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The private in the public: Scandinavia in the eighteenth century

Sari Nauman and Helle Vogt

The private is elusive.¹ Try to impose a definition upon it, and the concept will slowly seep through its margins, forcing the scholar to add qualifications and conditions until the definition is so cumbersome and circumscribed that it neither stimulates nor provokes. Try to focus on the phenomenon of the private, and it either fades or transforms into something else: something open, something public, something probed. Still, this should not lead us to despair. This volume understands elusiveness not as an impediment to study, but as an opportunity. The vague contours of the private, both as a term and as a concept, enable us to study it situated, as it always is, in its context. We seek to study the private not in contrast to the public, but in relation to it: in short, we explore the private in the public.

Most of the scholarly research on the private aspects of history has concentrated on the largest cities of Western Europe, chiefly London, Paris and Rome. It was in London that private life was born in the late seventeenth century, Philippe Ariès famously asserted, and during the next century or two it spread throughout Europe and to the rest of the world.² Even so, we suggest that focusing on the centre of the change only tells part of the story. A periphery does not passively absorb change; it adapts and acts on it as well. These actions may reverberate back to the centre, in an ongoing dialectical motion where cause and effect will be hard to differentiate. Thus, if we only keep our eyes on the centre, we risk overlooking the significant contributions to the narrative made by actors from the periphery. We seek to address this deficit by presenting research on the private in eighteenth-century Scandinavia. Research on the Scandinavian reception and adaptation of the private during this century is crucial, not only to remedy the narrow gaze of previous research, but also on its own terms. During this century, the two states of early modern Scandinavia – Denmark-Norway, and Sweden with Finland – experienced the same structural transformations that have been given explanatory value in the history of privacy in Western Europe: they witnessed state-formation, urbanization, globalization, the advances of print culture, confessionalization and commercialization. Furthermore, the aristocracy of both states frequently looked towards the major states of Europe for inspiration, modelling their homes and themselves after Parisian fashions. They welcomed foreign diplomats

as their guests and travelled abroad for both business and pleasure. It seems as if the conditions for an easy spread of ideas concerning the private were ideal, making Scandinavia a model case study for the diffusion of such ideas.³

Then again, other conditions indicate a not-so-smooth transfer of ideas. As we will show in this introduction, the political culture in the Scandinavian countries differed considerably from its European counterparts, but it also differed markedly between the two Scandinavian states. In both states, the aristocracy had taken a step back during the eighteenth century, though this was due to very different reasons. In Denmark-Norway, absolutism remained strong throughout the period, forcing the aristocracy to compete internally for favour and position. In Sweden, peasants had had representation in the *riksdag* (the estates assembly) since the sixteenth century, and this estate continually gained influence. Additionally, members of the burgher estate grew increasingly prominent, and during this century their wealth often surpassed that of the aristocracy. When it comes to religion, Sweden was a confessional Lutheran state throughout the century, with minimal concessions allowed for other religious movements. In contrast, the Pietistic movement had gained considerable ground in Denmark-Norway during the first half of the eighteenth century. The significance of these political, economic, cultural and religious differences in shaping the reception of ideas about the private in the public still needs to be addressed. Yet research on the early history of the private in the Scandinavian countries remains scant, and often inaccessible to scholars working outside of the region.⁴

A major impediment to research on the private in Scandinavia is a linguistic one. As we shall discuss below, there is no word for privacy in Danish, Norwegian or Swedish. The absence of any direct translation of privacy into the Scandinavian languages not only hampers an etymological investigation, but it may also indicate a significant difference in approach to the concept of privacy, as well as to its implementation, in comparison to elsewhere in Europe. For this volume, we have therefore chosen to focus on 'the private' rather than on 'privacy' to come to terms with this difficulty. Whereas some of the contributions address the history of the term 'private' and how it was used in public life, others focus on how present-day notions of the private worked in the early modern setting. A joint conclusion from our investigations is that the private had a significant economic undertone in the Scandinavian languages during the eighteenth century, which influenced how people talked about and acted upon the private in the public.

In the following, we shall present the analytical tools of our endeavour – the props, if you will. We start with an investigation of the terms privacy, private and public in the Scandinavian languages, followed by an overview of research into the relationship between the private and the public. The volume starts from the assumption that the private and public neither were, nor are, fully separated, but instead constantly operate in relation to each other. In order to study the private, we thus have to pay special attention to the public, and to how the two interact. The section ends by identifying three key challenges facing those who seek to understand the private in the public during the early modern period: linguistics, the spatiality and temporality of the concepts, and the hitherto narrow geographical focus of existing research. After introducing our props, we then set the stage itself, presenting an overview of Scandinavia during the eighteenth century. Finally, we present our programme and open the curtains to our ten chapters on the subject.

