

This special issue of *Nordicum-Mediterraneum* contains select proceedings from the third meeting of the *Nordic Summer University* research circle called “Crisis and Crisis Scenarios: Normativity, Possibilities and Dilemmas”, held April 9th — 12th, 2015 at the Lysebu Conference Centre in Oslo, Norway. The circle’s research program runs from 2014 to 2016 and is aimed at examining the concept of *crisis* as it is used today in academia and public discussion. In this collection of papers from the symposium we present some of the different ways in which the topic of the study group was addressed.

In the current global society, the general situation is considered by many intellectuals, politicians and citizens as a simultaneous aggravation of the financial, political, cultural and environmental elements of the ongoing crisis at local, regional, national and international levels. On the other hand, hope has also been expressed for the emergence of a new social, cultural and political order based on a genuine possibility of emancipation and dialogue about world problems in the international community. The crisis research circle, operating within the framework of *Nordic Summer University*, is to examine in the period 2014–2016 the paradoxes of the general situation and the tensions leading, on the one hand, to increased problems *vis-à-vis* economic, social and environmental world justice and, on the other hand, the growing presence of voices and signs of a paradigm shift towards sound politics and good governance. On the basis of some possible explanations of the causes of the crisis, the study group will discuss some of its most urgent dilemmas.

The main topic of the Lysebu conference was “The Crisis of Democracy - Europe and the Nordic Countries”. In particular, we wanted to put the following question: *How does the crisis influence democratic politics as well as political and social justice?* We wanted to discuss the crisis of the concept of democracy as well as the reality and institutions of parliamentary democracy and relate them to the discussion of the belief in the development of novel political concepts and ideas for European democracy, constitutions and culture.

The following papers were presented at the Lysebu conference (we include below their authors’ names, titles and abstracts):

Giorgio Baruchello & Ágúst Þór Árnason

“Europe’s Constitutional Law in Times of Crisis: A Human Rights Perspective”

In this paper, we aim to survey representative constitutional amendments in the European Union’s (EU) area, whether attempted or accomplished, as well as significant adjudications by constitutional bodies. Then, we proceed to assess these legal phenomena in light of human rights jurisprudence. Pivotal reference in our work is the recently released 7th volume of the *Annuaire international des droits de l’homme* (Athens: Sakkoulas, December 2014), edited by G. Katrougalos, M. Figueiredo and P. Pararas under the aegis of the International Association of Constitutional Law. Not only does this volume comprise the work of some of Europe’s noted constitutionalists, it also addresses the constitutional matters central to this paper in light of human rights jurisprudence, which is the area of expertise of one of the paper’s authors, i.e. Ágúst Þór Árnason, and the area that the other author, Giorgio Baruchello, has construed axiologically as a pivotal instantiation of *civil commons*, i.e. “all social constructs which enable universal access to life goods”. Have European constitutions continued to function *qua* civil commons in the crisis years? That, at the deepest level of value scrutiny, is the question that our joint survey and analysis aim to answer.

Gorm Harste

“Critique of War Reason. A Perspective on Self-referential Systems, 11th—21st Centuries”

This paper is a summary of my 700-page very academic thesis, in Danish, to be published by Aarhus University Press (AUP). A shorter booklet based on it was published by AUP too (November 2014, 250 pages) and so were a number of shorter articles in English, French and German. In Luhmann’s systems theory and in sociology at large there is a missing link consisting in the lack of a sociology of war. A number of German systems theoreticians use Luhmann’s theory to fill that gap. Yet Luhmann (born 1927), who was a soldier and a prisoner of war from age 15-17, would not write a “Der Krieg der Gesellschaft”. The attempt to narrow this lacuna is indeed a heavy burden and a difficult task, in which it is decisive firstly to get the basic distinctions right about a second order observation of war as a conflict system – to be distinct from a military organisational system. This, I do by beginning with a reconceptualization of Carl von Clausewitz’ form analysis and self-description of war from *Vom Kriege* (1832). The central point is to observe the self-reference of war, or how

war became war about war. Conflict is basically a problem of essentially contested communication. Once this historical self-reference established around the 17th century was in place, war became delimited by its structural couplings to religion, mass media (propaganda), finance, welfare for victims and veterans, law, politics and other functional systems. The costs of war increased, reconstituted and transformed modern society in a way that has formed a range of risks and – of course – neglected blind spots.

Jacob Dahl Rendtorff

“Peter Koslowski’s Ethics and Economics or Ethical Economy: A Framework for a research agenda in business ethics”

This paper presents the concept of ethical economy (*Wirtschaftsethik*) and the relation between ethics and economics on the basis of the work of the German ethical economist Peter Koslowski. The concept of ethical economy includes three levels: micro, meso and macro levels; and it also deals with the philosophical analysis of the ethical foundations of the economy. After the discussion of these elements of the ethical economy, the paper presents some possible research topics for a research agenda about economic ethics or ethical economy.

Jesper Jespersen

“Can Macroeconomics and Ideology Be Separated? Some Experiences from Europe and the Nordic Countries”

Mainstream economists claim that economics is an objective and empirically tested science – contrary to the humanities and soft social sciences. According to this view, economics is beyond the influence of ideology. It represents the rational way of analysing economic welfare – not influenced by political consideration. Therefore, it is explicitly stated within the Treaty of Lisbon that the board of directors of the European Central Bank must not take any direct instructions from the European Council to secure objectivity in the European monetary policy. Unfortunately, economic theory is not neutral. It cannot be separated from the vision and the fundamental assumptions which lay behind the economic model employed when policies are decided upon. The so-called general equilibrium model is firmly relying on

market theory and ordo-/neoliberal ideology.

John Storm Pedersen & Jacob Dahl Rendtorff

“Do digital systems and concepts in modern public service production have a negative impact on citizens as end-users?”

Do digital systems and concepts in modern public service production have a negative impact on citizens as end-users? To answer this research question, we shall first present our theoretical framework ‘the institutional logics perspective’ and show how we deploy this on modern public service production. Second, we claim that digital systems and concepts develop a new institutional logic within modern public service production: the ‘digital logic’. Third, we analyze and discuss the new logic’s possible impact on citizens as end-users. Fourth, we discuss the ethical dimensions of values and ethics in relation to public service production and digitizing.

Peter Wolsing

“Environmental Ethics. From theory to practical change”

This paper provides a critical presentation of parts of Anglo-American environmental ethics from the perspective of the environmental crisis. Environmental ethics must attempt to provide the theoretical basis for overcoming the crisis to which it responds. So I suggest a possible connection of theory with practice by arguing that the meta-ethical approach to normativity via an axiology of nature should be supported by a theory like deep ecology that is dedicated to practical change. Naess’s notion of self-realization as an experiential process of gradual identification with all life contains the insight that practical change begins with a fundamental change of attitude.

Øjvind Larsen

“Piketty’s *Capital*. The Revival of Political Philosophy, Political Economy and Social Sciences in the Light of the Declaration of Human and Citizens’ Rights in the French Revolution of 1789”

Piketty's *Capital in Twenty-First Century* has posed a totally new platform for the discussion of the economy and capitalism. Piketty has reinvented the classical political economy founded by Adam Smith in his 1776 *Wealth of Nations*. Piketty has shown *via* massive historical research how growth and inequality have developed since 1793. Piketty's conclusion is that the French Revolution did not change the existing inequality either in the medium or in the long term. Piketty's prediction is that a new form of global capitalism will arise, patrimonial capitalism, in which inequality will develop further and the 1% of the World population will control 95% of all wealth in the World.