

Democratic Transformations: Towards Political and Social Change

Aalborg University

Venue Kroghstræde 3, room 4.112

Days 23rd -24th of January

General description:

The Arab spring in 2011 initiated a new cycle of social struggles that expanded to other places in the world: Spain, Greece, USA, Mexico, Turkey and Brazil. Despite all their particularities, two main characteristics can easily be identified: a new vigorous civil society that claims its right to be heard and the questioning of democracy as a mere system of representativeness, which relies exclusively on political parties.

In this seminar we want to address this dual challenge: what is the role of civil society and how does it contribute to social and political change? And how can political parties be more receptive to civil society and increase the mechanism of participation for citizens?

There are no simple answers to these relevant issues. Therefore we propose a dialogue between representatives from civil society organizations, scholars and politicians in order to share knowledge and practices and to try to find possible ways of thinking about a more inclusive and participatory democracy.

Questions such as the following will be used as a starting point to initiate the discussion:

- How can we conceptualize the civil society reactions to the economic and political-cultural crisis?
- Which social experiments are already taking place in Europe and how do they challenge the system in crisis and its politics of austerity?
- What can the political parties do, from a Danish perspective, to expand the limits of democracy and open up politics towards citizens?
- Which social experiments are taking place in Denmark and how do they contribute to social change and rethinking the political agenda?

Aims:

As mentioned, the seminar is an attempt to strengthen the connections between academia, civil society and political parties and to establish a common framework of discussion, based on dialogue and mutual learning, which is not only Danish but also European.

This event should be the beginning of common thinking and the creation of a network to explore possible ways of cooperation and activities in the future.

A more concrete and immediate aim is to promote spaces of reflection with a European perspective, since the coming European elections remind us of the importance of thinking about and developing a Europe by and for the citizens.

Participants:

Anyone (activists, students, scholars, citizens...) who is interested in the topic is very welcome to participate in the seminar and contribute with his/her opinions, experiences and points of view.

The participation is completely free of charge but prior registration is recommended.

<http://www.en.cgs.aau.dk/democratictransformations/Registration/>

Program

First day: Conceptualizing political and social change

13.00-15.30 (including break) Room Ks 3/4.112

Global Justice Movements and the Precariat, Carl-Ulrik Schierup (Linköping University, Sweden)

The right to the city, Aleksandra Ålund (Linköping University, Sweden)

The Europe of the commons, Gigi Roggero (Bologna University, Italy)

Moderator/discussant: Birte Siim

15.30-16.45 Room Ks 3/4.112

Roundtable: Rethinking Europe: possibilities of change

Birte Siim, Aleksandra Ålund, Carl-Ulrik Schierup, Nico Sguig

Reception at K3 – a bit of music and something to drink

Second day: Political and social change in practice

10.30-12.00 Room Ks 3/4.112

Roundtable 1: European alternatives from below

This session departs from three presentations by academics/activists. The aim with the session is firstly to present different European experiences of civil society engagement in social struggles and secondly to discuss if such experiences and practices can be transferred across countries. What alternative is being formulated, who are engaged in these alternatives, how is engagement facilitated, and what implications could they have for political and social practice?

Martina Tazzioli (Italy/England): Migration struggles

Gavan Titley (Ireland/Finland): Media, technology and political participation

Ramón Espinar Merino (Spain): Youth against precarization

Moderator: Martin Bak Jørgensen

13.00-14.30 Room Ks 3/4.112

Roundtable 2: Political parties in dialogue with civil society *(this session will be held in Danish only)*

This roundtable discusses the role of established political parties for creating political and social change. The roundtable sets off with presentations from three representatives from parties traditionally engaged in issues of inclusion. The roundtable seeks to draw out responses to the dissatisfaction with the political system witnessed across Europe albeit not in Denmark to the same degree and discuss how political parties can revive the engagement of citizens and strengthen the dialogue with civil society.

Lisbeth Poulsen (Socialistisk Folkeparti)

Rasmus Prehn (Socialdemokratiet)

Per Clausen (Enhedslisten)

Moderator: Anders Lundkvist

14.45-17.00 Room Ks 3/4.112

Roundtable 3: Social change – initiatives from civil society (*this session will be held in Danish only*)

This session will depart from presentations by five different civil society actors. It will discuss relations between the established and institutionalized channels of influence and non-institutionalized actors and initiatives. It will discuss the role of trade unions, issues of representatives, civil society initiatives for social justice and inclusion for citizens and non-citizens and necessities of alternative solutions as means for social change.

Jan Hoby (LFS, Landsforeningen for Socialpædagoger)

Morten Goll (Trampolinhuset)

Said Pavin (Asylret)

Leif Lahn Jensen (Arbejdernetværket)

Pil Berner Strandgaard (CEVEA)

Moderator: Ivan Lind Christensen

Further information:

Website: www.democratictransformations.aau.dk

Facebook: www.facebook/groups/618883074839459

Organisers:

Óscar García Agustín & Martin Bak Jørgensen are associate professors at the Department of Culture and Global Studies, Aalborg University