Denmark: The Rise of Fascism and the Decline of the Nordic model

**Jasna Balorda**

Liverpool Hope University, School of Social Sciences

E-mail: Balordj@hope.ac.uk

*Contrary to its conventional image as a social-democratic paragon, the Danish welfare state has, in recent decades, been undergoing significant changes as a response to the intrusion of the social sphere by self-regulating markets and a final departure from Keynesian politics of universalism and solidarity. This article examines the evident decline of the Nordic model as a result of neoliberal globalisation and establishes an association between the erosion of the welfare state and the emergence of fascist political sentiment in Denmark. An analysis of the Danish People’s party and its growing public support among the disenfranchised working class communities in Denmark demonstrates how those overlooked by the free market and unrepresented by the liberal left become increasingly more receptive to the proposed social agendas of the far right campaigns.*

**Keywords**: Denmark, fascism, DPP, neoliberalism, welfare state.

**Introduction**

The field of Social Policy has so far been dominated by literature proposing the Nordic model as the ultimate solution to the crisis of neo-liberal globalisation as a result of two major trends: a) a dedication to the path dependency approach which focuses on the institutional continuation of progressive values (Cox, 2004; Kay, 2005; Kiess et al., 2017) and b) a persistence of Esping-Andersen’s welfare model (1990) within the key body of theory despite its obvious limitations (Alves, 2015; Kuisma and Nygard, 2015). This approach has, however, proven to be largely inadequate at addressing the very real issues of poverty and unemployment currently faced by Scandinavian economies, demonstrating not just a gradual decline of the Nordic model as a result of the intrusion of the social sphere by self-regulating markets, but a certain disappearance of all values commonly attributed to it, including those of universalism and solidarity. In fact, the continuous crises experienced by all neo-liberal economies, including the Danish, have brought about a rebirth of the militant far right eager to facilitate the interests of capital through a creation of ethnically pure states (Eagleton, 1976; Marx, 1980). The aim of this article is, therefore, twofold. Firstly, and contrary to the majority of currently existing literature portraying Scandinavian economies as the pinnacle of social development, the gradual decline of the Nordic model will be examined as a result of overwhelming forces of neoliberal globalisation. Secondly, and most importantly, an association will be established between the decline of the welfare state and the emergence of far right politics in Denmark. It is, indeed, only with the transition from Keynesian politics of universalism and solidarity to the neoliberal ethos of ‘survival of the fittest’ that those overlooked by the free market and unrepresented by the existing left, become receptive to the proposed social agendas of far right campaigns. This article, thus, presents an innovative argument and fills an existing gap in current literature, which tends to either entirely overlook the difficulties faced by the Nordic economies as a result of the laissez faire ideologies, or does not attempt to relate the decline of the welfare state to the rise of the far right among the disenfranchised working class Scandinavian communities ([Green‐Pedersen](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/action/doSearch?ContribAuthorStored=Green-Pedersen%2C+Christoffer), 2002; Obinger *et al*., 2010; Bredgaard and Daemmrich, 2012). Given the nature of the current political context, characterised by turbulent changes in the political rhetoric and the final demise of the liberal order, the questions explored here seem more pertinent than ever.

**The introduction of neoliberalism and the decline of the Nordic model in Denmark**

Denmark is generally seen as an advanced, Social-Democratic welfare state according to Esping-Andersen’s seminal work, characterised by a free market on the one hand and high levels of de-commodification and universalism on the other, where access to a generous welfare system for all citizens, means that workers are not forced to participate in the market in order to survive (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 37). In relation to the Bismarckian corporatist-statist and the Anglo-Saxon liberal model, this type of welfare state is more explicitly based on the socialist ideal of solidarity, defined as the state’s responsibility to protect its citizens against common misfortunes such as sickness, interrupted earnings, and old age, through distribution of wealth (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Weale, 1990: 477). Individual autonomy and social mobility would then, in this ‘Nordic model’, be guaranteed through facilitation of direct collective bargaining between labour unions and employers at the national level, maximised labour participation and a liberal use of expansionary fiscal policy.

