Democratisation of Denmark - the Inclusion of Women in Political Citizenship

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Christina Fiig & Birte Siim

Democratisation of Denmark – the Political Inclusion of Women

Preface

The first version of this paper was presented by Birte Siim at the international conference titled *From Voters to European Citizens. 75 Years of Female Suffrage in Spain*, 3.-6. October, 2006, Andalusian Parliament, in Sevilla, Spain. This rewritten version of the paper is co-authored by Christina Fiig and Birte Siim, for an anthology edited by Blanca Rodrigues Ruiz and Ruth Rubio Marin to be published by the Spanish Centre of Political and Constitutional Studies. Christina Fiig is Associate Professor, Ph.D and Birte Siim is Professor. Both are affiliated with the Department of History, International and Social Studies, Aalborg University, Denmark.

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Democratisation of Denmark – the Inclusion of Women in Political Citizenship

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Introduction

In Denmark, women gained the suffrage relatively early and undramatically in 1915, when a constitutional reform granted suffrage rights to all men and women over the age of 29. The first democratic Danish Constitution of 1849 had granted the vote to men above the age of 30 who had their own household, had lived in the constituency for at least one year, paid back or been released debt or could dispose of their own estate. "Women, poor people, criminals and fools" [fruentimmer, fattiglemmer, forbrydere og fjolser] were excluded. As a result, 14- 15 % of the population could vote (Elklit et al. 2005:21).

The struggle for women's vote lasted 66 years and was part of the struggle for women's formal equal rights. Granting women the vote was controversial and touched upon fundamental power structures and male privileges in marriage, on the labour market and in politics. Indeed, the history of female suffrage illuminates the close intersection between women's civil and political rights - between the public and private arenas. Nor was it an isolated 'women's struggle'. It was an intrinsic aspect of the deep transformation and democratization of society that took place during the end of the 19th and the first two decades of the 20th century.

The key playing field was Parliament, where male parliamentarians debated women's political citizenship (Bach 2003). Indeed, in this chapter we attempt to move beyond the emphasis Danish gender research lays on the women's organisations as main advocates of female suffrage (Dahlerup 1977; 1978, Holm 1982) and stress the key role male Parliamentarians played in the struggle for universal suffrage that included women's vote. Women were active in voluntary organizations and some participated in the suffragette organization (Dahlerup 1977; Hansen 1992; Højgaard 1977) and in local networks (Rambusch 1990), but the suffragette movement was never a mass movement and was never as militant as it was the case in Great Britain (Dahlerup 1978).

Our main argument is that the Danish struggle for women's suffrage was part of the political and constitutional conflict [*forfatningskampen]* between Left and Right about parliamentary democracy[1]. This was a sharp class conflict between

[1] The following section is based on historical analyses by Christiansen (1990) and Ravn (1985).

the urban and rural political forces, between landowners on the one side and small farmers and workers on the other side. The landowners in the Conservative Party [*Højre],* which dominated the upper chamber [*Landstinget]* during the time period of the enfranchisement, perceived – rightly - a reform of the election system that would expand suffrage to cover women, workers and servants as a serious threat to their political power platforms in the provincial towns (Christiansen 1990:59). The Conservative Party defended the privileged vote and argued against women's vote. The Left, a combination of wealthy farmers in the Agrarian Liberal Party [*Venstre*], workers in the Social Democratic Party, and from 1905 also small scale farmers, school teachers and intellectuals in the newly formed Radical Liberal Party [*Det Radikale Venstre*], dominated in the lower chamber *[Rigsdagen*] and struggled for Parliamentarism and universal suffrage and defended, for the most part, women's vote (Christiansen 1990:53).

2. The History of Female Suffrage

The general political scene for the universal enfranchisement for women and men is based on the four-party-system at the time with the Social Democratic, the Radical Liberal, the Agrarian-Liberal and the Conservative Parties as the main political actors.

