

Civil society in the shadow of the state (CISTAS)

On the birth of Danish civil society, its emergence, development and present state: What role has civil society played in the development of the modern state and the welfare state? What role does civil society play today, and what role will it play in the future?

An interdisciplinary research project 2014–2018

(Directed by Lars Bo Kaspersen, KU & Liv Egholm, CBS)

This research project is a key part of a comprehensive research and dissemination project that aims to uncover the role of civil society (CS) – including its possible future role – in the development of the Danish welfare state, from a historical, sociological and political theoretical perspective. The research project is financed by the Carlsberg Foundation (8.97 million DKK).

The project analyses the Danish CS from historical, sociological and political perspectives, including the role philanthropy and voluntariness have played in relation to the traditional functions of the welfare state, and to what extent CS has contributed to ensuring cohesion in society as well as the retention and development of specific democratic traditions and organisational forms.

The project will help to qualify a range of current political and research discussions about the purpose of CS and the role it will undertake in the future in light of the financial crisis of the welfare state, the growing democratic deficit, challenges from processes of individualisation and the pressure of globalisation.

The Current State of the Research

CS is often overlooked in historical works about the development of the modern state and society. It also plays a notably marginal role when the ‘larger history of Denmark’ and the development of the welfare state are writtenⁱ. Studies on the development of democracy, consolidation and change largely disregard the special role of CS as a supplement to liberal democracy.

When CS is the object of investigation, it is often idealised as if the Danish public mobilised itself from the ‘bottom up’, formed voluntary organisations and gave rise to modern democracy and modern Denmark. Still, there are a number of Nordic social scientists, with CS as their research area, that are interested in (1) the empirical mapping-out of voluntary organisations, their characteristics and the role they play in our societyⁱⁱ; and (2) CS’s role as a trust-building element in the creation of a citizenshipⁱⁱⁱ that instils a high degree of social capital in Denmark and the other Nordic countries. The basis for these studies is that CS, prior to any historical and sociological analysis, is placed between state and market. CS is seen as a sphere governed by voluntariness and philanthropy that is not subject to the state’s power or the market’s conditions, but that is based on a community of values and developed historically prior to the modern state^{iv}. Consequently, today CS is considered by many to be an unrealised good, which with some changes in norms could flourish and become the agent that could save the welfare state and perhaps even global society.

Theses and problems of the project

Compared to the existing research, this project uses CS as the pivot for an analysis of the development of the Danish state and society and to clarify CS’s importance to this development. In addition, we question the presumptions and conclusions characterising the research. For example, large parts

of existing CS research use a fixed definition of CS (which is often defined as a sphere outside of the state and the market) in the analysis of its development and qualities often detached from the historical and geographical context. In contrast, we see CS as a politically contested concept that changes meaning over time and has various attributed features and roles. Consequently, we analyse the development of the concept and its use in a Danish context and examine how CS assumes different shapes and changes nature over time. Its shape is a result of the changing power structures that affect the CS debate and thus have created a certain understanding of CS in the period from 1849 to 2014. Among other things, this approach shows that CS's position between state and market is a relatively new one. For example, CS did not exist in the political theory of the fifteenth century^v. Later, CS was placed next to the market^{vi}, or even seen as part of it^{vii}. To other thinkers, CS is seen as the mediator between state and citizen^{viii}. Our approach facilitates insight into the competing definitions of the concept of CS that exist today. In this way we can expose how these understandings define certain structures for the possible roles that CS can play in tomorrow's society. In relation to this, and also in contrast to existing research, this project is based on the following theses^{ix}: (1) the state provides the conditions for CS, (2) CS can contribute to both the cohesion and the disintegration of society, (3) voluntariness and philanthropy are central phenomena but must be seen in the specific context in which they are carried out, (4) CS associations are potentially vital links of mediation and communication between the state and the public, and (5) the organisation of CS can potentially increase effectiveness and transparency in small and medium-sized businesses.

The theses constitute the framework for six subprojects:

- 1. CS and associative democracy^x.** Here the importance of CS organisations and associations for democratic learning, democratic practice and democratic culture in the period from 1820 to 2014 are analysed to discuss the possibility of a revitalisation of CS's democratic potential in Denmark.
- 2. CS and philanthropy^{xi}.** This project examines how philanthropic concepts established different logic and constellations between the state, the market and CS in the period from 1849 to 2014. It does so through an investigation of concepts from both the political and CS spheres as an expression of networks in which diverse knowledge, objectives and results are bound together and influence the contemporary understanding of CS.
- 3. CS and voluntariness^{xii}.** This project will map out, using a historical case-based study as a starting point, the extent of voluntariness in Danish CS and focus on its logic and practices, to investigate how the logic behind voluntariness and the participation of volunteers is constantly challenged.
- 4. Danish CS from a comparative perspective^{xiii}.** Danish CS is compared in two selected areas (CS's legal basis and the relationship between the state and CS) with Norway, Sweden^{xiv}, Germany^{xv} and Great Britain^{xvi} in order to determine the specific characteristics of Danish CS.
- 5. CS, trust, social capital and cohesion^{xvii}.** This project uncovers, through case studies from 2001 to 2012, which types of CS activity respectively strengthen and weaken social capital and trust^{xviii}, and how strengthening CS can paradoxically result in a weakening of social capital and thus also social cohesion.
- 6. CS's forms of ownership and organisational structure^{xix}** are examined in selected European countries^{xx} in order to create the foundation for a discussion of alternative models that contribute to the long-term responsibility of companies and avoid organisational and managerial forms that pursue short-term gains.

