

To cite this output:

Mole, R, *et al* (2012) The Nordic and Baltic States in the European Political Imagination
ESRC End of Award Report, RES-451-26-0747. Swindon: ESRC.



ESRC End of Award Report

For awards ending on or after 1 November 2009

This End of Award Report should be completed and submitted using the **grant reference** as the email subject, to **reportsofficer@esrc.ac.uk** on or before the due date.

The final instalment of the grant will not be paid until an End of Award Report is completed in full and accepted by ESRC.

Grant holders whose End of Award Report is overdue or incomplete will not be eligible for further ESRC funding until the Report is accepted. We reserve the right to recover a sum of the expenditure incurred on the grant if the End of Award Report is overdue. (Please see Section 5 of the ESRC Research Funding Guide for details.)

Please refer to the Guidance notes when completing this End of Award Report.

Grant Reference	RES-451-26-0747		
Grant Title	The Nordic and Baltic States in the European Political Imagination		
Grant Start Date	01.10.2009	Total Amount Expended:	£6,599.72
Grant End Date	31.03.2012		
Grant holding Institution	UCL		
Grant Holder	Dr Richard Mole		
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Co-Investigators (as per project application):		Institution	
Dr Mary Hilson		UCL	
Dr Jan Hjelm		UCL	
Dr Allan Sikk		UCL	

1. Non-technical summary

Please provide below a project summary written in non-technical language. The summary may be used by us to publicise your work and should explain the aims and findings of the project. [Max 250 words]

In the eyes of the outside world, there is a strong perception that regional coherence among the Nordic or Baltic states is strong. While the two regions share various commonalities, they nevertheless occupy opposite poles in the international political imagination. Since the 1930s Scandinavia or 'Norden' has been cited as a model region, an indication of how to do things well, particularly in the field of social policy. When the Baltic States appear in the Western media, by contrast, they are often seen in more problematic terms, associated with corruption, instability, ethnic intolerance and homophobia. Yet, while there is a strong element of truth in the description of both the Nordic and Baltic states, the European perception of the two regions is inaccurate or, at least, incomplete. There is thus an acute need to gain a more accurate picture of the region. The seminar series thus set out to explore various aspects of the politics, societies and economies of this important but underanalysed corner of Europe.

2. Project overview

a) Objectives

Please state the aims and objectives of your project as outlined in your proposal to us. [Max 200 words]

The seminar series explored the myths and realities behind the images of the region as a whole and the individual countries of which it consists. The seminars highlighted the significance, in both positive and negative terms, of small states in the broader European context and demonstrated what these small states could teach other European countries – in particular the UK – about a range of social, political and economic issues. We held six one-day seminars over 30 months and brought together academics from within the Nordic and Baltic regions with those from outside it, especially Britain, to analyse the following topics:

1. The Image of Sweden. The Hegemony of Sweden in Norden and Beyond
2. Nordic and Baltic Economies: Problems and Prospects
3. Health and Welfare in the Nordic and Baltic States
4. Diversity and Tolerance in the Nordic and Baltic States
5. Politics of Environment and Energy in the Nordic and Baltic States
6. Lessons from the North? Education, teaching and schools

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b) Project Changes

Please describe any changes made to the original aims and objectives, and confirm that these were agreed with us. Please also detail any changes to the grant holder's institutional affiliation, project staffing or funding. [Max 200 words]

The only change made was to the length of the programme. As we found it more difficult than anticipated to find speakers working in and/or on the Nordic and Baltic States, we requested a six-month extension to the duration of the grant, which was granted.

c) Methodology

Please describe the methodology that you employed in the project. Please also note any ethical issues that arose during the course of the work, the effects of this and any action taken. [Max 500 words]

The aims of the series were achieved by various means. Experts from the region and Britain gave individual paper presentations of their latest research. Chairs acted as discussants, teasing out similarities and differences in the region and the UK and identifying key issues, which were subsequently the focus of panel discussions. The audience were asked to pose questions to individual speakers, ask general questions for the panel or reflect on the issues from their own disciplinary, regional or professional experience. Audio or video recordings or reports of the presentations and discussions were posted on the series website (www.ucl.ac.uk/nordicbaltic) to allow non-attendees to benefit from the debates and speakers' insights.

The series was publicised by various means: list servers, mailing lists, alumni networks, Nordic and Baltic embassies, Nordic and Baltic universities. The series received additional support from Helsinki University's Centre for Nordic Studies; Norwegian Embassy; Finnish Institute, London; UCL European Institute.