From its formation in 1871, the involvement of the Social Democratic Party in the struggle for women's rights was complex. At the first Congress in Gimle [*Gimlekongressen*] in 1876, the Party proposed labour rights for female and male workers as well as universal enfranchisement for both men and women. Yet the Party was ambivalent towards women's emancipation and liberation movement, which made it difficult for female members to engage in the struggle for women's vote. It did support parliamentary proposals for women's suffrage coming from the Radical Liberal Party, but argued that women's issue should not be seen as a separate issue, but as part of the class struggle (Christiansen 1990; Ravn 1985).Parts of the party feared that middle class women would be granted the enfranchisement before working class men. In 1907, the Social Democratic Women's Suffrage Association [*Socialdemokratisk Kvinders Valgretsforening*] was founded by female trade unionists and female party members but never recognized by the party (Christiansen 1990:59). The Party thus expected Social Democratic women to withdraw from cooperation with bourgeois and "non-political" women's organisation. Some Social Democratic women were active in the National League for Women's Suffrage for the first couple of years after its foundation and then withdrew (Hansen 1992). Still, there was never such a sharp split between the socialists and the women's rights movement as for example in Germany (Dahlerup 1978). As for the other main

parties, the Radical Liberal, The Conservative and the Agrarian-Liberal Parties, all contributed differently to the debate on enfranchisement.

As of its foundation in 1905, the Radical Liberal Party argued for women's political equality as a key element of election reforms and the privileged suffrage for the Upper Chamber. The enfranchisement included women, servants and receivers of poor's people's relief. The party, which broke open from the Agrarian Liberal party, was based on support by small farmers, school teachers and university educated Copenhageners and a number of urban entrepreneurs and tradesmen. After its establishment, the Radical Liberal Party formed a political alliance with the Agrarian Liberal party and the Social Democratic Party supporting a reform of the law on local elections that would grant the vote to women and servants (Christensen 1990). The Agrarian-Liberal Party was based on support by the farmers (land owners), priests and teachers rooted in the countryside electorate.

The Conservative Party was based on the country's 1200 aristocratic landowners, the administrative civil servants, the military and a strong support from the urban business men. The party dominated the Upper Chamber and regarded a reform of the election system a serious threat to its political power platform in most of the provincial towns. Yet some Conservative parliamentarians ended up supporting women's vote for local municipality election in 1908 believing that women would vote more conservatively than men (Christiansen 1990).

The political landscape also included several women's organisations which to a varying degree were protagonists of the conquest of female suffrage.

Denmark's first women's organisation, the bourgeois Danish Women's Society in 1871[*Dansk Kvindesamfund*] was established by Agrarian- Liberal Frederik Bajer and his wife Matilde Bajer. It was the Danish branch of the Association International de Femmes (AIF), which was founded in 1868. Yet, during its very first year of existence, Danish Women's Society withdrew from AIF, which had formal equal rights between men and women as its main objective. The Danish organisation hesitated for a long time to demand the vote for women fearing that demands for political rights would damage women's search for social acknowledgement and respectability (Dahlerup 1978: 141). Thus, instead of arguing for political rights, it focused on civil and social rights such as education, employment and equality in marriage. Although it had no party affiliation, its politically active members came predominantly from the political centre or right representing the bourgeois women (Dahlerup 1978:141, Højgaard 1977; Ravn 1985). It would take some 35 years from the foundation of the Danish Women's Society in 1871 to add women's enfranchisement to the

organisation's associational article in 1906. In the meantime, the organisation acted politically by contributing to parliamentary debates on women's issues, delivering petitions and arguments to government and Parliament on enfranchisement for local elections for wealthy women (Ravn 1985:242).

