

Russian women in Denmark: between integration and marginality

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Ethical situation in Denmark

Denmark is one of some countries in Europe, which has not so many foreigners and it means – not so many traditions for immigration and integration. Up to the second half of the 20th century Denmark was almost a monoethnic state with only some groups of not-original population – peoples from Greenland, Iceland and some other colonies. Only Greenlanders were representatives of non-European culture, traditions and religion, but under Danish colony they received Danish culture such as literature, language, Lutherans church as official religion and Danish culture and traditions as "good taste". All these people from colonies haven't brought any problems for Danish people, but nevertheless they were almost assimilated.

In 1956 Denmark decided to help Hungarian refugees – it was the first step on the way to multiethnic state and society. Right up to 1972, when EU stopped almost

all forms of "guest work", Denmark took a lot of refugees from Eastern Europe and thousands guest workers from Turkey, Yugoslavia, Pakistan and North Africa. But the biggest part of foreigners came as guest workers and their residence's status was temporal. It meant, that they and their status in country were without plans about integration, Danish courses etc. All foreign workers were accepted by government, local people, trade unions and aliens themselves as temporal and that's why guest workers didn't think about integration and someone kind of contact with local population. Later it was decided that it could be useful for foreign workers to get some information about Denmark, Danish work's rules and political system from special newspapers in foreign languages by special arrangements in co-work with embassies. But generally foreign workers were isolated from other workers and Danish every day's life.

A lot of foreign workers received a permanent permission to stay in Denmark and lot's of them received later Danish citizenship and brought their own families from countries of origin to the Kingdom. A large part of foreigners in Denmark consisted of foreign workers, but with time it was a steady stream of refugees

that played a big role in forming of Danish multiethnic society.

In 1956 taking of refugees changed at the beginning of 1970, when the amount of east Europeans was down, but Denmark received new refugee groups from other fare countries with different regions such as Uganda, Chile, and Vietnam etc. All these people arrived in the Kingdom of Denmark after agreement with UN and UNHCR. Since 1980 more and more asylum seekers and refugees came from Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Palestine etc.) there, but since 1990 lot's of refugees came from former Yugoslavia.

Up to the middle of 1970s all refugees were located only in Copenhagen and Århus – the next biggest city in Denmark (and it was actually wrong, because it was a basis for making ghetto and a reason for problems with integration of foreigners in the future). But after the Vietnamese people's arrival province cities and towns were also involved in the process of refugees' accommodation. And in the 1990s almost all Danish communities received refugees from different countries.

Now all refugees and other foreigners have to go to language school, where they learn Danish and culture and traditions of Denmark, get advices and other help

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for better integration in Danish society.

According to the Danish Statistical Office, there are ca. 300 000 foreigners in Denmark, that is, people with foreign citizenship compose ca. 5 % of the Danish population (in 1984 there was ca. 1 %). The majority of foreigners were stationed in the Copenhagen area and that's why the population of foreigners is nationally and religiously very different, a quarter of them are from Nordic and EU-countries and every third of aliens is Christian. 20 % of foreign citizens were born in Denmark.

Russian migrants in Denmark and double marginality

The part of Russian migrants is not large – ca. 3 200 people, the most of them are women – 2 292 (1 311 of them are married to Danes). As married women are the largest part of Russian people in Denmark, I selected them as a basis group for my research.

The phenomenon of marginality is actual and important in our time of change: people in the context of globalisation are forced to move not only from country to country, but also between branches and industries, strata of society etc. Therefore sociologists talk about so-called "new marginal groups".

Russian women began to come to Denmark in the 1990s – in so-called Perestrojka-time, when economical and political situation in USSR/Russia was labile and many people and groups of people (especially ethnical Germans and Jews) decided to move from

Russia to other countries. But all these people and groups had and still have problems with integration in the society in their new "homeland". The most of them are marginal – that means they have problems both with accepting their new culture and the society, which doesn't want to accept them as equal citizens.

But there are some differences between migrants groups of Russian people, for example, in Germany and in Denmark: in Germany "the Russians" (or more precisely – the ethnical Germans) live together, in the same city districts and have a big community with culture institutes (school, newspapers, churches etc.), while in Denmark the Russians live among Danish people and are "good integrated" (that is, our nationals as a part of Danish families know Danish traditions, language and everyday life better than isolated groups of asylum-seekers or refugees). But the question is if the Russians are really integrated or maybe they are latent marginals.

When I began my work with the Russians in Denmark, I have some assumptions about how marginal my fellow countrymen are. I presumed, that many of them have problems with job, daily contacts, friends, family life etc. But it's not so easy to research it in marginality-field because of some reasons:

1. As a rule respondents do not know about marginality as social phenomenon – that's why researcher needs to find some other questions, which can indicate marginality – in my research I chose questions about everyday and job contacts, perception of Danish traditions etc.;

2. Research about marginality is to be made with use of two kinds of data: statistical information and results of quantitative explorations;

3. In marginality-researches we need to use questions of private character – that's why it's necessary to formulate them very carefully.

