Several international comparative studies group the Nordic countries in a “social democratic” regime, characterized by large public welfare spending that “crowds out” nonprofit organizations (Anheier & Salamon 2006; Salamon & Anheier 1998). Others view the voluntary sector as embedded in corporative structures and as highly dependent on the state (Boli 1991). Some even go so far as to argue that an expansive welfare state has destructive effects on civil society and turns active citizenry into passive clients (Berger & Neuhaus 1996, Etzioni 1995, Wolfe 1989). The four papers in this panel will confront such assumptions with historic and comparative analyses based on new studies and in-depth knowledge of the Nordic countries.

The first paper starts out by describing variables on which the Nordic countries tend to cluster and form a Nordic exceptionalism: high social trust, social capital, membership in associations, economic and gender equality, as well as low corruption. Through empirical analysis a more complex and analytically refined Nordic idealtype is developed. This is achieved by describing relations, first, between state, family and the individual and, second, between state and civil society. The historical roots of these characteristic relations are found in a strong statist tradition, combined with local self-determination and independent peasants. This resulted in the marriage between a liberal emphasis on individual autonomy, and a social democratic concern for equality.

The second paper confronts the idea that an encompassing welfare state is destructive for civil society structures with findings from a comparison of local level associations in three Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland and Norway. The paper focuses on historical commonalities among the Nordic countries, and asks if they have resulted in similar voluntary sectors, and how characteristic these sectors are compared with the rest of Europe. The analyses show that the organizational density is higher in the Nordic countries. Although the size of associations varies between the countries, more than half of them have affiliation to national organizations. The hierarchical popular movement model, with ties to regional and national mother organisations, was historically dominant and very important for integrating people into the political system. However, with new types of organizations emerging it becomes less common. Still, the high density of local associations and the structures they are embedded in are contradictory to the communitarian critique of the destructive effect of an encompassing welfare state.

The third paper asks what role the associational organizations play in how the representations of society are constructed. By tracing the different historical conditions in Finland and France, it is possible to problematize seemingly self-evident features of the Finish case. While in France, representation is ambiguous and manifested in the unstable character of the party system and pressure groups, politics in Finland appear as a regulation between organized representatives of social groups. The construction of the ‘voter’ is historically derived from association-based representation in popular movements, while in France there was a more longwinded and laborious process characterized by struggles for representation. We see that the popular movement tradition, that is prominent in all Nordic countries, has been important for the development of a political culture of representation through voluntary organizations and voting.

The fourth paper questions the idea that a large welfare state crowds out nonprofit sector in the social democratic regime, presented as a part of social origins theory (Anheier & Salamon 2006; Salamon & Anheier 1998). It differentiates between voluntary organizations on the welfare field and in other areas, and focuses on size and composition of volunteering, paid employment, funding and role in society. The data are from the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, ILO and OECD. The findings show that there is a clear crowding out tendency on the welfare field: High public welfare spending results in a small
share of voluntary sector paid employment and volunteering on the welfare field. This is in line with expectations about a social democratic type of welfare state. However, looking at voluntary organizations outside the welfare field, the findings show a crowding in tendency both for paid employment and volunteering. The more “public” the more “voluntary”. Contrary to common assumptions, this is not a consequence of generous public funding arrangements, since the share of income from the public sector tends to be rather low. It is rather a result of high levels of volunteering and participation on the local level that generates income for the organizations.

On the welfare field, popular movements and voluntary organizations have historically been involved in policy-making processes that have resulted in a high level of public responsibility in order to promote broad coverage of services and secure rights for people with special needs. Outside the welfare field, broad participation in activities and volunteering has resulted in a very high level of activity without particularly generous public funding schemes.