Partly because the bourgeois Danish Women's Society was reluctant to fight for enfranchisement, a number of new suffrage organisations were founded from the 1880s which were, clearly, more protagonist of the conquest of female suffrage. In 1885, Mathilde Bajer, the co-founder of the Danish Women's Society, left it and formed Women's Progressive Association [*Kvindeligt Fremskridtsforening*] and in 1888, the new organisation published the first issue of its journal 'What do we want' *[Hvad vil vi*?] which became a symbol of the struggle for enfranchisement[2]. Between 1890 and 1894, the mobilisation around women's vote was organised through The United Women's Association [*De Samlede Kvindeforeninger*], an umbrella organisation for suffrage organisations and a number of skilled trade unions including men's tailors, midwives and teachers (Broch 1977; 151-171). In 1907, the National League for Women's Suffrage [*Landsforbundet for Kvinders Valgret*] was founded. This organisation's only claim was women's franchise and the leadership consisted of women from the Radical Liberal and Social Democratic Party. Between the two biggest organisations (The Danish Women's Society and the National League for Women's Suffrage), there was a sense of competition and rivalry (Dahlerup 1978). Both organisations grew rapidly; the former had 6000 members in 1909 and 7500 members in 1912 while the latter had 5000 members in 1908 and 11000 members in 1912 (Dahlerup 1977; 1978; Hansen 1992). For reasons that will be explained below, neither organisation was allied with the Social Democratic party in a common struggle, even though many women in the Social Democratic party advocated the vote.

During the period 1886-1915, women's enfranchisement was on the parliamentary agenda on a regular basis framed first in the proposed reforms of the municipality election laws and subsequently within the amendment of the Constitution. The first demands for women's suffrage (for local politics) were

[2] A number of prominent members, including the founder, Matilde Bajer, left the organisation and formed Women's Progressive Association [*Kvindelig Fremskridtsforening*] in 1886 focusing on a broader mandate including social and political rights such as workers' rights, peace and the franchise for women. In 1889, a single woman, Line Luplau, from the rural Western part of the country, established the Women's Suffrage Association [*Kvindevalgretsforeningen*] which was the first Danish organisation to have the issue of women's enfranchisement as the only point of its program. A couple of years earlier, Luplau achieved national fame when she initiated a local petition proposing women's rights to vote in local elections by collecting 20,000 signatures (Larsen, without year; Rambusch 1990).The organisation existed until 1897 and was then co-opted by the Danish Women's Association's Copenhagen branch.

raised in the Danish Parliament in November 1886 by the politician Fredrik Bajer from the Agrarian- Liberal Party. The proposal landed on a tense political agenda concerning democratisation of issues on Parliamentarism, unicameral system and extension of the electorate to including the working class which would all change the political geography radically (Larsen 2008).

During the period 1886-1914, reforms of the laws on enfranchisement for men and women were proposed and decided on in the lower chamber, the Parliament [*Rigsdagen*], made up of elected members but voted down in the upper chamber [*Landstinget*] dominated by the Conservative Party [*Højre*] several times. A reform of the laws on enfranchisement for the municipalities formed a common demand by the Social Democratic, the Agrarian-Liberal and the Radical Liberal Parties arguing that the cleavages between the different groups of citizens ought to be replaced by universal enfranchisement. The proposal was controversial. For the Agrarian-Liberal Party, granting the vote to small-scale farmers, workers and servants formed a threat to the party's solid platform of power: the landowning farmers in the local councils (Christiansen 1990:59). After the turn of the century, the resistance against women's vote for the local political body vanished. This was demonstrated by including women in a number of elected councils. Resistance to and delays in the reform of the election laws can be explained by political instability in the period and opposition to changes in the party political power balance, which the democratisation of the universal suffrage would lead to (Larsen 2008). Danish women's enfranchisement was won gradually. The election of 1901 delivered a new Liberal- Agrarian government which initiated a reform program under the local authorities. These reforms included a number of elected councils as for example the parochial church council and the councils taking care of needs of children and young people. All these were made up by members selected by public election with women eligible both to vote and to run as candidates (Nielsen without year).

In 1903, that is, three years before the Danish Women's Society officially declared enfranchisement a political goal (Dahlerup 1978:143), women received the right to vote for and be elected for the new parochial church councils, then for the councils taking care of needs of children and young people [*Værgeraad*] in 1905 and in 1907 Danish women were enfranchised and became eligible for membership on the new Social Aid Boards [*Hjælpekasserne*], a social relief authority allocating financial resources for the underprivileged part of the population. The first election to the Social Aid Boards took place in 1908 and led to 35-45% elected women according to unofficial electoral statistics. Official statistics from the 1911-election show similar tendencies (Dahlerup 1978:143-147).