Why the private instead of privacy?

On 27 April 2016, the European Parliament passed the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and on 15 May 2018, the law came into force. The law is based on the principle of protecting the personal information of EU citizens. It was the culmination of a long tug-of-war between the European Parliament and private internet operators over the use of sensitive personal data on the internet. During this lengthy debate, one of the key issues under discussion (among other things) was the individual's right to self-determination and his or her control over the circumstances in which internet providers may use such information. With the adoption of this law, a new word familiar to all internet users entered into the Scandinavian languages: *privacy*.

Privacy belongs to the family of ideas centred on a citizen's rights in relation to the state and to his or her fellow citizens. The conceptual ancestry of privacy lies in the discourse of natural law that resurfaced in eighteenth-century Europe. The right to privacy is attached to the individual and to his or her needs, but it is difficult to define unambiguously what the concept of privacy covers. Often, it is simply defined as the right to have no one interfere in one's personal matters or as 'the right to be let alone'.⁵ In this sense, privacy is often understood as the right to be one's self with regard to sexuality, attire, home or body. This right is to be enjoyed free from the infringement or interference of third parties, though it of course also operates within the restrictions set by the state's regulatory frameworks, both for the protection of the privacy of others and for criminal law.⁶ However, it is only with the constitutional rights of the nineteenth century that the element of protection can first be seen, although it does not appear as an absolute right.⁷ The protection of privacy as a legal right depends on the law, and not on the individual's personal understanding of when his or her privacy is violated.⁸ Before it became a legal right, however, privacy had different connotations, which the word still evokes today. It belongs to the sphere of the individual, that which is close to home – both literally and figuratively.

Despite the difficulty in defining privacy, Scandinavians use the English term and talk about 'privacy policy', simply because there is no Scandinavian noun for this phenomenon. In Danish, it has recently been translated into *privathed*, a word that in its origin simply means something that is private and is now almost exclusively used in a legal context. Sweden still lacks an authorized translation of 'privacy'.

'Private', on the other hand, was a word imported into the Scandinavian languages much earlier, coming from the Latin *privatus*. In the second half of the eighteenth century, it became a regular word, spelled as *privat*. To investigate how *privat* was defined in the eighteenth century, we have consulted contemporary dictionaries. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Danish-Norwegian word *privat* had a very limited meaning. *Moth's Dictionary*, written by Matthias Moth (1649–1719) around 1700, is the first real Danish dictionary. It was a novelty internationally; not only did Moth register the language of the elite, but he also included slang and specialist terms.⁹ Moth defined *privat* as civil – in the meaning of non-noble – or single.¹⁰ In addition, *privat* was used adjectivally as an element with three compounds: private case, private school and private estate, the latter again meaning non-noble.¹¹ For Moth, *privat* was

thus not defined as the antonym of public; this latter, that is, *publik* (public), was defined as ‘common’ or ‘obviously’.

About hundred years later, in 1798, Christian Fredrik Bay published the first Danish-English Dictionary, and here we can observe quite a change in the definition of the word. Bay translated the Danish word *privat* as ‘private’ or ‘particular’,¹² but he also noted that *privat* was often used as an adverb, translated as ‘privately’. Interestingly, if one looks up ‘privately’ in modern English-Danish dictionaries, all examples are from the economic sphere (e.g. to sell or own *privately*).¹³ In the hundred years that had passed between the two dictionaries, the understanding of ‘public’ had also changed: the word *publik*, from the French *publique*, had been replaced by the German-inspired *offentlig* (*öffentlich*). This term unfortunately lacks English translations other than ‘public’, although it also has connotations of openness and of falling within the responsibility of the state. More importantly, Bay translated *offentlig* as belonging to the state or public, and thus as the antonym of ‘private’.

