

# NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

## Rethinking Citizenship Education in European Migration Societies

### Political Strategies - Social Changes - Educational Concepts

# Conference Paper

## Contribution to Workshop 2, Session 1: How to Become a Good (European) Citizen: Standards, Subjects and Models

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Lisbon, Portugal, April, 26-28, 2007

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The purpose of this intervention is to reflect on what elsewhere<sup>1</sup> I have termed the new civicism or civic integrationist turn, a) which is clearly a European trend; b) whose anatomy seems to be reflected in this very conference, and c) which harbours a normative ambivalence, which should be confronted; d) ambivalences apparent in the example of a country which may be conjectured, in certain crucial respects, to serve as a laboratory for the rest of Europe. This country is Denmark.

1. Two aspects characterise a common development, visible in different degrees and having different timings and flavours, all over Western Europe. *First*, a progressive idiom of citizenship argues that the integration, peaceful prosperity and development of immigrant societies requires the strengthening of, or inculcation of a set of civic virtues, i.e. the habitual assumption of specific duties and the achieving of competences in a variety of social and political spheres (in exchange for enjoying substantial rights to welfare and material membership). Societies need active, engaged, identifying citizens – as opposed to passive, indifferent subjects. *Secondly*, this idiom is fitted to discourses of common values, cohesion, homogeneity and culture.

The good news is that old-style *Kulturnationalismus* – in terms of open or latently held *entry requirements* for newcomers<sup>2</sup> – is increasingly relegated to a right wing fringe, which caters for population segments that are threatened by globalisation. However, concern with national culture is alive

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<sup>1</sup> In Per Mouritsen, "The Particular Universalism of a Nordic Civic Nation: Common values, state religion, and Islam in Danish political culture, in Tariq Modood et al (eds). *Multiculturalism, Muslims and citizenship: a European approach*, London: Routledge, 2006 & Per Mouritsen, Political Responses to Cultural Conflict: Reflections on the ambiguities of the civic turn" in Per Mouritsen & Knud Erik Jørgensen (eds), *Constituting Communities: Political Solutions to Cultural Conflict*, London: Palgrave, in press.

<sup>2</sup> Cultural nationalism certainly also survives in more mainstream versions in terms of a conservative concern with national heritages, cultural canons etc.

# NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

and kicking in terms of appeal to a *country's* shared 'civic' or 'political' or 'liberal' or 'democratic', and in terms of these – again, nationally shared – values as counterweights to diversity and parallel societies. Countries such as the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark each have varieties of a public debate which a) asks “Have we become too diverse” (David Goodhart), and answers it affirmatively, posing b) the need for a *Leitkultur*, and insisting c) that much of this *Leitkultur* consists of (our) civic values. It is a peculiar fact that this neo-Durkheimian integrationist discourse only appears to be in crisis (or at least questioned) in one place, which is France.

2. In important senses, this development vindicates earlier hopes placed in the development in *constitutional patriotism* (CP) as argued by Jan-Werner Müller. Commentators often overlook how, in Habermas' own ideas, CP was not merely a solidarity of the European spirit (i.e. shared, universal values, embedded in constitutions), but also one embedded in the particular political cultures and national histories of given communities. But there are three differences: First, the new 'constitutional patriotism' places more emphasis on 'patriotism' than 'constitutional' – civic allegiance is a more demanding practice and more solemn form of identity/solidarity. It has a bit of fire in the belly. Secondly, whereas earlier versions were formulated either against the nation or as criticisms of it, the new discourse, and the political theory that goes with it is a political reinvention, or reframing – and in some national contexts a celebration – of the nation and of national culture as a state project.<sup>3</sup> Civicism is contained in a national culture, into which newcomers must be integrated, or perhaps rather *assimilated* – given the emphasis on state sponsored inculcation, engineering, even heavy handed monitoring of 'habits of the *heart*', through citizenship tests, declarations, 'integration contracts' (in Denmark) and – as debated at this conference – citizenship education. Thirdly, and correspondingly, while early constitutional patriotism was seen as 'loosening', and 'thinning' loyalties, making them more amenable to (multicultural) difference (as argued by Habermas, J. E. Fossum and others), the new civics serves to 'tighten' society, presenting cultural diversity as a threat, associated with divisive parallel societies.

3. This, of course, reflects a shift of historical trajectories, problem diagnoses, and protagonists. Habermas was concerned with European integration and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*; whereas today's issues concern the future of functioning welfare states, the challenges of immigration, and above all the perception by many that strongly held religious belief, in particular Islam, is associated with democratic immaturity and indeed with terrorism. Also, *this conference itself*, for worse or (hopefully, probably) better, reflects the diagnosis thus presented (1-2 above): i.e. with notions that “'multiculturalism' defined as intellectual discourse and a set of political concepts and policies emphasising and encouraging difference over common political values, is in a state of crisis”; the claim that European societies have been seen as “sleepwalking into segregation”; and the view that this calls for a “paradigm shift” towards emphasising clear rights and duties – in a colour blind didactic discourse of citizenship (“irrespective of their origin, their skin colour or religion”). Indeed, citizenship education should “facilitate the *identification* of immigrants in European societies with their respective country, its language, *its culture* and its laws. But is there anything wrong with such statements? Should not the future of Europe be a republican one? I think it should<sup>4</sup>. But please consider the following:

4. *First*, the 'crisis of multiculturalism' is loudly proclaimed in countries (Denmark, Germany), which *never* experienced any of it at a policy level and never had strong groups advocating it. *Secondly*, influential political theories as well as state programs of multiculturalism were not and are not opposed to liberal rights and equality, nor opposed to the value of national belonging.<sup>5</sup> Kymlicka associates Canadian multiculturalism with the liberal rights revolution; Australian multiculturalism is distinctly liberal and constitutional; advocates of British multiculturalism such as Bhikhu Parekh and Tariq Modood stress its status as an *integration* philosophy, conducive to national belonging; and Swedish multiculturalism was always closely tied to a Social Democratic project, enhancing the equality of new and old Swedish *medborgara* (citizens). *Thirdly*, the problem of 'living apart together' is not only about 'culture', but also –

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<sup>3</sup> In Germany *Leitkultur*, while primarily civic and liberal in content, is an alternative to *Verfassungspatriotismus*.

