

Abstracts

Torben Hviid Nielsen

The Civil Society. Concept and organisation, politics and ethics

The concept "civil society" summarizes a true critique of the state and the market, giving an intuitive understanding of the alternative in an ambiguous concept. The "ethical wave" of the past decade is rooted in the same criticisms of modernity and contemporary society as the interest for "the civil society". The sphere of morality can not however be reduced to "the civil society" and no "particular" ethics of proximity can be generalised from civil society to society at large. "The public sphere" and "lifeworld" might together conceptualize a modern meaning of "civil society" better than the traditional term.

Peter Gundelach and Lars Torpe

Social Capital and the Democratic Role of Voluntary Associations

Robert Putnam started a new discussion on the democratic role of associations with the publication of his book *Making Democracy Work* in 1993 and the somewhat pessimistic analysis of democratic development in the USA. Putnam claims that associations constitute the central source of social capital: the precondition for a well-functioning democracy. This article examines Putnam's theory with special emphasis on his central concept: social capital ie. social confidence, norms of reciprocity and networks. We argue that the concept needs clarification and that there is a need for clarifying the relationship between social capital and democracy. The article concentrates on the significance of associations for democracy. There has been a tendency for associations to have less emphasis on active membership and this impedes the importance of associations as "schools for democracy". At the same time new fora that produce social capital have emerged. Hence it is an open question as to whether Putnam's pessimistic analysis of contemporary society is accurate.

Per Selle and Kristin Strømsnes

Membership and Democracy

This article emphasizes the role of non-democratically organized voluntary organizations in modern democracy and argues that their democratic importance is not at all understood within modern empirically based democratic research. We distinguish between democracy within voluntary organizations and their external democratic role, taking the role of passive members/supporters as our point of departure. We argue that the development within the organizational society itself points in the direction of an increased emphasis upon their external role at the cost of their internal role.

Bjarne Ibsen

Does Financial Support Corrupt the Organizations?

Most associations and voluntary organizations are partially dependent on public, financial support, which can limit the freedom of associations and promote organizational uniformity. For many years, associations and voluntary organizations have been heavily supported by public funding. Since the end of the 1980's, public financing of voluntary organizations in both the social sector and the leisure sector has actually doubled. The degree of autonomy is, however, not so much affected by the amount of public support received as by political and administrative attitudes towards the voluntary organization within a given, public area. In addition, the institutionalized form of financing utilized also plays a part in determining autonomy.

Marius Ibsen

Voluntary Organizations and Local Authorities

Based on experiences from a large Danish municipality, relations between local authorities and voluntary organizations of various sorts are described. It is shown that the degree of public control of the voluntary organization varies from one area to another. As far as education and culture are concerned, the degree of public control is very limited, whereas private social institutions for most practical purposes function as an integrated part of the municipal service.

Lise Tøgeby

Danish Attitudes towards Refugees and Immigrants

Since the beginning of the 1980s, the refugee and immigrant issues have been the object of increasing attention. During the last few years, this attention seems to have decreased, however. The problems have hardly become smaller, but apparently we have gotten used to having the immigrants around. The decreased attention has been accompanied by more tolerance, political as well as economical, but there are signs of growing concern over the trend towards a multicultural society. The article is a general discussion of how the attitudes towards refugees and immigrants are influenced by fluctuating attention.