Two early Swedish dictionaries, Archbishop Haquin Spegel’s *Glossarium – Sveogothicum* (1712) and Jesper Swedberg’s *Swensk ordabok* (1714), include neither *privat* nor *publik*. In Abraham Sahlstedt’s Swedish-Latin dictionary, *Dictionarium Svecicum* (1773), *privat* was firstly defined as that which is not public, and secondly as personal or separate, *enskild*.¹⁴ *Publik*, on the other hand, was defined by Sahlstedt as communal (*allmän*) and *offentlig*.¹⁵ According to Sahlstedt, *offentlig* meant *solemnis* in Latin, that is solemn or established.¹⁶ Spegel and Swedberg both gave *offentlig* the Latin definition of *apertus* (open) and *manifestus* (manifest, evident), and Spegel suggested an English translation of ‘openly’.¹⁷

More information on the private is given in *Svenska Akademiens ordbok* (SAOB) (1954), which includes a report on how the term has been used since it first occurred in the Swedish language in the middle of the sixteenth century. According to SAOB, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *privat* was mainly used as an adjective, modifying nouns in such a way as to mark that they did not pertain to the state or the public: for example, a private gathering, private business, private house. During the eighteenth century, *privat* also developed connotations of ‘non-noble’. Mainly, though, *privat* kept its place as a term signifying that which did not pertain to the state, to the public, or to the common good of the people – this during a period when public debate was limited to discussing issues of the state. The private was thus something potentially harmful, signalling (economic) resources that did not contribute to the public goods.¹⁸

The dictionaries provide a good indication of eighteenth-century developments in the meaning of *private* within a Danish and Swedish linguistic context. Our investigation indicates that the word private – in the meaning of ‘not public’ – came into the Swedish language much earlier than the Danish, although it was not defined in early dictionaries. For this reason, this volume includes a contribution by Charlotte Christensen-Nugues investigating how the word *privat* was used in the public discourse in Sweden during the period 1521–1730. Christensen-Nugues focuses on the debates within the Swedish *riksdag*, and her chapter provides an in-depth analysis of how *privat* entered the Swedish language. Her findings are followed up by Pernille Ulla Knudsen in a chapter investigating the use of the word *privat* in eighteenth-century

Danish newspapers; together, these two chapters provide an indispensable foundation for the other investigations in this volume.

The private and the public intertwined

Street life in the major cities in Europe began to stir during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, stimulating public debate about political issues – a process that Jürgen Habermas famously described as the emergence of a public sphere.¹⁹ As men moved into the public to debate politics, women moved to a secluded indoors, with an increasing responsibility for and devotion to domestic life. Whereas, before, opportunities for privacy had been sorely lacking and perhaps not even missed, Victorian homes now closed their doors to the public and focused on private family life. Or so the story goes.

Although it subsequently became envisioned as such, for Habermas, the public sphere was not a spatial concept at all. According to Brian Cowan, such an interpretation resulted from the untranslatability of a central Habermasian concept: Habermas wrote about *Öffentlichkeit*, which in English and French became spatialized as the ‘public sphere’, or *l’espace public*.²⁰ The English and French translation of the German term *Öffentlichkeit* effectively changed Habermas’ meaning – and with it, his theoretical framework. Nevertheless, it proved to be quite a fruitful change; as Cowan puts it, ‘as much was gained as was lost’.²¹ The idea of separate spheres initially inspired researchers to spatialize public and private life, locating the public in outdoor spaces, where men met to discuss and make their influence known on politics and development. In reaction to this, early feminist scholars turned their gaze inwards, investigating indoor spaces, especially the homes, which were identified as the private spaces to which women were confined. The Victorian household was especially scrutinized, since it was viewed as the centre from which the idea of separate spheres slowly spread across Europe.²²

The last three decades of research have been devoted to the deconstruction of this traditional narrative. Major contributions have been made, primarily from the field of gender history, that expose how the boundaries between the two spheres were neither factual nor absolute. There are some excellent research overviews of these developments, so there is no need to enter into historiographical detail here.²³ To keep it short, we will limit ourselves to highlighting two main findings. First, the home was never quite as private as previously imagined. Small living spaces were shared by the majority of the people, and subletting apartments to travellers and newcomers ensured a steady flow of outsiders within the boundaries of the home. Private homes continued to act as public spaces that were open for guests and were arenas for both political debate and commercial activities.²⁴

Second, public spaces were not all male, and neither were they altogether public. Although there might have been an ideal for some women to stay at home from the late eighteenth century onwards, such enclosure was very seldom practical. First of all, the ideal was not common to all – it might have been present for upper- and middle-upper-class women, but common people were dependent on movement between spaces. Secondly,

wives and daughters, not to mention servants, frequently strayed outside, conducting businesses, shopping, travelling, gossiping and arguing. Private business could be resolved in the streets, and open spaces were accessible to more groups than has previously been acknowledged – although some spaces were of course more accessible than others.²⁵