With the reform of the municipalities [*kommunalreformen*] in 1908, all women, married and non-married, gained the right to vote and to be elected for the municipalities and a number of legal measures changed the democratic landscape. The electorate was still limited due to a number of legal conditions. The vote was granted to women, men and servants above the age of 25 in the municipality where they had lived and paid taxes to the commune the current year and the year before the elections. This condition was formulated by Conservatives to prevent servants and casual labourers to vote. Receivers of poor people's relief were not granted the vote. The bill was passed in both chambers, which was seen as a stepping stone towards parliamentary vote (Christiansen 1990:60; Elklit et al. 2005: 30-35).

The first election to the local municipalities took place in 1909 with a very low number of elected women -about 1% of those elected. A similar pattern was replicated in the 1913 and 1917 local elections. Women's representation varied according to elective institution, degree of urbanisation and political party with more women candidates running and being elected in the capital Copenhagen (Dahlerup 1978: 147). Moreover, there was a significant difference between men and women voters' participation rate, as well as differences between rural and urban populations. Gender-based differences vanished slowly in subsequent elections. Danish women adapted to enfranchisement rather quickly (Elklit et al. 2005:25). In the end, both proponents and opponents of female suffrage seemed satisfied with the result of the 1909 elections: proponents were satisfied that women's voters had reached 50% and opponents were relieved as so few women were elected.

The reform of the municipality electoral system formed a good platform from which to agitate for the universal suffrage. Already in 1905, the Social Democratic Party proposed the abolition of the Upper Chamber and introduction of universal enfranchisement for all men and women above the age of 21. The other parties disagreed and put forward a number of party-strategic alternatives. However, the parties agreed on the need for reforms of the electorate system. With the demographic changes, the present contribution of mandates was biased (Christiansen 1990: 177).

The final window of opportunity followed the parliamentary election in May 1913 leading to a power shift, with the formation of the Radical Liberal Party's (second) Zahle-government with support of the Social Democrats. The three Constitutional–reform-friendly parties, the Radical Liberal Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal-Agrarian Party, decided on the guiding lines for the constitutional amendments in March 1914. It would take another parliamentary election before the amendments were approved in Parliament and submitted to a referendum in 1915. The revision of the Danish Constitution

granted universal suffrage to women and men above the age of 29. The legal preconditions of two years' permanent address in a given commune and own household for servants lapsed. With the constitutional revisions in 1915, the electorate more than doubled from 15 to 40 % of the population (Christiansen 1990: 186, Elklit et al. 2005:21-38). At the first parliamentary election in 1918, women obtained 3% of the parliamentary seats.

On Constitution Day, June 5th 1915, the Danish suffragettes dressed in white marched through the streets of Copenhagen to the Amalienborg royal palaces and to the King to mark the occasion of women's parliamentary enfranchisement. Celebrated nationally, the march was symbolic and related to the previous decades' struggle for the vote which women obtained some 66 years after the 1849 Danish Constitution.

3. The framing of the Arguments

The Danish debate on women's enfranchisement went on for several decades and aired a range of arguments. The debate illustrates two key observations: first, many of the arguments for women's vote in local elections (1886-1908) were mirrored in the debate on universal suffrage until the constitutional amendments in 1915. The intersections of gender and class were played out in the debate. The *gender* issue concerned the question of whether married women should have the right to vote or should be represented politically by their husbands, and the *class* issue concerned whether servants without economic means should be allowed to vote (Bach 2003). Secondly, the main arguments in favour of female suffrage resemble those raised in other Western countries (see Dahlerup 1978:141 for references), but their specific formulations and relative weight was influenced by the Danish national history, political institutions and the mobilization of social and political actors.

In the Danish Parliamentary debates we find many variations of two types of pro-suffrage arguments a) a natural rights argument based upon ideas of justice and equal political rights, b) a utilitarian argument based upon women and men's different abilities and talents and ideas about what was good for women and for society. A third argument c) referring to women and men's different interests was presented by the suffrage organisations, but was used only exceptionally (Dahlerup 1977; 1978; Ravn 1985).

