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UNIVERSITY•ABERDEEN**

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## RE-WRITING THE DANISH-AMERICAN DREAM?

An inquiry into Danish Enterprise Culture and Danish attitudes towards Entrepreneurship

Robert Smith, Centre for Entrepreneurship, Aberdeen Business School, Robert Gordon University, Garthdee, Aberdeen AB10 7QE, Scotland. [r.smith-a@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:r.smith-a@rgu.ac.uk)

Helle Neergaard, Department of Management and International Business, Aarhus School of Business, Haslegaardsvej 10, DK-8210 Aarhus V, Denmark. [hen@asb.dk](mailto:hen@asb.dk)



*“...nce upon a time, long, long ago, many adventurous sons and daughters of Denmark went in search of a fairytale future that became the American Dream. They worked hard in the New World and sent money home to families left behind. In time, they became proud Americans melting into an ethnic cauldron that fed American Identity. As often happens in the fullness of time their amazing story became forgotten in their homeland. Now a new generation of Danes are breathing the spirit of a revived American Dream into a Denmark much need of an Enterprise Culture”.*

This research story which to us reads like a fairytale is the second-part of an exploration into Danish Enterprise Culture. It tells an oft forgotten tale, a Danish Success Story which we hope will one day be held even dearer by self-deprecating Danes everywhere. In telling this wonder tale we are also serving a serious purpose in examining some socio-cultural and historical factors influencing the perceived low entrepreneurial drive of the Danish people; and perhaps also in the process helping to explain why traditionally Denmark does not have a vibrant Enterprise Culture. This work adopts a *Verstehen* based methodology because it considers both the historical and the social to determine the ideal typical social characteristics of Danes. The use of this imaginative investigative, socio-historical approach has its roots in the seminal work of the economist William Baumol [1] who used a similar approach to understand Entrepreneurship from a historical perspective in readings of Roman, Medieval and Chinese history. This study is not an exhaustive, comparative study of American and Danish cultures but a limited scholarly inquiry. Nonetheless, it does re-examine the seldom told story that is the Danish-American Dream. The article extends the authors research output into aspects of Danish Enterprise Culture [2].

Traditionally Denmark has lacked a cohesive Enterprise Culture of its *own making*. To compound matters, we believe this has been exacerbated by the absence of a fully articulated home grown Danish Entrepreneurial Dream. These twin themes are evident to those familiar with Danish culture and history. We propose that these two facets of the Danish character, when combined with other socio-economic and cultural factors examined in this study, may explain the low collective entrepreneurial libido of the Danes. In conducting research, we came across *“The Bridge”*. We find it significant that in researching the titles of all articles which have appeared since its inauguration in 1978 only one article has specifically mentioned the word entrepreneur. This distinction goes to Henry Jorgensen [3] author of the article entitled *“Peter Larson – The Danish Immigrant Entrepreneur”*. Culturally, we find this fascinating because it suggests that as a collective body Danes do not appear to venerate the entrepreneur as a folk hero. Conversely, over the years, in excess of thirty articles have appeared in the Journal on the subject of migration.

It is also significant that America has a strong Enterprise Culture, and a vibrant Entrepreneurial Dream in the form of the American Dream. Moreover, historically and culturally America has developed a body of Entrepreneurial Mythology in the format of the

Horatio Alger myths in which the poor-boy-makes-good. This body of Americanized-folklore is we believe a variant form of fairytale albeit that Robert Reich believes that this culture is on the wane [4]. Denmark is also famous for the fairytales of Hans Christian Andersen, but in his dark tales the poor-boy keeps his head down if he has any sense at all. Moreover according to contemporary writers such as Stenum [5] Danes do not welcome migrants to the shores of Denmark. Consequentially, we argue that there are some significant differences between Danish and American entrepreneurial drives. This attitude of aversion is steeped in, and shaped by history and tradition. It is accepted that this may be a culturally induced, socio-historical manifestation because many modern Danes are beginning to admire their home grown entrepreneurs some of whom are simultaneously *making-good* in America. Now a new generation of Danish entrepreneurs are emerging and along with this, the beginnings of a new Danish Enterprise Culture. This article examines why traditionally Denmark has lacked

- A cohesive Enterprise Culture;
- A home grown Entrepreneurial Dream; and
- A strong Entrepreneurial Drive.