The current line of research thus supports what Dena Goodman had already concluded in 1992: the private and the public were never strictly opposed, nor were they even essentially separated, and they were not restricted to practices conducted indoors or outdoors.²⁶ Lately, this recognition has directed the scholarly gaze towards the previously assumed boundaries between spaces; concepts such as liminality and thresholds have generated new, exciting results on how public and private could spill over into each other.²⁷ For example, Amanda Vickery has shown that the steady stream of lodgers in the houses of eighteenth-century London led to constant renegotiations of private space. 'Access to privacy was an index of power,' she concludes, but even the lowliest servant usually had access at least to the private space of a small box.²⁸ Other scholars have focused on street life, and how private and public intermingled in these open spaces. Based on an investigation of violence in the streets of Bologna, Sanne Muurling and Marion Pluskota have shown how peoples' actions need to be taken into account when defining spaces, and they argue for the addition of 'spaces of sociability' into our framework of early modern urban life. The ability to stop and exchange private information in public spaces certainly shows just how complex it is to see the private and the public as separate entities.²⁹

Together, the evidence suggests that whether a space was private or public is not merely a product of its spatial location, but it must also be seen as temporally contingent. A space could be private, or public, or even both simultaneously, depending on what happened there at that particular moment. Thus, concepts that speak to the spatiality of these concepts – liminality, porosity – need to be complemented by concepts that address its temporality, such as simultaneity, coincidentally or subsequentality. As Danielle van den Heuvel has suggested, for example, focusing on movement and how the meaning of spaces was constantly being negotiated might be a way forward.³⁰ We also need to acknowledge the many different publics available, both on various levels of society – the family, the neighbourhood, the state – and for different aspects of public life – morality, sociability, economic aspects. The different kinds of public become clear in the contributions to this volume by Camilla Schjerning and Ulrik Langen, who show that while the state, through legislation and court practice, tried to protect the home and the 'private life' of its inhabitants, the public morality of the neighbourhood challenged both the state's public polities and the peace and order of public spaces.

Another way forward has been suggested by Daniel Jütte and Laura Gowing respectively. In his studies of early modern thresholds, doors and windows, Jütte has highlighted how material innovations have influenced not only peoples' capability to promote privacy within their homes, but also their perceptions of home and the private in general.³¹ In a recent study of bedposts, Gowing has further highlighted the potential rewards of placing materiality into focus. By investigating what kinds of action could take place at a space that is, to us, so clearly marked as private, she thus demonstrates empirically some of the abstract points that Erica Longfellow has argued for: if we start by assuming that our notions of private match those of earlier times, we may miss out on highly thought-provoking results.³²

What also adds to the difficulties in defining a shift in the role of private and public life during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries is the fact that as soon as we zoom in on particular cities, neighbourhoods, households or individuals, it becomes harder and harder to define an exact moment for this shift. Different regions, different periods and different scholarly approaches generate considerably different results; while some researchers place the shift earlier in history, others push its commencement towards later periods, or deny that it happened altogether.³³ The historian's endeavours to avoid simplification and to stress the complexity of change further accentuate the need to draw attention to these differences. Separate spheres rose as an ideal, influencing the everyday life of – at least – townspeople in European cities during the eighteenth century; but how individuals handled day-to-day challenges in this respect is a different story.

Several researchers of late have therefore started to make comparisons between case studies in order to determine which factors influenced variations in the configuration of the public and private. Manon van der Heijden and Sanne Muurling, for example, have shown that men and women living in eighteenth-century Bologna and Rotterdam had the same experiences of violence in the streets. But legal and socio-economic positions of women in the two cities meant that women from Rotterdam were more likely to stand up against violent husbands, as well as to take part in violent acts far away from their homes.³⁴ In a comparison between St Petersburg and Helsinki, Marjatta Rahikainen argues that the materiality of cities must be taken into account, as buildings bear traces of past power structures: 'the physicality of urban space is conservative in essence'.³⁵ These findings should encourage us further to compare different regions, in order to understand the range of possibilities that existed in the early modern world. For example, comparisons between urban and rural areas are perturbingly few, and the tale of urban private and public spheres has been set as the standard for the eighteenth century. Still, a clear majority of people in all European countries dwelled in rural settings at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Moreover, Western Europe – and mainly England and France – have been given a dominant position in the historiography, and the findings from these countries are assumed to be applicable for less researched areas and taken as a truth, without regard for possible differences. In recent years, the international research community has started to amend this troubling deficiency, and cities in the Netherlands, the Holy Roman Empire, Spain and Italy have been incorporated into the general narrative. Still, a wider gaze is sorely needed.

