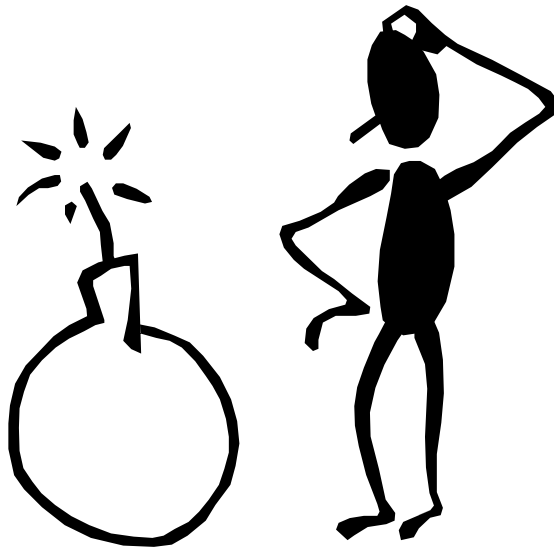


**The Future Consequences of a Negative Discourse on
Religious Islam in Europe**

- The case of Denmark



European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation

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Abstract

Based on qualitative interviews, with both religious Muslims and ethnic Danes, this thesis will analyse the consequences of the discourses that are being used to address Islam and Muslim immigrants in Denmark. It will analyse both the general opinions and concerns expressed by the ethnic Danes as well as how this is experienced by the religious Muslims.

By applying a socio-political approach as well as using the relevant case law applied by the European Court of Human Rights, the research will also address the difficult balance between having a pluralist and secular society, while maintaining freedom of conscience and religion. The European Court of Human Rights has in its case law weighed secularism very highly, and has for this reason often made rulings that move religion into the private sphere. However in the Danish context, keeping religion within the private sphere seems to be part of the problem as it lays a foundation for misconceptions and unnecessary resentment towards Muslims and Muslim symbols. This will be explained and analysed through the theories of Michel Foucault and Axel Honneth.

The claim of this thesis is that the current atmosphere in Denmark towards Muslim immigrants lays a foundation for future conflict within the Danish society and that this is the result of political priorities and lack of knowledge about Islam. It is also the claim of this thesis that similar tendencies can be found in other European countries, and that the findings to some extent apply to these countries as well.

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