

2014

Published in Sokratis Koniordos & Alexandros-Andreas Kyrtis, editors,
Routledge Handbook of European Sociology, London: Routledge, 303-317.

19

Nordic sociology

*Patrik Aspers, Jukka Gronow, Lars Bo Kaspersen, Lars Mjøset,
Guðbjörg Linda Rafnsdóttir, and Aino Sinnemäki*

Introduction

This chapter analyses trends in the development of sociology as a discipline in the five Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, with a focus on the period from 1980 to 2010. Our aim is to provide readers with an introduction and overview of Nordic sociology. The analysis uses a descriptive scheme of phases of sociology. We begin by briefly outlining these phases. This scheme is a background that covers general trends in sociology in the Nordic countries.

Three phases in the development of postwar Western sociology

The period we analyse, 1980–2010, can be regarded as the third phase in the development of postwar sociology. Table 19.1 defines the three periods with reference to a typology of notions of theory (Mjøset 2009), largely applicable to all Western countries. In the contemporary phase, it is possible to distinguish three sets of basic methodological presuppositions (meta-methodologies) and six concepts of theory. Looking back at the two earlier phases – the early pioneer phase and the turbulent decades of the 1960s and 1970s – we can roughly trace the timing of the introduction of the notions of theory into postwar sociology.

In the first phase, 1945 to the early 1960s, a standard view of social science dominated. Experimental natural science, with its assisting sciences of mathematics and statistics, was the benchmark for others sciences, and thus also for sociology as one of the social sciences. In light of present-day sociology, that understanding of theory which was inspired by postwar modifications of Vienna school logical positivism – we may call it a *law-oriented notion of theory* – is only one out of the six present understandings of theory distinguished in Table 19.1. We can portray – in a highly schematic and condensed fashion – the development through the three phases with reference to the notions of theory that have been added (either as criticisms or revisions) to the original law-oriented notion. This scheme is presented as one lens through which the discipline of sociology is interpreted; it does not exclude other approaches.

In such a reconstruction, the second phase – roughly 1960 to 1980 – emerges as a very heterogeneous one. While the first phase was dominated by American thought, the second phase saw

Table 19.1 Contemporary notions of theory in sociology

	<i>Standard</i>		<i>Meta-methodology* Contextualist</i>		<i>Social-philosophical</i>	
Pioneer phase. Late 1940s to late 1950s	Law-oriented notion as the dominant benchmark		Few if any attempts to consider counter-positions to the law-oriented notion			
Turbulent phase. Late 1950s to early 1980s	Responding to criticism: looser law-oriented notion, and emergence of the idealizing notion		Emergence of a number of counter-positions (critical and hermeneutic positions in philosophy; micro-interactionist and political economy approaches in empirical sociology), with few considerations of inconsistencies between the various alternatives to the standard position.			
<i>Present phase</i>	<i>Standard</i>		<i>Contextualist</i>		<i>Social-philosophical</i>	
Reference faculty	Natural science		Social science		Humanities	
Notion of theory	Law-oriented	Idealizing	Explanation-based	Critical	Reconstructionist	Deconstructionist
Labels often used	Variables-oriented sociology	Rational choice, game theory	Grounded theory, interactionism	Critical/standpoint theory	Social theory	Post-structuralism, postmodernism, constructionism
Important in sociology since...	1945	The 1970s	The 1960s	The 1960s	The early 1980s	The late 1980s
	[1]**	[4]	[3]	[2]	[5]	[6]

*This term refers to the notion of practical philosophies of social science, defined in Mjølset 2009.
 **Numbers in brackets in this row indicate historical sequence.

a mix of American and continental European thought. As early as the late 1950s (at the time of the peace and anti-nuclear weapons social movements), and increasingly through the 1960s, a philosophically based notion of critical theory emerged. In this period we saw the launch of humanities-based philosophical approaches such as hermeneutics and phenomenology, often with little distinction from critical theory. As for empirical analysis, various micro-interactionist approaches gained attention, inspired by the revival of Chicago-style ethnography in the United States. In the third phase, it was possible to see how these various positions could be sorted into the different approaches of contextualism and social philosophy, but at the time, there was one wave of indistinguishable criticisms against what we here call the law-oriented notion of theory. All the counter-approaches were launched well before the late 1960s student revolt, but that revolt related to these newer ideas of theory and politicized these.

External criticism, as well as internal considerations, led to a revision of the standard approach. By the 1970s, inspired by economics, the idealizing notion of rational choice and related conceptions of theory that resembles what we call the standard notion of theory were added to the toolbox of sociology.

This yields the briefest definition of the heterogeneity of the second phase: on the one hand, an additional notion of theory emerged within the standard position; on the other hand, several waves of criticism against the standard position led to conceptions of theory linked to qualitative research. These were often intertwined with philosophical impulses from the humanities and from standpoint epistemologies.

Among all the social science disciplines, sociology was the one that was most affected by the student revolt, as well as by the feminist women's movement. Both movements shook sociology's disciplinary identity, which had been formed with reference to a standard notion of theory in the first phase. The student revolt never became more than a movement *inside* the sphere of higher education (and thus was distinctly middle class), but its influence on academic sociology was particularly strong. Giving primacy to meticulous interpretation of Marx's original writings, the student revolt triggered two consequences that greatly transcended the original focus on Marxist political economy: first, it emphasized an interdisciplinary focus; second, it transferred the idea of reconstructing the core concepts of the classics from Marx to all classics.

