

**Proposal for Study Circle of the Nordic Summer University 2017-2019**

**Edition 9-3-2016**

**Crisis, Critique & Normative Orders**  
**Challenges for Nordic Societies and Europe in Global Perspectives**

**Proposed by**  
**Members of Study Circle 3**

***Challenges for Nordic Societies and Europe:***

This is the proposal for a new NSU study circle in crisis, critique and normative orders.

We take our point of departure in the fact that the Nordic Countries and Europe with their social and political orders are in crisis. During the last years, there has been an increased crisis at many levels of society. We can mention the crisis of the Scandinavian welfare state and its current transformation into a so-called competition state. At the level of the European Union, democracy is in crisis in several European countries and institutions. On the one hand the established political systems are discredited; on the other hand new populist parties – both left and right, but often claiming to be non-political – are gaining string support. This is happening in many countries in Scandinavia, Europe and the Western World. The European Union's political institutions are weak and they miss the capacity to take common political decisions in front of recent urgent crises such as economy, migration, radical nationalism and terrorism. The established political institutions have a legitimization problem, and therefore they face a strong critique from many different points of view.

Moreover, the Nordic countries and European political orders and institutions stand in front of increased Nationalism and increased differences and national cultures. Both critical left

wing and right wing movements are increasing and there is an increased criticism of established political positions of Nordic and European countries.

At the level of the Nordic and European global economic systems, neoliberalism is increasing, at the same time as there is an increased criticism of the economic crisis in different countries. The Euro crisis and the global economic crisis relate to each other. A growing inequality is an increasing problem, which leads to further exclusion and creation of poverty.

On the background of this simultaneous aggravation of the financial, social, political, cultural and environmental elements of the ongoing crisis in the regional and in the international community, it becomes relevant to discuss critique and normative strategies in relation to the Nordic and European crisis with perspectives on the global and international dimensions of the crisis. We are in particular interested in studying normative systems and concepts of critique in relation to contemporary Nordic and European societies. In this context, we would like to study concepts of emancipation and critique in different theoretical and practical conceptions of normative orders in Nordic countries and Europe. At the same time as the Nordic and European societies are confronted with increased social, political and economic tensions, there has also been an emergence of new social, cultural and political orders based on genuine possibilities of emancipation and dialogue about world problems in the international community.

We will consider the critiques of the contemporary normative orders and look for possible new suggestions for political, economic, social and environmental normative orders.

***Special Topics to consider in relation to the crises in the Nordic societies and Europe:***

In particular, we will look at the relation between crisis, critique and normative orders in relation to the following dimensions of the contemporary developments in the Nordic countries and Europe:

1. Basic concepts of critical theory and normative orders. Here, we will look at the actuality and traditions of critical theory in relation to the study of contemporary normative orders. Important themes are issues of the relation between normativity, civil society and the state. This includes concepts of normative orders and the welfare state, for example issues of the normative orders of neo- and ordo-liberalism and normative orders in the competition state.

2. The critique of the normative orders of contemporary neo-liberal capitalism. Here we will examine the current developments in critical theory in order to understand the social theory of Western democracies in the Nordic societies, Europe and the United States. Moreover, we will

look at the crisis of the Nordic countries and Europe in relation to the global economic system. We will examine the possibilities and limits of different concepts and theories of critique in order to understand contemporary normative orders.

3. The critique of the global economic and political system. Here we can mention dimensions of critique of world politics, including international security, terrorism and changed relations between world powers, for example US, Europe, China and other developing countries. In this context, important issues are critique and normative orders in international politics and contemporary theories of international politics.

4. The current state of cultural critique and the critique of cultural encounters, multiculturalism, human rights and religious confrontations. Here, we can mention the tensions between formation of worldviews, ideologies and religions, related to migration and refugee crisis in the Nordic countries and Europe, as well as increased confrontations between different cultural groups in the Nordic and European societies.

5. Colonialism and post-colonialism in the Nordic countries and Europe are essential topics for the understanding of the recent crisis. In this context, racism and sexism can also be mentioned. On the other hand, we see also critical feminist perspectives.

6. The current state of the critique of endless growth society and the climate and environmental crisis related to the politics of CO<sub>2</sub> reduction in connection with the UN and international climate politics. How can critical theory contribute to the discussion of the environment and the global inequalities related to the global environmental crisis? What can critical theory say about the transformation towards a new sustainable world community?