During some years I had possibilities to observe life of Russian people in Denmark and my opinion is that they are marginal, they live in marginal situation, which is usual for migrants. On basis of extended interviews with 10 Russian women who are married/divorced (which was the part of my PhD.-project about quality of life in Denmark and North-West Russia) I could make some conclusions:

1. Russian migrants in Denmark are good integrated on the common, everyday level: they need to be like the Danes because they live with Danish mates, have family with their Danish spouses and learn more about Denmark and have to get to know all Danish things from their own husbands and their families;

2. In fact our migrants have a lot of problems with accepting and integration on the official level; because of Danish foreigner policy Russian migrants are not really recruited to take part in the integration processes: they are married to the Danes and it means, that their spouses or partners must help them to be integrated in Danish society;

3. The majority of Russian migrants in Denmark have a high education level (university degree) but they cannot use it in the Kingdom of Denmark and need to

take unqualified work or just to be housewives – and it is manifestation of marginality of social role: "former" engineers work as labourers and not because of their bad education or qualification, but only because of their national origin;

4. The other form of marginality is a cultural marginality. This kind of marginality is also one part of life of Russian migrants in Denmark. In spite of everyday contacts with the Danes they don't identify themselves with the Danes, but they are not the real Russians anymore. They are between two cultures and we feel it in their language – many of migrants talk to each other one kind of pidgin. The severance from Russia made our migrants marginal in both in country of origin and in their new homeland: they are really between two banks. Because of severance from country of origin many of the Russians abroad don't want to move back to Russia and are satisfied with low social position in their new homeland.

5. My opinion is that many of migrants' groups in Denmark (including the Russians) are part of process of structural marginality, too: they have not so many possibilities to be really well integrated and to demonstrate their loyalty to their new homeland. In fact there are many demonstrations of discrimination, which influence on intensification of marginality.

Unfortunately my research of marginal situation of the Russians in Denmark was a pilot character and is not complete and perfect, but nevertheless it can show some tendencies towards complication of marginality-phenomenon in Europe.

All these above-listed conclusions are evidence of necessity to understand migrations process deeper and wider: real integration is not possible without minimization of marginality. The phenomenon of double marginality in migration context needs more to be paid attention by authorities and research people.

Reasons for marginality as a part of social decomposition

But where is a way to reduction of marginality and decomposition? I suppose that only dialogue, study, information and co-work can and will make Aliens to become real citizens. Social activity of new citizens on the different levels of public life make them to be more open and tolerant to some things, that is not acceptable in their countries of origin, which are usual and tolerated in western or European cultures: pluralism, opinion freedom, etc. There are some good examples of migrants positive co-operation with local people: in Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Denmark are some migrants members of community councils and parliaments, and on the united front Aliens and Europeans try to contend against fascism, nationalism, religious fanatics and prejudices from both sides.

Nowadays when all European states have people with different national and religion background, so it is vitally important to provide a new policy, which is built on dialogue, trust and joint worth.

But despite of concept of "the third way" and other good ideas about better integration, it is progressive growth of

intolerance in Danish society. There isn't almost any dialogue, but conservation in old traditions and prejudices. The Danish Folks Party has good chances to be winner again. Electorate is interested in "invandrer spørgsmål" – Aliens question more than in other important problems such as taking part of Denmark in war in Iraq, environmental problems and unemployment. Aliens are guilty in all Danish problems is DF's motto. Instead for social democratic softness and cultural relativism we receive more and more xenophobia at the moment. Xenophobia is a new mantra in the modern Danish policy – and also social democrats and other left political powers use it in the elections. The cheap and vulgar populism abuse of politicians for disguising other problems – sometimes it reminds Germany in the 1930s. But this propaganda and strong rules for family reunion cannot resolve problems with integration, tolerance and criminality in Aliens milieu.

I think that Denmark needs a real open debate about multiethnic society, tolerance and intolerance, one standard for all and other question in this direction. This debate can give the Danes more knowledge about Aliens' and their own Danish traditions – and DF will not have possibilities for abuse national idée more.

Today DF can present itself as a sole guardian of Danish traditions (it's very important in this context) and of the Danish Folk Church (Dansk Folkekirke) – the state church in Denmark. Dansk Folkekirke has a special V.I.P.-status in Denmark: the Church is

one part of state and is organised in Church Ministry with special authorities concerning register of births, deaths and names. This non-democratically tradition and law is not acceptable in the multiethnic and multireligious state: why should Catholics, Moslems, Orthodox or Atheists register the birth of their own child in the Lutheran Church? Shouldn't it be a State job? And why should the State pay salary to only priests in Folkekirke and not to all other priests? All people in Denmark pay tax and it will be more democratic and fair if priests of other churches will receive salary from state or nobody will receive it. So it means that multiethnic society (with all respect to recipient countries) claim some reforms in all spheres of public and political life – also in church's status, too.

Final points: multiethnic society and common civil society

The multiethnic society is already here and we cannot ignorant it more. In the context of modern world development, globalisation and contrast between North and South it will be impossible for so little country like Denmark and for Europe generally to escape Aliens in our every days life. But we can escape civil war in our countries and national conflicts like in former Yugoslavia.

It will be more better if all or majority of new citizens in our countries will learn our democratic traditions, our social rules and humanistic worth and will get possibilities to be Moslems, Hindus or Orthodox so long and so much but in some ranges, of course. And these ranges are civil

society, respect for other people, cultures, religions, opinions, preferences and rights. Only in this case we can talk about real comprehension between parts and about real tolerance.

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"Russia's New Migration Policy" -lecture in Institute of Migration

Ph.D. Andrey Y. Lukyanov kept an interesting lecture "Russia's New Migration Policy" in Institute of Migration at 28.5.2007. Photo: Jouni Korkiasaari.

