

## Introduction

In the 1990s the Institute for Social Movements at *Ruhr-Universität Bochum* published three issues of its journal devoted to individual Nordic countries, namely Sweden (volume 10, 1990), Finland (volume 12, 1992) and Norway (volume 19, 1997).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the Institute has an international orientation as well as reputation. The Scandinavian countries, Finland and Iceland are known for the Scandinavian Model (sometimes called the Swedish or Nordic Model) of society, which encompasses high welfare spending and taxes. Much useful analysis has been conducted on its various aspects. This collection adds to the previous scholarship with articles about welfare policy and labour market conditions. Also included are articles on less well-known Scandinavian themes, such as occupation movements in Copenhagen and Stockholm or the Swedish far right. I hope that the articles together illustrate the complexity of Nordic societies as they have existed since the twentieth century began.

In order to explain why there exists a sense of community between the five Nordic countries, it is necessary to go further back in history. The Union of Kalmar, bringing the three kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden together between 1389 and 1521, was a product of pre-existing mutual ties. In the 14th century about half of present-day Finland was under Swedish control. Iceland was similarly brought into the Union by virtue of being a Norwegian colony. As noted in Ragnheidur Kristjansdóttir's contribution, Iceland was only able to end its subordinate status to Denmark, the leader in the Union of Kalmar, in 1944. Norway achieved the same goal in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars in 1814. The Union of Kalmar therefore nebulously continued its existence till the Second World War. But whatever the benefits and burdens of single-statehood, there is recognition of a shared heritage between the Nordic countries. Today, this sense of community is exemplified first and foremost by the Nordic Council, established in 1952. It meets several times a year to discuss matters of common interest, and suggests joint legislation to be implemented by national parliaments. Under its aegis is the Nordic Council of Ministers, set up in 1971, where decision makers can get to know each other and exchange ideas. There is a plethora of common institutions, companies, and networks that work across the region. The ones which affect daily life the most are perhaps the Scandinavian Airlines System and pan-Scandinavian television channel TV3. Closeness of language and territory also means that much of this exchange happens naturally by itself.

1 At that time the institute was still called *Institut zur Erforschung der europäischen Arbeiterbewegung* and its journal entitled *Mitteilungsblatt zur Erforschung der europäischen Arbeiterbewegung*.

Since it has already been mentioned, it might be propitious to discuss Kristjansdóttir's article first. It takes a Nordic perspective on Icelandic history by asking why the home-grown Social Democrats have never equalled the success of their Scandinavian sister-parties. A division familiar from all of Europe, between revolutionary and reformist socialism, continued for much longer in Iceland. Very interesting is how the revolutionaries were paradoxically able to present themselves as defenders of the Icelandic nation. It brings to mind the German Communists' stance of voting against the Locarno treaties in 1925, along with nationalist parties. In Iceland the Communists cum left-socialists competed with the right-wing Independence Party on protecting national values. Since independence was the all-consuming issue before 1944, the Social Democrats were in effect sidelined. It seems unusual for the Communists to dissolve their own party in its heyday for the sake of cooperating with other socialists. Negotiations took place in Denmark and Norway about creating a single party in the aftermath of the Second World War, but in those countries the Social Democrat and Communist participants ended up as enemies.

Flemming Mikkelsen notes how opponents of the Atlantic Pact adopted a peace rhetoric in Denmark and Norway, a somewhat different way of arguing for isolation than in Iceland. His article investigates what he calls social movement unionism, more generally the challenges to organised labour since 1945. Social movement unionism is grass-root or shop-steward activity leading to strikes. It represented a threat to the highly corporatist Scandinavian industrial relations. All the Scandinavian countries were affected, Denmark the most and Norway the least. Central to Mikkelsen's argument is the new labour history of Marcel van der Linden, which takes a critical look at some cherished concepts, and the World System of Immanuel Wallerstein. After bringing up a host of interesting trends, Mikkelsen concludes that the Scandinavian labour movements are very much subject to economic cycles. They are possibly also affected by developments of the *longue durée*.

If Mikkelsen takes a bird's-eye view of an entire region during sixty years, the strength of Carolina Uppenberg's article is her command of detail relating to three Swedish trade unions. These were in the clothing industry, comprising the Tailoring Workers' Union, the Textile Workers' Union and the Women's Trade Union, to which many seamstresses belonged. These were examples of respectively a craft union, an industrial union, and a less well-known type. Uppenberg writes from a feminist perspective about the first three decades of the twentieth century. She asks how the variable of gender interacted with the activities of trade unions. In a later time period the Norwegian feminist Berit Ås formulated five male domination techniques. One of them was the double-bind reaction. However they acted, women did wrong. Uppenberg's article gives clear examples of this: if there were many women in an industry, it weakened the union because women were difficult to organise. If they joined unions, a higher proportion of female members nevertheless made those unions less strong. Only if they entirely gave up their own concerns were they totally accepted.