The Image of Sweden. The Hegemony of Sweden in Norden and Beyond, 22.09.2009

This seminar was supported by the Centre for Nordic Studies, Helsinki University, and took place in Helsinki. Papers examined the construction and use of images of Sweden and the Nordic region both in a historical perspective and in more recent times.

Nordic and Baltic Economies: Problems and Prospects, 29.04.2010

In the context of the recent global economic turmoil, speakers discussed issues related to economic development and future growth potential in the region ranging from financial recovery and tax reforms to labour market policies and innovation.

Health and Welfare in the Nordic and Baltic States, 26.11.2010

With the Nordic welfare state model coming under pressure and the Baltic States facing serious public health problems (Estonia has one of the world's highest HIV rates), the speakers discussed the challenges facing health and welfare policy across the region and the implications for the UK.

Diversity and Tolerance in the Nordic and Baltic States, 04.05.2011

Attitudes to ethnic, religious and sexual minorities on either side of the Baltic Sea are markedly different, although governments throughout the region are taking steps to improve gender equal-

ity and minority protection. Seminar participants discussed the sometimes conflicting attitudes to difference in the region.

Politics of Environment and Energy in the Nordic and Baltic States, 30.09.2011

Energy security has become a key issue in both academic and policy circles. Presenters discussed ways of dealing with the problems of secure energy supply – with reference to fossil fuels, nuclear power and also renewable energies – and the social, political and economic reasons for and consequences of different approaches.

Lessons from the North? Education, teaching and schools, 30.03.2012

The final seminar was organised in collaboration with the Finnish Institute in London as part of their education series, reflecting heightened recent interest in the Finnish education model in particular. The seminar examined the transfer of education policy ideas and the adoption of foreign models from the Nordic and Baltic regions in the UK.

Seminar participants included academic staff, postgraduate and undergraduate students from UK universities, journalists, civil servants, diplomats and businesspeople.

d) Project Findings

Please summarise the findings of the project, referring where appropriate to outputs recorded on the ESRC website. Any future research plans should also be identified. [Max 500 words]

The series successfully brought together academics and practitioners working on a broad range of social, political and economic issues. Those with an existing knowledge of the region were able to develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the Nordic and Baltic lands, while for the larger majority for whom the area was less well known, the presentations and subsequent discussions introduced them to an important but underanalysed region, challenging stereotypes and highlighting the key roles these states play in the broader regional and European context. The presenters made contacts across disciplinary and geographical boundaries and obtained invaluable feedback on their papers in preparation for submission to academic journals. Each seminar was attended by around 25 people.

The feedback from the participants and the audience was positive. Below are excerpts from e-mails from the presenters to the seminar series organisers after the respective events:

“The workshop was very useful. I met some new people outside my field.” Chloe Le Coq

The seminar was “interesting and useful in regards of making new contacts”. Riikka Koistinen

The seminar “was very useful for me”. Tapio Bergholm

“The event was well organized, informative and very useful. I especially enjoyed the introductions and the closing remarks by Mary Hilson. She was able to summarize and pull together the various themes and presentations brilliantly. I am sure most participants share my view that the event was well worth our time, useful and gave us an opportunity to meet people we can include in our professional networks.” Sirkku Nikamaa-Berg

“The seminar did help in terms of developing my arguments and prepare the paper for journal submission. Also, the seminar gave me a good chance to network with other researchers working

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with similar topics and expand my knowledge in this field. As a follow-up to the seminar, I was also invited to give a talk at the 2012 Baltic Symposium organized by the SSEES in April.” Kårg Kama

Future research plans

Mary Hilson continues to collaborate with Helsinki University on the project ‘Nordic Co-operative Revisited’, funded by NordForsk and to be launched in Helsinki in October 2012. It is hoped that further collaboration with the Finnish Institute in London may also be possible, following the very successful final seminar in the series (education).

Jan Hjelm will be working on a project in 2012–14 entitled ‘Youth Street Politics in the Media Age’, comparing Helsinki and London youth movements and their (self)representation in the media, and builds from the comparative and interdisciplinary framework explored especially in the diversity and tolerance seminar.

Richard Mole was invited to be a Visiting Fellow at the Nordeuropa-Institut at Humboldt University in Berlin, where he is continuing to work on LGBT rights in the Baltic States and beyond, building on his research presented at the fourth seminar.

