

## Summary

This study examines how the Danish Parliament since the early 1970's has legitimized changes to the law on immigration. This study has two principal objectives; firstly to understand in what way the topic of immigration from the beginning of the 1990's has become one of the most politicized issues for politicians as well as for the mass media and voters and secondly, to analyse the nature of the alliances that are established between political parties in the course of arguing for or against a proposal to change the law on immigration. The study takes its point of departure in Thomas Hammar's concentric "gate" model. The model depicts access to the Danish society by non-Danish citizens' as regulated by three 'gates'. Security and rights increase in proportion with the number of 'gates' passed, culminating in naturalisation and full social, legal and political rights. The passing of a non-Danish citizen through the first gate provides a temporary permit to stay which mostly concerns asylum seekers and refugees. The second gate provides permanent permit, which allows for the same social, civic and economic rights as Danish citizens and these are in Hammar's terminology called denizens<sup>47</sup>. The third gate allows for full membership of the Danish society i.e. Danish citizenship.

In the study, I analyse the empirical material by working from the third to the first gate. This reverse approach enables an early mapping out of the conflicting interests and discourses about the different components of Danish citizenship i.e. rights, duties, participation and identity. This approach is also chosen because different discourses on naturalisation (third gate) spill over and they have an effect on how exclusionary politics are legitimized within debates on asylum seekers refugees (first gate) and denizens (second gate).

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<sup>47</sup> "One who lives habitually in a country but is not a native-born citizen; a foreigner admitted to residence and certain rights in a country." Oxford English Dictionary, [www.dictionary.oed.com.zorac.aub.aau.dk/cgi/entry/50060844?](http://www.dictionary.oed.com.zorac.aub.aau.dk/cgi/entry/50060844?), 02.09.2005

My approach builds on two central arguments. Firstly, I take a social constructivist approach to the understanding of discourse, which briefly means that people inhabit a world of meaningful discourses and practices, and cannot conceive or think about objects outside it.<sup>48</sup> By this I do not mean that, all social practices are discursive but as regards to this study's empirical material – political speech-act and political discussions - I argue that there is a high degree of myths and social imaginaries that guide political action. Secondly, I argue that the reason why immigration functions as a challenge to the Danish society has to do with three tensions. The first tension is that between an ethnic and civic understanding of nationhood where the question to be answered is how citizenship is constructed along the continuum between these two understandings. The second tension emanates from the fact that the universalistic Danish state intends both to promote integration within the community of citizens and to tolerate (or even actively promote) the fact that citizens also enjoy membership in different ethnic communities. The third tension is concerned with the arguments surrounding the issue of asylum seekers/refugees, which I argue has to do with the 'tug of war' between three concerns: complying with international norms, moral obligations to help political refugees and lastly protecting national political and economic interests. These tensions are used as tools to analyse the three domains (naturalisation, denizens and naturalised) in that order.

### *Danish Citizenship – discourses on ethnic and civic understandings of nationhood*

The debates on naturalisation reveal that the basic principles of Danish citizenship laid down more than 100 years ago still receive just about full support from all po-

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<sup>48</sup> Howarth, 2000:5. As I argue in the chapter on methodology this viewpoint does imply that every social practice is discursive which I do not fully agree but take the stance that there are practices that are non-discursive.

litical parties in Parliament. These principles are “jus sanguinis” and “non-acceptance of dual citizenship”. Only the left-wing party – the Red-Green Alliance – talk in favour of accepting dual citizenship. A principle which Sweden and other Nordic countries imposed in 2002. The study also shows that through the entire period under scrutiny (1973-2002) a common understanding of the meaning of naturalisation has been unchallenged. Nationalisation is seen as a reward for striving to incorporate into society, a token for good behaviour and an appreciation for making an effort to becoming “Danish”.

In summary, the debates on naturalisation showed that the dominant way of thinking about nationhood was an ethnic understanding of nationhood. I conclude that the ethnic notion of citizenship is built on two parallel, but not identical discourses, which emphasize the need to preserve social cohesion in Denmark through nourishing the bonds of commonality. One is the communitarian discourse that views the need for this ethnic national bonding because people’s feelings of loyalty and identity are a product of common national history, traditions, cultural values and norms. The other discourse is the social democratic understanding of nationhood, where national bonding is a means of upholding a high degree of social and economic equality in society, which has for the past many decades been safeguarded by the universalistic Danish welfare state.

I also conclude that the civic understanding of nationhood at no time challenged the dominant ethnic understanding. The civic understanding also changed from having a global outlook in the beginning of the 1980’s – similar to Brubaker’s broad civic understanding of nationhood – to a more narrow civic understanding of nationhood in the late 1990’s and in the beginning of the new century.

### *Integration – the contested meanings of equality*

In the 1980’s the debates on integration revealed that the political consensus of bringing immigrants on an equal footing existed as long as the political parties did

not discuss particular integration initiatives. In the course of discussing particular integration problems e.g. how to solve the problems of immigrants living separate from Danes and 'black' schools, it became apparent that one alliance (centre-left wing parties) in Parliament was in favour of a strong state regulating and controlling the integration process. In contrast, another alliance (consisting of the centre-right wing parties) perceived integration, in general, as a private matter for immigrants. In the late 1990's this disagreement on the role of the state disappeared. The majority in Parliament argued instead for a strong need for the state to regulate and control integration of immigrants. One controversial issue, though, was on the 'solution' as to how immigrants could reach the same level of financial self-sufficient as ethnic-Danes. A majority in Parliament saw the workfare ideology of reduced welfare benefits as a means to encourage newly arrived refugees and immigrants to get a job rapidly. This law, however, was withdrawn again because of critique from UNHCR as regards to violating article 26 Geneva Convention on Refugee Rights about treating refugees on equal footing with Danish citizens. After the national election in 2001, the same law was passed again by the centre-right wing alliance but this time not directly conflicting with the Conventions on Refugee Rights. The aim was, however, the same: to combat the numbers of refugees and immigrants on welfare benefits by reducing their allowances. The centre-left wing parties were strongly against this line of thinking and were instead arguing for upgrading new arrivals' qualifications as a means of getting a regular job.

*Policies towards asylum-seekers and refugees – humanism or humanitarianism?*

Lastly, the debates on refugees showed that the moral and human rights arguments for receiving refugees used in the 1970's and 1980's were downplayed in the 1990's and onwards in favour of national concerns regarding the preservation of the ethnic homogenous composition in Danish society. As to the political alliances in Parlia-

ment, I conclude that the seemingly unique bipolar division of the political parties on the matter of immigrants is due to the topic of immigration as being an expression of symbolic politics. The political parties play on people's asperities, fears and feelings. In conclusion, one can say that there seems to be persistent strong discursive disagreement on the matter of refugees and on the perception of equality but a relatively common perception of Danish citizenship.