7. Critique of global cosmopolitanism and critical examination of migration and refugee crisis from the point of view of human rights and cosmopolitanism. Here we can look at the need for critical theory in relation to strong international governance and law systems.

8. Critique of the biopolitical order and the existential and cultural dimensions of neoliberal societies. What are the existential dimensions of neoliberal society? We can examine how increased alienations influence personal life stories and biographies, showing the need for critical evaluations and perspectives on personal life, actions, worldviews and perspectives.

9. Critique of the established liberal democratic system and the tendencies to closure, both inside one nation and in western clusters such as EU. How come that democracy and justice are only seldom linked? And why does liberal individualism normally define democracy? We examine new normative formulations of genuine social conceptions of democracy.

10. The crisis of critical theory. How do we evaluate normative orders from the point of view of the crisis of normative political philosophy and critical theory? Is it possible to develop a comprehensive critical theory in the current situation of ongoing economic, social political and cultural transformations? Here we can relate critical theory to the increased acceleration and de-synchronization of different normative orders and sub-systems in society.

With focus on these mentioned themes and issues, we will discuss the possibilities of a critical social theory of normative orders. We will look at concepts of critique in relation to the state, civil society and the market and we will examine concepts of critique and normative orders at the national and international level.

***Six Summer- and Winter Meetings concerning Crisis, Critique & Normative Orders in Nordic Societies and Europe from a Global Perspective:***

We propose to study the mentioned themes issues in the framework of six symposia during the three years of work of the study group in the period 2017-2019. The six symposia will subsequently deal with the following topics:

- *The Concept of Critique and Normative Orders.* This workshop will examine how the concept of critique and normative orders appears in many different ways in the present situation. Critique has a long philosophical tradition and has different meanings in different philosophical and social theories. Critique is a concept that has a revival in contemporary social theory and theory of normative orders. We will look at the different concepts of critique and normative order as the basis for our reflections on contemporary social, political and economic problems in relation to the crisis of the Nordic countries and Europe.
- *Critique, Existence and Alienation.* This workshop will look at critical social theory in relation to personal existence and life biographies in different cultures of society. We will examine alienation, life and death, existence and culture, the role of gender in critical theory. The different social dimensions of critique in relation to individual subjects and existence will be discussed. The relation between personal subjectivities, recognition and self-realization in different normative orders is essential for personal emancipation in societies

and families. This includes freedom in political relations in culture, the state and civil societies. In this context will colonialism and post-colonialism also be essential themes.

- *The role of Critique and Normative Orders in Contemporary Biopolitics.* We can observe a strong biopolitical perspective in the present society. Neoliberalism connects with technologies of the self and self-management in relation to health, work and family. At the same time, the concept of the camp and exclusion as a state of exception is present in contemporary terrorism, refugee crisis, and confrontation between cultures in nationalism. We find it essential to discuss the role of critique in relation to biopolitics in the crisis of Europe.
- *Neoliberalism, Economic Crisis and Political Economy.* What is the role of critique in relation to global economy? How do we criticize the economic and the political economy of European institutions and European markets? What is a critical approach to the economic problems and opportunities of the global crisis? This workshop will discuss the relation between different concepts of critique in political economy. It will deal with new forms of critique in order to propose transformations of current political economies.
- *Normative Orders and Democracies in Nordic Countries and Europe.* What is the role of critique in democratic politics? How do we develop social and political justice to new social theories? This workshop will relate political theory of democracy and citizenship in the Nordic Countries and Europe. Here we will make an update of political theory in relation to Nordic countries and Europe. We will discuss the critical dimensions of different theories of normative orders. This will also include critical dimensions, concepts, and visions of Nordic and European democracies.
- *Critique, Control and New Technology.* This workshop will consider the ethical and existential dimensions of technology in the advanced information society. We will focus on possible critique of concepts of instrumentalization in the technological developments. How can we make a critique of the alienation of human beings in the social media of exposure societies? How does the internet change our societies and democracies and what is the role

of critical theory in relation to digitalization? In this context, we can also examine education and the decline of the European university systems. Moreover, issues of free speech and social control are important in the relation to the biopolitics of new technology in exposure society.

***Publication:***

The result of the workshops will be published as conference papers in the electronic scholarly journal *Nordicum-Mediterraneum* (<http://nome.unak.is>). Later we will also assemble the best contributions in an anthology about the topics discussed in the study group. This anthology will present analyses and explanations of the concept of critique and normative orders and it will also propose some concrete political and economic solutions for the future.

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