We challenge these propositions by suggesting that history is already in the process of being re-written. Nevertheless, in Denmark there is still a lack of attention given to 'ordinary' entrepreneurs, because unlike Americans, Danes as a nation do not eulogise their entrepreneurs. In present day Denmark, ordinary entrepreneurs actually create more jobs than so-called technology and knowledge-based ventures. These remarkable people are often one wo/man companies. This elevation of the entrepreneur to the status of being a hero and role model is necessary with Denmark not being viewed as a nation of entrepreneurs. To appreciate why this is so, we peer through the mists of time and turn to history.

#### **DENMARK AS SEEN THROUGH THE MISTS OF TIME**

This section considers why traditionally Denmark does not have a strong Enterprise Culture by concentrating upon two socio-historical aspects of the Danish history, using them as heuristic devices. These heuristics are (1) Religion; and (2) Emigration. The primary purpose of this socio-historical investigation is to use these heuristic devices to achieve a greater analytic understanding. These aspects of Danish cultural history provide a backcloth to understand the apparent Danish apathy towards the Entrepreneurial. The purpose of this section is thus to discuss the hypothesis

*That traditionally the Danes are regarded as a non-entrepreneurial people*

This is achieved via interpretative readings of Danish history, culture and religion. From these readings it is possible to capture, or read out of the texts, an underlying spirit of enterprise.

It is necessary to first set the Danish attitude to entrepreneurship in its proper socio-historical perspective. Being a native of Denmark, the author Helle Neergaard was aware of the traditional Danish attitude of ambivalence towards Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship. We were perturbed when initially we failed to unearth examples of Danes who became famous in their Motherland as having made it big in America in true Algeresque style. Nor initially, were we able to find a significant body of venerating lore in Danish history linking Denmark to America. These misperceptions (or perhaps myth-perceptions) will be jointly addressed later in the article. We had been confident that research would throw up many such examples of Danes made-good in America to legitimise the inclusiveness of the model of success-making as articulated in Horatio Alger stories.

It certainly appears to us, that unlike many other European countries, in Denmark there is no accepted path to success and therefore it follows - No Danish Dream of success. In Denmark, the collected wisdom as passed down the generations is that if you are successful you had better keep your head down otherwise someone will point a finger at you and possibly invent stories about where you got your money. Consequentially, Denmark is ripe

with riches, jealousy and envy. This perhaps explains why previous generations of Danes were very sceptical of Success Stories in general. Indeed, Denmark has been referred to as a sceptical barnyard. Nevertheless, the Protestant State of Denmark has a long literary history and a reputation of having a moralistic outlook as evidenced by the genre of *Danish Morality Tales* and *Morality Plays* for which the country is famed.

### **Setting Danish attitudes to entrepreneurship in socio-historical context**

No examination of early Danish history would be complete without reference to the Viking age. Although this was not exclusively a Danish phenomenon, collectively as a people the Norse were a very enterprising people whose exploits featured heavily in the annals of the histories of the age. The author Robert Smith [6] researched the Norse from the perspective of being an entrepreneurial race as all Scandinavian cultures produced more than their fair share of farmers, craftsmen and artisans, merchants traders and warriors who engaged in a 'rough commerce' with the known world. The seafaring Norsemen founded colonies in Britain, Ireland, Russia, France Iceland and Vinland, in what is now America. These they took by force of conquest, or claimed in the true spirit of exploration. However, ultimately, it was religion, and not the sword, that tamed the Pagan Norse and unified them with Western world. The role of the Church and of the Holy Roman Empire in bringing order to Dark Age Europe and the known world cannot be overstated. Papal edicts (and the threat of excommunication) held sway across many protean Nation States as a new age of civilisation dawned. Overtime, the exploits of the Vikings faded from living memory onto the pages of storybooks where they became heroes once again. Ordinary Danes returned to the more prosaic task of farming, ship building and of earning an honest living.