At the start of the third phase, sociology had acquired a confusing variety of branches. There were even two new notions of sociological theory that appeared during the 1980s. The *reconstructive* notion was the above-mentioned approach to reconstructions of classics of sociology and social philosophy, founded on continental philosophical principles. Reconstructive approaches such as those of Habermas and Giddens, who followed Parsons' (1968) example of critical discussion and synthesis of classical sociology, attracted attention. The *deconstructive* notion was an influence from modern, de-nationalized humanities, in particular Parisian post-structuralism, working with linguistic analogies. That notion diffused into sociology (and other social sciences) via its networks with humanities disciplines. Feminist sociology was on the way into its second and third generations, and here the deconstructionist notion of theory played an increasingly important role. In its first generation, feminism had been a social movement that transcended the sphere of higher education. In the Nordic region, the influence of "state feminism" on major political parties led to a set of major reforms enforcing gender equality and women's rights. But successive generations of feminism have again become more of an academically oriented, middle-class movement.

Throughout this third phase, the specificity of contextualist notions of theory became clearer. The interactionist program had inspired several predominantly micro-sociological studies. There was an obvious difference between empirical, ethnographically based, grounded notions of theory and the reconstructive approach to fundamental concepts of action that yielded a non-empirical "transcendental" notion of theory. Some of the empirical studies of underprivileged groups are best seen as instances of what is here called critical theory: "action research"-like strategies working directly with social movements, supporting groups with legitimate rights to social change. There are some parallels with deconstructionist notions, but the crucial difference is that deconstructionists reject the idea of legitimation that is involved in critical theory (Mjøset 2009). In sum, by the third phase, all the notions of theory represented in Table 19.1 (bottom rows) were available inside of sociology. No other social science was that diverse.

The interdisciplinary surge of the second, heterogenous phase had challenged the disciplinary identity that the postwar pioneers had established for sociology. But in the third phase, sociology's "internal social movement," the student revolt, had faded, and the question of a disciplinary identity for sociology had to be reconsidered (Mjøset 2013). The 1980s also saw the transition from the classic research university to the mass university, to which about 50 percent of a cohort is counted. This trend should be related to the early 1990s context, when Finland, Norway, and Sweden in particular saw an unprecedented economic downturn and financial instability. In the early 1990s, all the Nordic countries experienced rising unemployment, most dramatically Sweden and Finland, the latter of which also faced the consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union – which opened opportunities for collaborative work with researchers in Russia and the Baltic states. Governments tried to counter youth unemployment by means of educational reform, including efforts to increase the number of students admitted into higher education. Broader trends toward the knowledge society that stresses innovation also motivated such policies.

Below, we synthesize trends in Nordic sociology through this last phase. Our empirical material is gathered from conversations with colleagues, personal experience, and our reading of academic texts.

The pioneer phase

Even before sociology was established in the Nordic area as a discipline under US influence in the early postwar period, there were earlier pioneers. They lived at a time when most Nordic countries were also exposed to continental influence, above all from Germany. Already in the mid-nineteenth century, the priest Eilert Sundt studied the living conditions of Norway's urban and agrarian lower classes. C. Wilkins in the 1870s lectured in sociology at Copenhagen University, as did – some decades later – Sigurd Ibsen (1859–1930) in Norway, Gustaf Steffen (1864–1929) in Sweden, and Gudmundur Finnbogason (1873–1944) in Iceland. Edward Westermarck (1862–1939) established a link to British anthropology and made sociology a recognized science in Finland in the early twentieth century. The first chair of sociology was established in 1926 at the University of Turku in Finland under the influence of Westermarckian evolutionary anthropology. There was, however, an almost total break after the Second World War when “modern” sociology was introduced to the newly established Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Helsinki in the late 1940s. The German sociologist Theodor Geiger had lectured in Denmark before the war and returned from Swedish exile after it, but he died soon after, and exerted little influence on Nordic postwar sociology. As a proper academic discipline in the Nordic countries, sociology is a postwar phenomenon.

Table 19.2 provides some basic information on the institutionalization of sociology in the five countries. In the pioneer phase, legitimization of social science was entirely in the form of natural science analogies. The message was strengthened by visiting foreign experts. The Swedish-American positivist sociologist George Lundberg was invited to lecture in Sweden in 1947. His book became a “Bible” to many Swedish social scientists (Boalt 1988: 8). The Austrian Paul Lazarsfeld, once a Vienna school disciple, then leading entrepreneur of statistics/sociology at Columbia University in New York, in 1948 became the first of many US guest researchers to visit Norway. Lundberg visited Oslo in 1949. Almost all the first generation Finnish chairholders of sociology visited American universities at least for one academic year as Asla-Fulbright scholars.

The upgraded framework of Vienna positivism was loose and flexible enough to allow the pioneer researchers to explore the potentials of the new discipline. Norway had a particularly early start. Swedish sociology also developed early. The interest spread in philosophical circles in Lund, and an analytic philosopher from Lund, Torgny Segerstedt (1908–1999), was in 1947 installed as the first professor of sociology in Uppsala.

