

## Civil Society and Enlightened Welfare Politics

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A legitimate democracy depends on the participation in effective deliberation by those affected by public decision-making. Citizens need to be able to develop and articulate positions that best reflect their interests, which is then translated into policy. It is therefore a serious problem that recent literature highlights increasing democratic deficits in both participation and deliberation, from local, through to national and global levels. Declining participation in political parties is contributing to legitimacy crisis in public policy. Democratic institutions from local and national parliaments to transnational-national bodies are in desperate need of practical solutions for participation and more democratic decision-making and public administration needs to be reformed and open up for democratic participation, inter alia.

A commonly cited solution in the literature emphasizes a revitalized and mobilized civil society, with increased citizen participation. “Mini-publics” and “deliberative forums” are particular forms of democratic innovation that are viewed as complementary to formal decision-making bodies, improving their public responsiveness. Similarly “collaborative governance” with networks of actors from civil society and public authorities is seen as the remedy for democratic deficiencies in Public Administration. New media is regarded as an important vehicle enabling marginalized groups to organize and participate in public discussions.

Research in this project takes seriously these challenges to modern democracy and the democratic deficit. But it does so in a careful manner, with a view that cure needs to be calibrated to real-world circumstances, where idealized measures may do more harm than good. The research is sensitive to the uneven manner in which is power distributed also within civil society, and that many civil society organizations mobilize (also) to defend particular interests in ways that distort theoretical ideals. Consequently, a main task – and a main interest of this project – is to investigate the conditions for civil society to contribute to deliberative (democratic) public policy in the face of power, via e.g. collaborative, participatory public administration, deliberative public events, and new media.

### *1) Participation in public policy by organized civil society*

In articles and book chapters, the project has identified how the conditions for public participation by traditional civil society in Sweden has changed (Öberg et al 2011; Öberg and Svensson 2012; Svensson 2013, Svensson forthc.; Öberg forthc.). Results show that traditionally strong organizations still dominate public policy, especially within traditional welfare politics. But participation has been more professionalized and to a certain extent less public, i.e. lobbying increases but participation in public debates do not. There are also other problems in the horizon, e.g. membership in organized interest groups has decreased and the link between members and the leadership has weakened.

2) *Collaborative, participatory public administration*

This is a growing subject in international social sciences, but a much under-researched area in Sweden. Preliminary results are encouraging (Öberg and Uba 2013). Citizens that contact Swedish municipalities appear to behave more deliberative than expected. Even an act of protest can be constructive from a deliberative point of view. When complaining on issues in primary schools, we found that citizens often clearly formulate a position, deliver arguments for it, provide evidence, and suggest alternative solutions. Hence, direct participation in public administration does not only consist of outcries, but also of deliberative claims. Another interesting result is that groups behave more deliberative than individuals, in spite of worries that “groups tend to go to extremes”. The implication is that processes of public policy-making within civil society involve a rich array of alternative forms of information (knowledge) that might otherwise have been neglected. These results relate to more general research questions on how norms of deliberation are developed in certain contexts. For example, it has also been shown how deliberative norms can be established by leaders acting like role models (Jennstål 2013).

3) *Deliberative Public Events*

There is a strong global trend to involve civil society in public policy in various deliberative public events, often referred to as ‘minipublics’, where citizens are invited to discuss, develop and influence public policy. While these experiments are becoming increasingly common, it also raises issues such as its democratic legitimacy and how results from deliberative civic events can be integrated into public decision-making (“scaling-up”). This project has collected data from deliberative events in Italy and Australia (and have prepared for comparative studies in Sweden). The data will be used to develop an overall picture of the factors that motivate citizens to participate in politics, especially in deliberative civic events. Analysis so far from these case studies has revealed that there is a strong link between citizen’s personalities and why, how and with what impact they engage in political deliberation (Niemeyer and Jennstål 2013a and b). Citizens with certain personality traits tend to be more likely to sign up for deliberative events, participate more active in discussions, and engage the information relevant to the issue. This is path-breaking knowledge with implications for how deliberative events are designed, evaluated and used in public policy-making. In the past there has been a dominant focus on descriptive (especially demographic) representation as the primary condition for representative legitimacy. We have evidence for an equally important dimension through which to view participation in the political process.

4) *New ideas of representation and the use of new media*

We have found reason for caution in embracing new media in the democratic process. It may well be that new media can be used by marginalized and otherwise disempowered groups in civil society. However, results from our project has shown that new media is also used by counter movements to prevent marginalized groups from influencing public

policy (Holm 2013 a, b and c). Moreover, it has also been demonstrated that new media is used by already powerful groups with resources from “old media”, which distorts power relations in civil society even more. Among other things, this also illustrates that ideas within democratic theory on new forms of representation has to be critically scrutinized both theoretically and empirically (Holm 2012).

## **Publications**

### ***Published (august 2013)***

Hermansson, Jörgen and Öberg, PerOla. 2012. ”Konstitutionell socialism och idén om löntagarägda företag”, i B. Rothstein (red.) *Tillsammans: En fungerande ekonomisk demokrati*, ss. 164-201. Stockholm: SNS.