However, despite its international reputation as a social democratic paragon, Denmark has had a long and ‘fruitful’ relationship with the free market for most of the 20th century. In fact, a fully Keynesian economy can only be said to have existed from the mid-1950’s until the late 1980’s, and has therefore represented an intermezzo in the country’s overall historical commitment to the free market, rather than its general characteristic (Kuisma and Nygard, 2015). Politically, The Danish state was historically dominated by the so called politics of the ‘big compromise’, where the centre parties, which were predominantly against Socialism, but for social responsibility, i.e. the welfare state, played a key role (Christoffersen and Paldam, 2004: 9). In spite of this, the Danish welfare state has, with its focus on universalism and de-commodification, certainly represented one of the most successful attempts at a Keynesian economy in the Western world, which is also why the decline of this model is so important to analyse.

Indeed, The Danish welfare state has been going through extensive changes since the introduction of neoliberal policies in the late 1970’s and is now considered by some as a multi- tiered, fiscal economy, increasingly characterised by a commitment to unrestricted markets, monetarist policies to lower inflation and maintain fiscal balance achieved by reducing public expenditures and raising the interest rate (Kvist and Greve, 2011). The many proponents of the Nordic model like Stiglitz and Kenworthy are now slowly becoming replaced by theories critical of its achievements. A study by Landersøn and Heckman from 2017, for example compared American and Danish social mobility and found that social mobility in Denmark is not significantly higher than that in the US (Kenworthy, 2003; Stiglitz, 2014; Landersøn and Heckman, 2017).

But, let us start by contextualising this transition from Keynesianism to neoliberalism. Like in most Western societies, in Denmark, the stagflation of the 1970’s signified the beginning of the end of the Fordist model of production caused to an extent by the oil shocks of 1973, but also by the fact that Keynesianism realistically reached its socio-economic frontiers, revealing the absurdity of its commitment to reconcile the laws of laissez fair with the concept of state control (Ryner, 1999). Since the early 1980’s the development of informatics and cybernetics also entailed a refraction of production relations, a global trend that has impacted all capitalist societies and eventually brought about the switch from economies of scale to economies of scope. As the microchip revolution enabled the controlling of production overseas, we see a substitution of labour for capital in production with production no longer being carried out nationally and productive capital depending less on nationally generated mass consumption, which also began to undermine the responsibility of the capitalist towards the consumer as citizen and in turn also started to weaken the structures of the nation state (Gill, 1997: 22; Ryner, 1999). In other words, the transition to post-Fordist modes of production also signified the end of the politics of productivity associated with industrial capital and an emergence of a disorganised working class, unable to ensure collective bargaining rights, acceptable wages and reasonably high employment levels (Rydgren, 2007: 502; Ryner, 2007). Indeed, as some theorists claimed in the early 1990’s, a social democratic mode of governance cannot be sustained without an organised labour movement, and in Denmark, as in other Western democracies, the new politics of off shoring and privatisation along with weaker unions and the general neoliberal spirit of individualism and competitiveness, resulted in the ultimate erosion of social movements based on solidarity (Refslund and Andersen, 2014).

This new market orientation in Denmark should therefore be seen as a response to increasing economic pressures on the welfare state but also a general neoliberal Zeitgeist, as the Chicago school was largely seen as the engine of economic modernisation by most Western political elites (Ryner, 1999; Kvist and Greve, 2011; Anttonen and Sipilä, 2012: 26). It was therefore decided that the public sector needed to be controlled and a new Conservative-Liberal government in 1982 started up a program for bringing in market forces to raise efficiency at first through outsourcing, and later through privatisation, as it was felt that the fixed costs were becoming increasingly difficult to cover by the municipalities and that only the market could drive them down. Certainly, it can be argued that after the Keynesian growth of the Danish welfare state came to a halt in the 1970’s, the state has been in a more or less continuous crisis, in-spite of the fact that the introduction of flexicurity1 in the early 1990’s seemingly reduced unemployment while simultaneously reducing welfare benefits (Anttonen and Sipilä, 2012; Refsfeld and Andersen, 2014).

