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**REFORMING NORWEGIAN IMMIGRATION POLICIES:  
LEARNING FROM CANADA?**

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First Draft - Comments Welcome

## I. Introduction

Public sector reformers act in an international context, observing and reacting to policy solutions in other states. The Scandinavian nations—Denmark, Norway and Sweden—have for an extensive period of time been portrayed as models for development of policies for other states (Childs, 1936; Eric S. Einhorn & Logue, 1989; Galenson, 1949; Howe, 1921; Strode, 1949; Tomasson, 1970). The so-called “Scandinavian Model” is rooted in a particular version of the mixed economy, which reflects a strong commitment to the welfare state (Mjøset, 1992). The model combines concerns for social equity with private capitalism, and it has been marked by strong consensus, a high level of organization, low levels of social conflict and fewer social problems than other capitalist nations (Christoffersen & Hastrup, 1983; Noreng, 1981).

The Scandinavian Model has also informed the political and academic discourse in Canada. Abundant references can be found in Canadian policy debates on electoral systems (proportional representation vs. single-member plurality), government formation (minority vs. majority, and coalition vs. single party governments), political representation (gender equality), political participation (voter turnout; tripartite arrangements to incorporate unions and employers’ associations in socio-economic policy planning), political priorities (policies on the environment and adult education), welfare provisions and health-care delivery (private vs. public solutions; free access vs. user fees), to mention a few (See for instance Adler-Karlsson, 1970; Briskin & Eliasson, 1999; Carey-Bélanger, 1987; Corak, Gustafsson, & Österberg, 2000; Desjourdy, 2009; Horváth & Daly, 1989; Laxer, 1995; Lefebvre, 1968; Milner, 1994, 1998; G. M. Olsen, 2002; Paquin, n.d.; Raphael & Bryant, 2003).

However, questions have recently been raised about the future of the Scandinavian Model due to mass immigration and increased ethnic diversity (Bay, Hellevik, & Hellevik, 2007; Bay & West Pedersen, 2006; Eric S. Einhorn & Logue, 2007). Into the 1970s, the Scandinavian nations were extraordinarily homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, language, and religion by comparison to other European nations. Indeed, it has been argued that social homogeneity was the source of the values of solidarity, reciprocity, and, above all, the social equity which supported the Scandinavian welfare model (Brochmann, 2003). To be sure, the Scandinavian nations remain relatively homogenous by comparison to immigrant societies like Canada. Yet, for the first time the Scandinavian nations have a noticeably diverse population in terms of ethnicity, at least in major urban centers. Although there is little evidence to support the contention that increasing ethnic diversity has adverse effects on welfare states (see Kymlicka & Banting, 2006), the idea that there is a potential trade-off between a more open and accommodating approach to immigration and increasing ethnic diversity, on the one hand, and the maintenance of a robust welfare state, on the other, has become increasingly popular in many European nations (See for instance Cuperus, Duffek, & Kandel, 2003). The universalistic and generous Scandinavian welfare model which in principle is inclusive for everyone living lawfully in the country has been seen as particularly vulnerable. As Brochmann points out, “immigration to a country that espouses the principle of equal treatment and has an extensive welfare state challenges the population’s generosity in the first instance, and *may* in the longer term affect the sustainability of the system itself if the bulk of the newcomers are unable to support themselves... Good welfare states do not tolerate substantial elements of persons or groups that fall by the wayside, that disturb the regulated world of work and burden social welfare budgets” (2003, p. 6).

Recent research has demonstrated that the employment rate for labour migrants who entered Norway in the early 1970s was very high during early years but that it had declined to 50% by the year 2000, compared to 87% for a native comparison group (Bratsberg, Raam, & Røed, 2010). This has triggered debate on the need for reforms to existing immigration policies in Scandinavia. In this process, the Scandinavians have searched for inspiration and for new policy solutions abroad, including in Canada.