The three challenges identified above can be summarized as follows:

1. Whereas linguistic definitions of the private and the public tend to separate the two terms, those who investigate them in practice increasingly argue for a conceptual amalgamation of the two, or at least awareness of the possibility of such.
2. The private and the public have spatial connotations, but cannot be spatially contained. To investigate them, we need to add a temporal perspective, focusing on movement and materiality.
3. A strong geographical focus on the major cities of Western Europe has resulted in a one-dimensional narrative, neglecting the potential insights to be gained by looking at the periphery.

This volume presents research on the private in early modern Scandinavia, a region in the periphery of Western Europe. While some of the chapters investigate the term private – how it was used and what it meant in different settings – other chapters explore what the private meant in practice. All start from the assumption that the private cannot be clearly separated from the public. Our research concerns that which is defined as private, either by historical actors or by our own understanding, but is discussed and scrutinized in the public. In fact, when looking for the private, all investigations herein make almost exclusive use of public source material: legislation, newspapers, court practice, records, insurance policies, wills, etc. Hence, we study the private from a public point of view, which also means that the closer we come to the private, the more blurred the line between private and public becomes.

Our joint endeavour is thus to investigate the private *in* the public. To do so, it is vital to recognize different kinds of private and public. Both concepts need to be treated as spatially and temporally contingent, meaning that what was private in one setting was not necessarily defined as such in another. In this volume, we adhere to this claim by not proposing an overall definition of the private, choosing instead to stay open to the particularities of each case study. The privateness of a conversation between individuals may not be readily comparable with the private business of a bailiff taking bribes, but it is our contention that the sheer range of possible connotations says something essential about the private. It demonstrates the elusiveness of the concept, and the need for a broad perspective if we are to understand it more fully.

The Scandinavian setting

When comparing Scandinavia to other countries in or outside of Europe, it is easy to point to all the similarities within the Scandinavian region. Five centuries ago, Denmark, Norway and Sweden (with Finland) were tied together in a personal union under a joint ruler. Today, the countries share a common social politics, with a relatively high tax load to provide social securities for its populations. Cooperation is extensive, passports are not needed for travel within the region, and there is even talk about a common ‘Scandinavian culture’, blurring the borders between the states. However, the idea of Scandinavia as a homogeneous region is a twentieth-century phenomenon.

Political life

In the early modern period, Scandinavia was composed of two kingdoms: Denmark-Norway, a unified realm over the period 1537–1814, and Sweden, which also incorporated Finland until 1809, when Finland became part of the Russian Empire. Norway and Finland only received independence in 1905 and 1917 respectively. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Denmark-Norway and Sweden had been at war on and off for more than two centuries. In 1721, a peace treaty ended the Great Northern War. Previously, Sweden had been a major player in European politics, and it enjoyed a firm hold of the Baltic region; but according to the peace treaty, many of

its territories were to be ceded to, among others, Russia and Brandenburg-Prussia. As the eighteenth century progressed, both Denmark-Norway and Sweden were forced to accept their fate as small states. Yet, despite their shared prospects, differences in political life were considerable.

In Denmark-Norway, a far-reaching absolutism was imposed in 1660, and the system proved to be very stable: it was only replaced by a constitutional monarchy in 1848.³⁶ With the introduction of absolutism, the old Danish nobility lost much of its power and its privilege.³⁷ In a combined effort to raise money for the state and to create an influential group loyal to the king, a new nobility with purchasable noble ranks was introduced in 1671.³⁸ The interests of this new nobility and the bourgeoisie often overlapped, but conflicted with those of the landowning and conservative nobility. Peasants were excluded from political influence; even freeholders were dependent on their landlord or the king, legally and economically.³⁹

In Sweden, on the other hand, absolutism never gained a strong hold. It was introduced in 1682 but abolished in 1719. Reinstated for a short period in 1772, it was finally abolished for good in 1809. The years between the two absolutist periods have been labelled 'The Age of Liberty' in Swedish history, which is renowned as a period during which the *riksdag* experienced its heyday. The *riksdag* included representatives from all four estates – nobles, priests, burghers and peasants – and took part in internal and foreign affairs, taxation and legislation. Because of its strong negotiating position vis-à-vis the king and government during these years, the *riksdag* effectively ran the country.⁴⁰ The peasant estate thus played a significant political role in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It had undeniable rights that royal and governmental authority had to respect, even in wartime, or risk rebellion.⁴¹ Sari Nauman's contribution to this volume attests to the readiness of the Swedish peasant population to protest against wayward public servants and use the undertones of the public and private to argue their case.