Overall, the neoliberalisation process in Denmark has been fairly smooth, yet comprehensive, and initially met with little resistance or interference by outside actors, unlike in the global periphery where the privatisations were carried out under a great deal of pressure from the International Monetary Fund (Wallerstein, 1974; Shannon, 1996). There is, however, emerging evidence that many of these transactions were less than fortunate particularly in relation to natural monopolies, which soon became reflected in growing public dissatisfaction. It has sometimes been argued that privatisations were particularly problematic because the state did not liberalise internally first, so the public companies sold were monopolies which then gave a lot of control of internal matters to outside actors, but it would seem that deeper issues, particularly those related to workers’ rights and increasing unemployment, were more relevant. The 2014 sale of a 19 per cent stake of the largest Danish utility energy giant DONG to Goldman Sachs, was seen as a significant threat to national independence and almost resulted in government collapse, demonstrating an already destabilised political establishment with little control of the market (Christoffersen and Paldam, 2004; Refslund, 2012; Refslund and Andersen, 2014).

The global recession of 2008 had a particularly significant impact on the Danish economy and was a pretext for speeding up the process of neoliberalisation. Even though Denmark was somewhat less devastated by the crisis than many other members of the Eurozone, considering that it retained its national currency, the recession has, nevertheless, created turbulence in the market, with a decrease in growth and consumer spending directly leading to an increase in unemployment. In fact, according to data from the European Commission in 2016, in just one year, after the beginning of the recession, unemployment rates in Denmark more than doubled from 3 per cent to around 7.5 per cent with around 80.000 manufacturing jobs lost to cheap labour abroad (Refslund, 2012). Overall, according to Marginson and Meardi (2009), the increased role of multinational corporations in post-recession economies, with their capacity to move production and jobs across borders, resulted in more pressure for decentralisation, implementation of cost-saving and flexibility-enhancing measures and, as a result, also, a significantly reduced power of organised labour. (Ryner, 2007; Mailand, 2014).

Furthermore, instead of being a part of the solution, the welfare state was, in the neoliberal logic, seen as a part of the problem, with the public sector cuts deemed a crucial part of the new austerity politics. Indeed, public sector reform from 2007, has resulted in the number of administrative units drastically reduced by almost 2/3rds (271 to 98) including mass shutdowns of city court circuits, police districts and a reduction of the total number of councillors by more than 50 per cent, also resulting in significant job losses (Costa and Liouville, 2013; Alves, 2015). Reforms of the benefit system have reduced the time employment benefits can be received from four to two years resulting in almost 50,000 unemployed dropping out of the social system within the first year and a rapid increase in poverty levels, with the gap between rich and poor increasing by more in the first three years of the crisis than in the previous 12 years (EAPN, 2015). The already fragile welfare state, eroded by cuts and no longer able to adequately distribute wealth was supposed to be rescued by the implementation of the trickle down approach, but this has, as in other contexts, proven to be a logical fallacy.

It must, in this respect also be highlighted that causes of some of the above mentioned trends towards neoliberalisation, should also be looked for in the EU Open Method of Coordination procedures. Indeed, while most early studies highlighted negative integration of Nordic member states within the EU, more recent literature clearly shows a turn towards positive integration. A Europeanisation of social protection was thus taking place through an increased application of internal market rules as competition laws were endorsed within member states’ social protection schemes and practices (Kvist and Saari, 2007: 2; Kuisma and Nygard, 2015).

On top of this, neoliberal budget disciplines emanating from the Maastricht Treaty as well as the Stability and Growth Pact have presented a ban on deficit funding and a strict monitoring of public sector expenditure in an overall attempt to limit its size and scope (Ferrera, 2005). A wave of post-recession labour market activation policies, a central element in European employment strategy, directly resulted in the deterioration of workers’ rights by creating increasingly precarious working conditions. The relationship between unemployment and benefits has now been redefined in such a way that the stick, (e.g. reducing or taking away benefits) rather than the carrot, has become the key motivational element, effectively making the benefits system a punitive one (Andersen 2004: 41; Aerschot, 2016; Lødemel and Moreira, 2014).

As a part of the EU employment agenda, pension reforms were also pursued, which generally sought to raise the average pension age and enforce financial sustainability of mandatory pension schemes through privatisation, while the early retirement pay scheme was abolished. Being active in the labour market now had a profound impact on access to higher levels of disposable income even after retirement, a move towards occupational welfare, which not only signalled a detachment from the universalistic Nordic welfare approach but also a departure from the Scandinavian model of social citizenship towards a neoliberal, interactive model, which attributes rights according to individuals’ marketable skills rather than their national belonging (McCluskey, 2002; Aerschot, 2016).

