

# The Image of Sweden

## The Hegemony of Sweden in Norden and Beyond

Helsinki, 22 September 2009  
Venue: Unioninkatu 40 (Metsätalo), room 10

- 09:45-10:30 Coffee, introductions  
Opening remarks: Henrik Stenius (Helsinki)  
Introduction: Mary Hilson (Helsinki/UCL)
- 10:30-12:15 Ainur Elmgren (Lund) *"Dearest of Enemies: Images of Sweden in the Finnish Press, 1918-1939"*  
Mirja Österberg (Stockholm/Helsinki) *"Towards a natural development: the image and construction of the idea of Scandinavian class compromises among Finnish Social Democrats in the 1930s"*
- 12:15-13:15 Lunch
- 13:15-15:00 Andrew Newby (Aberdeen) *"Social Democracy in Action? Norden and the Scottish Imagination since 1997"*  
Mikko Lager spetz (Åbo Akademi) *"Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania – How 'Nordic'?"*
- 15:00-15:30 Coffee
- 15:30-16:15 Per tti Joenniemi (Copenhagen) *"Norway: The Leading Nordic Power in the Sphere of Peace and Security Policies?"*
- 16:15-17:00 Concluding discussion: Allan Sikk (UCL), Richard Mole (UCL)

Ever since the emergence of the idea of the Swedish 'middle way' in the 1930s, Sweden has had a powerful position in the political imagination, out of all proportion to its small size. The aim of this seminar is to explore in more detail the rather problematic, and often ignored question of the relationship between the image of Sweden and of Norden or Scandinavia. In the eyes of the outside world, Sweden has often been elided with the idea of 'Norden', and for the rest of the region the relationship with Sweden has been a constant defining feature of 'Nordicness' throughout the twentieth century. For Denmark, for example, Sweden was the quasi-totalitarian 'other' contrasted against Danish 'hygge', while, as Max Engman has commented, perhaps in no other country than Finland was the idea of Swedish modernity so influential, at least until the 1970s. Since the early 1990s, the idea of the 'Nordic model' has been challenged, while at the same time new nationalised discourses have emerged to replace it: of a Danish model based on

'flexicurity', a Finnish model of technical innovation and education, and a Norwegian model based on the responsible investment of oil revenues. Until 2008, one could even perhaps also have talked of a new Icelandic model based on financial services.

The seminar will bring together a number of scholars concerned with images of Sweden within Norden on the one hand, and images of the other Nordic countries outside the region, on the other. It is suggested that these perspectives will help to shed new light both on the image of Sweden as utopian/dystopian political discourse, but also on the idea of 'Norden' as a region in the twentieth century.

The seminar is organised with the kind support of Centre for Nordic Studies, Renvall Institute, and NordWel: The Nordic Welfare State – Historical Foundations and Future Challenges. It will also launch a new series of seminars on "The Nordic and Baltic States in the European Political Imagination", organised by UCL (London) in collaboration with Helsinki University and funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (for more information about the series, please contact Richard Mole [r.mole@ssees.ucl.ac.uk](mailto:r.mole@ssees.ucl.ac.uk)).

All are welcome to attend, but numbers are limited due to the size of the room, so advance notice please to Mary Hilson: [mary.hilson@helsinki.fi](mailto:mary.hilson@helsinki.fi)