Economic life

Sweden and Denmark-Norway both mainly stayed neutral in the relentless wars between the great European powers.⁴² Neutrality made it possible for Scandinavian ships to enter ports across Europe and the colonies, and to trade with all.⁴³ This 'blossoming trade period', as it was known in Denmark-Norway, differentiates the Scandinavian countries from those where continuous wars drained national treasuries.⁴⁴ The flow of money to Bergen, Copenhagen and Stockholm increased during the century, and only came to a halt when Denmark-Norway entered the Napoleonic Wars.

The material culture of the aristocracy shared many common features across Europe at this time, although slight regional variations were of course also the case.⁴⁵ Consequently, life in Scandinavian towns seems to have differed in degree rather than in kind from that of other European towns. Goods were brought in from around the world to satisfy the desires of families of means, and port cities were frequented by sailors, travellers, diplomats and spies.⁴⁶ In eighteenth-century Stockholm and Copenhagen, coffee and alehouses enabled people (almost exclusively men) to meet and discuss the economy and politics on a daily basis – though, similar to other

European cities, some women also had access to these spaces. These localities enabled meetings that bridged political, economic and gender barriers, among others.⁴⁷

Not only men, but women too participated in commercial and public life in early modern Scandinavia, including trade, credit and vending markets.⁴⁸ Scandinavian society during this period was built upon a two-supporter system; even though a man nominally stood as the owner of a business, he depended on his wife and, most often, his servants to operate it – and furthermore, this was recognized and taken for granted by both state and society. If a man passed away, his widow could get permission to take over his business and run it on her own or with the help of servants for several years, sometimes for the rest of her life.⁴⁹ In addition, as shown in this volume by Pernille Ulla Knudsen in her article about Margrethe Stampe, women could run businesses in their own right – without the interference of a husband – if the couple had made private arrangements before they married. A husband's right to control the property of his wife could thus be circumvented.

During the eighteenth century, the question of whether businesses relating to public life and spending – such as tax revenues, street lighting and waste management – should be under the state's organization or handled by private persons was a recurring subject of debate. The same types of argument resurfaced over the years: private companies could do a more effective job, but were prone to corruption and sought profit at the expense of the common man.⁵⁰ A significant difference in the Swedish debate on the one hand, and the Danish-Norwegian one on the other, was that the *riksdag* in Sweden was an important arena for discussions on the private economy and taxes, and state regulated trade as opposed to free trade. In Denmark-Norway, this discussion tended to take place instead within patriotic societies, journals and newspapers.⁵¹

Religious life

Both states embraced the Lutheran reformations from an early date. In Sweden, the process started in 1527, but, because of a later dynastic connection with Catholic Poland, a full transformation was slow. It did not fully take hold until the seventeenth century and was marked by the strong observance of Lutheran orthodoxy.⁵² In Denmark-Norway, the reformation was introduced in 1536–1537, and the state's control over the church and religious behaviour was strong from early on.⁵³ To avoid religious conflicts, both Scandinavian kingdoms developed mono-religious cultures, making it increasingly difficult for non-Lutherans to settle; even if they were allowed, they were subject to severe restrictions. Immigration therefore primarily came from other parts of Scandinavia, or from Lutheran Germany and the Baltic region, and centred on labour migration.