The role of the Church in shaping the Entrepreneurial outlook of a people cannot be underestimated [7]. For example, Historian Richard Pipes and Criminologist Pino Arlacchi independently examined the roles of early Church history in the formation of the Russian and Italian Peasant psyches. It could be argued that the 'other worldly' doctrines of both the Russian Orthodox and Catholic Churches served to retard the latent Entrepreneurial propensity of their Peasantry when taken into consideration alongside the repressive power of the Church and State.

Medieval Denmark was in the whole a settled and prosperous Nation State and despite being embroiled in various Scandinavian wars Denmark enjoyed long periods of independence despite the political and military dominance of Sweden. When change occurred (as is inevitable) it came again in the form of Religion and the Reformation as the preaching and doctrines of the Protestant Religion swept across Europe. It was the writings of Martin Luther (1483-1546), in neighbouring Germany, which took root in Denmark and led to the formation of the Lutheran Church. The overarching doctrine and theological message espoused by Luther was the cardinal doctrines of faith, repentance, holiness and love of God. Thus we appear to have a very different theological drive to that which we have come to associate with Ascetic Protestantism and the Protestant Work Ethic as articulated by Max Weber. As a result, Lutheran Religion can be very intense with many strict Lutherans known as 'Black Bible' individuals who are very stern and unbending in their outlook upon life. Their theological message is that all we can expect is God's wrath. Conversely, ordinary Dane of Lutheran faith seeks God's love whilst fearing for the worst. A deep pessimism and a brooding darkness may therefore be an integral part of the Danish cultural psyche. Indeed, this spirit was summed up eloquently by J. W. Larson [8] who wrote that the Danes view the world "*through a glass darkly*". The Lutheran Church is the State Religion and it is estimated that approximately 90 per cent of Danes are Lutherans, making it the predominant faith.

The Lutheran church is a Protestant sect founded upon the doctrine of Martin Luther. Since the publication of Max Weber's hugely influential work "*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*" [9] we have come to associate Protestantism, and those of the Protestant

Faith as a vigorous strain of achievers. Indeed, many Protestant sects such as Puritans and Quakers made a significant impact upon the New World. However, not all Protestant sects follow the template of 'this worldliness' so ably articulated by Weber. Other minority Religions in Denmark include Baptists, Catholics and Mormons.

Theologically, politically and demographically the Denmark of the 18th Century (1800-1900) was a well ordered stable industrious state. Geographically, its assets were primarily agrarian for example the rich farmlands of Jutland and Schleswig-Holstein; and maritime in the form of easy access to the North Sea and the Baltic States. Denmark was therefore a stepping stone into Europe. Despite the presence of several large urban centres including Aarhus, and the capital Copenhagen, Denmark was primarily a rural utopia. We believe that this factor, when taken into consideration with others, discussed below may help to explain the absence of a Danish entrepreneurial ideal.

### **Danish emigration to the New World**

Emigration plays a significant part in Entrepreneurial mythology. It is estimated that over 50 million Europeans migrated to the new world between the years 1814-1914. Of these 90% immigrated to America. Legions of poor Scots, Irish, Poles, and Italians made the often perilous journey. However, it is estimated that between the years 1820-1850 only 2,000 Danes made the same crossing. This is significant because the Danes did not achieve a numerical dominance in numbers as did the Scots and Irish. There are numerous studies of the phenomenon including the works of Hale and Norman & Runblom [10]. Early Danish migration to America consisted mainly of seamen, artisans and adventurers. The high cost of travel perhaps made emigration prohibitive for the poor of Denmark and indeed, it appears that many who emigrated from Denmark were what can be described as Bourgeoisie extraction e.g. Teachers, Preachers and Tradesmen who could well afford the passage. Also, many Danish men travelled alone, later sending for their wife and family to join them. A significant number of Danish men married women from other ethnic origins. It is helpful to divide these Danish émigrés into three separate types because they formed very different communities:

- City dwellers;
- Rural dwellers / Farmers;
- Religious émigrés.