Some scholars from this first generation gained acclaim for their international publications. The Swede Hans L. Zetterberg (1927–) published his *On Theory and Verification in Sociology* in three editions from 1954 to 1965. But throughout that period, his base was Columbia University in New York and Ohio State University (see below for general remarks on such émigrés). Zetterberg was also active in publishing, and contributed, in addition to the English translation of Weber's *Economy and Society*, to the publication of a famous collection of essays, *The Hidden Society* (1965), by Oslo-based sociology professor Vilhelm Aubert (1922–1988). An even more active entrepreneur was the slightly younger Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung (born 1930). He was also at Columbia for a short while, but mainly operated from Oslo. Galtung founded the Oslo Peace Research Institute (PRIO) in 1959, and inspired and contributed to the education of peace researchers all over Norden and Europe. His *Theory and Methods of Social Research*

Table 19.2 Nordic sociology – timing of institutionalization and basic features today

	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
First sociology chair	1938 (Århus)	1926 (Turku)	1970	1949 (Oslo)	1947 (Uppsala)
First sociology department	1954 (CBS ¹) 1958 (Copenhagen)	1955 (Helsinki)	1970, 1976	1950 (Oslo)	1947 (Uppsala)
First social research institute	1958	1945	1971	1950	1972
Some departments closed following the middle phase	Yes	No	No	No	No
Existence of departments of social policy/social work	Yes	Yes (major feature)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of sociology departments as of 2010. (More mixed departments in brackets.)	2 (8)	8	1 (2). One offers PhDs.	4 (7). At least 6 offer PhDs.	25. About 10 with PhD programs
Social science research institutes with significant employment of sociologists, as of 2010*	1 ²	4 ³	3 ⁴	At least 15 ⁵	Very few ⁶
Number of sociology PhD	10–12 per year	1990–1999: 112 2000–2009: 146 ⁷	Starting up in the early 2010s. ⁸	1990–1994: 20 1995–1999: 80 2000–2004: 87 2005–2009: 125 ⁹	2001–2004: 141 2005–2009: 153 ¹⁰

Note: This table should be read as an impressionistic sketch, rather than as a fully reliable quantitative assessment.

*Omitting agencies directly incorporated into the state apparatus, as well as institutes directly included into the universities.

¹ Copenhagen Business School.

² Socialforskningsinstitutet (The National Institute of Social Research) is the largest one.

³ The largest one is the National Institute for Health and Welfare.

⁴ These are Félagsvísinda-stofnun (Social Science Research Institute), Rannsóknir og greining (Icelandic Centre for Social Research and Analysis), Lýðheilsustöð (Public Health Institute of Iceland).

⁵ The oldest one is Institute for Social Research (ISF), other large ones are: Norwegian Social Research (NOVA), Institute for Labour and Social Research (FAFO), Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR), Norwegian Institute for Alcohol and Drug Research (SIRUS), Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), Institute for Transport Economics (TØI), Norwegian Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU), Norwegian Institute of Public Health (FHI), and the Foundation for Industrial and Technological Research (SINTEF). In addition, there are several regional research foundations.

⁶ About 15 institutes are included into the universities, others are organized directly as state agencies.

⁷ Half of all Finnish sociology PhDs 1990–2010. Source: Finnish authors.

⁸ The first PhD student graduated from the University of Iceland in 2012. About 20 doctoral students are now registered in Sociology at UI.

⁹ These numbers were provided by Terje Bruen Olsen, NIFU, Oslo. Cf. also the Norwegian Research Council (NFR) (2010). *Sociological research in Norway. An Evaluation*. Oslo: NFR, Figure 5.1. This classification is somewhat discretionary, based on judgments regarding the topic of the PhD theses.

¹⁰ Sources: Högskoleverkets NU-statistikdatabas (www.hsv.se) and Statistics Sweden (SCB).

(Oslo 1965/1967) positioned him as a leading scholar in the use of statistical inference models. A third Norwegian work worth mentioning is political sociologist Stein Rokkan's (1921–1979) collection *Citizens, Elections, Parties* (1970, which compiled his research published through the 1960s).

The development of sociology in Denmark and Finland lagged behind slightly, partly inspired by the Nordic sociological avant garde in Norway and Sweden. In Finland, Erik Allardt (1925–) cooperated with Rokkan (as well as the American sociologist, S. M. Lipset) on political sociological studies of communism. Finland has one important institutional peculiarity: parallel to the departments of sociology proper, departments of social policy were founded in all the major universities in Finland. Such departments emerged later and were more scattered in the other Nordic countries. In 1958, the Department of Sociology was established at the University of Copenhagen. The Norwegian Kaare Svalastoga (1914–1997) was appointed as the first professor. Like his mentor, Georg Lundberg, mentioned above, Svalastoga advocated mathematical sociology, legitimated by positivist philosophy of science. Early Danish sociology thus became formalistic and quantitatively oriented. At the Copenhagen Business School, an Institute for Organisation and Work Sociology was established in 1954, led by Geiger's former research assistant Torben Agersnap (1922–2013). In 1958, the Ministry of Social Affairs founded the National Institute of Social Research (Henning Friis (1911–1999) was the first director), devoted to applied, empirically driven research on social problems. At this time, there was no organized sociology in Iceland. Thus, the dating of the three phases is not valid for that case, since it lags behind even more.

The new social sciences were attractive to young intellectuals. Sociology was strengthened as a discipline by the formation of national sociological associations (Finland 1940, Norway 1949, Sweden 1961) and national language journals. Some Nordic arenas had already been established during the first phase (the Nordic journal *Acta Sociologica* in 1957; the Nordic Summer University was formed in 1950, and it became a forum mostly for social science). The Nordic Sociological Association is the umbrella for the five Nordic associations, holding biennial conferences since the 1960s.

The heterogenous second phase

What we here call the second phase focused on diverging theoretical logics and was one of growing heterogeneity. Philosophically based critical theory challenged the standard approach early on.

At the time, social science faculties had been, or were about to be, formed as faculties independent of humanities and law faculties. More heterogeneity eventually – as elsewhere in the Western world – interacted with the turbulence of the student revolt. In all Nordic countries, sociology as a discipline was associated with the broad political left wing. In Sweden, for example, research shows that sympathies for the former Communist Party and the social democrats have been grossly overrepresented among sociologists compared to the average population. The almost sectarian left-wing debates in the 1970s were largely detrimental to the development of the discipline in Sweden.