Arguments were part of a political debate and changed over time. In practice, they often drew on more than one discourse. The Agrarian Liberal politician Frederik Bajer's parliamentarian arguments from the 1880s can illustrate this point (Bach 2003). Bajer initially referred to international debates especially to the British philosopher John Stuart Mill's speech to the British House of

Commons on women's enfranchisement in 1867 as well as to women's enfranchisement in Finland, Iceland and Sweden. Mill's arguments generally inspired leading Danish intellectuals at the time (Larsen 2008). In subsequent debates Bajer used different arguments that combined the discourses of justice and utility arguing that women were political beings with political rights and that they could be useful in cases dealing with health care, school and social policies. He added a third argument stressing that women were neither children nor criminals (Bach 2003).

The argument on *'justice'* was central. This argument changed over time and had two meanings. One emphasised that all citizens in a democracy with equal abilities should have political rights and that the concept of "the people" included both women and men. Here suffrage was considered a goal in itself, a simple matter of justice (Dahlerup 1978:141-142). The no taxation without representation-dictum formed a second version of the justice – argument, stressing the similarities between men and women as economic beings, thus limiting the vote to women who paid taxes (Bach 2003:30).

The Social Democrats proposed to grant the vote to all women based upon an equality principle, arguing that differentiating between married and unmarried women would create new inequalities. This position differentiated between economic and personal suffrage, arguing that married women's vote would not harm the family but make the homes happier, whereas inequality would harm social harmony as well as individual abilities (Bach 2003: 51-53).

The *utilitarian* argument pointed out that men and women are different and that women had special qualities and experiences. On its basis, women ought to be granted the vote because their political participation would be useful for and improve society. Women's special abilities, values and experiences as mothers were perceived as factors that could improve the quality of political decisions and benefit society. This argument was put forward by members of the Danish Women's Society.

All different arguments were also used by the Danish women's movements and suffrage organisations. The justice argument was used especially by the National League for Women's Suffrage, the utilitarian argument primarily by Danish Women's Society (which also argued along the lines of justice (Ravn 1985: 242) and the interest argument was rarely used (Dahlerup 1978: 142). The argument presented by individual members of the two organisations stated that women should gain access to politics because they would be able to represent women's interests that, due to the sexual division of labour, were different from men's (Ravn 1988). According to this argument women like other social groups such as the farmers and workers ought to be granted the vote in order to protect their

own interests – the assumption being that only women could defend the interests of women.

The Parliamentary debate also aired a number of non favourable arguments from the Conservative representatives directed primarily against married women's right to vote (Bach 2003) and this was in line with the general resistance towards granting married women independent legal and political status. Two crucial arguments were presented, one based on a) biology and the other upon b) 'sociology' both arguing that it was not in society's interests to give the vote to married women because this would turn marriage into a political battlefield.
The biological argument focused on women as intrinsically inadequate and unfit for political work due to the female psyche, and it was based on men's and women's biological differences and on the belief that women were emotional and irrational and therefore not suitable for political work. It argued that women should not speak in public because they are destined to other tasks than politics; that is providing care-work in the family (Bach 2003). This argument drew on the idea of separate spheres for men and women.

The dominant sociological discourse stressed that women's participation in public life was not in society's interests and that granting married women the vote would undermine the fundamental division of work and the separate spheres within society, where men were responsible for public affaires and women for private households. Conservative MPs stressed that women's vote would undermine the fundamental gender and power system in society. The main argument being that married women ought to be fully politically represented by their spouse who in economic life represents not only himself but his family. Inclusion of married women in political citizenship and in the parliamentary public sphere on equal terms with their husbands would create less favourable conditions for the key institution in the private sphere: the marriage. It thus assumed that equal gender rights in the political public sphere would disrupt the gender order in the private sphere. The struggle for enfranchisement thus revealed the cleavage between the public and the private sphere (Bach 2003).

What does the discursive struggle tell us about the Danish political culture and public debate at the time of the struggle for enfranchisement? Women's struggle for the vote not only illustrates key aspects of the Danish democratic institutions, but also helps to understand broader societal power struggles, including women's role in the family, the legal and political status of married women (Larsen 2008) and the general struggle for democratization of political rights at the time. The debate was not only about gender but also about class differences.