This division helps explain the invisibility of Danes amongst the pantheon of American entrepreneurs, because unlike the Irish, Italians, or Poles they did not as a general rule always settle in ethnic enclaves. Nevertheless, Danish immigrants were hardworking individuals being very much in demand and respected. After 1850, Danish emigration increased. Approximately 20,000 Danes left Denmark between the years 1870 and 1895. The Danish historian Christianson [11] estimates that over 300,000 Danes emigrated in the years 1840–1914. Social conditions led to a moderate wave of immigration which reached its height between the years 1880-1920. The Danish owned ship, Frederik VIII, is credited with transporting more than half a million immigrants to America from Scandinavia. Christianson using other historians such as Neilson, Friedman, and Lovoll as sources [12] tells us Danes began to emigrate in significant numbers after Denmark suffered defeat by Bismarck's Prussia in 1864. In this period the majority of such immigrants came from urban backgrounds and naturally gravitated towards cities. It is helpful to discuss these different émigré communities to establish how they fared in the new world.

City Dwellers: Between the years 1895-1910, Danish immigrants settled in various cities in America, such as New York City, Chicago and Racine, Wisconsin. Many of these workers, especially Tradesmen, settled in cities. Danish Tradesmen in particular did so with the dream

of establishing their own businesses and becoming independent. Many Danish immigrants were young, single, skilled, well-educated men. This created a gender imbalance and the need to look for a non Danish partner. Significantly, the Danes and Swedes shared a common heritage and intermingled. The Danes who settled in the ghettos of Chicago quickly assimilated and by as early as 1920 many had moved to the suburbs. North Avenue in Chicago became a Danish – Swedish commercial centre. Christianson narrates that many Danish men became carpenters, masons, painters, furniture makers, and contractors because these were the skills in demand. Some became small-scale entrepreneurs and shopkeepers - A Scandinavian bourgeoisie of grocers, tobacconists, clothiers, hoteliers, publicans, and restaurateurs. Some enterprising Danes with rural roots relocated to the fringes of Chicago specialising in market gardening and dairying. Danish women became domestic maids or shop clerks. Christianson describes the formation of a Danish *Round Table* which led to the setting up of a social club, a library, an English-night school, and a mutual aid fund. Several Lutheran and Baptist Churches sprung up as did the fraternal Danish Brotherhood. A network of Danish self-help groups emerged including societies for gymnastics, cycling, football, hunting, fishing, sharp shooting, and theatre. A Scandinavian newspaper ran for 50 years until circulation declined. What Christianson describes, is effect the formation of a Danish-American Entrepreneurial community complete with an elite of artists, sculptors, journalists, clergymen and professionals. In this respect the Danes conformed to the Entrepreneurial Community model discussed by Diamond [13] as being a particularly American Institution. It would appear that in the process the émigré Danes became comfortable, model Americans. They lived the American dream but faded into the obscurity of middle class America. As a result few of their creed became renowned as famous entrepreneurs or tycoons, unlike the Scots and Irish émigré's in America who produced many such cultural icons. Perhaps their Danishness and their Lutheran faith dictated that they kept their heads down and their feet firmly planted on the ground? This wondrous story narrated by Christianson and others certainly casts doubt on the thesis that Danes are by nature a non-entrepreneurial race. Opportunity and context may therefore be a more accurate indicator of Entrepreneurial proclivity.

Rural dwellers: Christianson narrates that in the 1870's an agricultural depression led to many Danes of farming stock emigrating to the American heartland, particularly the Mid-West. The states preferred by these immigrants were Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Michigan, California, Utah, Arizona and Wisconsin. These often entrepreneurial farmers settled in remote rural enclaves where they recreated "*Little Denmark's*". Many in time became landowners, a feat which was impossible in Denmark because of the shortage of land. In their native Denmark farmers were held in bondage by major landowners. This arrangement was abandoned about 1850. Those Danes who sought to recreate the Danish rural idyll in the new world settled in communities such as Solvang recognised as the Danish Capital of America.