This implies that the concept “crowding out” understood as a top down process, appear as a very simplistic understanding of the relationship between the public sector and the voluntary sector. In a historical perspective, several popular movements have been important links between citizenry and policy making processes, which means that bottom up processes are indispensable for understanding the structuring of the welfare state and the social role of the voluntary sector. A common theme for all four papers in this panel is that the hierarchical, multi-level structure of the popular movements, characteristic for the Nordic countries, played a crucial role for establishing a strong vertical integration of the societies in combination with individual freedom and political openness.
Theory

In Salamon and Anheier’s (1998) social origins scheme, “social democracy” emerges as one of four categories, characterized by a small voluntary sector measured in number of employees, but a strong advocacy and expressive role. The Nordic countries are prime examples of this nonprofit regime.

However, as Finnish historian Stenius has shown, the similarities between the Nordic states predate social democracy by centuries: elite-led reformation processes; decentralized political structures; early, widespread literacy within an egalitarian culture; a protestant ethos of frugality and hard work and the absence of great wealth. The latter traits fostered skepticism towards charity and philanthropy as solutions to social problems. Instead reformers turned to the state to develop encompassing welfare arrangements.

Nonetheless, many (predominantly Anglo-Saxon) scholars have been less concerned with the continuity in the Nordic voluntary sectors than with the perceived destructive effects of the welfare state, which many saw as anathema to civil society institutions. They worried about the way in which the welfare state “colonized” the idealized life world of civil society, turned an active citizenry into passive clients and weakened civil structures such as the family, faith-based communities and neighborhoods (Berger/Neuhaus 1996; Etzioni 1995; Habermas 1989; Wolfe 1989). In Norway, similar arguments have been put forward by Lorentzen (2004), who argues that the Labor movement conquered the state apparatus and subsequently colonized and destroyed civil structures.

Research questions

To what extent have the historical communalities produced similar voluntary sectors? Can such common traits reasonably be understood within a “crowding out”-perspective? And can Nordic countries remain a “special case” in the age of globalization and individualization?

The first empirical section compares in space, by comparing the most typical traits of the Nordic sectors with the rest of Europe. The second section is comparative in time, as we analyze the development over the past couple of decades to give an impression of in which direction organized civil society is moving.

Research strategy, design and methodology

We address these questions at the local level of organizational society. Despite its importance, very little comparative research has been done on local chapters of voluntary associations. We now have a great “window of opportunity”, as we have comparable data gathered at approximately the same time in Norway, Denmark and Finland. These projects, as well as the emergence of new European data sources (Maloney and Rossteutscher 2007), enable us to employ both “most similar” and “most different” approaches when analyzing the Nordic model in a European perspective.

The Norwegian data consists of a 2000 census of local chapters of voluntary associations in the Hordaland region, Norway (Wollebæk/Selle 2002), which was followed up by mailed questionnaires, with a response rate of 60 per cent in the rural municipalities and 45 per cent in the city of Bergen.
In Denmark, voluntary associations in the Funen region were registered by compiling several sources: lists of associations from the municipalities, phone books, national or regional associations, various websites and local informants, organisations or institutions with in-depth knowledge of what is going on in the local areas. A questionnaire was mailed to a sample of registered associations in April 2004. The questionnaire was sent to 3,844 associations. 49% responded.

Finland has a unique register of associations. The Finnish data was collected by a survey to the registered associations whose addresses could be found. Altogether 1079 questionnaires were mailed and the response rate was 31 per cent. An important difference to Norway and Denmark is that only “registered” associations – which, however, form a huge majority of all – are included (see Siisiäinen (ed.) 2002).

The associations under study are active within a wide range of fields, such as economy (e.g. unions), politics, sports, language, alcohol abstention, mission, children’s associations, music and arts, social and humanitarian work, culture and leisure and neighbourhood activities.