Danish developments illustrate the turbulence most dramatically. Given the profile of the first Copenhagen Sociology Department, an alternative Department of Cultural Sociology was established in 1964. When the student revolt hit, Denmark was the country where its consequences were the gravest in the transition to the third phase. Within the two Copenhagen departments, and even between them, tensions lingered on into the late 1970s, with excessive infighting and a deteriorating work environment. After drawn-out considerations, both

Copenhagen departments were abolished in 1987. Only in 1994 was a new department established. Between 1987 and 1994, sociology survived at other universities, either as a part of other departments or in interdisciplinary research environments.

Icelandic sociology was the latecomer in the Nordic area. In the late 1960s, as part of the student revolt, student activists demanded that the University of Iceland offer courses in sociology. Such courses were given first under Business Administration, but a separate faculty of social science was established in 1976. The discipline then developed mainly as an empirical study of Iceland's social transformations. This is understandable in such a small country (population of 300,000), and the correspondingly small size of the academic sector, which is further diminished by the number of Icelanders who study abroad.

Institutional developments in the third phase

The extension of higher education was one government response to the early 1980s unemployment crisis in Finland, Norway, and Sweden. In Sweden, the number of smaller teaching-intensive university colleges was increased, in some cases taking over sites from the military, which was downsizing – indicating the multiple double role of university-colleges as a means for coping with unemployment, regional policy, and research.

As for Norway, before the early 1990s, there were sociology programs (including doctorates) at the four universities (Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, and Tromsø). Since the 1990s, sociology has expanded at regional colleges. Some of these have recently gained status as universities (Agder 2007, Stavanger 2005, Nordland 2011). The universities of Stavanger and Nordland now offer PhDs in sociology. At some of the remaining regional colleges (particularly North Trøndelag and Vestfold), sociology figures prominently as parts of multidisciplinary departments. The remaining colleges will employ one or a few sociologists to teach sociology topics as part of interdisciplinary curricula related to topics such as sport, innovation, education, nursing, or gerontology.

In Denmark, the unemployment was actually lower in the early 1990s than what it had been in the mid-1980s. There, it seems, expansion was not in colleges, but in regular universities. Sociology expanded with the formation of the new department at Copenhagen University in 1994. In terms of the institutional development, Danish sociology probably expanded and consolidated more than any other social science discipline from the mid-1990s to the present day. Since the late 1990s, the Copenhagen Department has produced a large number of PhDs who have successfully acquired attractive jobs. Since the late 1990s, both Aalborg and Roskilde Universities have expanded their programs in sociology. Finally, the highest concentration of sociologists is found at Copenhagen Business School, which is not a traditional business school but a broad social science university studying both private and public organizations. Many of its degree programs have sociological components. More recently even Århus and South Danish Universities have expanded their sociology programs.

The University of Iceland recently inaugurated a graduate program (including a doctorate) in sociology, and in 2012, the first doctoral candidate in sociology received a degree from the university. Even if about 20 doctoral students are now registered in sociology at the University of Iceland, most Icelandic sociology PhD students still study abroad, mainly in other Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark, and Norway) and the UK and USA.

The compilation dissertation, that is, a dissertation made up of several articles, has developed to be a serious contender to the more traditional monograph form. Furthermore, PhD education becomes more professionalized since most students are fully paid for the entire period of their education. The large majority of PhD students aim for an academic career, and most have so far accomplished that, though not always within sociology. In the communication of

research results, English has increasingly become the first choice of language in graduate programs, including dissertations, in all countries.

Job options for sociologists have also increased in the sector of non-university research institutes (cf. item in Table 19.2). In addition to these academic institutions, many research departments in the state ministries and the municipal administration employ professional researchers with a sociological educational background. A large number of sociologists find employment in fields other than academia, such as in public administration, research organizations, educational institutions, and the mass media.

In 1960, Finland had four departments of sociology. With the opening of several new universities during the following 30 years, such departments with full programs, including PhD programs, were established in all Finnish universities, which numbered eight in 2010. In Finland, the Ministry of Social Affairs runs a large research institute of its own, surveying the development of social inequality and national health. Similar, but somewhat smaller, research institutes or departments exist alongside other public organizations, too. One unique Finnish department was the Research Institute on drinking behavior, at one time one of the largest in the world. It was financed directly from the profits of the state alcohol monopoly. Kettil Bruun (1924–1985) was a long-time leading figure in the institute. His extensive work in control politics played an important role in the Nordic countries and gained international recognition. This institute was, however, closed after the recent liberalization of Finnish alcohol policy. Its research was quite well-known internationally, and is a good example of how historically specific social and economic conditions can give rise to flourishing sociological research ventures by offering a combination of research problems and financing.

Research themes in the third phase

In the third, mass university phase, sociology in the Nordic countries has matured. In some other countries, economic instability since the mid-1980s and, more dramatically, since 2007–2008 has worsened conditions for a broad social science such as sociology. But not so in the Nordic area. Through the third period, the number of researchers has multiplied, and departments, funding, students, and publications have increased. There are also signs that the countries are increasingly becoming academic destinations, due to good economic and social conditions for sociology PhD students.

Given this expansion, we find it difficult to spell out *particular fields* in which Nordic sociology shows specific strengths. Previous overviews of Nordic sociology had few problems in identifying some significant fields and themes of research which in their opinion had been both quite typical and represented more permanent topics of research interest in these countries. Erik Allardt (1989), for instance, identified four such main research areas: welfare state, social stratification, women studies, and cultural studies. Allardt's classification sounded quite plausible at least at the time of its writing but reflected probably his own preferences as much as the actual state of affairs. All these research fields can be understood in more general or narrow terms. Strictly speaking, there were not many sociologists who would have had the welfare state as such as their object of study even though many were certainly studying the conditions and consequences of various social policy measures.