Allan Sikk continues to work on new anti-corruption and anti-establishment parties in the Baltic states (and CEE more broadly) funded by the EC FP7 ANTICORRP project in collaboration with partners from University of Gothenburg and Latvian University.

e) Contributions to wider ESRC initiatives (e.g. Research Programmes or Networks)

If your project was part of a wider ESRC initiative, please describe your contributions to the initiative’s objectives and activities and note any effect on your project resulting from participation. [Max. 200 words]

N/A

3. Early and anticipated impacts

a) Summary of Impacts to date

Please summarise any impacts of the project to date, referring where appropriate to associated outputs recorded on the Research Outcomes System (ROS). This should include both scientific impacts (relevant to the academic community) and economic and societal impacts (relevant to broader society). The impact can be relevant to any organisation, community or individual.

The seminar series allowed us to develop ties with the UK civil service, including an Assistant Economist from the Treasury and Baltic Desk Officers from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and develop collaborations with representatives of the region’s diplomatic missions in London, with Embassy staff – including three Ambassadors (Iceland, Latvia and Finland) and several deputy heads of mission – attending a number of the seminars. The Norwegian Embassy funded the travel expenses of one speaker in seminar 3.

The series brought together academics at different stages of their careers on an equal footing, enabling junior academics and postgraduate students to gain invaluable feedback from and make useful contacts with more established figures in their fields at the seminars but – equally important – at the post-seminar dinners.

The following academic articles, based on the seminar presentations, have been published or submitted for publication:

Le Coq, C. and Paltseva, E. (2012) "Assessing Gas Transit Risks: Russia vs. the EU", *Energy Policy*, (42), 642-650

Bergholm, T. and Bieler, A., 'Globalisation and the erosion of the Nordic model: A Swedish – Finnish comparison', *European Journal of Industrial Relations* (Accepted for publication)

Kama, K. 'Between energy security and emissions trading: the potential politics of 'carbon leakage' in Estonia', (under review with *Geoforum*)

Mole, R.C.M. (2011) 'Nationality and sexuality: homophobic discourse and the 'national threat' in contemporary Latvia', *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 17, no. 3, 540-560

Kilpi-Jakonen, E. (Forthcoming) Does Finnish Educational Equality Extend to Children of Immigrants? Examining national origin, gender and the relative importance of parental resources. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 2(2).

Parutis, V., Mole, R.C.M., Gerry, C.J. and Burns, F.M. 'Migration and sexuality: the sexual behaviour and attitudes of gay East European men in London', (under review with *Culture, Health and Sexuality*)

b) Anticipated/Potential Future Impacts

Please outline any anticipated or potential impacts (scientific or economic and societal) that you believe your project might have in future. [Max. 200 words]

In terms of scientific impact, the series of seminars – all of which were cross-disciplinary – facilitated network-building across disciplines as well as across borders. Shortly after the final seminar, a joint workshop was held at Humboldt University's Nordeuropa-Institut in Berlin (HU) with HU and UCL academics and PhD students with the aim of promoting joint research at both the pre- and post-doctoral levels. An annual PhD workshop is planned to start in the 2012-13 academic year. Members of the Nordic/Baltic Research Group have also continued to collaborate with the Centre for Nordic Studies at Helsinki University.

Given the interest in the region – as reflected in the January 2011 Nordic-Baltic summit held by David Cameron in Downing Street and in the increasing interest in the Nordic countries in the run-up to the referendum on Scottish independence – we anticipate that the expertise of the Research Group and the seminar series participants will be increasingly called upon. The final seminar in the series on education policy in the Nordic region, for example, was attended by teachers, educational consultants and education journalists, and demonstrated the very intense focus on Finnish education – in particular in the UK. See the posts at <http://blog.finnish-institute.org.uk/>.

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You will be asked to complete an ESRC Impact Report 12 months after the end date of your award. The Impact Report will ask for details of any impacts that have arisen since the completion of the End of Award Report.

4. Declarations

Please ensure that sections A, B and C below are completed and signed by the appropriate individuals. The End of Award Report will not be accepted unless all sections are signed.

Please note hard copies are **not** required; electronic signatures are accepted and should be used.

A: To be completed by Grant Holder

Please read the following statements. Tick **one** statement under ii) and iii), then sign with an electronic signature at the end of the section (this should be an image of your actual signature).

i) The Project

This Report is an accurate overview of the project, its findings and impacts. All co-investigators named in the proposal to ESRC or appointed subsequently have seen and approved the Report.

ii) Submissions to the Research Outcomes System (ROS)

Output and impact information has been submitted to the Research Outcomes System. Details of any future outputs and impacts will be submitted as soon as they become available.

iii) Submission of Datasets

No datasets were proposed or produced from this grant.