

Seminar on Nordic Models of Self-Organization

CBS Center for Civil Society Studies

Porcelænshaven 18 A, 2000 Frederiksberg

September 20th-21st 2018

Participants: Haldor Byrkjeflot, Sidsel Eriksen, Lars Bo Kaspersen, Anker Brink Lund, Henrik Stenius.

Preliminary Program

September 20th 12:00-18:00 Round up the usual suspects

Dinner at 19:00

September 21st 09:00-12:00 Demarcation from other book projects

12:00: Lunch

The premise of the seminar is that an important (but currently overlooked) constituents of civil society in the European region consisting of the nation states Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland (shorthand: Norden) is a plurality of self-governed associations that cannot be reduced to networks of libertarian individuals or localized communities. The fundamental question is if collective and connective action of this kind has been a civilizing factor enabling Nordic associative democracy. And if so: Is self-organized republicanism sustainable in the 21st century?

Talking about **associations**, i.e. organized groups that is formed in order to further common interest of its members at arms-length from government as well as market forces, we not only refer to voluntary incorporated ones. Important for the Nordic development have also been obligatory associations (e.g. village communities, guilds, and municipalities) and informal ones (e.g. secret societies, self-help groups and action committees). Furthermore, it is claimed that associational action is institutionalized over time and in so doing depends heavily on historical traditions, civil values creation, and organizational imitation.

Relatively small and uniform populations tend to enable self-governance, but European comparisons show that these conditions do not automatically translate into associative decision making. Consequently, we shall discuss self-government as a dependent variable informed by a variety of “usual suspects” presented as more or less convincing independent variables. Not in order to find one specific, “smoking gun” in terms of causal effect, but more pragmatically to understand (in the Weberian sense) genealogical path-dependence: How has the current state of associative democracy in Norden been established – and can this peculiar form of governance survive in times of individualization, globalization, and migration?

Finally, the aim of the seminar is to determine if research-based answers to such questions merit an edited volume or a monograph?