



Pluralistic Societies: Challenges and opportunities of cultural diversity in liberal democracies.

In an age of increasing globalization, rapid communication of ideas, and movement of people across historical boundaries of place and identity, both societies and individuals themselves seem to be becoming more diverse.

Diversity brings opportunities and challenges: both opening people up to new ways of thinking and being, but also creating resistance when those new ways clash with taken-for-granted social and moral assumptions and valued cultural traditions. The realities of migration and increasing diversity raises a challenge for social scientists: How to create and maintain pluralistic societies in which difference contributes to, rather than jeopardizes, social cohesion?

This challenge can be seen in the debates surrounding migrants and refugees currently occurring in many western liberal democracies: how can western liberal values of individual autonomy be balanced against the reality of diverse cultural practices, some of which may seem strange or disturbing, in the eyes of the cultural majority?

It can also be seen in tensions between equality and difference that is often amplified by globalization and economic change. As societies become more diverse, they also tend to become more unequal. Diverse societies can therefore test and strain the values of those who aspire to social equality, and raise questions about how these things can be balanced – both in terms of social policy but also in the minds of citizens themselves.

Finally, at the local level, the movement of people across boundaries changes the character of local spaces, neighborhoods, and cities in ways that might prompt people to feel 'out-of-place' where they were formerly 'at home'.

A Call for Papers:

We invite contributions for a two-day small group meeting at the University of Copenhagen exploring issues of cultural diversity, pluralism, and social cohesion, through the lens of different disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological standpoints, using multiple forms of data.

We aim to create a space within which both junior and senior researchers feel free to debate and discuss the tensions and possibilities within pluralistic societies. To anchor discussions, we have confirmed two keynote speakers:

Jolanda Jetten

Professor of Social Psychology
University of Queensland
Australia



Richard Shweder

Harold H. Swift Distinguished Service Professor
of Comparative Human Development
University of Chicago
USA

Meeting Location:

Copenhagen is in many ways the ideal place to discuss challenges faced by pluralistic societies. Traditionally, Denmark has been relatively ethnically, culturally, and linguistically homogenous. Yet recent migration and the increasing visibility of ethnic groups in specific areas has triggered multiple responses. Politicians and citizens are currently debating questions of whether and how this new diversity should be accommodated, what expectations or requirements should apply to new arrivals, and how minority groups can form communities and live out their identities in their new home.

Copenhagen is also one of Europe's most charming cities, and capital of the so-called "happiest people on earth." The conference coincides with the northern summer in which the beauty and vibrancy of Copenhagen is on full display. The long summer evenings will give plenty of time to enjoy the many waterways, beaches, squares and parks, as well as Copenhagen's famous dining scene.

Expressions of interest:

If you are interested in attending this meeting, please send an abstract (between 100-200 words) to **Séamus Power** (seamus.power@psy.ku.dk) and **Thomas Morton** (thomas.morton@psy.ku.dk), with 'Pluralistic Societies' as the subject line of your email.

Attendees will be expected to cover travel and accommodation costs. There will be no attendance fee. Invited participants will be competitively selected. We will strike a balance between senior and junior researchers.

Conference dates: Tuesday & Wednesday, 7-8 July 2020.

Submission deadline: 29th February 2020.