In the Finnish case, there was a relatively short period in the 1980s when cultural studies à la Birmingham – youth subcultures or working men's subcultures – made their entrée into the Finnish sociology, but this focus did not last very long. Sociologists certainly continued studying culture in one way or another, but at the same time they may belong to very different theoretical traditions and understand "culture" in many different ways. In the 1980s there was also a lot of interesting research going on which was not at all recognized by Allardt.

Today, the task of naming just a few central research areas or topics is even more challenging. Sociology has become more multifaceted or genuinely pluralistic than ever before. In at least the four larger Nordic countries, one can easily find several active sociologists in almost any of the research networks of the European Sociological Association. Given its special relation both to public policy – the welfare state or social policy in a broad sense, including medical care and education – and to social movements, the profile of sociology very broadly understood undoubtedly still differs to some degree among various countries, or rather clusters of countries. In the Nordic countries, for instance, the political issue of equality and inequality is quite central and it has certainly had some impact on the formulation of research topics as well.

The following overviews thus emerge as rather loose compilations of contributions that we find worth mentioning within the limited space available. Our account is not based on any bibliometric studies or systematic analyses of research financing of what fields have been most common in quantitative terms. To some extent, we mention the areas in which we find the most promising work being done. But we also try to quote work that belongs to each of the three strands (standard, contextualist, and social philosophical) of sociology.

In Denmark, surveying the many research environments, one is tempted to state that not only theoretically but also in terms of areas and themes, sociology seems to be rather fragmented. It is hard to find a topic or a set of intellectual ideas which tie together larger group of researchers. Certain research areas are more visible than others, such as value research, drug and alcohol abuse, welfare and social policy, social theory, the study of risks, state formation and state building, science and technology studies, sociology of science, industrial relations, micro sociology, sociology of emotions, sociology of sport, urban sociology, gender issues, and social capital/civil society.

In Finland, we shall point to the following research directions that in our mind have been strong among Finnish sociologists during the last couple of decades. First, there are studies of social movements, networks, and the self-organizing of civil society – a combination of interests both in the social development in the post-socialist countries and in the new social movements in Europe, including the information society. Risto Alapuro (1945–) is an internationally renowned scholar in this field of research. Second, sociological studies of consumption which consist of two parallel strands, one using historical and international statistical databases in its quantitative analyses, the other, often inspired by the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, concentrating more on the cultural meaning and role of consumption in the modern society. Jukka Gronow's (1945–) work is here of great importance. Third, there are studies of public regulation and individualization inspired by post-Foucaultian studies of governmentality. This is a continuation of the old interest in public policy in various areas (social health, education, etc.). Fourth, traditional family sociology has been reinforced by posing questions of identity policy and studying various kinds of intimate pair relations. Fifth, there are women's studies, in particular women at work and gendered professions. Elina Haavio-Mannila (1933–) is a pioneer in the fields of family and women's studies. Sixth, with the simultaneous collapse of the Soviet Union and the Socialist bloc, Russian studies, often in close collaboration with the Russian and other eastern European scholars, has become an integral part of Finnish sociology. This has opened totally new and unexpected visions to the Finnish social scientists. Finally, a continued interest in social theory and theory history should be mentioned.

Sweden has seen a gradual increase of different methodological and theoretical approaches, as well as of theories and methods. The period after the mid-1980s has been discussed in some texts (Ahrne 1994; Allard 1994; Dahlström 1994; Fridjónsdóttir 1987; Hansen 1997; Magdalenic 2004). The main research topics of sociology still revolve around inequality, distribution, family, the welfare state, education, organization, work, and consumption. Though the research is of

a high quality, a consequence is that sociologists in Sweden have spent much time and energy investigating how resources are used and distributed, and considerable sums have been invested into large datasets preserving this bias. There are only a few exceptions that look at the production side of the economy and how resources are generated; for example, Christian Berggren (1950–) on the Swedish industry, its innovation, and its organization. There are others who have written on theory and the path following the more micro-oriented sociology of Johan Asplund (1937–). We should also mention the field of science and technology studies, where Boel Berner (1945–) has played a leading role, and emotions, which has been addressed particularly by Gerd Lindgren (1945–). A trend imported from the United States, and emanating from Stockholm and students of Peter Hedström (1955–) has been network theory, in which subject Fredrik Liljeros (1970–) has become the leading figure.

We cannot here discuss all the individual studies that have made a mark or that represent new trends. An ambitious project not only to survey, but also to actually show the relevance of Swedish sociology has been undertaken by Ahrne, Franzén, and Roman (1996). Their book, frequently used in undergraduate courses, represents a sociological account of Sweden from the 1950s to 1990s. It is also a detailed survey of existing sociological research in Sweden, using the organizational perspective developed by Göran Ahrne (1944–).

Turning to Norway, we use the threefold distinction between social science approaches (Table 19.1). The three different approaches to the practical philosophy of social science clearly go together with different research methods. Major research projects on social mobility, inequality, and civil wars have been carried out within the bounds of the standard position. This research is strong in terms of inferring from large datasets, but weak on contextualization. A number of research fields are more drawn to the contextualist side: medical sociology has long been inspired by the interactionist tradition. The same goes for work on domestic violence, adding critical awareness of this dark side of social life. In such areas, the gap between grounded and critical theory is not wide at all. Research into substance abuse also partly works with ethnographic, case-oriented methods. But such work need not be restricted to micro-analysis. In all Nordic countries there is extensive work on immigration and integration. We also find purely social-philosophical work, mostly as contributions to theory, as theoretical treatises or textbooks only, exemplified by the works of Dag Østerberg (1938–).