**Main findings**

The analyses show that the organizational density in the Nordic countries is higher than elsewhere in Europe. This contradicts crowding out theory. In all three countries organizational society is characterized by a large expressive sector, i.e. culture and leisure, politics and advocacy and economic interests, and a relatively small voluntary welfare sector. As regards structure, the Norwegian associations are small entities within hierarchical structures (with ties to regional and national mother organisations). The Finnish associations are larger, and the majority are hierarchical in structure. The Danish associations are even larger than the associations in Norway and Finland, but fewer of them are affiliated with national organizations. Despite these differences more than half of all associations in all three countries are hierarchical in structure.

Contrary to the predictions of crowding out theory, voluntary associations in the Nordic countries are relatively economically independent of the public sector. In most cases, public sector grants amount to a symbolic sign of endorsement and play no crucial role for the organization’s existence.

The temporal comparison showed that the hierarchical model is becoming less common. With regard to type, culture and leisure associations and local community associations are on the rise and religion is declining in all three countries.

There are no signs of weak local networks in the Nordic countries because of state “crowding out”. On the contrary, the density of local voluntary associations in the Nordic states is unequaled in Europe. While we do find similarities between the three countries, none of these are in the direction projected by neoconservative critics of the welfare state. The social origins classification scheme, in which the Nordic countries are regarded as a separate, social democratic “regime”, also fails to capture the essence of the similarities and distinctness of the three countries.

Processes of individualization and globalization do not undermine voluntary associations as such. The new forms of associations catering to individual interests and neighborhood concerns are clearly compatible with increasing individualism. However, the most typical traits of the Nordic voluntary sectors – the widespread participation, the decentralized, yet hierarchical structure and their movement-like character - are perhaps so to a lesser extent.
Associations and Representation in Finland and France

Finland and the other Nordic countries are commonly considered “organizational societies” in which the close relation between the state and (civil) society is manifest in high levels of associational membership. In them, to cite one formulation, government is envisaged as intermediating the organized interests of society, and society is organized along corporate lines; hence a special balance between state and society, a supportive attitude towards associations from both sides (Ronald L. Jepperson).

In the paper the image of society, presumably emanating from this configuration, is examined in the Finnish case, through a comparison with France where the traditional role of associational organization is very different. To put it in a French idiom, at issue is how associational activity shapes the way the society constructs itself and makes itself visible (Pierre Rosanvallon). In short, which role does the associational organization play in the representation(s) of society?

It is argued that in contrast with the French tradition, the Finnish tradition views society in a peculiar way as an ordered whole, consisting of structurally determined parts and their regulated interrelations. It is as if society were organized in such a way that it directly reflects, through its associational pattern, the objectively existing structure of society and its groups, making them immediately perceptible and legible by the actors themselves.

The contrast with France is studied through an historical analysis of the role of voluntary associations in the early socio-political mobilization in the two countries. It is traced to the creation of modern politics in Finland through organized popular movements in the nineteenth century, and to the anti-associationism of the French republican tradition.

Different views of representation have both political and other implications, which problematize seemingly self-evident features of the Finnish case. Politically the most striking difference lies in the conception of “people”, the articulation of whose will constitutes a key aspect of democracy. In the Finnish tradition politics appears as a regulation between organized representatives of social groups forming the people, whereas in the French tradition the representation of the people has remained ambiguous and is manifest in the unstable character of the French party system and pressure groups. In Finland the construction of the voter, the indispensable but far from self-evident figure of democratic politics, appeared a largely unproblematic process, deriving from the association-based conception of representation established in preceding popular movements. In France, on the contrary, the corresponding process was slow and laborious. The voter was gradually “made” by the electoral process itself which was instrumental in the creation of the representation of groups.

A parallel can be found in the French social analysis, which sees the voluntary organizational activity contingent, as the “representation struggle”, as a part of the “general economy of the representation” that produces the society and does not only describe it, as (deceptively) seems to be the case in the Finnish tradition. In Finland, not accidentally, the dominant strand in social analysis has been the structural analysis of fundamentally non-problematic social groups and their relationships.

How do the ambitious welfare states of the Nordic countries affect voluntary organizations?