Although welfare theories derived from management studies can potentially be seen as dehumanising, Dean’s typology of ‘welfare to work’ regimes could be useful in this respect as it highlights the switch from an egalitarian and competitive ‘human capital’ development approach, which focuses on training individuals to become better at navigating the market, towards a coercive and authoritarian, neoliberal work-first approach which merely aims to discipline and punish if certain participation criteria have not been realised (Bengtsson, 2014). Indeed, the introduction of labour market activation policies and a general European trend towards a rolling back of the benefit system can be said to be in direct opposition to the very essence of the Danish welfare project which, in line with politics of de-commodification, aims to guarantee an acceptable living standard for all independent of market participation (Dean, 2007; Lødemel and Moreira, 2014; Aerschot, 2016).

There is today, little doubt that the introduction of neoliberal reforms has had disastrous consequences with regard to living standards in Denmark. While the country still has relatively low levels of inequality, the Gini index shows a rapid deterioration in the living conditions of almost 1/5th of the population with 17, 7 per cent being in the risk zone for poverty and social exclusion (Alves, 2015: 11). Policies such as the introduction of the benefit ceiling, intended to function as a motivational tool to ‘make work pay’ and fitness to work schemes aiming to reduce the number of people on benefits, all reflect wider European neoliberal trends towards rolling back the welfare state and affect particularly the most vulnerable including families with children. Indeed, not only has the typically Danish concept of flexicurity, originally introduced by Social Democrats, proven itself inadequate at reconciling the essentially opposing values of capital and labour in production on the one hand and income distribution on the other, but we see an even further departure in almost all areas of social care towards a multitiered work-first approach, a clear sign of the erosion of essential values of the Nordic model (Kvist and Greve, 2011; Bengtsson, 2014).

To summarise, it seems that the nature of the Danish Welfare state changed dramatically in the last decade as a result of various influences related to the forces of neoliberal globalisation. From a solidarity based de-commodified welfare model with origins in a historical consensus between workers and farmers, endorsing a cooperative, participatory model of democracy, the system has now developed into a punitive, authoritarian, work-first, approach based on weak unions, lower corporate taxes, limited access to benefits and strict obedience. The only way to achieve inclusion in this new order is to fully participate in the workforce, a model which does not take into account the fact that unemployment is a necessary result of neoliberal capitalism, reinforced by the politics of austerity. Indeed, it is this new authoritarianism along with the growing inequalities, facilitated by the demise of the welfare state that has created the political climate necessary for the rise of the far right.

**Neo-liberalism in Denmark and the rise of the far right**

In Denmark, the rise of the far right certainly took place simultaneously with the rise of the neo-liberal order, from late 1970’s onwards (Wren, 2001). The Danish People’s party, the biggest and most influential far right organisation in the country, draws global inspiration from the Nouvelle Droite, a French fascist revivalist movement from the 1960’s and Italian Sorellian fascists, a movement well known for its revisionary Marxism and its desire to ensure the victory of the proletariat (Sternhell *et al*., 1994: 93). The latter is particularly important because it clearly demonstrates the link between the decline of the Nordic welfare model and the appeal of the far right social welfare agendas to the marginalised working classes. Indeed, the Danish People’s party has willingly adapted to the needs of its voters, most of whom belong to the blue collar working class2, by moving more to the left in relation to its position on the welfare state, and is currently, in line with many of its fascist predecessors, advocating protection of the elderly and the vulnerable (Widfeldt, 2014: 140). In this respect, the radical right in Denmark appears to have encroached on the political terrain previously occupied by the Social Democrats3, presenting themselves as socially responsible protectors of the welfare state, and representing the interests of the unemployed, the precariat, and blue collar workers who are afraid of losing their jobs as a result of neo liberal globalisation and accompanying centralisation and deindustrialisation.

Indeed, the party has been able to tap into widespread feelings of insecurity felt by increasing numbers within politically unrepresented groups in the wake of welfare retrenchment, and cuts to pension rights and unemployment benefits. As a result, its electoral success has grown steadily, from a very narrow electoral base, to almost one fifth of the entire electorate in 2015. It is now the largest right wing party in Denmark (2nd in elections). However, reflecting the somewhat ambiguous relationship most fascist parties have with capitalist agendas, DPP has, when in government, actually supported neoliberal reforms (Eatewell, 1996).

