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Recent scholarship on the Nordic models; bringing associations back in

Bakgrund/Frågeställning

Since early 2000s there has been an upsurge in interest for the so-called “Nordic model”. The Nordic region has been referred to as a “supermodel” (the Economist 2013) and scholars like Francis Fukuyama (2011) have suggested that many nation-states are now trying to figure out “how to get to Denmark”. As a consequence of this increased interest there is also a flood of articles and books dealing with the Nordic model construct in one way or the other, both from a political, popular-cultural and scientific viewpoint (Byrkjeflot et al 2021).

A question that has been asked recently is why the recent literature and related discourses on the Nordic model fails to account for the influence of neoliberalism. In this paper, however, it is rather the strange absence of the role of associations and associational governance in the literature on the Nordic model that will be discussed. In a standard narrative of the history of the various Nordic nation-states both the people’s movements and the politics of democracy plays a rather large role. This is to a much lesser extent the case in the more recent literature on the Nordic model, however. The question that motivates this chapter, then, is why has the role of associations and alternative organizational forms like cooperatives been so absent in recent scholarship and public discourse related to the Nordic model?

The idea of a Nordic model did not appear in scholarship until 1980s, although it has been used in travel reports and political discourse outside the Nordic region since the 1930s (Childs 1936, Koivunen et al 2020, Byrkjeflot et al 2021). First, I will outline the most important positions currently available in the social sciences and the humanities related to the Nordic region. I will argue that there has been a change from emphasizing socio-political aspects, power resources, elite compromises, social democracy (Korpi 1983, Esping-Andersen 1990) towards arguing for the role of religion, free farmers and a welfare-individualistic culture in the making of the Nordic model (Sørensen and Stråth 1997, Berggren and Trägårdh 2006). There has also emerged a literature emphasizing high quality of government, high trust, ‘consensual governance’ (Rothstein 2011, Kuhnle 2009) and a Nordic civil sphere (Enroth and Henriksson 2020). As a means to reintroduce such alternative perspectives into current discourse I will explore what kind of roles associations have been attributed in historical narratives both in Norway, Sweden and Denmark,

Metod och Resultat

Konklusion