Research question

Social origins theory proposes that countries cluster around four different models according to how public welfare spending affects nonprofit sector scale (See Anheier and Salamon, 2006, Salamon and Anheier, 1998). In the social democratic model, high levels of public welfare spending is expected to “crowd out” paid nonprofit employment. However, volunteering is expected to be high in expressive organizations. This article confronts assumptions about a
social democratic model with results from a comparative analysis of 15 highly industrialized countries with extensive welfare arrangements:

How do the ambitious welfare states of the Nordic countries affect paid employment and volunteering in voluntary organizations? Is the observed crowding in/out effect a result of level of public funding for voluntary organizations?

To answer these questions, we compare 1) paid employment in the voluntary sector as percentage of total paid employment, 2) volunteering as percentage of total paid employment, and 3) public funding as share of total income for voluntary organizations.

Theories and concepts

Social origins theory assumes that in the social democratic regime, the nonprofit sector is replaced by the state, whereas in the corporative regime, the nonprofit sector, which performs welfare services that are paid for by the public sector, becomes heavier involved when welfare ambitions rise. Thus, in the social democratic regime the size of the nonprofit sector varies inversely with the size of the public social welfare costs, while in the corporative regime the nonprofit sector grows when the public welfare spending increases (Salamon and Anheier, 1998: 229-230).

Based on social origins theory, Salamon and co-writers assume that in the social democratic regime the public sector has main responsibility for the welfare services, and this leaves little room for nonprofit organizations on this field. Furthermore, public funding and private gifts are considered alternative sources of funding in the social democratic model. Since the nonprofit sector was rejected as a mechanism for meeting public needs in the welfare field and the public sector both pays for and perform services, “the voluntary sector would be financed more heavily by private charitable contributions” (Salamon and Anheier, 1998: 230). Salamon and co-writers also assume that in the social democratic regime the so-called expressive role of nonprofit organizations could grow unimpeded, because it was considered instrumental for the political mobilization that underpinned the social-democratic regime (Salamon & Sokolowski 2001: 15). In the following analysis we will compare such assumptions from social origins theory with results from a comparative analysis.

Research methodology and design

We give a general overview over the history of the voluntary sector in the Nordic countries, which includes Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway. Then we describe some basic characteristics when it comes to membership and volunteering. Thereafter, we confront presumptions about a social democratic type of voluntary sector with data from the Nordic countries in comparative perspective by comparing volunteering and paid employment and sources of funding. To see if there is a crowding out effect, we see these aspects in relation to public welfare costs. For each aspect we compare data for the voluntary sector as a whole, voluntary organizations on the welfare field, and other voluntary organizations. This is because there are significant differences, not just between countries, but also between sub-sectors of voluntary organizations. It is therefore essential to at least understand in what ways voluntary organizations on the welfare field differ from those on other fields. The data are from the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, ILO and OECD.

Main findings

The findings show that there is a clear crowding out tendency on the welfare field: High public welfare spending results in a small share of voluntary sector paid employment and volunteering on the welfare field. This is in line with expectations about a social democratic type of welfare state. However, looking at voluntary organizations outside the welfare field, the findings show a crowding in tendency both for paid employment and volunteering. The more “public” the more “voluntary”. Contrary to common assumptions, this is not a consequence of generous public funding arrangements, since the share of income from the public sector tends to be rather low. It is rather a result of high levels of volunteering and participation on the local level that generates income for the organizations.
On the welfare field, popular movements and voluntary organizations have historically been involved in policy-making processes that have resulted in a high level of public responsibility in order to promote broad coverage of services and secure rights for people with special needs. Outside the welfare field, broad participation in activities and volunteering has resulted in a very high level of activity without particularly generous public funding schemes.