The relationship between fascism and capitalism is certainly not an uncomplicated one. While most Marxist literature argues that fascism is an attempt to ensure the rule of monopoly capitalism in its least vulnerable form (Eagleton, 1976; Renton, 1999: 16), others have pointed out that fascist regimes have, in many ways, challenged the autonomy of large-scale capitalism by imposing state control of the economy and nationalising industry (Payne, 1980: 162; Eatewell, 1996; Berend, 2016). In this sense, fascism is primarily opposed to the laissez faire form of international finance capitalism, and is with its focus on welfare and community, in fact, closer in nature to state capitalism (Berend, 2016). With its ability to cater to the interests of the marginalised working classes by promising to preserve the welfare state, while at the same time challenging failed ideologies of liberalism and multiculturalism, fascism presents itself as the ultimate solution to the problems of neoliberal globalisation, and a useful compromise between labour and capital (Renton, 1999).

Indeed, the importance of economy for our understanding of rising fascist sentiments in Europe is crucial. In spite of previously existing low level routine racism in Denmark, the rise of a more general anti-immigrant sentiment only occurs when the Keynesian economy starts experiencing difficulties in the late 1970’s and the ‘outsiders’ become perceived as a burden (Wren, 2001; Schori Liang, 2016: 156). The social construct of the immigrant as a threat to the welfare state reveals the nature of this economy related anxiety in the context of neoliberal globalisation. Theorists such as Rydgren have argued that it is the perceived lack of political importance of economic cleavages that brings about an increased interest in socio-cultural cleavages related to immigration and cultural values (Rydgren, 2007: 489). In other contexts as well, particularly in the Weimar Republic it is possible to show a precise causal relationship between the economy and the rise of the far right. A brief recovery in the golden twenties as a consequence of US loans resulted in an instant decrease in the support for fascists only for it to grow again once the effects of the economic boom wore off (Harold, 2004). In fact, in all DPP’s manifestos, immigration is described as a serious threat to the continuing existence of the Danish welfare state, with Muslims in particular presented as being unwilling to work and dependent on welfare (Tönnies, 1955; Wren, 2001: 156; Danmarkshistorien.dk, 2018). It is argued that Muslims are a threat to Danish values of free speech, democracy and equality; arguments that are racialised and draw on biological reductionism (Danskfolkeparti.dk, 2017). Expelling immigrants is thus seen as crucial in improving living standards and reviving native Danish communities. Worryingly, the influence of DPP on the overall political atmosphere in the country has been unprecedented in Europe and has directly led to increasingly harsh anti-immigrant laws, labour market discrimination and extremely high levels of ethnic minority unemployment (Careja *et al*., 2016).

Indeed, The Conservative-Liberal coalition government (2001-2011) has implemented many of the Danish People’s Party’s key demands. The government began by enacting rules that prevented Danish citizens and others from bringing a ‘foreign’ spouse into the country unless both partners were aged 24 or above, passed a solvency test showing the Dane had not claimed social security for 12 months and could lodge a bond of £7,000. The new policy was openly presented to the public as an attempt to fight arranged marriages, targeting specifically Muslim population. Institutional racism, thus, became a feature of the political agenda, evident in the introduction of start-up aid for refugees, which cut the amount refugees received by up to 40 per cent during their first seven years in the country. This represented the emergence of an ethnic tier in the welfare economy (Kvist and Greve, 2011). Furthermore, a more recent law passed in 2017 allowed the police to confiscate the valuables of refugees on their arrival to the country. Luggage and strip searches are used to enforce the new rules and make sure valuables are surrendered, marking the beginning of a racialised police state. Furthermore, Danish social workers also seem to have become enforcers of the government’s discriminatory policies and are charged with detecting and reporting perceived anti-social behaviour amongst immigrants. In the context of an authoritarian welfare state, the future of Danish social work is seen within the police force (Oland, 2015). Finally, in order to preserve essentialised Danishness, a canon of values and culture was drafted and made obligatory reading in schools, reinforcing imagined differences between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. The neoliberal order stripped of key Keynesian values of universalism and solidarity is, indeed, a fertile soil for the development of institutionalised racism.