Canada is recognized for its immigration policy model, which balances aspirations for economic and demographic growth, with a commitment to humanitarianism, along with the need for national security (Bauder, 2008). The model has been actively promoted by Canadian politicians at home and abroad (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002; Kymlicka, 2004b). Moreover, Canadian immigration policy has also been considered to be a possible model for Europe (DeVoretz & Laryea, 2006; Kymlicka, 2004a; Schmidke, 2009; Triadafilopoulos, 2006). Although the international relevance of the Canadian immigration policy model has been addressed before, pertinent research has been largely anecdotal and atheoretical. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to provide a systematic and theoretically-oriented analysis of the role of the Canadian immigration policy model in the reform process in one Scandinavian nation, Norway. Focus will here be on the work of two government appointed expert commissions: *Utlendinglovsutvalget* (The Immigration Law Committee) and *Velferds- og migrasjonsutvalget* (The Welfare and Migration Committee).<sup>1</sup>

In addition to published and unpublished government documents, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with key policy practitioners in the area of immigration as well as with members of the two government appointed committees, identified above. But prior to an analysis of the data, three theoretical perspectives are presented on the relationship of foreign public policy models to domestic policy reform processes.

## **2. Public Sector Reforms and Foreign Models: Instrument, Culture and Myth**

Organization theory provides three perspectives that can be employed to analyse the relationship between foreign policy models and domestic policy-making, and in particular, the influence of the Canadian immigration model on the Norwegian reform process: structural/instrumental, cultural/institutional, and myth-based perspectives (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2001; Christensen, Læg Reid, Roness, & Røvik, 2007).

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<sup>1</sup> The Immigration Law Committee, whose main mandate was to prepare a proposal for a new immigration act that could respond to the many challenges posed by increased internationalization, was established in 2001 and delivered its report in 2004. The Welfare and Migration Committee was established in 2009 and is mandated to describe and assess in more detail the elements in the Norwegian welfare model that influence and are influenced by increasing migration. This committee is expected to submit its report to the Norwegian government in May 2011.

The *structural/instrumental perspective* is based on a means-end rationality in which organizational solutions are seen as products of deliberate purpose, design and choice among alternative arrangements. Comprehensive organizational reforms are adopted in order to realize predetermined goals and to improve policy outcomes. Foreign models can thus be seen as inspirational models for reforms through processes of imitation and learning. References to foreign models in the Norwegian legislative process could, therefore, be expected to be supported by systematic analyses of other models' advantages and disadvantages in the Norwegian context. Accordingly, we pose the question, to what extent do recent administrative reforms in Norway actually display indications of active imitation and learning from foreign policy models?

National public sector reforms are often based on processes of imitation and learning from other states. The point is effectively illustrated by Westney (1987) in her classic study on the use of Western prototypes by Japan's late nineteenth century "modernizers" to create new governmental initiatives. However, there are several ways in which imitation and learning can occur (Lisheng, Christensen, & Painter, 2010): a reforming country may actively try to collect information from other countries on reform experiences, for example, through travels and systematic analysis. In other cases, reformers may be exposed to reform ideas in a more informal and less organized manner (J. P. Olsen & Peters, 1996). Additionally, imitating and learning from other countries might be a collective and centralized effort dominated by central political and administrative leaders, or may be more sector oriented. Reformers may take a broad perspective, trying for example to adopt the whole package of administrative reforms or select specific elements for attention (Wright, 1994). Sometimes processes of imitation and learning are evident when reformers make direct reference to foreign policy models. Other times, few direct references but many indirect and less visible links between reformers can be identified (Sahlin-Andersson, 2001). Another issue concerns the form imitated models are adopted. One option could be that imitated reform models are used unchanged. Alternatively, foreign models may be fitted into pre-existing domestic institutional and cultural frameworks. Often, reform attempts will be based on a combination of the two (Røvik, 2002).

From the *cultural-institutional* perspective, organizational solutions are viewed as outcomes of organic evolutionary processes rather than as deliberate choices at specific points in time (March & Olsen, 1989; Selznick, 1957). Organizational solutions are shaped by internal and external factors over time and references to foreign immigration policy models can, in this context, be seen as a result of an already existing cultural compatibility between these models and longstanding informal norms and values held in the recipient nation.

A *myth perspective* sees organizational reforms in terms of myths, symbols and fashions (See DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Reforms are not considered to be about instrumental-structural design or cultural-institutional compatibility but more especially about the promotion of reform symbols and fashions. Once reform symbols are ingested, key policy actors, citizens, and the media come to take for granted that certain reforms and reform concepts are unavoidable and will enhance effectiveness and efficiency in the public sector (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2001). Reform models are adopted because they are widely recognized as proper or fitting solutions in the surrounding environment. According to this perspective, foreign policy models can be invoked as a "buzzword", suggesting an image of success. It is, however, difficult

to determine whether or not a reform concept is a myth. In some cases, public leaders may directly admit this. In others, the systematic use of value-infused concepts, slogans, and metaphors may provide clues. A discrepancy between “talk” and “action” – what Brunsson (1989) refers to as “hypocrisy” – may be an indication of myth dynamics.

