other European countries, in studies of racial difference. Within this trail of research there was little discussion of the statement that race mattered. One aspect of the argument was based on simple differences in physical features, another the conviction that race had influence on mental capacities and human behaviour as such. As Gudmund Hart wrote in an article in *Geografisk Tidsskrift* in 1928<sup>2</sup>:

It is widely accepted that a typical Negro differs significantly from a typical North European – not only in terms of appearance, but also in terms of thoughts and emotions. A Sicilian is both physically and mentally different from a Dane. (p. 154).... That a spiritual race character exists is quite indisputable, as spiritual qualities are inherited. .. It is fair to expect that the people who have reached the farthest in cultural development have a greater pool of inherited spiritual capacities than passive people with a paralyzed culture (Hart, 1928: 160).

Popular culture and science are two aspects of the history of racism in Denmark. However, cultural racism and discrimination on the basis of cultural and national difference has historically been prominent in other forums, not least within politics, legislation and the press. One early example of how immigrants were not only looked upon as different, but even destructive for the upcoming Danish welfare state, can be

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<sup>2</sup> See also Wikipedia "racelære" for a number of Danish scientific articles on racial difference: <http://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racel%C3%A6re>.



found as far back as the early 1900s. In the Danish parliament Folketinget, the Social Democrat Emil Marott exemplified how the anxiety towards Russian-Polish migration was formulated according to a clear understanding of the immigrants as culturally inferior:

The low cultural stage on which these foreign workers stand will be a dark and threatening background on our otherwise bright shining country. In other words, these workers do not fit into the ensemble of this country. They walk around like foreign birds and are actually unable to find root here (Marott in Jacobsen 2008)

**The understanding that immigrants were a burden and even dangerous for the Danish nascent welfare state** was also reflected by an editorial in Politiken in 1913:

Slowly the city's different authorities and inhabitant realize that the continuous immigration of Polacks and Russians, especially Polish and Russian Jews, will cause the municipality severe difficulties within a foreseeable future [...] They [the immigrants] have discovered that living here is nice. In terms of welfare Denmark ranks quite high, far higher than Russia. The high standards of our country are our honor. However, it would be a shame if these circumstances encourage other countries' proletariat population to flood our shores, just because we have free access to healthcare, medicine, education and many other material and spiritual resources...They [the immigrants] are just very poor and in terms of spiritual and physical culture far behind...They lack assimilation skills and assimilation urge: They do not care to learn Danish... We must of course be humane and hospitable. But there is a fine line beyond which the city must not give in. At the moment the Polish immigration takes such proportions that the city cannot absorb the immigrants but is rather flooded by them (Politiken 1913, in Thing 2008:47).

**Interestingly, the way that the Jewish, Polish and Russian immigrant question was formulated a hundred years ago, does not look much different from how the Muslim immigrant question is formulated in the early 2000s** (Jacobsen, 2008; Schmidt, 2007). The questions are formulated around a nucleus of national norms and values and the defence of the welfare state. **One field worth investigating for our understanding changes and continuities of immigrants in both political and popular debates is the role of science, including scientific formulations of the characteristics of Otherness are both inspired by and influence these debates.** The question is worth pursuing in later phases of the TOLERACE project

### *3.2. Early examples of tolerance*

Throughout history legislation has been a prominent means to regulate migration. Whether migration legislation can thus be argued anti-tolerant and discriminatory is worth further discussion. Examples from early Danish migration history show that legislation in those days was particular used to control the doings of immigrants after their arrival. One result of a tightening of the Danish Alien Act in 1912/13 was that all immigrants staying in Denmark should hold a valid residency book and were to report directly to the police (Thing, 2008; Jacobsen, 2008: 122-123). Thus, as fear of the influx of migrants increased, so did surveillance.

Although history includes numerous examples of legislation as a means through which borders were upheld between migrants and the majority population – also when people had settled down in the country – legislation has also proven an important means to secure the basic rights of immigrants, thus safe-guarding tolerance. For example, when the Social democrats in 1913 proposed a welfare act for animals, including rules securing the stunning of animals for slaughter, a parliamentary committee suggested that the Jewish ritual slaughtering (*schæchtning*) should be excepted from the rule. As a result, the final animal welfare law of 1916 did not include any demands on the stunning of slaughter animals (Jacobsen, 2008: 119-121).