This is where we see a clear divergence of the current Danish path from established liberal European politics, as the above-mentioned laws were all heavily criticised by the Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner and would not have been possible if Denmark had to comply with EU law in this area. In fact, Denmark remains fairly autonomous in this respect and holds opt-outs from European Union policies in relation to security, defence, citizenship, police and justice (Alves, 2015). In response to criticisms from the Swedish government, Pia Kjærsgaard the former leader of the Danish People’s party and currently the speaker in the Danish parliament responded: ‘If they want to turn Stockholm, Gothenburg or Malmö into a Scandinavian Beirut, with clan wars, honour killings and gang rapes, let them do it. We can always put a barrier on the Øresund Bridge’, exemplifying the deeply racist, isolationist sentiment of Danish far right politics (Kjaersgaard, 2011, cited in EAPN: 20).

It wouldn’t, of course, be illogical to argue that racism is integral to capitalism. According to some theories, racial minorities function as shock absorbers in capitalist business cycles. By presenting the immigrant as deviant, capitalism can explain the concentration of poverty in some subgroups and manage the risk of instability (Wolff, 2016). The meritocratic ideology further justifies the exploitation of the immigrant in low paid jobs, on the black market and in privatised refugee camps and detention centres, as it is blind to the difference in resources between social groups (Murray and Herrnestein, 1994). Furthermore, the introduction of racist politics achieves a hierarchisation of the working class, thereby a) justifying the lowering of wages within one segment of the population and b) creating a reserve army of labour able to rapidly respond to the needs of fluctuating neoliberal economies. According to Balibar and Wallerstein, this hierarchisation does not only directly aid the goals of individual businesses, but also prevents an emergence of proletarian solidarity able to challenge the dominance of the capital. This is, indeed, how fascism, as an extreme form of right wing politics, manages to overcome class conflict by diverting the focus from class onto race, thereby attempting to stabilise the unpredictable free market economies (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991).

Indeed, the idea of the Danish people as the superior race as opposed to the Muslim immigrant as the ‘enemy within’ is quite apparent in the politics of the DPP. While Danes are shown as naturally tolerant, democratic and civilised, the Muslim immigrant is portrayed as a patriarchal barbarian, prone to violence and crime (Camre, 2007, cited in Bygbjerg, 2014). The inherently racial idea of the Danish Folk, the essence of a Gemeinschaft movement based on the idea of blood and soil, presents itself as an opposition to the immigrant invasion of traditionally Danish lands and the subsequent imagined decline of Danish communities, traditions and values (Tönnies, 1955; Wren, 2001; Eco, 1995: 12; Paxton, 2005). As one of DPP’s MPs Mogens Camre put it: ‘We are economically, culturally and militarily superior and we can take our lands back if we want to. The Islamic parallel societies in the EU must be dissolved by use of force if necessary and those who will not adapt to the European norms must be expelled. We can start with Imams and by closing their military headquarters – mosques’ (Camre, 2011, cited in Bygbjerg, 2014). This deep seated victimisation proves itself to be the single crucial element in any fascist ideology, which, according to Paxton, typically presents itself as a form of authoritarian nationalism, marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation and victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy and purity, with the final aim of creating a racially pure utopian society (Paxton, 2005: 218). The idea here is of course, that fascism is best defined by its core myth of rebirth, which is, in contexts such as Denmark, where the development of the far right is still restricted to the realm of ideology rather than an existing regime, particularly useful. Indeed, when Søren Krarup, the ideological figurehead of DPP insists on the return to traditional Danish values, such as God, king and the fatherland instead of multiculturalism, globalisation and a common European identity, he not only attempts to address the fears related to the insecurities of neoliberal globalisation in general, but also presents a palingenetic promise of an ancestral living space uncontaminated by the ‘enemy within’ (Griffin, 1996; Krarup, 2000, cited in Larsen, 2014).

The fear induced by global integrations and the subsequent decline of the Danish nation state including the integration into the European Union seems to greatly fuel these feelings of victimisation, particularly in relation to immigration. On the DPP’s website, the European Union, in particular, is portrayed as a source of immigrant crime and a danger to racial purity (Danskfolkeparti, 2017). The social construct of the Muslim immigrant as deviant becomes thus predominant as politics turn into a sphere characterised by the need for protection and isolationism.

Indeed, Islam has in the post 9/11 discourse become largely synonymous with terrorism replacing the key debate on re-distribution of wealth with a single topic, the ‘war on terror’. This is particularly evident in contemporary Danish social policy developments that aim to remove non-assimilated immigrants from the public sphere altogether, including the recently passed law banning burqa and niqab. The ‘war on terror’ has also been used to justify heavy policing in ghettos and unlawful detention of immigrants. Here we see the criminalisation of racial belonging (Oland, 2015).

