

## **Nordic routes to "Weberian" bureaucracy. The role of elites, social mobilisation and nation building**

ReNEW workshop at the Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo, March 28 and 29.

This project aims to contribute to the comparative study of the historical routes that led to the establishment of "Weberian" bureaucracies in the Nordic realm. It is interdisciplinary between history, sociology and political science.

Weberian bureaucracies are "accountable" bureaucracies marked by rational procedures in the treatment of cases and virtual absence of clientelism and corruption. Such a bureaucracy is a key factor in "developmental states" (Evans), marked by a high "quality of governance" (Rothstein).

On the basis of a periodization, the workshop will pursue systematic comparison of the five countries within a common framework. The main participants are historians and historically oriented social scientists.

The outcomes to be studied in this project are the various national bureaucracies in the early (pre-1970s) post-war period. A typologization of such Weberian bureaucracies will be discussed. Iceland's bureaucracy seems to have been the weakest among the Nordics in terms of capacity. At least in the 1930s and the early post-war period, elements of clientelist practice have been identified. At the other extreme, the Danish bureaucracy and its spin-off in Norway, were closer to the Weberian benchmark. The closely related Finnish and Swedish cases can be located in between.

While thorough comparisons of the two large older Nordic countries (Sweden and Denmark) from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards have been conducted, there is a lack of studies that treat all five Nordic cases together. Our workshop will focus on the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The workshop will include all five cases, and furthermore intends to look at the evolution of bureaucracies *from the perspective of the three countries that still did not enjoy full sovereignty as nation states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century*, that is: Iceland, Norway and Finland. Iceland was still a colony under Denmark, Norway was in a personal union with Sweden, and Finland was a grand duchy under Russia. The relationship between the state elites (central bureaucracy/administrative elites), various nationalist social movements, and the external, dominant state will be compared for the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and changes after full independence (Finland in 1917, Norway in 1905, and Iceland's home rule in 1904) until about World War 2 will be mapped. We will discuss whether the category of "civil servant state" is relevant for all of these cases.

Was Iceland such a "civil servant state"? In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was very small and dominated by Danish representatives of the Danish King. Key to the professionalization of Iceland's bureaucracy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the education of an Icelandic clergy in Copenhagen, later followed by education in Reykjavik too. When the Althing became a legislative assembly in 1874, Icelanders educated in law

would also relate to a distinct body of Icelandic law. However, it remains to be investigated whether they had the same peculiar autonomy as had the Norwegian and Finnish administrators, especially in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It is interesting to see whether a comparative analysis from the point of view of the not-fully sovereign countries will yield new insight into the development of the fully sovereign cases (i.e. Sweden and Denmark) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their administrations evolved from the absolutist states of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The nationalist mobilisation in these countries may have been marked by the absence of external centres trying to dominate them. Did this lead to bureaucracies that differed from those in Finland, Iceland and Norway? If we find that they were not “civil servant states”, did the impact of social interest groups on their bureaucracies lead to trajectory of bureaucratisation different from the other three Nordics? Did it matter that Sweden and Denmark did not have to relate to an external power-centre? Or did one or more of the three others of the non-sovereign cases eventually also develop interest groups that began to influence the administrative elite, making it less autonomous?

The workshop will also develop comparisons with at least one case in Southern Europe. Greece is historically a main case of clientelist intermediation between state/parliament and civil society. Greece can be applied as a useful measuring rod when trying to judge elements (however mild) of clientelism in the Nordic cases, and Iceland will be the main focus of this discussion.

We will investigate comparatively whether a combination concepts from the study of administrative elite autonomy (Alapuro), conditions for clientelist politics (Shefter), and various state trajectories (Tilly) can prove fruitful in tracing the different Nordic paths to Weberian bureaucracies. The comparison of the three not-fully-sovereign states implies an interesting linguistic element, as emphasized in Rokkan’s models. The project will particularly investigate the role of administrative language.

The project will investigate whether these intricate differences – and others that we may discover – played any role in influencing the outcome we focus on, that is: the varieties of Weberian bureaucracies in the Nordic area 1930s-1960s.

#### Admissions

The workshop will be arranged at the Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo, March 28 and 29 (Room 134, Harriet Holters hus). It involves scholars that have already been building a network over several years. Participants are Risto Alapuro (University of Helsinki), Mette Frisk Jensen (Aarhus University), Gudmundur Jónsson and Gunnar Helgi Kristinsson (University of Iceland), Lars Mjøset (University of Oslo), and Apostolis Papakostas (Södertörn).

The workshop is open to scholars in the Oslo region, provided they cover travel costs and accommodation (if any) themselves. It is also possible for scholars from the ReNEW consortium universities to participate, but they will then have to finance the participation by means of their own research funds. Those who are interested in participating should get in touch with the Oslo organizer of the workshop: Lars Mjøset, [lars.mjuset@sosgeo.uio.no](mailto:lars.mjuset@sosgeo.uio.no).