As for qualitative empirical work mixed with reflections based on social philosophy, we find some attempts to “use” higher level theories of modernity, notably in Østerberg’s (1998) publications on Norwegian politics and on architecture, as well as in his textbook *Samfunnsformasjonen* (with Fredrik Engelstad, 1984). The work of Bourdieu has had some impact in cultural sociology. There is also a tradition at the University of Bergen of work on social mobility, education, class structures, and life courses.

The first generation of feminist sociologists is still going strong. Kari Wærness (1939–), who launched the concept of “rationality of caring,” has done several studies that illuminate feminist research questions by analysing large datasets. The younger generation has tried to combine the critical impulse of the first generation with the two social philosophical notions of theory. Many have tried out the deconstructionist option, while some have recently turned to empirical work.

As for social policy-related fields, there is extensive work on drugs, alcohol, and sexuality, drawing on both quantitative studies of large datasets and qualitative, ethnographic fieldwork methods. Surveying mixed methods research, it should also be noted that one of Norway’s best “analytical sociologists”, Ole Jørgen Skog (1946–2006) published as his last book a quite comprehensive account of the sociology of deviance, *Skam og skade* (2006). It was written in Norwegian, but Skog had an extensive list of English-language publications.

We shall finish with the youngest member of the Nordic sociological family. According to Gunnlaugsson and Bjarnason (1994), Allardt's themes mentioned above (welfare state, social stratification, women studies, and cultural studies) reflect Icelandic sociology in the last decade of the twentieth century. But they also alert us to two broader underlying themes in Icelandic sociological research, namely: "studies dealing with social conditions, in terms of both historical and emerging societal tendencies" and "studies addressing the various social and cultural problems associated with the development of Icelandic society" (p. 304). Their analysis is thereby in line with Thorlindsson (1982), who a decade earlier pointed out that the nascent Icelandic sociology related from the beginning to its own background in the rapid industrialization of a country with a small population and strong consciousness of national identity. In many ways, these themes are dominant in Icelandic sociology even today.

Both Thorlindsson (1982), as well as Gunnlaugsson and Bjarnason (1994), describe how the economic, social, and cultural transformation of Icelandic society in the twentieth century influenced official, public, and sociological perceptions of relevant objects of study. Icelandic sociology continued to provide basic facts about past developments, present status, and emergent trends in those fields considered important to the heritage and immediate future of Icelandic society, rather than elaborating extensively on sociological theory. Since sociology was such a young field of study, there was also a lack of adequate data. Sociologists had to spend considerable time and energy in providing various forms of data, which could serve as the basis for further research and theoretical analysis. Even today, this work goes on, with particular efforts to secure longitudinal data. There are still limitations when it comes to linking Icelandic data to databases allowing international comparison. However, as the sociological community has grown and matured, a number of new themes have entered the scope of research. Among those working within Icelandic academia and other research institutions, the main trends during the last years have been, in alphabetical order: criminology, disability, education, gender, health, management, mass media, regional planning, social stratification, sport, welfare, working life, and youth.

Icelandic data is often unique. The country's small population makes it possible for sociologists working with quantitative data to do a nationwide study among *all* individuals belonging to the group under consideration.

The role of émigré sociologists

We have omitted one important group from our survey of national developments. This is the distinct group of émigré sociologists, scholars who left their native country early, but who maintain networks with sociologists and institutions back home. Nor have we mentioned the considerable influence of well-educated immigrants who wrote their doctoral dissertations in a Nordic country, of which Sweden has been by far the most common destination country. When looking at the émigrés, we limit ourselves to those who immigrated to large intellectual centers of social sciences (such as notable US and European universities), and we discuss only a limited sample of scholars that we judge to be among the most influential ones. They have had an important impact, often even in Nordic countries other than their own. Given the recent practice of Research Council evaluations of scientific disciplines, these émigrés also frequently are active on the committees appointed to evaluate sociology. Our discussion focuses on those who have made an impact internationally and have also continued to play a role of their country of origin.

An early case is the already mentioned Swedish sociologist Hans Zetterberg. Educated at the University of Minnesota in 1951 and Uppsala in 1952, he returned to Sweden in the mid-1960s. He triggered the debate on "soft data" sociology, that is, what today is called qualitative sociology,

with direct reference to Aubert's book. But Zetterberg did not take up an academic position when he returned. Instead, he became an entrepreneur for social science as a private vocation: he was the main force behind the Bank of Sweden Tri-Centennial Fund, a major fund for support for social research, and he established Sifo, a private firm doing market and social research. In the 1980s, he became editor-in-chief of the conservative newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*. He is still active and is currently publishing a larger work, *The Many Splendored Society*.

However, some of these émigrés have not returned, except for frequent short visits. The Norwegian philosopher Jon Elster (1940–) pioneered and developed rational choice as a general social science orientation, starting in the interface between political economy, economic history, and analytical philosophy. Although he was educated as a philosopher, and never identified with any particular social science discipline, his main focus has always been the philosophy of the social sciences, and his impact on Norwegian and Swedish sociology has been extensive. Holding permanent positions abroad since the late 1970s (Chicago, Columbia University, and Collège de France), he is another Nordic émigré who has linked Nordic social science to the broader international setting.

An important Danish émigré was Aage Bødtker Sørensen (1941–2001). He was Svalastoga's student, and graduated in the United States and held professorships at Wisconsin and Harvard, studying inequality in labour markets, and tutoring many from the growing wave of Nordic doctoral students travelling to the United States in the third phase. Not surprisingly, he was involved as an expert advisor during the restructuring of the Copenhagen sociology departments in the late 1980s. Counted as another scholar to inspire analytical sociology, Sørensen also served on evaluation committees of Swedish and Norwegian sociology.