From a comparative Nordic perspective Denmark represents a special case in the struggle for women's political rights (Bach 2003: 5; Christensen & Siim: 63-64). First, there was no differentiation in women's suffrage as unmarried and married women gained the right to vote to local municipalities at the same time in 1908. This is different from the Finnish, Icelandic and Swedish approach to the question of enfranchisement where unmarried and economically active women gained the right to vote in local elections before other women. Secondly, women gained the vote at the same time as domestic servants and thus the principle about universal suffrage included all women and all men. Although the demand for women's vote was not met with a strong resistance in Parliament compared to the British and French cases, there was discursive resistance against married women's vote in Parliament as part of the resistance against the proposed reforms of the electorate laws. The arguments against married women's vote illustrate that the patriarchal family structure and strong conservative forces in society worked against the political rights for women and the poor and for the privileged voting system.

4. Female suffrage and citizenship

Women's suffrage and the struggle for civil and social rights did not follow the same pattern as men's. In most countries women gained political and social rights before they obtained equal civil rights in marriage (Siim 2000). Female suffrage was a cornerstone in women's democratic citizenship and political rights were perceived as a means not only to influence political decisions but also to expand women's civil and social rights. In the previous sections we have shown how the Danish struggle for women's suffrage was linked to the political class struggle for universal suffrage and parliamentary democracy between the farmers and workers against the landowners. In this section we look closer at the interconnection between the struggle for women's civil, political and social rights.

In Denmark proposals for married women's political rights were directly linked to the struggle for married women's civil rights and authority in marriage (Larsen 2008; 12). Danish women obtained equal rights in marriage relatively early and already at the end of the 19th century wives had been granted their majority. Thus women obtained basic civil rights in marriage before they won the vote. From a political perspective, this can be explained by the close linkage between the struggle of the bourgeois women's movement organized in Danish Women's Society and the pro-suffrage Agrarian Liberal Party. Fredrik Beyer played a key role in the formation of this political alliance because he was both an agitator for women's vote as an MP and a co-founder of the Danish Women's Society. At a socio-economic level, the early reform of the marriage laws was probably made possible by the Danish class structure with a dominant agrarian

sector and a relatively egalitarian class structure in the country side. The wives of many small farmers were recognized as having a crucial role in the production.

The Danish development of women's civil and political rights resembles the development of gender relations in the other Nordic countries. The reform of marriage legislation has recently been linked to the development of the Nordic welfare states. In the beginning of the 20th century, marriage legislation was reformed in all the Nordic countries, male privileges were abolished and basic equality established (Melby et al 2007). During the reform process starting in 1909 and ending during the 1920s married women were given the right to dispose over their own private property and income, full disposal of the common estate as well as custody of the children. This early introduction of basic equality between spouses was unique compared to the family legislation in the rest of Europe. Here it was not until the 1960s that a similar legislation was introduced. This forms a key element in the claim that there is a special Nordic model of marriage (Bradley, 1996; Melby et al, 2000; Melby et al. 2008).

The period 1918 to 1925 saw the passing of a number of parliamentary bills dealing with equality for women, with women politicians such as Elna Munch and Nina Bang playing a key role in the debates (Nielsen, without year). As a consequence Nordic women had already obtained formal equal rights with men in terms of education and government posts, voting and political positions around 1920. Between 1909 and 1929, legislation on marriage was also thoroughly reformed in all the Nordic countries, modernizing the institution of marriage, enhancing women's individual rights and ending the husband's legal power over his wife. The reformed legislation also gave married women the obligation to provide for the family, a measure that, seen in a European perspective, was unique and questioned the male breadwinner model in this formative period of the Scandinavian welfare states (Melby et al. 2007). On this basis scholars have further argued that gender equality in marriage is one of the pillars of the Nordic welfare model and that early modernization of gender relations through gender equality reforms formed an important historical precondition for the universal Scandinavian welfare state regime with a high degree of gender equality (Bradley, 1996; Melby et al, 2000).

