

This special issue of *Nordicum-Mediterraneum* contains selected proceedings from three research circles within the **Nordic Summer University (NSU)**: *Human Rights and International Relations*, *Understanding Migration in Nordic and Baltic Countries* and *Patterns of Dysfunction in Contemporary Democracies; Impact on Human Rights and Governance*. The meetings took place in Saulkrasti, Latvia, from 29/7 to 2/8 2017 and in Copenhagen, Denmark, from 2/2 to 4/2 2018.

The program of the research circle, *Human Rights and International Relations*, ran from 2015 to 2017. This circle explored how human rights militancy and more generally the protection of human rights are affected by the international human rights regime and the way this regime enters state relations, and it also examined how the international human rights regime modifies the relations between states and how this is explained in international relations theory.

Understanding Migration in Nordic and Baltic Countries runs from 2017 to 2019. This circle addresses contemporary migration through the lens of representation. Interpreted broadly as various means of capturing, contextualizing, interpreting, and defining people, institutions, politics, and histories, representation should encompass both tangible renderings – such as photographs and films – and also a wide range of practices and processes whose representational forms serve in specific ways to produce the subject matter itself.

The study circle about the *Patterns of Dysfunction in Contemporary Democracies; Impact on Human Rights and Governance* runs from 2018 to 2020. This circle endeavours to study different patterns of dysfunction in contemporary democracies and in particular the insidious processes which undermine the traditional canons of liberal democracy, notably encapsulated in the rule of law and human rights. Many factors are involved in these insidious processes and the state of the various democracies can be seen as nodal points between different factors that are criss-crossing and thus creating a unique constellation: populism, nationalism, corruption, fear, social isolation, ignorance, poverty, luxury, injustice, rootlessness in its various forms are signs of unbalances within democracies on both the global, national and local levels.

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