This implies that the concept “crowding out” understood as a top down process, appear as a very simplistic understanding of the relationship between the public sector and the voluntary sector. In a historical perspective, several popular movements have been important links between citizenry and policy making processes, which means that bottom up processes are indispensable for understanding the structuring of the welfare state and the social role of the voluntary sector.
Is there a Distinct Nordic Civil Society?: The Case of Sweden Exploring Variation and Commonality from an International Perspective

This paper will address the question of Nordic exceptionalism in regards to state/civil society relations, using Sweden as the case. It will provide a number of broad and contextualizing reflections on Nordic commonality and exceptionalism; consider a number of crucial features that Nordic civil societies can be said to share to a great extent; provide an analysis of how we may understand the historical roots of the particular state-civil society nexus that, this paper argues, is characteristic of the Nordic countries; and conclude by making a number of theoretical reflections.

The paper starts off by considering more generally the idea of a Nordic (or sometimes “Social Democratic”) model or a Nordic exceptionalism. In this section the paper will engage with a number of attempts at making welfare regime typologies, for example that of Esping Andersen. This is followed by a section that looks at empirical data indicating a marked Nordic exceptionalism when it comes to a cluster of measurable variables, such as social trust, social capital, membership in associations, equality, gender equality, child-well being, happiness, low corruption, rule of law, good governance, which in turn appear to be linked to other factors, such as ethnic homogeneity, Protestantism, etc.

In the next section, the empirical data will be analyzed in order to generate a more complex and therefore theoretically useful idealtype that can be used in elaborating a more refined regime theory. In particular, a key objective will be to provide an account, based on an historical analysis of empirical data and experience from Sweden, which is focused on two sets of relationships. The first one looks at relations between state, family, and individual. The second one is focused on relations between state and civil society.

It will be noted that all Nordic countries, including Sweden, score high both when it comes to trust and when it comes to participation and membership in civil society organizations. Secondly, not only does Sweden (and the other Nordic countries) stand out with respect to the size of civil society, it also exhibit a distinct character in the composition of its civil society, which is relatively large when it comes to unions, culture association, sports and recreation, but relatively small when it comes to charities, social services, and faith-based institutions. This is particularly obvious when we compare to the United States but also true if we compare to other European countries. A third commonality concerns what we can describe as the relations between individuals and associations, with more members, more volunteers, and fewer paid employees. A forth aspect is the economic structure of Swedish civil society and how the state support associations: In the Nordic countries, very much including Sweden, membership based civil society organizations are typically supported directly by the state by funding based on number of members, as long as they fulfil certain criteria, such as being internally organized on a democratic basis and externally not involved with activities deemed as un-democratic. And a fifth way in which Nordic civil society organizations may be said to exhibit common features is in how their relationship to the state and its institutions of governance is constituted. Access to the state and its agents has been institutionalized in a way that we describe as a particularly Nordic mode of democratic governance, especially through en extensive usage of governmental commissions that include both state agents and civil society actors.

The historical roots are discussed next, with a focus on the following elements. Sweden as an egalitarian and state friendly society with both a strong statist tradition and a legacy of peasant freedom and local self-determination; a Protestant tradition in which state and church were united – and in which not only the work ethic but also equality and individualism were
central; a particular family culture and marriage pattern in which relative gender equality and more generally individual autonomy was a more prominent feature; the latter feature has, in the modern period, been translated into a particular inflection of the welfare state that we call "statist individualism." This constituted a marriage between a liberal emphasis on individual autonomy and a social democratic concern with equality. The same moral logic has also informed the associations of civil society – they tend to be expressive of this desire for individual autonomy and independence rather than embody more paternalistic or patriarchal structures.

In the concluding section, the question is asked: Why should be care if there is a distinct Nordic civil society? The success of Nordic societies makes it interesting to theorize the source of the vitality and strength of these social contracts. Which are the theoretical implications and how do they challenge Anglo-American theories. In this section a neo-Hegelian theory of state and civil society will be elaborated as a challenge to the dominant theories of civil society.