Interestingly the main DPP argument against the European Union is not its destructive austerity policies, which the party has enthusiastically supported, but it’s supposed communist like totalitarianism (Danskfolkeparti, 2017). The merger of the two key threats: global Socialism and Islamic terrorism is particularly apparent in the public disdain for global human rights advocates like Amnesty International, which are often referred to as ‘Muslim lovers’ and ‘Halal hippies’. It is indeed this animosity towards the modern, global and multicultural alongside an overwhelming focus on a communist plot which is so typical not just of fascist ideologies in general, but is symptomatic of the alternative right, both in the US and in the UK.

Certainly, the only reason why such hateful anti-immigrant rhetoric has been allowed a free reign in the press is, according to Wren (2001), due to an absence of any coordinated initiatives from the political left. A consequence of neoliberalism’s infiltration of traditional left wing structures in the early 1990’s, has led to segments of the Danish population becoming not only marginalised and impoverished but also voiceless (Harvey, 2007; Alves, 2015). A settling of accounts with Socialism, was, indeed, carried out in an appropriately totalitarian manner by the neoliberal Danish state, by, for example, putting pressure on public institutions such as state television and universities to abandon the so-called ‘Spirit of 68’. Furthermore, levelling the ground of the Copenhagen youth house in 2007, which was the headquarters of the anarchist left and one of the key Socialist strongholds in Europe, resulted in mass demonstrations and violent clashes with the police. With the final defeat of Socialist ideals, the only way for vulnerable groups to claim representation was through political programs of the far right, thereby marking the final demise of the Danish politics of centrism (Schori Liang, 2016).

**Conclusion**

It is argued that the disintegration of the welfare state in Denmark is a consequence of neoliberal reforms implemented by the Danish political establishment over the past four decades, that reflected a particularly strong commitment to the free market both as a result of the neoliberal Zeitgeist but also obligations the country has taken on as a part of its membership in the European Union. Both left and right radical wings in Denmark, as well as in Europe, emerged in the context of a real disenchantment with the promises of the free market and the loss of the welfare state as the key social protector. However, the far right has been far more ready to exploit the political void created by the crisis of neoliberalism than the Danish far left, which has been silenced and suppressed by an increasingly totalitarian police state, characterised by a combination of free market ideology and emergency laws linked to the ‘war on terror’.

Current political trends in Denmark are not dissimilar to those in Brexit obsessed Britain or Trump’s USA where ‘bottom up’ movements have emerged, populated by an increasingly angry and disenfranchised working class. These developments indicate that the path-dependency approach can no longer be seen as adequate in the current analyses of the Nordic model. This is, most definitely, a time of great turbulence as the liberal political status quo, which has characterised most Western contexts since the 1980’s, has finally ended, and with it the age of multiculturalism and political correctness.

In an era of globalisation, those who have not benefited from cosmopolitanism, and who are dependent on the local distribution of wealth for survival, are the losers. If the groups negatively affected, manage to organise themselves effectively around the idea of worker’s rights, a new socialist reality may arise, but the racialised construct of the immigrant within the far right discourses stands in the way of this and serves to prevent an emergence of any valid revolutionary effort. Indeed, a mass movement is not unlikely to occur in Denmark, but at this point, it is more likely to be fascist than socialist. Indeed, the fascist ideology of the Danish People’s Party presents itself, at this juncture, as the most obvious solution not just to the questions related to growing inequalities, but also to broader issues concerning economic uncertainties of neoliberal provenance.

**Notes**

1 A policy strategy that attempts to enhance the flexibility of labour markets, work organisation and labour relations while simultaneously enhancing employment security and social security – notably for weaker groups in and outside the labour market.

2 Its standard voter, as of 2014 Megafon survey is male (6 out of 10), elderly (most Danish parties have almost twice as many young voters), lives in the province (mostly de-industrialised areas, with low support in the capital), is of lower income (under 20.000 £ per year), has a relatively short education and supports the capital punishment (42 per cent) (Astrup, 2015).

3 This trend is best exemplified by the fact that around 8 per cent of DPP voters at the last elections previously voted for Social Democrats (Astrup, 2015).

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