One of the foundational building blocks in Lutheran states was the idea of the household, both as an analogy for the state and as a family ideology. Whereas the king was responsible for upholding the Christian faith and for controlling the behaviour of his subjects, it was the obligation of the householder and housewife to uphold morality and Christian behaviour within their household, and to instruct and correct those who violated Christian norms. To perform this task, the head of the household was to read aloud to his subordinates from the Bible and from other moral literature,

such as the many books of sermons.⁵⁴ The Lutheran ideal of the housefather was most instrumental to the high literacy rates of both Sweden and Denmark-Norway from an early date. Confirmation, which included lessons in reading, was made mandatory in Denmark-Norway in 1734, and in Sweden in 1811. Even earlier, the Swedish Church law of 1686 made it obligatory to know Luther's *Small Catechism* by heart before receiving first communion. Even children of the lower classes were to acquire elementary reading skills, and most children received some education in reading and religion.⁵⁵

With the emergence of Pietism in Denmark in the eighteenth century, increased focus was placed on the education of the common people, one of the consequences of which was that the Danish Poor Laws of 1708 gave poor children the right to receive a free education.⁵⁶ The Pietistic movement came to the Nordic countries from Germany and represented a new way to embrace the Protestant faith. It focused on the individual's relationship with Jesus, challenging both state institutions – that is, the parish priest and the church – and the housefather's central function. The official approach to Pietism differed markedly between Denmark-Norway and Sweden. In Denmark-Norway, a state Pietism developed in the 1720s; the state adopted Pietistic religious ideas and controlled the movement. In Sweden, on the other hand, Pietism never gained public recognition, and Pietistic ideas were seen as heresy. Johannes Ljungberg's article in this volume investigates how the Swedish state tried to deal with private, Pietistic expressions.

Social life

Increased literacy rates were combined with liberal legislation on censorship in the late eighteenth century, in both Scandinavian countries. In 1766, Sweden became the first country in the world to introduce legally guaranteed freedom-of-print, with exceptions only applying to religious and state matters. Denmark followed with an unrestricted bill in 1770, although it was gradually curtailed in subsequent amendments from 1771 and 1773.⁵⁷ The legislation was effective: several print publications began to circulate, disseminating news from around the world. Moreover, a considerable amount of the printed texts – such as books, newspapers, leaflets etc. – that circulated came at such low prices that even the lower classes could afford them. In his contribution to this volume, Jørgen Mührmann-Lund shows that the texts were often formatted to look like letters, both signed and addressed, giving them the trustworthiness of private communication. The publications opened up a completely new world of fiction, as well as providing knowledge about foreign places and customs, serving as a forum for gossip, etc., thereby giving readers food for thought. As Jesper Jakobsen demonstrates in his chapter, the Danish market was used to expose private information to further the publisher's or writer's interests, forcing the government to deal with the right to privacy before this right was ever formulated.⁵⁸

Still, there was not much private physical or mental space within most individual households. In rural and urban communities alike, most people lived in small houses of one or two rooms, sharing sleeping quarters with family and guests.⁵⁹ Scandinavia was – and is – less densely populated than the rest of Western Europe, and it was

also less urbanized. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Sweden's largest city, Stockholm, had about 75,000 inhabitants, and its second largest city, Gothenburg, only 15,000. Ninety per cent of Sweden's total population still lived in rural areas.⁶⁰ During the same period, Denmark was only slightly ahead with 100,000 living in the capital of Copenhagen, and about 80 per cent living in rural areas.⁶¹ Urbanization was definitely not a generalized Scandinavian phenomenon; rather, it was concentrated to the two capitals of Copenhagen and Stockholm, and the Norwegian trade town of Bergen. Other Scandinavian towns were quite small compared to their European counterparts.

Scandinavian households during this period are, like many others in Europe, best described as open: residents, friends and family constantly crossed its thresholds.⁶² Spatially focused studies of Scandinavia thus support the wider research trends concerning European privacy, concluding that private and public spaces were neither clearly separated nor exclusively gendered, but should instead be understood as porous and permeable. However, even in the provincial towns, household patterns and the structure of living quarters experienced significant change over the eighteenth century. Increased urbanization in this period led to other kinds of households that had just one or two members, challenging the traditional idea of the household as one of the core building blocks of society. As Dag Lindström and Göran Tagesson demonstrate in their chapter, even in a small provincial town such as Linköping, larger town houses were built during this century with a greater number of clearly differentiated rooms. Although their sources do not permit conclusions as to the actual usage of the rooms, the transformation certainly increased the potential for an indoor private life. Stockholm witnessed a similar development, largely due to the growing importance of the parliament during this century.⁶³ During the first two decades of the eighteenth century, the city received large numbers of refugees from Finland and the Baltic provinces due to the Great Northern War, which put a strain on the economy of the city and its inhabitants; but overall, the eighteenth century was a period of economic growth.⁶⁴

The same transformations are noticeable in Copenhagen. It was the most important city in the twin-monarchy of Denmark-Norway, both politically, economically and intellectually; it was the residential city of the monarchy, the trade centre of the state and Denmark's only university was found here. The city witnessed significant changes during the second half of the eighteenth century: the poor areas became even more overpopulated, and, in the wealthier parts of the city, new grand town houses and domiciles cropped up.⁶⁵ In this volume, Camilla Schjerning and Ulrik Langen both demonstrate that as Copenhagen became increasingly crowded, private matters were taken as public evidence for the degradation of homes and people, forcing residents to defend themselves with words and deeds.