The three perspectives are not mutually exclusive as references to the Canadian immigration policy model in the Norwegian reform debate may be subject to different interpretations. It may also be that different policy actors have raised the Canadian model for different purposes. Before elaborating further on these points, some general context on immigration and welfare in Norway will be presented.

### **3. Immigration and Welfare in Norway**

“The modern political history of Norway is characterized by peaceful coexistence and revolution in slow motion” (J. P. Olsen, 1987, p. 19). Olsen is here referring to the fact that the modern welfare state, which combines solid financial growth, high employment rates and comprehensive universal welfare programs with an even distribution of income, was built without agonizing conflicts. Expert commissions have played a central role in the “revolution”. In fact, Logue (1979) has identified the reliance on experts as an important factor contributing to the success of the Scandinavian nations. As a matter of fact, the American political scientist, Thomas Anton, who studied Swedish policy-making in the late 1960s, argues that the extensive use of these commissions contributed to a “politics as work”, rather than to a “politics as game” ethic, and a “problem-focused” rather than “theory-focused” orientation (Anton, 1969, p. 98)

Indeed, the use of expert inquiry commissions in Scandinavia constitutes an institutionalised mechanism for pre-legislative consultation between the executive and relevant policy actors in the gestation of public policy. This tradition has particularly long roots in Norway, where it predates the emergence of political parties and mass politics (Sovang & Moren, 1974). According to Arter (1984), there were around 894 commissions at work between 1814 and 1900, an average of about 10 new ones annually. This figure had risen to 20 new commissions annually between 1900 and 1936. However, the real expansion of the expert commission system coincided with the increased role of the state in social and economic management after the Second World War (Arter, 2008). During the 1970s, more than 1000 commissions were at work at any given time (Christensen, Egeberg, Larsen, Lægreid, & Roness, 2002). However, the number of commissions has decreased some since the 1980s. At the end of 2000, 477 permanent and 66 temporary commissions were at work (Christensen et al., 2002, p. 138). More importantly, expert commissions have played a key role in the recent debate on immigration and welfare in Norway.

Norway has been described as a *latecomer* in terms of immigration (Borchgrevink & Brochmann, 2003). It was not until the late 1960s that the nation began to experience the waves of immigration that reached Europe after the Second World War and, even then, the size was modest, compared to most West-European nations. Nevertheless, Norway followed suit when most Western European countries introduced heavy restrictions on immigration at the beginning of the 1970s. According to Borchgrevink and Brochmann (2003, p. 86), the heavy controls

imposed on immigration can be explained by three factors. First, the generous and universalistic welfare model – “inclusive in principle, yet also representing a limited good” – necessitated and legitimized selection and limitation of the inflow. Second, there was a feeling that the country was culturally vulnerable because Norway was a small and relatively “young” nation state; it was thought that large inflows of immigrants could disturb Norwegian “core values” among what was perceived to be a culturally homogenous people. Third, Norway was influenced by the international trends of tighter restrictions that swept Europe.

Despite the restrictive policies, which still form the basis of Norwegian immigration policy, the immigrant population increased steadily. Between 1990 and 2008, a total of 377,000 non-Nordic citizens immigrated to Norway and were granted residence. Of these, 24 per cent came as refugees; 24 per cent were labour immigrants; 23 per cent came to Norway on the basis of family reunification with someone already in the country; 17 per cent were granted residence because they had established a family; and 11 per cent were granted residence in order to undertake education.<sup>2</sup> Today the immigrant population in Norway is approximately 552,300 persons which corresponds to 11.4 per cent of the population.<sup>3</sup> The proportion of immigrants with backgrounds from non-western countries has increased from 1.1 per cent of the population in 1986 to 6.6 per cent of the Norwegian population in 2006 (NOU, 2008: 14).

During the last decade, debates on the future of Norwegian immigration policies have intensified both due to new international commitments and questions about the consequences and dilemmas for the welfare model and the welfare programmes that arise from increased migration and international mobility. This is why the Immigration Law Committee and the Welfare and Migration Committee were struck. Both committees considered the Canadian immigration model in this process.