Another article where gender is paramount is the contribution of Tapio Bergholm. He discusses women's entry into the labour market in Finland and its effects since the 1970s. His research, in contrast to that of others, sees the 1970s as a decade of equality. Women's new employment responsibilities were encouraged not just by the Trade Union Confederation *Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö* (SAK), but also the employers' organisation *Suomen Työnantajain Keskusliitto* (STK). Running parallel to this modernisation of society was economic development, successfully turning what had been an agricultural country in the 1950s into a successful industrial economy after 1967. In the 1970s, before women had entered the labour force in large enough numbers, Finland had some of the highest rates of strikes in the world. These were probably caused by scarcity of labour due to emigration, which put employees in a promising position in their workplace. Thus, for a traditionalist worker, there were some tensions between class position and gender. However, on the part of organised labour, Uppenberg and Bergholm illustrate contrasting reactions to female labour market participation. (Although some of the issues described by the former are not entirely absent in the article of the latter.) Mores had obviously changed a fair amount between 1920 and 1970.

So far all the movements considered have been classic, i. e. left-wing political parties and trade unions. A wider perspective is provided by Natasha Vall in her article on organised squatting in Copenhagen and Stockholm. These were less political than the contemporary Occupy movement, having only a loose ideological affiliation to anarchist/socialist modes of thought. What primarily motivated them was the desire for their own space. Stratification nevertheless took place in such alternative communities, the squatters being divided into activists, the alienated and, sometimes, drug users. In the Stockholm occupation at M ullvaden between 1977 and 1978, interviews for places in the squat were used to identify and privilege activists. Street theatre and other artistic activities were important elements in the daily life of both squats. These cultural manifestations could sometimes be used to gain support from wider society. Vall analyses comparatively, using factors discovered in the famous Danish squat of Christiania when she goes on to discuss the lesser known and short-lived occupation in Stockholm. Both are considered in the context of Social Democratic housing policy and its possible weaknesses. Vall concludes that Christiania is a life-world of 1970s counter-cultural activism and that Mullvaden represented such a phenomenon before eviction.

If social movements are not necessarily self-consciously political, neither are they always on the progressive side of the political divide. As Abby Peterson and Ylva Mattsson-Wallinder write about the Sweden Democrats and my own contribution concerns organised eugenics in Denmark and Norway. The Sweden Democrats are a far-right political party, which entered Parliament in 2010. Peterson and Mattsson-Wallinder argue that the local elections of 2006 provided a stepping stone to the party's breakthrough in 2010. This was because representation on local councils gave the party more media attention and legitimised it as a serious alternative. They also find that support for the party was very unevenly divided across the country, with the South providing a

much more favourable climate for this manifestation of xenophobia than the North. The authors describe the Sweden Democrats as a movement-party, and indeed their classification as a movement is put beyond doubt by the fact that they wore uniforms until 1996.

A system of thought that would today only be resuscitated by the far right, but which in its heyday commanded support across the political spectrum, is eugenics. My article conducts a comparison of the Danish and Norwegian versions, focusing especially on sterilisation and the vexed issue of racism. When it became public in 1997 that the Nordic countries had sterilised a large number of their citizens between 1929 and 1977, it caused an outcry. Sterilisation had a sympathetic reception in the far North, with every state in the region introducing it. But I argue that in Denmark and Norway, this had less to do with eugenics than with concern about sexual crime. That is not to say that eugenics was powerless. On the contrary, eugenicists had clear ideas about how they wanted to transform society. In Denmark they sought primarily to eliminate the mentally deficient, while Norwegian eugenicists took a more racist stance. This can be derived from the higher sterilisation figures in Denmark until 1950, and how eugenics was applied to race in the two countries.

The other article which considers Norway in this collection is by Clive Archer. He has written about changes in Norwegian society between the late 1960s and the early 2010s. He considers many economic and cultural factors, reaching important conclusions. The country has become more outward-looking, richer, less Labour-oriented, more consumerist but also more environmentalist in the preceding forty years or so. On social movements, he finds that their range has broadened considerably. Notwithstanding all these changes, Archer believes that a core of Norwegian society remains in values of egalitarianism and solidarity.

The final article in the special issue is about the provision of welfare services in Iceland. As in Kristjansdóttir's article, authors Ómar Kristmundsson and Steiunn Hrafnisdóttir give a considered opinion of why Icelandic practice does not quite match Scandinavia's. There is a much larger private and charitable sector involvement in the welfare services of Iceland. This conflicts with the social origin theory of Lester Salamon and Helmut Anheier. Empirical data collected by Kristmundsson and Hrafnisdóttir show that 144 charitable organisations, ranging in size from less than two to 560 full-time employees, had a substantial role in welfare provision in 2010. A possible reason for this lies in history, with the country not being affluent enough until the 1950s for the state to have much of a role. In the mean time needs had been met by charitable organisations. This was a tradition hard to undo, especially since the leading political party was the right-wing Independence Party.

At the conclusion of a project, which has spanned almost two years from beginning to end, I wish to thank above all the Institute, its director, Professor Dr. Stefan Berger, who initiated the project, and Dr. Christian Wicke, who provided valuable editorial assistance. Silke Neunsinger of the Archive and Library of the Labour Movement, Stock-

holm helped circulate the call for papers, which led to many good responses. Speaking for myself, I was greatly aided when the Danish State Archives gave me access to restricted materials, which is gratefully acknowledged here. I thank also the Norwegian State Archives and its helpful archivists. The same remark applies to members of staff at the Royal Library in Copenhagen. And my final thanks are due to the contributors, who have introduced me to a range of very interesting lines of enquiry, for all their hard work and for putting up with my sometimes slightly pedantic demands.

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