Religious émigrés: Large scale immigration began in 1840, when many Danes of the Mormon faith chose to emigrate. Wilde [14] poignantly refers to these pilgrims as having "*bleeding feet, humble hearts*". An earlier wave of Norwegian Mormons had made the journey in 1825 as a flight from religious persecution. According to Bille [15], only Danish Mormons emigrated for religious reasons. This was not a flight from persecution but a gathering-in to "Zion" of co-religionists. These were predominantly rural folk. However, religious dissent was not a major contributory factor in Danish emigration. Many Baptists and Mormons also emigrated to America from 1850-1870. These Danes enjoyed building churches identical to those in their homeland. The major cause of emigration was an increase in the birth rate and the economic difficulties of a small country faced with a rapidly increasing population. Nielsen describes

the religious aspects, in which Danes differed from other Scandinavian immigrants by joining American churches instead of Danish ones in America. Simonsen [16] narrates the struggle of Danish churches in North America to maintain a sense of unity and Danish-ness in light of dwindling congregations. Conversely Norwegian and Swedish American churches flourished. Bille argues that a common consensus amongst scholars of Danish history is that Danish Americans were unlike other Americans of Scandinavian descent. The latter congregated in enclaves with their own countrymen whilst the Danes assimilated quickly into the social fabric of America. Many Danish men married non-Danish women and quickly became Americans. Furthermore, Nielsen and Simonsen argue that the Danes again differ from other Scandinavian immigrants by spreading thin over a wide area and thus hastening their assimilation. Their mother tongue experienced significant changes on the new continent. This is an interesting passage because to sum up (1) Many Danes quickly identified with being American; (2) the absence of a persecution complex perhaps denied the Danes the motivation which drove other outsider groups; (3) the Mormon Danes considered themselves as Mormons first and foremost.

From an analysis of the above factors it is obvious that, unlike other émigré ethnic groups, the Danes did not develop a critical mass and assimilated into the melting pot of America. This may explain the absence of a Danish entrepreneurial ideal. However, the absence of a body of Danish-American success stories is puzzling. It is to this that we now turn.

#### **Danish-American success stories**

As stated above, prior to our research, we were not aware of the identity of any famous Danish-American Entrepreneurs. A search of the internet located details of August and Ane Rasmussen. A fortuitous e-mail conversation with the Editor of this Journal Dr Peter Petersen proved to be a turning point because he provided the names of many entrepreneurial Danish Businessmen namely Peter Larson; Neils Poulsen; William Petersen; Lorentz Iversen; William S. Knudsen; Karl Mathiasen; and Eckardt Eskesen. As researcher we are frustrated at the difficulty in locating biographical information concerning their exploits. We believe that there is a need to collect the remarkable stories of Enterprising Danish Americans to act as cultural role models and to make these stories available to scholars outside the Danish Cultural Community. Their micro-biographies are narrated below. The majority of the research was conducted on the internet often obtained from unreferenced articles.

A love story: August and Ane Rasmussen made the epic crossing in 1856 as pioneers [17]. August Rasmussen from the Parish of Sæby in West Zealand was raised in abject poverty but rebelled against the prevailing social conditions and landed elite in rural Denmark which dictated that he would never be able to afford to buy land. For four years he and Ane worked hard to save for their passage to America. They arrived in Greenville, Michigan, USA with nothing but the clothes on their back and as a result of hard work bought a small holding. In doing so they started a process of chain migration from their parish which saw Greenville becoming a Danish American community. This aspect of Danes helping others of their kind is epitomised by the words of Sorenson [18] who wrote of the Danish Community providing helping "*Hands across the Sea*". As an old man August Rasmussen wrote his memoirs which were highly critical of the Denmark of his youth. They are not deeply dark tales but a lasting story of romance and adventure in the achievement of their Dreams. It is nevertheless an American Dream because it was not possible in parochial 19<sup>th</sup> Century Denmark for poor boys to live such dreams.