Another example of legislation as a means to secure tolerance is the Danish Penal Codes' paragraph on blasphemy (§ 140). The paragraph was introduced in 1866 and has remained unchanged since then. The paragraph states that “the person that publically mocks and scorns the faith and practices of a legally accepted religious denomination in this country will be punished by fine and incarceration in up to four months.” The blasphemy paragraph has been intensely debated in Denmark by the early 2000s. In 2004 the Danish People's Party suggested that the paragraph was removed from the Penal Code. However, after intense debate in the Danish parliament, § 140 remained a part of the law.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Danish way of dealing with racism mirrors general theories on racism in Europe: Here too the issue has been silenced since world-war II, with anti-semitism representing the only measure of racism that stands out as an exception (Goldberg, 2006; Hesse, 2004). As is the case in other European countries, there is a conceptual double bind to the discourse on racism in Denmark (Hesse, 2004). The dominating view in Danish public debate as something that concerns Jews and Blacks, as an ideological exceptionality. This implies that “racism” is not related to actual relations between ethnic and religious majorities and minorities, e.g., to other major ethnic minority groups in Danish society such as immigrants from Greenland or Muslims immigrants. This approach to racism as related to biology also ignores other forms of racism based on culture and religion, especially Islamophobia (Meer & Modood, 2009). **The avoidance of recognising Islamophobia is in stark contrast to the report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance on Denmark, which points to especially Muslims as targets of discrimination** (ECRI, 2005). The 2005 report, which was very critical of the Danish situation, pointed to a discriminatory

climate against immigrants, particularly of Muslim background. Among other things, it was maintained that the anti-racism paragraph was only seldom taken into use, and that certain media and politicians should take responsibility for their direct and indirect discriminatory ways of representing Muslims (ECRI, 2005: 26).

To avoid isolating racism as a phenomenon related to biology and to the history of anti-Semitism and Colonialism, some Danish researchers prefer the concept of new-racism. They hereby emphasize that racism is still prevalent, but should be understood in a broader sense including e.g. religion or culture (Hervik & Egaa Jørgensen, 2002).

Also in relation to citizenship and the construction of excluding categories, discourses on immigrants tend to demarcate who does (not) belong, and who are the “true nationals” (Balibar, 1991). In its extreme such discourses associate immigrants with beastliness, and actions of denial and annihilation (Goldberg, 2006), e.g., at the political level by focusing on the possibility of returning migrants. Whether such debates have as one consequence that immigrant citizens are treated as second-class (immigrant) citizens (Balibar, 2003) is an open question worth further investigation. **It is relevant to discuss whether parts of the Danish legislation on migration may be directly or indirectly discriminatory.**

In Denmark as in other European countries, tolerance has become a central concept when discussing issues in relation to migration and integration. Historically, tolerance has been an important part of the Danish self-image and identity. This self-image has been somewhat contested over the last decades’ public debates on immigration and integration (Gaasholt & Togeby, 1997). Still, being Danish is to a large extent associated with being democratic, liberal and open-minded (Hervik & Egaa Jørgensen, 2002). In opposition, other – often Muslim – countries are seen as intolerant, fundamentalist and barbaric, and the same seems to be the assumption about Muslim immigrants. In this way the tolerance discourse marks an opposition between “Us” and “Them”, indicating both distance and polarization and at the same time a hierarchical relation (Brown, 2006).

This narrative of Danish tolerance is strongly contested in reports by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI, 2005), while national studies of attitudes to cultural difference in Denmark show the dilemma in which many Danes find themselves. On one hand trying to maintain the ideal of tolerance and openness, and on the other feeling uneasy about difference and preferring the immigrants to be like themselves (Hervik & Egaa Jørgensen, 2002).

As is the case in other European countries, the question of how wide the scope of tolerance should be is thoroughly discussed, and is often related to the

discussion of how free the exercise of culture ought to be (Sweder, Minow & Markus 2000). Some of the main sites of cultural collision over difference are: women's status and clothing, religious practices and treatment of children.

The question of, how much government agents can or should intervene in such issues is highly relevant in a Danish context, and has been thoroughly discussed since 2002, where the 24 years rule was introduced. The stated purpose of the rule was to cut down on forced marriages and family reunification immigration, but it has been widely criticized for discriminating ethnic minorities and violating international humanitarian laws (ECRI, 2001). The prohibition of the *burka* is another recent example where the relationship between formal laws and customary practices has been addressed and discussed - and nothing indicates that it is the last time this relationship is up for discussion (Sweder, Minow & Markus, 2000).

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