5. Female suffrage and citizenship today

Around 1900, the citizenship debate focused on questions related to the suffrage and addressed the intersections of gender and class as it concerned an extension of citizenship to women and the poor. Today, the citizenship debate concerns issues related to the social and political marginalisation of immigrants and addresses the intersection of gender as it deals with ethnicity immigrant

women's demands for equal rights and cultural differences. This final section first looks at the debate on gender balance in politics and ends by discussing the new challenges to equal citizenship from immigration and increased diversity.

In spite of the adoption of formal gender equality politics in many arenas of society it took approximately 60 years from women's enfranchisement for Denmark, Norway and Sweden to cross the 20 percent threshold and 70 years to reach 30 percent of women in parliamentary seats (Dahlerup 2006). Moreover, women's representation did not rise to ten percent in the municipalities till 1966 and not till 1970 in the county councils. This illustrates that there is not any direct linkage between women's vote and an increase in female representation and it further indicates that the male-dominated political opportunity structure together with the dominant discourse about women's primary family role remained a major barrier to gender equality in politics.

It also illustrates that there are different patterns at the local, the national and European levels. Unlike many European countries, Danish women's representation in the municipal and county councils has generally been lower than on the national level. Since the early 1990s, women's representation has indeed stagnated in local politics at 27-28 %, while their representation in the European Parliament was higher than women's percentage in national elections in the first four elections (in 1979, 1984, 1989 and 1994).

Female suffrage did not create equality in politics, but it has been a key aspect of Danish women's mobilization and empowerment in civil society (Christensen & Siim 2001). Between the two World Wars a successful alliance was formed to defend married women's right to work between bourgeois women in Danish Women's Society and women organized in the trade union movement (Ravn, 1995). After the Second World War, Danish women were mobilized as active citizens in the new social movements, and during the last 30 years Danish women have also become part of the political elite.

During the 1970s and 1980s a strong women's mobilisation outside the political parties formed part of the general grass root mobilisation that succeeded in placing women's, peace- and environmental issues on the political agenda (Christensen & Siim 2001). The movements represented a break with the male dominated political parties and were able to influence the political opportunity structure as well as peoples' everyday life through the spread of values, norms and activities to the general public.

Denmark has no real gender balance in politics. During the last three elections women's representation has remained about 38 percent of members of Parliament. From a comparative Nordic perspective the Danish gender political

model has been characterised as a more 'bottom-up' oriented model compared to Norway and Sweden, and the autonomous women's movement has played a relatively stronger role compared to women's groups in the political parties (Bergqvist et al 1999). In contrast to Norway and Sweden Denmark has no tradition for *gender quota* in political parties. Here only the Social Democrats and the Socialist Folks Party have adopted gender quotas, but only for limited functions and during short periods of time. This can be explained by a combination of the strong bottom-up tradition in the women's movement, which has made the push for gender quotas in the parties weaker than in Norway and Sweden, and a strong liberal tradition with more hostile attitudes towards state regulation.

In spite of the women-friendly social policies with extended public childcare, which have contributed to the high participation of women on the labour market, there is still a lack of gender equality in major arenas of society. One major challenge is the lack of gender equality in leadership positions in the private labour market, the media and in academia (Fiig 2009). This imbalance in power relations has been discussed by gender researchers, but is not considered a major political problem that needs to be solved. According to the dominant political discourse ethnic Danish women have already achieved gender equality, and gender equality is primarily perceived as a problem for ethnic minority women.

One of the new challenges to Danish citizenship and gender model comes from immigration, which has increased diversity according to religion, culture and ethnicity and has created new social and political inequalities among ethnic Danish women and women from ethnic minorities. Immigrant women's social and political marginalisation represents a major democratic problem It has become visible that the inclusion of women in the political elite does not represent immigrant women and one of the key questions is about who has the power to represent whom (Siim 2007).

From a comparative perspective a unique element in the Danish approach to citizenship is the relatively strong social and political egalitarianism, which was historically combined with a high degree of homogeneity in terms of ethnicity, language and religion. Globalisation, increased immigration and the subsequent social and political marginalisation of immigrant groups therefore pose challenges to the Danish citizenship model to live up to the normative visions that all individuals who live legally in the country should be treated as equal citizens, have the right to be represented in politics and the ability to influence political decisions.

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