Svensson, Torsten. 2013. “Sweden” i C. Fredge and J Kelly (eds): *Comparative Employment Relations in The Global Economy*, ss. 227-244. New York: Routledge.

Öberg, PerOla and Svensson, Torsten. 2011. ”Civila samhället och den upplysta välfärdsstaten”. *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift*, 131 (1), 131-139.

Öberg, PerOla and Svensson, Torsten et. al. 2011. ”Disrupted Exchange and Declining Corporatism: Government Authority and Interest Group Capability in Scandinavia”. *Government and Opposition*, 46 (3), pp. 365-391.

Öberg, PerOla and Svensson, Torsten. 2012. “Civil Society and deliberative democracy: have voluntary organizations faded from national public politics?”, *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 35 (3), pp. 246-271.

Öberg, PerOla. 2013. ”Är ett organiserat civilt samhälle bra för demokratin” i Bennich-Björkman (red): *Statsvetenskapens frågor*, ss. 93-105. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

### ***Publications under production***

Svensson, Torsten (forthcoming). ”The Swedish Model of Industrial Relations”, in J. Pierre (ed) *Handbook of Swedish Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Planerad publicering hösten 2014.

Öberg, PerOla (forthcoming). “Interest Organizations in the Policy Process: interest advocacy and policy advice” in J. Pierre (ed) *Handbook of Swedish Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Planerad publicering hösten 2014.

Öberg, PerOla (forthcoming). “Deliberation”, in C. Ansell and J. Torfing (eds.) *Theories of Governance*. Cheltenham: Edwar Elgar. Planerad publicering 2015).

## ***Submitted articles under review***

Öberg, PerOla and Uba, Katrin 2013. *Civil Society Making Political Claims: Outcries, Interest Advocacy, and Deliberative Claims*. Manuscript. Department of Governance, Uppsala University. (Under review).

Jennstål, Julia. 2013. *Deliberative Norm Entrepreneurs: How leaders instigate deliberation by 'talking the talk'*. Manuscript. Department of Governance, Uppsala University. (Under review).

## ***Conference Papers***

Hermansson, Jörgen and Öberg, PerOla. 2013. *Constitutional Socialism and the Idea of Wage Earners Rule*. Prepared for the Workshop on Economic Democracy, Paris, April 29-30, 2013

Holm, Malin. 2012. *A Fast Track to a Dead End? Assessing the interlinked implications of reserved seats for descriptive and substantive representation*. Presented at the PSA Women and Politics Specialist Group Conference in Bristol, February 2012.

Holm, Malin. 2013. *Men Who Hate Women – Online: Mapping the Swedish Antifeminist Movement in New Media*. Presented at the European Conference on Politics and Gender in Barcelona, 21-23 March 2013.

Holm, Malin. 2013. *Understanding the Success of Online Counter Movements: Mapping the Swedish Antifeminist Movement in New Media*. Presented at the International Conference “Civil Society in a Global Context”, Swedish Research Council’s Program for Research on the Civil Society, Ersta Sköndal, 16 April 2013.

Holm, Malin. 2013. *New Media, New Opportunities? Antifeminist Mobilization in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Prepared for presentation at the ECPR General Conference in Bordeaux, 4-7 September 2013.

Niemeyer, Simon and Jennstål, Julia. 2013. *Enhancing Capacity for Communication about Climate Change: A Deliberative Systems Approach*. Presented at the Cemus Conference on Communication and Environment, Uppsala University, June 7 2013.

Niemeyer, Simon and Jennstål, Julia. 2013. *Understanding the Deliberative Person as Part of a Deliberative System*. Prepared for presentation at the ECPR General Conference in Bordeaux, 4-7 September 2013.

Öberg, PerOla and Svensson, Torsten. 2011. *Civila samhället och den upplysta välfärdsstaten. Presentation av pilotprojekt*. Presenterat vid Dansk Selskab for Statskunskab i Vejle, 3-4 Nov 2011.

Öberg, PerOla and Uba, Katrin. 2012. *Civil Society Making Political Claims: Outcries, Interest Advocacy, and Deliberative Claims*. Presenterat vid Dansk Selskab for Statskunskab i Vejle, 25-26 Oct 2012.

### Working papers (Graduate and under-graduate papers)

1. Särintresse eller demokratins förkämpe? En studie om socialdemokraternas och Moderaternas syn på civila samhället. Linda Moberg (Supervisor: PerOla Öberg)
2. *Hur arbetade LO och Svenskt näringsliv med opinionsbildning valet 2010?* Claes Nordmark. (Supervisor: PerOla Öberg)
3. *Särintressen och staten. En studie över representationen i svenska myndighetsstyrelser relaterade till arbetsmarknaden.* Viktor Gustavsson och Henrik Karlsson: (Supervisor: Marianne Danielsson)
4. *Civil Society and Political Participation - The Long-term Effects A Field Study in Plachimada, Kerala.* Sofia Helander (Supervisor: Torsten Svensson)
5. *Mellan förstoring och förminskning. En studie om intresseorganisationers förhållningssätt till vetenskap.* Anders Mankler. (Supervisor: PerOla Öberg).
6. *Empowerment in a movement. The long-time effects of social movements on organizing. A field study in Plachimada, India. Miliscchia Rezai.* (Supervisor: Torsten Svensson).