<sup>4</sup> See Per Mouritsen, *The Fragility of Liberty. A Reconstruction of Republican Citizenship*, PhD-thesis, Florence: The European University Institute, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> At least in a context of migration – national minorities is possibly a different story.

# NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

and probably more – about the lack of full participation in T.H.Marshall's material community of the welfare state. It concerns lack of skills, social capital and networks, poor labour market participation, segregated housing and schools, and political marginality. *Fourthly*, although there are problems of culture, which call for civic responses, or *political culture*, there is a tendency across Europe, although more pronounced in some countries than others, *to present civic solutions in terms of cultural-national frames*:

5) These frames play on a hierarchy of good and bad culture (and religion), i.e., most crudely, the need of immigrants to give up *their* underdeveloped, undemocratic, prison-like, religious-traditional culture in order to adopt *our* advanced, democratic, reflective, secular culture. In both instances, 'culture' is presented as essential and unyielding – although the normative valuation changes from negative to positive. On the one hand, we *politicise culture* (particularly religion) as *dangerously uncivic*. Playing the civic card often goes hand in hand, in real politics and administrative practice, with securitisation. Thus, Werner Schiffauer, in a German context, has convincingly argued that *de jure* liberalisation of naturalisation procedures for immigrants has entailed intensified administrative and social suspicion of terrorist sympathies amongst applicants.

6) However, we also *culturalise the political solutions* offered. Thus, Danish research (Mouritsen) indicates a tendency in dominant discourse on citizenship to present the liberal value and citizenship virtues, which immigrants must learn as shared by all of *us* (as compared, say to Australian ideas about citizenship ceremonies for newcomers and settled alike); as particularly Danish; as particularly deeply rooted and dependent upon (being brought up inside) a way of life or history; and as 'sacred' and unchallengeable (rather than open for ongoing interpretation and debate) *qua* constitutive of 'culture' and 'our deepest values'.

7) Why bother with pathologies of public debate in Denmark, one time role model, now more like a black sheep of Western Europe? These fallacies – we might call them the *culture fallacy* and the *chauvinism, ethnification* and *sacralisation* fallacies – are probably not uniquely Danish, although their particular form may be, indeed Denmark may be in certain respects the shape of things to come. Denmark is not a Northern hotbed of racist xenophobia. On several measures of immigrant friendliness and principled tolerance it scores better than most European countries, and much popular concern is really about the (very real) difficulties of integrating immigrants as equally participating citizens of the welfare state. However, there is very widespread scepticism and pessimism of multicultural diversity, low acceptance of Muslim religion in public space, and, even compared to other Northern countries, hostility towards religion when taken more seriously than what the secular non-churchgoing Danes themselves term 'cultural Christianity'.

8) Moreover, in Denmark, an organic connection exists between this scepticism of strongly held traditional religion and a political culture which is in important respects, if looked at from the point of view of political theory and literatures on citizenship education, *extremely civic* and which understands itself as such. It is characterised by a comprehensive liberalism favouring deeply individual autonomy, substantial equality all the way down through civil society to family and gender relations, and deliberative ideals of democracy. To those of us who think that enhanced citizenship, and its concomitant ideologies and imagery, is the road to positive integration of culturally and religiously diverse societies, Denmark should serve as a warning that this may not be so easy. In the country where the conventionally stressed elements of strong citizenship have for long been part of political culture generally and school ideology, didactics and organisation specifically, this very culture functions, and is reflected in discourse, in ways that are not terribly amenable to integration and recognition. In Denmark civicness can translate to intolerance – intolerance of those perceived as intolerant, unreflective, and authoritarian. Hence, one of the main rationales for Jyllands Posten's infamous cartoons, and for their supporters, remains the sincerely held conviction that Muslims, in their own best interest, should learn or be forced to learn to take their religion less seriously and become more autonomous, reflective and anti-authoritarian. In short, like us. *They should learn to be citizens*. And many Danes, including leading politicians (not all to be sure) believe that this can be facilitated by *teaching* Muslims to stand ridicule and offence of their religion and their prophet. Religious mockery is conceptualized as a Danish civic virtue.

# NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

9) Does this mean that citizenship education is not the answer? No, it does not. But it indicates – to educators, scholars and certainly politicians that citizenship, too, is not an innocent idiom. To have communities based on citizenship rather than the blood and sacred heroes of the nation is certainly a step forward. Yet, good citizenship must include – and be taught to include – self-criticism and *criticism of citizenship itself* – in particular the ways we speak about its elements, and in particular in the way that we tend to posit good citizenship as antithetic to Islam and devout religious feeling. There is more than a single way to be a good citizen, including a European one; we should not be too self-congratulatory, neither as nations nor as a continent. Indeed, European citizenship in the eyes of newcomers susceptible to notice blind spots and double standards, may be 'a very good idea' in much the same way as 'Western civilisation' was to Gandhi.