### **3.1 The Immigration Law Committee**

On 1 January 2010, a new Immigration Act became law in Norway (*Ot.prp. nr. 75 (2006-07) Om lov om utlendingers adgang til riket og deres opphold her (utlendingsloven)*). The main purpose of the Act which replaces the Immigration Act of 1988 is to provide the basis for regulating and controlling the entry and exit of foreign nationals and their stay in the realm, in accordance with Norwegian immigration policy and its international obligations. Furthermore, the act shall facilitate lawful movement across national borders, and ensure legal protection for foreign nationals who are entering or leaving the realm, who are staying in the realm, or who are applying for a permit pursuant to the act. Finally, the Act shall provide the basis for protecting foreign nationals who are entitled to protection under general international law or international agreements by which Norway is bound.

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<sup>2</sup> Statistics Norway, [http://www.ssb.no/innvandring\\_en/](http://www.ssb.no/innvandring_en/) (Accessed on 7 April, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> The immigrant population comprises immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents. **Immigrants:** Persons born abroad of two foreign-born parents. Immigrants emigrated to Norway at some point. **Norwegian-born to immigrant parents:** Persons who are born in Norway of two parents born abroad, and in addition have four grandparents born abroad. Statistics Norway, <http://www3.ssb.no/stabas/ClassificationFrames.asp?ID=5536101&Language=en> (Accessed on 7 April, 2011).

The process towards the new Immigration Act started in 2001, when the Norwegian government established the Immigration Law Committee as a temporary expert commission of inquiry. The mandate of this committee was to prepare a proposal for a new immigration act that could respond to the many challenges posed by increased internationalization. The findings and preparatory work of the committee were published in 2004 as a *Norwegian Official Report (NOU)* (NOU, 2004:20). Here, the Immigration Law Committee provided a detailed report on the present state of Norwegian immigration law, and, most importantly, on the needs for new legislation. The NOU, which forms the basis for the new law, was in 2005 sent out for hearings, in which all affected and interested parties and organizations were invited to submit written comments. By the deadline on 1 July 2005, 68 different governmental and non-governmental organizations had submitted their comments on the NOU. In September 2007, the government referred the new Immigration Act to the Parliament, Stortinget, which approved the new Act in April 2008.

### **3.2 The Welfare and Migration Committee**

The Immigration Law Committee was given a rather restricted mandate, the focus being on streamlining and updating the existing law in light of new international commitments. Yet, in the aftermath of the process that led to the adoption of the new Immigration Act, the Norwegian government claimed that “there has not been enough research, reporting and discussion on the consequences and dilemmas for the welfare model and the welfare programmes that arise from this increased migration and international mobility” (Ministry of Children Equality and Social Inclusion, 2010). Consequently, in 2009 the Norwegian government decided to establish a new temporary expert commission, the Welfare and Migration Committee, in order to address, in more detail, the impact of increased migration on the Norwegian welfare. More precisely, the Committee was mandated to determine whether there were aspects of the immigration policy that would have special relevance for the future development and design of the Norwegian welfare model (Ministry of Children Equality and Social Inclusion, 2010). The Committee was also asked to assess the societal consequences of any changes in immigration and emigration, including the conditions that must be present in order to sustain the welfare model in the short- and long-term. In this respect, the Committee was asked to assess whether it can be assumed that greater ethnic and cultural diversity can influence the view on, and the use of today's welfare programmes (Ministry of Children Equality and Social Inclusion, 2010). Based on the committee's assessments of the current situation and the importance of the welfare programmes, the committee was also asked to outline a proposal for possible changes to or adaptations of the measures that may contribute to long-term sustainability (Ministry of Children Equality and Social Inclusion, 2010). The Welfare and Migration Committee is scheduled to deliver its report on 10 May 2011.

## **4. The Canadian Immigration Model as Rational, Natural or Mythical Model in Norwegian Immigration Policy Reforms**

The study of study of international policy solutions was a central element in the mandate of both expert commissions. According to its mandate, the Immigration Law Committee should present the international debate and policy development for both immigration and refugee law and evaluate the extent to which Norwegian laws should mirror international developments. The

Committee was asked to: "collect information about immigration and asylum legislation in other countries and evaluate how this material can be utilized in the process of the drafting of the new Norwegian law in this area" (my translation) (*Ot.prp. nr. 75 (2006-07) Om lov om utlendingers adgang til riket og deres opphold her (utlendingsloven)*, p. 26). The same instructions were given to the Welfare and Migration Committee: "the committee must have a comparative perspective, where the development in other Nordic countries and other countries must be assessed and compared to relevant trends in Norway. The development compared to other countries that have considerably different welfare models than Norway must also be assessed" (Ministry of Children Equality and Social Inclusion, 2010). Numerous references to Canada and Canadian immigration policies were then made in the works of both expert commissions.