Each of these projects will help to clarify how the relationship between the modern Danish state and CS has established and shaped the development and relevance of CS, with an emphasis on the period from the enactment of the constitution in 1849 through to 2014. This clarification will be the basis for understanding CS today and its possible future role. The directors of the research (Lars Bo Kaspersen and Liv Egholm) are responsible for compiling the subprojects and establishing synergy between the various parts in order to sum up the analyses of the evolution and changes in Danish CS as well as its present state (1–2 volumes)^{xxi}.

Appendix 1 – References

ⁱ Including the newly published history of the welfare state and the ongoing project on Danish school history. Jørn Henrik Petersen, Klaus Petersen and Niels Finn (eds) (2010–2012), *Dansk velfærdshistorie* vol. 1–4. The two final volumes will be published in 2013 or 2014. Charlotte Appel and Morten Fink-Jensen, *Da læreren holdt skole. Tiden før 1780* vol. 1. A total of five volumes are expected through 2014.

ⁱⁱ For example, Lars Skov Henriksen and Bjarne Ibsen (eds) (2001), *Frivillighedens udfordringer*, Syddansk Universitetsforlag, Odense. Peter Bundesen, Lars Skov Henriksen and Anja Jørgensen (2001), *Filantropi, selvhjælp og interesseorganisering*, Syddansk Universitetsforlag, Odense. Thomas P. Boje, Torben Fridberg and Bjarne Ibsen (2006), *Den frivillige sektor i Danmark*, SFI, Copenhagen. L. Torpe and T.K. Kjeldgaard (2003), *Foreningssamfundets sociale kapital. Danske foreninger i europæisk perspektiv*, Magtudredningen, Aarhus Universitetsforlag.

ⁱⁱⁱ T. Boje (2009), Organized Civil Society, Volunteering and Citizenship. *Comparative Social Research* **26**, 243–262.

^{iv} For example, Henrik Gade Jensen (2011), *Menneskekærlighedens Værk - Det danske civilsamfund før velfærdsstaten*, Forlaget Center for Politiske Studier/CEPOS, Copenhagen. Helmut K. Anheier (2004), *Civil Society: Measurement, Evaluation, Policy*, Civicus. L.B. Kaspersen (2000), *Samfundet som samfundsvidenskabens problem*, *Politica* **4**.

^v See, for example, Thomas Hobbes (1651), *Leviathan*.

^{vi} G.W.F. Hegel (1820), *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*.

^{vii} K. Marx (1843), Kritik af den hegeliske retsfilosofi. In: *Karl Marx: Økonomi og filosofi. Ungdomsskrifter*, Gyldendals Uglebøger, Copenhagen.

^{viii} Charles de Montesquieu (2000, 1748), *Om lovenes ånd*, Gads Forlag, Copenhagen. G.W.F. Hegel (1972, 1820), *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts. Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft*, Herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Helmut Reichelt, Ullstein, Frankfurt am Main. Emile Durkheim (2000, 1893), *Om den sociale arbejdsdeling*, Hans Reitzels forlag, Copenhagen.

^{ix} The theses are based on a body of theoretical work inspired, in particular, by C.S. Montesquieu, G.W.F. Hegel, M. Weber, E. Durkheim, the British pluralists and N. Elias. In other words, the theoretical basis of the project relies on a revitalisation of large parts of classical European social theory.

^x Managed by Lars Bo Kaspersen and postdoc Christiane Mossin, appointed August 2014.

^{xi} Managed by Liv Egholm and postdoc Inge Mønster Kjær, appointed August 2014.

^{xii} Carried out by a PhD student NN to start June 2014 (supervisor: Liv Egholm).

^{xiii} Carried out by a postdoc NN (to be appointed August 2016), in cooperation with Anker Brink Lund (CBS) and his research team at CfC.

^{xiv} Representatives of the so-called Nordic model.

^{xv} Representative of a continental coordinated market economy.

^{xvi} Representative of a liberal market economy.

^{xvii} Carried out by a postdoc NN to be appointed 2017.

^{xviii} For example, R. Putnam, R. Leonardi and R. Nanetti (1993), *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton University Press. R. Putnam (2000), *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon and Schuster. S. Baron, J. Field and T. Schuller (eds) (2000), *Social Capital – Critical Perspectives*, Oxford University Press.

^{xix} The project will be carried out by a PhD NN (supervisor: Lars Bo Kaspersen) to be appointed in 2016.

^{xx} In a series of European countries, especially France, Italy, Germany, Great Britain but also Denmark (especially in the period from 1840 to 1920), a range of different forms of organisation and ownership of CS were developed, including the mutualist movement in France and the UK and the cooperative movement in Denmark.

^{xxi} This part of the project will take place from 2017 to 2018.