A poor boy makes good: The American-Danish entrepreneur Peter Larson whose life story as retold by Jorgensen reads stranger than fiction in true Algeresque style. Born Peder Larsen on 11, July, 1849 in the parish of Dreslette, on the isle of Fyn he spent his youth working on his father's farm and had little time for formal education. As Jorgensen narrates *"This was at a time when opportunities for advancement in the old world were meagre and many young people migrated to America.."*. So Peder set off in pursuit of his dream arriving in New Orleans with no money and no grasp of the English language – but he learned fast. He changed his name to Peter Larson and by dint of hard work hauled himself up the social ladder eventually becoming a contractor before wealth enabled him to become a railroad entrepreneur. He died in 1907 in his prime at the head of a huge financial empire. Yet Jorgensen is correct to question why so few people in America or Denmark even speak his name. Jorgensen perhaps provides the answer in Larson's fanatical modesty and his avoidance of publicity. He considered himself to be of the common people. According to Jorgensen the rags to riches story of Peter Larson is one of a *"Danish immigrant youth who met and seized opportunity in America"*.

A man of Steel: Niels Poulsen (1843-1913) is famous for helping to create the Hecla Architectural Iron Works which produced iron products used in the creation of several major buildings in New York City. Poulsen, a native of Denmark, Poulsen was trained in Copenhagen as a mason-journeyman. He moved to New York City in 1864. Poulsen, like many émigrés from different cultures chose to Anglicize his surname which became Poulson. This is significant in that it perhaps served to eradicate his Danishness from the public memory. In time, Poulson became a famous American entrepreneur and endowed the American Scandinavian Foundation with well over half a million dollars.

The Blacksmith who turned inventor: Danish-American Entrepreneur and Blacksmith William Petersen inventor of the 'Vise Grip' learned his trade in Denmark. In 1924 Petersen founded a small family business in DeWitt, Nebraska to manufacture his unique hand tool. He formed the Petersen Manufacturing Company which by the 1980s was producing between 40,000 and 50,000 tools a day.

An Engineering Giant: Lorentz Iversen was another Dane who rose to great heights in the world of American business. Under Iversen's leadership the Mesta Machine Company near Pittsburgh became one of the world's largest manufacturers of heavy machinery.

A Titan in the automobile Industry: William S. Knudsen, born Signius Wilhelm Poul Knudsen in his native Denmark emigrated to New York in 1900. Knudson is another nationally recognized Dane who rose to the leadership of General Motors in the 1930s and became one of the highest paid executives in the nation during the Great Depression. During World War II President Roosevelt appointed Knudsen as a lieutenant general of the Army in charge of defense production. Knudsen is widely recognized today as one of the architects of the modern industrial economy. Knudsen's son Semon "Bunkie" Knudson served as President of G.M.'s Pontiac and then Chevrolet divisions before eventually becoming President of the Ford Motor Company.

Pioneering friends: Karl Mathiasen and Eckardt Eskesen two Danish immigrants who formed a friendship created the New Jersey Terra Cotta Company which supplied building materials to contactors in the New York City region.

Also, Pearson [19] narrates that the mother of the famous Oil Baron John Paul Getty was of Danish birth. She played a significant part in his moral upbringing. We find these skeletal



biographies frustrating and believe that there is a real need to fill in the gaps before they pass from living memory.

Collectively, the factors discussed above may help to explain why Denmark and the Danes did not develop a healthy Enterprise Culture. From the above it can be argued that a combination of a poor theological driving force; the assimilation of the Danish émigrés into the American culture may have led to a dumbing down of the Danish Entrepreneurial Spirit at a time when the American Entrepreneurial spirit was in the ascendancy. It can be seen that although Denmark is a proud example of an old world country who exported many of its sons and daughters to the dream that became America, there is little evidence that these sons returned to Denmark as Entrepreneurs. The research which went into the writing of this article led us to conclude that the Danish Entrepreneurial model is dissimilar to that of other countries possibly as a result of socio-cultural and historical factors. Significantly, no other Entrepreneurship researchers have appreciated the importance of this. Building upon this aperçus the following section considers the development of a protean Danish Entrepreneurial Dream and the influence of a reinvigorated American Dream upon this re-writing of Danish Entrepreneurial History.

