

Homosexuality has become an image of modernity in Denmark

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This is a shot of two participants in the 2012 Copenhagen Pride Parade. Credit: University of Copenhagen

In 1999, Danish homosexuals were granted access to stepchild adoption, and after the 2001 general election, legislation to improve homosexuals' rights was introduced in the Danish Parliament. In the subsequent negotiations many politicians spoke of homosexuals as central to the understanding of Danish values. This was in stark contrast to similar negotiations in 1989 when Parliament passed the Same-Sex Marriage Act:

"My research shows a [fundamental change](#) in the public conception of homosexuality in Denmark; [homosexuals](#) were associated with degeneration, suicide, AIDS, and disease but are now associated with life, reproduction, national recognition, marriage, and [kinship](#)," says PhD Michael Nebeling Petersen from the Department of Scandinavian Studies and Linguistics at the University of Copenhagen.

In the 1989 negotiations, homosexuals were accepted only insofar as that they did not interfere with heterosexual marriage, but 10 years later they had become symbols of marriage, [monogamy](#), and the nuclear family:

"Homosexuality is no longer 'the Other'; it is that which sustains 'normal family life', Michael Nebeling Petersen points out.

Modern Denmark

According to Michael Nebeling Petersen, homosexuality has become a symbol of liberal Danish values.

"When the Same-Sex [Marriage](#) Act was being negotiated in 1989, homosexuality was tolerated, but at the same time considered a threat to our national reputation. By the Millennium, a homosexual has become a figure who can represent national and religious communities and be an important element in the construction of a modern and liberal Denmark."

Michael Nebeling Petersen's research includes analyses of press coverage of the annual Danish Gay Pride Parade and the World Out Games in Denmark in 2009 as well as recent feature films.

In these two events and in films such as Rosa Morena from 2010, homosexuality is completely incorporated into an image of liberal Denmark. However, now other minorities, who are being accused of

homophobia, are seen as threats to societal stability – just as homosexuals were 20 years ago.

Provided by University of Copenhagen

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