Another Danish émigré is Gøsta Esping-Andersen. His influence should be related to the concept of a Nordic model. Swedish economists working with the trade union movement in the 1950s established the notion of a specific Swedish model of economic policy-making, one in which the emphasis on wage equalization and active labour market policies played an important role. A major development from the dogmatism of the peak years of the student revolt was the extension of this model to cover the consolidation of the welfare state. The Swedish sociologist Walter Korpi (1934–), a professor of social policy at SOFI (one of the leading social policy research institutes in the Nordic area, located at the University of Stockholm), made the crucial contribution with his *Working Class in Welfare Capitalism: Work, Unions and Politics in Sweden* (1978), followed by the English-language synthesis, *The Democratic Class Struggle* (1983). Research within Swedish sociology here converged with research by younger scholars in the United States, particularly sociologist John D. Stephens, who published *The Transition from Capitalism to Socialism* in 1978.

In the interface between philosophy, sociology and macro-historical studies of civilization, Icelandic-born Johann Arnason (1940–) has – from bases in Continental Europe and Australia – made significant contributions to a historically informed social philosophical position. Göran Therborn (1941–), should also be mentioned among those who mainly worked from abroad (the Netherlands and UK), and made an impact on sociology. Therborn's work is broad (spanning such topics as social theory, unemployment, European societies, inequality) and connected to his role as an intellectual of the New Left. The work of Peter Hedström (1955–) has been mentioned above. It was originally launched as a social mechanism program, together with Richard Swedberg (1948–), who has also been central in the resurrection of economic sociology. Taken together, these émigré sociologists, not the least as role models, have helped to pave the way for researchers who see the international scene as the primary arena for publication and contacts.

It is noteworthy that a large number of those working at Swedish universities have emigrated from other countries, including the United States, Germany, Poland, Chile Greece, and

Iran. A substantial number of people from Africa have written their dissertations in Sweden. Sweden has been the most open of the Nordic countries, whereas Norway, Iceland, and especially Finland have been more closed to foreign influence.

Concluding remarks

Sociology in the Nordic countries has matured and developed positively over the last 50 years. Since we have only given a bird's-eye view, we have no solid empirical basis that allows firm conclusions. During the writing of this chapter, we have discussed between us the relation between sociology and neighbouring disciplines. It can be argued that there has been an import of sociological theories and perspectives into inter-disciplinary research environments; for example, engaging with business economics, political science, philosophy, or technology issues. Several disciplines, including history, geography, political economy, education, and to some extent psychology, have imported sociological theories and concepts to develop their own disciplines. A significant number of chairs in more recent academic divisions such as criminology, media/communication studies, cultural studies and social studies of science are occupied by people who hold doctorates in sociology. A variety of departments now offer courses that pursue sociological points of view: sociology of education, political sociology, sociology of food, sociology of religion, sociology of law and sociology of literature. It is also common to find sociologists working at interdisciplinary centers.

Some of us are inclined to conclude that sociology have imported few ideas from other disciplines, while others tend to emphasize that the flow of analogies and metaphors between disciplines is so extensive that also sociology has received a lot. In some areas, sociology has been influenced by the health sciences. Another case is the increasing influence of analogies from economics (rational choice theory) in sociology. It seems clear, however, that this influence has been more debated in Norway and Sweden than in the three other countries. While Icelandic sociology still seems focused on empirical consolidation, Danish and Finnish sociologists seem to be more broadly converging on contemporary social theory as the main foundation of the discipline. In Sweden and Norway, some theoretically oriented sociologists with experience from quantitative analysis would still argue that research should be legitimated by reference to the Anglo-American notion of science as specified in the tradition of analytical philosophy. Although they mostly accept a pluralistic view of the discipline, they tend to see this orientation as a counterweight to social theory on the model of continental philosophy. But social philosophical approaches to social theory have many supporters even in these countries. We have, however, not been able to reach agreement on a more precise assessment of these theoretical trends.

Some of us argue that the social sciences and society at large have become more prone to use "sociological" reasoning. The use of *gender*, *class*, and *network* in everyday language and the large number of students who are educated at universities are conditions that facilitate both the diffusion and the use of sociological concepts. Others may rather hold that this is not so much due to a diffusion of concepts from the discipline to society, but that it rather indicates the extent to which concept formation in sociology (and in the other social sciences) relies on knowledge that already exists in society.

Sociologists in Nordic countries essentially study everything. Their research is not restricted, or even associated with, a specific domain, in the eyes of the public. All this may be seen as contributing to the relatively successful development of sociology, but it may very well have contributed to a less clear notion of what sociology is, and what sociologists can do. Within sociology, this has caused some concern, and disciplinary disintegration may be both a problem and

a solution. With reference to our periodization in three phases, we may conclude that if there is a sociological core, for example in terms of theory, it is less clear than it was 65 years ago.

As for the internationalization of sociology, Nordic sociologists still study their own countries. But increasingly, there is an exchange of ideas across borders and more sociologists today publish internationally. English has become more common as the language of the field. Those who develop theory and aim at general understanding can more easily join international networks. Comparative studies, as well as research projects that are jointly driven by researchers from several countries, are easier to organize. The findings of Nordic researchers are accordingly available to the broader international public, though still many publish only, or at least partially, in their native languages. More research projects financed by the EU have increased international contacts. Doctoral students, increasingly, spend time abroad and more publications are directed to an international audience.

