

**Forms of Legitimation and Legitimization Reforms needed
in the National Church of Denmark**

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1. From the Reformation in 1536 to the Free Constitution in 1849 the church in Denmark was administering the king's religion to which all people had to adjust. As the only place available for religious life (including folk religion) and life circle rituals church buildings and not least the church yards gained **traditional authority**, which they still have to some degree in local communities. During the 20th Century a predominant tendency among pastors, bishops and politicians was to argue for the church as a **rational, service-minded** part of the welfare state with equal treatment for everybody, using the slogan "the church for the people" (Iversen 1987). Marginal parts of church work has for limited periods been legitimized by **charismatic** leaders. It is questionable whether the church has ever gained any direct **legitimation from its status as a partly state-governed church?** The state has, however, "helped" the church' legitimation in the people by making sure, that there have been no longer delays in necessary adjustments to modernization (female pastors, gay marriage, professional auditing, public parish board meeting, and in general members' and employee's rights according to state standards).
2. Today the National Church of Denmark, the Evangelical-Lutheran Danish Folk Church has an **exceptional degree of confidence/trust** among people in Denmark, in spite of only weak expectation to what it can be

used for, cf. the following results the European Value Studies (percent of those saying Yes, Source: Andersen og Lüchau 2011):

The church answers	1981	1990	1999	2008
Morals problems	25	20	20	29
Family problems	16	13	15	18
Spiritual needs	37	48	51	54
Social problems		8	11	14
Confidence in the Folk Church	1981	1990	1999	2008
High degree of trust	13	10	9	10
Considerable degree of trust	38	37	50	53
Not very much trust	36	40	34	31
No trust at all	14	13	7	6

3. The most obvious hypothesis explaining this high degree of confidence and thus legitimation – besides 1) **remaining traditional and rational authority** – seems to be that the church appears 2) **authentic** and 3) **flexible/adjustable** so that people feel that the church is honest in what it is doing and that it provides room, so that they can be “themselves” independent of their reason to come (Fuhrseth 2006). The great majority of people in Denmark take turn visiting churches so that app. 2 percent of them appears in church for baptism or funeral pr. week. Thus most people visit a church at least once a year).

4. Further it can be hypothesized that the folk church gets a major part of its legitimation from being **4) a servant, not a ruling or in other ways powerful church**. Considering its size the Danish folk church is outstanding in terms of having only little power and property.
5. The legitimation of the folk church is challenged in public media and by members withdrawing from the church (21.118 members left the Folk Church in 2012) – in terms of **5) economic transparency and accountability**. This seems to require an **A) economy reform** where church tax is settled, budgeted and administered by and paid directly to the most local body (now the parish board). It is e.g. not legitimate when church leadership in Copenhagen cannot give clear reasons why certain churches are to be closed down and others not.
6. Further non-Christian groups are increasingly asking for access to the spectacular, e.g. Medieval church building (the great majority of 2.354 Church buildings under the folk church). This will require a **B) church building reform**, where the (commonly owned) church buildings cannot any longer be ruled sovereignly by church boards and bishops. For the time being a law is being passed in parliament so that not only Evangelical-Lutheran Christians but all “Christian” groups can have access to the church buildings – if the Folk Church leaders allow them! This leaves the Folk Church in power – even though this position is as questionable as the question of the “ownership” to Jerusalem and Palestine. In future legitimation may require that old church buildings are administered by boards with representatives from all local groups – and being maintained not for church but state funds.
7. Further also an **C) equality of status reform for the religious communities** will be needed – whenever the present messy mix of state

and folk church comes fully out of the closet. The next generation of politicians will not be easily convinced that the folk church (still having the majority of the people as members for let's say 50 years) need to to be partly run by the state in a secular country where the division between religion and politics is other vice emphasized and equal treatment considered a basic norm.

8. For the leadership of the folk church this will require **D) a full bottom-up democracy reform** in the folk church as it has been gradually developed since 1903. This will, however, look like a split between state and church, cleaning up the present – historically and politically determined - mixed leadership situation (adjusted from Heinsen 2007):

State Church	<p>Parliament is legislative body for the church</p> <p>The foundational creeds of the church are found in Danish Law from 1683.</p> <p>Authorization of Bible translations, hymnbook and rituals by royal decree</p> <p>Minister of Church Affairs decides the budget for Common Church budget and thus the size of the national Church tax for it</p>
Congregationalist Church	<p>Parish boards elect parish pastors</p> <p>Deanery committees and parish boards decides local budgets and church tax</p> <p>Freedom Legislation in the folk church: Parish and diocese can be selected, access to formation of electoral congregations inside the folk church structure.</p>
Episcopal Church	<p>Episcopal supervision, including episcopal recommendation of pastors to come and access to take cases about theology to court</p>

	Bishops represent the folk church in public media
Synod Governed Church	National Council for Inter-Church Affairs Diocesan Councils Advisory group for budget and economic administration of commons funds Parliament is legislative body for the church

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