## RE-WRITING THE DANISH ENTREPRENEURIAL DREAM

Each era, or age, has its own defining spirit. And so it is with modern Denmark. It stands on the brink of a new golden age of Entrepreneurship but may not be ready to accept the painful challenge of letting go of its past. Moreover, it has new problems of its own. The State is keen on equality espoused by the social democratic movement. However, such liberal benefits also come with responsibilities and high taxation (this can be as high as 62% - also VAT is charged at 25%). For the ordinary Dane in the Street this is good news because the Danish state provides free education, health care, and a state pension you can actually live on. However, this near utopian state of affairs has the unintentional effect of creating a dependency culture which can stifle Entrepreneurial flair. When one takes cognisance of this dependency culture alongside the socio-cultural and historical factors discussed in the previous section then one can begin to appreciate the scale of the problem. It is not as simple as letting go of the past but requires building, or possibly re-writing a brighter future.

The latest theory is that Danish entrepreneurs are following *their* version of the American dream. According to the Danish author Tüchsen [20] in his book - "*The American Dream*" it is a story about the bright future of Entrepreneurship in Denmark. Tüchsen re-tells the stories of eight Danish entrepreneurs who have made it big in America. The entrepreneurs he discusses are: Dan Meiland (a Headhunter from Zehnder International); Henrik and Charlotte Jorst (of Skagen watches); Henrik Slipsager (of AMB Industries); Peter Martins (who runs the New York City Ballet); Lars Dalgaard (of IT business Success factors); Ole Henriksen (who runs a successful cosmetics business); and Lars Ulrich (of Metallica). Tüchsen firmly believes that the Danish have been hit by the US-fever and argues that the Danish dream needs to be positively cultivated in schools. Tüchsen espouses individuality, not equality and argues that to create the American dream in Denmark, the individual Dane needs freedom. Tüchsen urges Danes to believe in themselves and forget about their inherent problems with becoming a success. According to Tüchsen in America the cleverest children are encouraged to an extent unheard of in Denmark. Americans are also better at cultivating the abilities of these children through differentiated teaching. In Denmark this has also been implemented, but has yet to work. Danes need to back the best, but often the teachers hold back the clever children – and often they are also mobbed by the other children, because it is not acceptable to be clever and to want to learn. In America you make your own rules, but in

Denmark everything is too regulated. Denmark also needs to open its doors to educated immigrants – indeed Denmark should welcome them with open arms – just like America.

This article makes a further theoretical contribution in that it has discussed important cultural variables and unearthed a narrative crying out for re-telling. It is time to rewrite a forgotten heritage of Danish entrepreneurial endeavour. Stories, whether fairytales or factual require to be retold again and again to retain their inspirational power. Danes need to re-write their place in history for the benefit of future generations. It is heartening that as well as Dan Meiland, Henrik and Charlotte Jorst, Henrik Slipsager, Peter Martins, Lars Dalgaard, Ole Henriksen and Lars Ulrich mentioned by Tüchsen a new breed of homegrown Danish entrepreneurs such as Thomas Adamsen, Lene Mønster, Maersk McKinsey-Møller and Lars Larsen are acting as realistic entrepreneurial role models for young Danes to emulate. Because of this the authors are heartened that perhaps the golden age of Danish Entrepreneurship is in the coming. We therefore question the hypothesis that traditionally Danes are regarded as being a non-entrepreneurial people and suggest instead that they are a hard working self-deprecating people averse to casting themselves as heroes or the modern day equivalent – entrepreneurs. As scholars we would appreciate your views on the subject.

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