Sociologists have become less the public intellectuals that they used to be. Since in the early 1980s, the radicalization and political leftism of the turbulent phase was weakened (Bergryd, 1982). Sociology still has some outspoken public intellectuals operating in the national public sphere: In Norway, for example, Ottar Brox (1932–) has been and still is an important voice. But economists and political scientists have come to play this role more prominently, as the influence of neoliberalist ideas has grown. Still, sociologists continue to provide inputs to government white paper investigations into important challenges in social development, such as the ageing trend, pensions, immigration, substance abuse, etc. Even in late-coming Iceland, sociological research has earned a role in most areas of governance and sociological concepts figure prominently in public discussion. In Sweden, by contrast, sociologists have lost ground to representatives from other disciplines in public investigations.

We noted above that Nordic sociologists, following Korpi and Esping-Andersen, adopted the trade union economists' notion of the Nordic model. However, with the deep crises of the early 1990s (briefly mentioned above), many commentators held that the Nordic model was dead. But after a considerable recovery since the mid-1990s, the performance of the Nordic welfare states now counts as above average compared to the two other clusters, that is, the Anglo-American and the continental. Of course, given the international downturn of the early 2010s, social policies in the region are under pressure – for example, due to unemployment, extensive reliance on disability pensions – but certain crucial revisions, especially pension reforms over the last two decades, have reduced their vulnerability. Today, the left and the right are competing as to who are best placed to sustain the model, so defense of the model is no longer a privilege of the left.

The case of Iceland, with its enormous financial crash of 2008, is special. One may rather attribute these developments to “non-Nordic” features of Iceland's political economy, while adjustments following the crises are bringing Iceland in a more “Nordic” direction (Mjøset 2011).

This relative strength of the Nordic approach to social policy-making may be one of the reasons why sociology is still thriving in this northern part of Europe today. Not even this, however, is a conclusion that we have reached full agreement on. In Finland, separate social policy departments have been so influential that Finnish sociology has been less wound up with the conduct of welfare state policies. The picture is thus one of considerable diversity, and the self-reflection of Nordic sociologists is certainly best pursued in a comparative framework.

References

- Ahrne, G. (1994) *Social Organizations. Interaction Inside, Outside and Between Organizations*. London: Sage.
Ahrne, G., Franzén, M., and Roman, C. (1996) *Det Sociala Landskapet*. Göteborg: Korpen.

- Allardt, E. (1989) Recent Developments in Scandinavian Sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 15, 31–45.
- Allardt, E. (1994) Reflexioner kring utvecklingslinjerna i svensk sociologi. In R. Swedberg and I. Wennemo (eds), *Sociologin i Stockholm 1954–1994*. Stockholm: Sociologiska institutionen.
- Aubert, V. (1965). *The Hidden Society*. Totowa: Bedminister Press.
- Bergryd, U. (1982) Sociology in Shorts: Sociology as Obsessional Neurosis. *Acta Sociologica*, 25(4), 367–372.
- Boalt, G. (1988) *Minnen och Meningar*. Stockholm: Stockholm University.
- Dahlström, E. (1994) Contemporary Swedish Sociology. A Personal View. *Acta Sociologica*, 37, 75–92.
- Fridjónsdóttir, K. E. (1987) *Om svensk sociologi. Historia, problem och perspektiv*. Stockholm: Carlsson.
- Galtung, J. (1967) *Theory and Methods of Social Research*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Gunnlaugsson, H. and Bjarnason, T. (1994) Establishing a Discipline: The Impact of Society on the Development of Icelandic Society. *Acta Sociologica*, 37, 393–312.
- Hansen, L. (1997) *Sociologi i tiden. Bakgrund, utveckling, framtid*. Göteborg: Daidalos.
- Korpi, W. (1978) *The Working Class in Welfare Capitalism: Work, Unions and Politics in Sweden*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Korpi, W. (1983) *The Democratic Class Struggle*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Magdalenic, S. (2004) *Gendering the Sociology Profession: Sweden Britain and the US*. Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis.
- Mjøset, L. (2009) The Contextualist Approach to Social Science Methodology. In D. Byrne & C. Ragin (eds), *Handbook of Case-based Methods* (pp. 39–68). London: Sage.
- Mjøset, L. (2011) Nordic Political Economy after Financial Deregulation: Banking Crises, Economic Experts, and the Role of Neoliberalism. *Comparative Social Research*, 28, 365–420.
- Mjøset, L. (2013) The Fate of The Sociological Imagination. Mills, social science, and contemporary sociology. In A. Nilsen and J. Scott (eds), *C. Wright Mills. The Legacy of his Writings 50 Years On* (pp. 57–87). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Østerberg, D. (1998a) *Arkitektur og sosiologi i Oslo: en sosio-materiell fortolkning*. Oslo: Pax.
- Østerberg, D. (1998b) *Statskvinnen: Gro Harlem Brundtland og nyliberalismen*. Oslo: Aschehoug.
- Østerberg, D. and Engelstad, F. (1984) *Samfunnsformasjonen*. Oslo: Pax.
- Parsons, T. (1968) *The Structure of Social Action*. New York: Free Press.
- Rokkan, S. (1970) *Citizens, Elections, Parties*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Skog, O. J. (2006) *Skam og skade: noen avvikssosiologiske temaer*. Oslo: Gyldendal.
- Stephens, J. D. (1979) *The Transition from Capitalism to Socialism*. London: Macmillan.
- Thorlindsson, T. (1982) Icelandic Sociology: National Conditions and the Emergence of a New Discipline. *Acta Sociologica* 25, 79–89.
- Zetterberg, H. L. (1954) *On Theory and Verification in Sociology*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wicksell.