In compliance with their mandates, there are many direct references to foreign immigration models in the work of both commissions. According to several members of the Immigration Law Committee, the primary focus was at an early stage put on the European Union (EU) and the immigration policies of Norway's Nordic neighbours (Interview). This focus can be explained by the fact that Norway is already integrated in the wider European cooperation through the Schengen Agreement on the free movement of persons and the Dublin Convention on the handling of asylum seekers in the EU (Vevstad, 2010). The special attention given to the other Nordic countries can be explained by the intimate relationship between these countries. In fact, it seems natural to compare the Norwegian situation with the Danish, Finnish and Swedish contexts. As one respondent phrased it: "We have not only a physical, but also a psychological proximity to these countries with respect to how one solves problems of moral and practical character within the area of immigration policy" (Interview). However, the Committee also discussed the Canadian immigration model. Indeed, there are many references to Canada in both the preparatory work of the Immigration Law Committee, published by the Norwegian government in 2004 (NOU, 2004:20), as well as in the final Act (*Ot.prp. nr. 75 (2006-07) Om lov om utlendingers adgang til riket og deres opphold her (utlendingsloven)*). In these publications, Canada is consistently used as an example of a "traditional immigrant country" by contrast to a non-traditional immigration nation, like Norway. There are also several specific references to the Canadian immigration model. For instance, in the chapter on labour immigration, the Immigration Law Committee have singled out six countries for special attention: Great Britain, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Italy and Canada (NOU, 2004:20). Canada is the only non-EU member among these countries.

There are several reasons why special attention is devoted to Canada. According to several respondents, the Canadian immigration model is a well-known international model in the field of immigration (Interview). For instance, it has already been confirmed by key officials in the responsible Ministries that the Norwegian approach to multiculturalism has been shaped by the Canadian philosopher Will Kymlicka's views on multiculturalism in liberal states, which is apparently informed by Canadian realities (see Borchgrevink & Brochmann, 2003, p. 83). Another factor, which has made the Canadian model relevant to Norway, is that Canada has combined an open and accommodating approach to immigration and increasing ethnic diversity with a comprehensive welfare state system. Canada is, in this respect, referred to as an "interesting contrast case" to Norway because the Canadian and Norwegian immigration policies differ substantially while the two countries share the strong commitment to the welfare state (Interview).



The two expert Committees relied on both formal systematic analyses and on informal and unstructured methods to collect information from other nations. First, the Immigration Law Committee embarked on study trips to Belgium (June, 2002), Denmark (June, 2002), Finland (April, 2003), the Netherlands (June, 2003), Sweden (April, 2003), and the United Kingdom (June, 2003). The Committee also discussed going on a study trip to Canada and the United States but decided against it due to time constraints (Interview). However, the Committee gathered information on Canada through other more informal methods. In fact, several of the committee members emphasized the ease of obtaining quality information about national immigration policies simply by way of the Internet (Interview).

Although the report from the Welfare and Migration Committee is not yet published, the Canadian immigration model has also played an important role in its deliberations. Here, we find a more systematic attention to the Canadian model. Indeed, the Committee asked Canadian academic and immigration expert, Keith Banting, to write a 20 page report on the Canadian model to be incorporated into the final report of the Welfare and Migration Committee (Interview). Apparently, the expert Committee wanted to rely on Canadian expertise rather than solely on systematic analyses of the Canadian immigration model viewed from afar (Interview).

In the end, both the selection and approach to foreign models can be explained with reference to both structural/instrumental and cultural/institutional dynamics. Information was collected by travels and also included systematic analyses of nations perceived to be similar to Norway culturally and in relation to socio-political norms and values. However, information about the Canada immigration model was also incorporated in the work of both expert commissions as an “interesting contrast case”.

