

## ***Neoliberalism in the Nordics – Developing an Absent Theme***

**MaxPo preliminary workshop, supported by *Reimagining Norden in an Evolving World (ReNEW)***

**Sciences Po, Paris  
6-7 December 2018**

In recent years, the nature of neoliberalism as a concept, doctrine, -ism, set of bureaucratic practices, or specific political rationality has been highly debated in the social sciences. This means that initially crude understandings of neoliberalism as something 'bad' have been replaced by much more sophisticated interpretations of how the large-scale process of marketization that the world has seen in the last three decades can be understood, as a both universal phenomenon that has similarities in a wide range of settings, and as highly particularistic and contingent in different national settings. As a general rule, the Nordic countries are totally or almost completely absent from the literature on neoliberalism. In the comparative welfare state literature and political economy, the Nordics and particularly Sweden still figure as an exception to liberalisation processes that are situated elsewhere and particularly to the Anglo-Saxon countries. Even Sweden, with its fargoning experiments in liberalisation and privatisation, is thus described as resilient to neoliberalism and as retaining a strong social democrat culture with support for progressive reforms (Thatcher and Schmidt 2013, Thelen 2014, see for a different argument Baccaro and Howell 2017). Meanwhile, there are good reasons to argue that the Nordic countries and especially Sweden have been important laboratories for neoliberal reform, but that the trajectories of neoliberalism in the Northern European periphery were different from those of the Anglo-Saxon countries or continental Europe. Possibly they had more in common with the experiences in the former socialist economies, where marketization was often carried through by highly statist former communist elites and as a virtual learning process for public sector employees and populations.

The workshop ***Neoliberalism in the Nordics*** seeks to develop a new research theme around neoliberalism in the Northern European periphery, by posing the following questions:

How did processes of marketization, privatisation and financialisation affect notions of property, private ownership, consumerism and welfare capitalism in nations with historically salient political traditions of public good, public consumption and social regulation?

What were the public cultures of neoliberalism and how did forms of social change (contributing to growing inequalities, growing city-periphery divides and professional as well as ethnic differences in all the Nordics) express itself in popular and political culture?

What was the importance of forms of contestation vs consensus and pragmatics in trajectories of neoliberal reform? How did elements of Nordic modernity interact with a process of marketization that was in many places also presented as a form of pragmatic reformism?

How can we explain the emergence of new actors, for instance business communities and multinationals, and their role between states and markets in the Nordic context?

Which salience should be given to the national, Nordic, transnational, and global contexts and levels of analysis? What are the relevant points and contexts for comparison?

How can we understand the complex interplay between social democracy or Nordic progressivism, nationalism, and neoliberalism?

The workshop will take place at the MaxPo Center for Coping with Instability in Market Societies in Paris (MaxPo). MaxPo is a collaborative research center between Sciences Po and the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Society in Cologne. The workshop will bring together about 15-20 invited participants (see preliminary list). All participants will present abstracts and speakers will present preliminary papers.

### **Participant List**

**Jenny Andersson**, MaxPo, CEE, Sciences Po, [jenny.andersson@sciencespo.fr](mailto:jenny.andersson@sciencespo.fr)

**Mitchell Dean**, Copenhagen Business School, [md.mpp@cbs.dk](mailto:md.mpp@cbs.dk)

**Chris Howell**, Oberlin College, [chowell@oberlin.edu](mailto:chowell@oberlin.edu) (convenors)

**Yohann Aucante**, EHESS, [aucante@ehess.fr](mailto:aucante@ehess.fr)

**Claes Belfrage**, Liverpool University, [C.Belfrage@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:C.Belfrage@liverpool.ac.uk)

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**Noomi Weinryb**, Södertörn University, [noomi.weinryb@sh.se](mailto:noomi.weinryb@sh.se)

## **Workshop Program**

### **Day 1: Thursday, December 6<sup>th</sup>**

9 – 9 30 Introduction and Welcome : Chris Howell, Jenny Andersson, Mitchell Dean

9 30 – 11

**Mitchell Dean:** Rethinking Neoliberalism for the Nordics

**Jenny Andersson:** From 'Retrenchment' to Neoliberalism: A New Research Agenda?

11 – 12 30

**Orsi Husz:** Turning Swedish Wage-Earners into Finance Consumers

**Jeppe Nevers:** Industrial Policy and the Transformation of Capitalism in the late 20th Century

12 30 – 13 30

**Lunch**

13 30 – 15

**Noomi Weinryb:** Negotiating Service Delivery on Social Media? Loosely Organized Networks, Co-optation, and the Welfare State

**Peo Hansen:** Refugee Reception or Welfare State Sustainability, or Both? Lessons from Government Spending on the Refugee Crisis in Sweden

15 – 15 30

**Coffee break**

15 30 – 17

**Claes Belfrage:** Iceland's Post-Crisis Model: Mirage or Miracle?

**Ilkka Kärrylä:** Tracing Neoliberal Conceptions of Democracy in Finland and Sweden

17 – 18 30

**Sami Outinen:** From Democratic to Market-driven and Innovation-based Regulation of Economy. Neoliberal, Neocorporatist and Neostatist Strategies in the Employment-related Concepts and Policies of Sweden's and Finland's Social Democrats 1975–1986

**Nikolas Glover:** The Sunset and Dawn of Punishing Capital: The Re-Entry of Business and the Marketization of Swedish-South African Relations in the 1990s

19 30

**Dinner** at the restaurant *A la Petite Chaise*, 36 Rue de Grenelle, 75007 Paris

(<http://www.alapetitechaise.fr/english.php>)

**Day 2: Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup>**

9 – 10 30

**Mathias Hein Jessen:** Neoliberalism and the Third Way in Denmark

**Marius Gudmand-Høyer:** The Interpellations of Human Capital: Negotiating Consumption and Production Value in the Present-Day Danish Welfare Society

10 30 – 12

**Nathalie Morel:** Liberalising the Swedish Welfare State and Labour Market through Tax Incentives: the RUT Tax Deduction on Household Services

**Yohann Aucante:** The Past and Future of Petrodemocracy: Reflexions on the Political Economy of the Norwegian Sovereign Fund

12 – 12 30

**Concluding discussion**



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