

Nordic Models in the Age of Populism

September 27-28, 2018

Center for Integrated Life Sciences and Engineering (CILSE)
Boston University, 610 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA

Hosted by Center for the Study of Europe at Boston University

*Co-hosts: University of Oslo (UiO:Nordic), Nordic Research Network (ReNEW)
Harvard University (WFCIA/SCANCOR) ⁱ*

Background:

The Nordic region has attracted great interest during the last decade. The Nordic nations score high on global indexes of happiness, equality and welfare, transparency and economic competitiveness, environmental policies, trust, associational life and government effectiveness. They have been described as model countries during the 2016 US election, the Brexit and Scottish independence referenda, and debates on gender policy and social investment in the European Union. In 2013, *The Economist* proclaimed the Nordics to be “The Next Supermodel,” citing their unique blend of competitiveness and innovation, equality and wellbeing. In Asia and other parts of the world, Nordic models have also attracted interest, not only for welfare and education, but also other aspects of the “Nordic way.”

Yet, the glowing idealization of the region has been tempered by the electoral success of populist parties and the treatment of asylum-seekers and migrants. The Nordic countries represent utopia to some but dystopia to others, in part due to very different assessments of the model of consensus and conformity embedded in Nordic institutions such as the welfare state.

Whether as an object of admiration or criticism, the Nordic model remains a common reference point in comparative and global politics. The aim of this workshop is to provide informed discussion on the challenges and paradoxes represented by these small-scale, societies in areas such as the economics of the tripartite model, the politics of gender equality, humanitarian penal policies, and the secrets of Nordic cooperation. More recently these societies have also been associated with the cultural innovations of New Nordic cuisine, Nordic design and Nordic Noir and one may ask how the increased visibility of these less contested aspects of the Nordics affect the perception of the Nordic models.

Questions:

In this workshops/seminar we address questions related to the paradoxes and challenges represented by the Nordic models in the age of populism. The Nordic council of ministers and individual Nordic countries are keen to present themselves as models for others but how exceptional are the Nordics really? How relevant is knowledge of Nordic successes and failures for other parts of the world? What kind of impact do the Nordics have and what kind of impact do they want to have?ⁱⁱ

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Thursday, September 27, 2018

9:00 – 9:30 **Introduction and Welcome**

Cathie Jo Martin, Boston University, and *Haldor Byrkjeflot*, University of Oslo (UiO:Nordic)

9:30 – 11:30 **Opening Panel: The Nordic Model from a Global Perspective:
Populism, Equality and Democracy**

Chair: *Malcolm Langford*, University of Oslo (UiO:Nordic)

“Norden” in Global Context | *Bo Stråth*, University of Helsinki

Nordic Populism | *Johan Strang*, University of Helsinki

Nordic Knowledge Regimes | *Åse Gornitzka*, University of Oslo

Nordic Civil Society | *Fredrik Engelstad*, University of Oslo

11:30 – 12:30 **Lunch**

12:30 – 2:30 **The Making and Circulation of Models: Preconditions for Defining
Success and Failure**

Chair: *Haldor Byrkjeflot*, University of Oslo

Cultural Backlash: The Nordic cases in Comparative Perspective | *Pippa Norris*, Harvard University

Recognition and Collective Well-Being | *Michele Lamont*, Harvard University

Indexes and Nordic models | *Tori Loven Kirkebø*, University of Oslo

The utopian trap: Divergent views of success and failure in social diagnosis of the the Nordics
Carl Marklund, University of Södertörn, Sweden

Making and Circulation of Nordic Social Policy Models | *Klaus Petersen*, University of South-West Denmark

2:30 – 3:00 **Coffee Break**

3:00 – 4:00 **Guided Discussion**

Chair: *Cathie Jo Martin*, Boston University

How do the Nordics and Nordic Populism Look from an American Viewpoint?

How Exceptional Are the Nordics and Nordic populism Really?

Circulation of Models; What Kind of Impact do the Nordics Have?

How Relevant is Knowledge of the Reasons behind Nordic Successes and Failures for the Nordics
Themselves vs. Others?

Friday, September 28, 2018

8:45 – 10:45 Nordic Models in Comparison

Chair: *Fredrik Engelstad*, University of Oslo (UiO:Nordic)

Imagine All the People: Evolution of the Social Investment Society | *Cathie Jo Martin*, Boston University

Equality, Redistribution, and Rightwing Populism: A Danish Love Story | *Torben Iversen*, Harvard University

Posted Workers in Nordic Construction – The Case of Denmark | *Jens Arnholtz*, University of Copenhagen.

Nordic Welfare and Wellbeing in Comparison | *Hanne Petersen*, University of Copenhagen

Discussant: Andrew Martin

10:45 – 1:00 Coffee Break

11:00 – 1:00 Other Nordic Paradoxes

Chair: *Johan Strang*, University of Helsinki (ReNEW/UiO:Nordic)

Making of Nordic Exceptionalism | *Malcolm Langford*, University of Oslo and Bergen

Equality Paradox | *Øystein Skorge*, ISF Oslo

Multinational Firms | *Jette Steen Knudsen*, Tufts University

Nordic Energy Paradoxes | *Elin Lerum Boasson*, University of Oslo

1:00 – 2:00 Lunch

2:00 – 3:00 Closing of Seminar: Follow-up and Future Cooperation?

Chairs: *Cathie Jo Martin*, Boston University, and *Haldor Byrkjeflot*, University of Oslo

What kind of burning research questions and possibilities for further cooperation follow from our workshop? In the application for ReNEW funding it is the plan to organize the annual ReNEW conference in Boston in 2020 and this may be one way to follow up on this workshop. Any further suggestions are also welcome.

ⁱ UIO:Nordic is a strategic research initiative at University of Oslo uio.no/nordic

ReNEW is a University hub involving six Nordic Universities: <http://www.uio.no/english/research/strategic-research-areas/nordic/research/reimagining-norden-in-an-evolving-world/>

WFCIA: <https://wcfia.harvard.edu>

SCANCOR: <http://scancor.org/scholars/applying-to-scancor-weatherhead/>

ⁱⁱ We estimate 10-15-minute presentations and 30-minute discussion for each session. Papers are welcome but not necessary. However, we would like to have a short summary of your talk or background document.