Although learning from foreign models was seen as possible, members of both expert Committees expressed the need to adapt them to Norwegian institutional and cultural frameworks. In general, it emerges like the use of expert Committees in pre-legislative consultation processes stimulates a broader perspective on policy solutions in processes of learning from other countries. Several members of the two expert Committees argued that domestic actors often seem to draw attention to specific elements of foreign policy models, Canada included, without considering viewing them in a broader context. For instance, during the Immigration Law Committee hearings and deliberations, the Norwegian Parliament instructed the government on 31 May 2005 to study the possibilities of adopting a new sponsorship system for family reunifications in the case of spouses. The Canadian model played a key role in this proposal: “...based on the Canadian model, a three year sponsorship system should be evaluated for those who bring their spouse to Norway from another country” (my translation) (*Innst. S. nr. 185 (2004-2005): Innstilling til Stortinget fra kommunalmomiteen*). Additionally, a minority group of members in the Norwegian Parliament proposed that: “as in Canada, persons who marry a permanent resident and have been granted family reunification should be granted permanent residency immediately” (my translation) (*Innst. S. nr. 185 (2004-2005): Innstilling fra kommunalkomiteen om mangfold gjennom inkludering og deltakelse*, p. 15).

The government followed up on these request and asked for an opinion from the Directorate of Immigration (UDI), which is the central agency in the immigration administration in Norway. The response from the UDI is referred to in the new Immigration Act: “The proposal refers to the Canadian model for family immigration. This model can, however, not be evaluated independently of general immigration policies adopted in Canada. With an extensive use of “sponsorship”, the Canadian authorities have based their laws and policies on a completely different philosophy than Norwegian authorities” (my translation) (*Ot.prp. nr. 75 (2006-07) Om lov om utlendingers adgang til riket og deres opphold her (utlendingsloven)*, p. 65). The UDI is, thus, warning against importing one single fragment of an external policy model to Norwegian realities: “The question can be raised if this fragment will be compatible with current principles for family immigration, both based on the existing Immigration Act and the proposal for the new Immigration Act. Using the Canadian model as a reference requires more comprehensive studies of Canadian immigration policies and the Canadian welfare system” (my translation) (UDI, 2005). The Welfare and Migration Committee, a temporary expert commission of inquiry, has been mandated and is currently addressing this question.

The issue of labour immigration is another element of the Canadian immigration model that has been subject to much attention in Norway. In January 2007, the Norwegian Minister for Labour and Social Affairs, Bjarne Håkon Hanssen led a government delegation to Canada in order to learn about the Canadian system for labour immigration (Interview). The impressions from Canada are visible in the white paper on labour immigration that was presented in April 2008 (*St.meld. nr. 18 (2007-2008): Arbeidsinnvandring*).

Several members of the two expert Committees claimed that politicians often referred to the Canadian model without much information about it. In particular, Canadian “multiculturalism” is often portrayed as an ideal for Norway to strive for (Interview). In accordance with a myth-based perspective, the concept of “multiculturalism” can here be evoked as a “buzzword”, suggesting an image of success. The same could be said of the Canadian immigration model which in Norway often is associated with positive values such as “tolerant, liberal, generous etc” (Interview). Also, Canada is often seen as a success case when it comes to integrating immigrants in the labour market (Interview). However, several of our respondents questioned the wisdom of such remarks indicating that they lacked a full understanding Canadian multiculturalism, especially given that Canada selects immigrants with high levels of education and skill flexibility. In other words, many concepts, slogans and metaphors evoking the success of Canadian immigration policy tend to be myth-based. In this perspective, the two expert commissions – the Immigration Law Committee and the Welfare and Migration Committee – adopted a broader outlook and a systematic analytical approach to address the relevance of the Canadian immigration for Norway.

## 5. Conclusion

Immigration policy has become a central issue in Norwegian politics and the debate on reforms continues. For instance, immigration was among the issues most reported by media leading up to the latest Norwegian Parliamentary election in 2009 (Allern, 2010). As a latecomer when it comes to immigration, Norway is currently searching for policy solutions internationally. Canada

and the Canadian immigration model has become a central reference point in the Norwegian debate and reform process, both as an inspirational model for learning and as a myth. Both the Immigration Act Committee and the Welfare and Migration Committee devoted systematic attention to the Canadian immigration model, while other domestic actors have evoked this model more like a “buzzword” and an image for success. It is too early to determine the policy implications of the Canadian immigration model on Norway. Future research should focus on the relationship between reform “talk” and “actions” in assessing the linkages between the Canadian immigration model and Norwegian immigration reforms.

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