Structure of the book

All chapters in this volume address the private in the public. They investigate this issue by using public records and sources in which the private is addressed either linguistically or conceptually. A first section, 'Situating the Private', comprises two

chapters that use a terminological approach to examine the use of the word private in contemporary sources. In the first chapter, Charlotte Christensen-Nugues studies occurrences of the word *privat* in the Swedish *riksdag* records from 1521 to 1730. Not only was *privat* an antonym to *publik* but it was also used to signal a direct threat to the public interest. In contrast, eighteenth-century Danish newspapers primarily used *privat* in an economic context, as shown by Pernille Ulla Knudsen. Here, citizens emerge as private economic actors in the framework of civil society. The legal theory of private property as formulated within natural law by Samuel Pufendorf contributes to a general understanding of the development of the private economy in early modern times.

The following section, 'Communication,' collects four chapters that deal with private communication in a public context. Chapters 3 and 4 concentrate on communications explicitly labelled as private. Johannes Ljungberg uses protocols from commissions sent out to investigate reports on Pietistic activities in 1720s Sweden as his main sources. He argues that the judicial processes rested on older notions of privacy, but also triggered new ideas on how communication could be classified and evaluated, as well as protected from external control by being described as private. Jørgen Mührmann-Lund examines the imitation of private letters in Danish printed news articles on foreign events. Drawing on the traditional letter genre, Mührmann-Lund shows that the letters' style conveyed authenticity and immediacy to the reader and was therefore considered to be more reliable than official news. Early modern readers thus used a form of source criticism, leading them to prefer personal to official communication. Both Ljungberg and Mührmann-Lund are able to demonstrate that the private could have positive connotations to an eighteenth-century audience.

Chapters 5 and 6 make use of present-day notions of the private and investigate how the authorities and individuals came to terms with private affairs being vented publicly. Jesper Jakobsen examines the work of the censors in late eighteenth-century Copenhagen. While we know from previous research that early modern states were keen on suppressing discomforting information regarding foreign and internal affairs, Jakobsen reveals how they also suppressed defamatory announcements in what can be described as early interventions for the right to privacy. Camilla Schjerning makes use of court records from Copenhagen, focusing on the phenomenon of house-scorning. She argues that exposures of the hidden body and secrets of the household became strategic means for negotiating both the physical and moral boundaries of the household. The body and emotional practices such as shaming emerge as vehicles for both producing and understanding privacy in the early modern world.

The section on communication clearly shows that private communication was a public event. Even though the specifics of what was said were not to be communicated further, the ability to have private conversations, and to have them protected from external interference, was discussed and defended publicly. Furthermore, making others' private lives public knowledge was used to further one's own position in the public, both by demonstrating one's knowledge of other peoples' business and by degrading and shaming others.

The third section, 'Spaces,' takes the reader indoors into private homes, courthouses, brothels and communal buildings, and outdoors to the streets, squares and courtyards.

The chapters in this section investigate how people interacted with space and place, and how the private was performed within the public. Chapters 7 and 8 examine the town houses of merchants and the elite, respectively. Combining archaeological, architectural and historical sources, Dag Lindström and Göran Tagesson uncover profound modifications to the town houses of Linköping in Sweden during the eighteenth century. While population density and the number of tenants and lodgers increased, the average number of people living in a household declined. New building elements were introduced, which enhanced indoor comfort and promoted possible seclusion. A new house type thus developed among the merchants, separating a potentially semi-public indoor space from more private indoor spaces. Pernille Ulla Knudsen probes a specific elite town house in Copenhagen further, namely that of Margrethe Elisabeth, the widow of the Prime Minister Henrik Stampe. By going through executor records and fire insurance policies, Knudsen creates a holistic picture of the private life inside the walls of this town house and gives a 'reconstruction' of the physical rooms of the Stampe mansion.

The ninth chapter takes us to the Struensee regime in Copenhagen 1770–1772. Ulrik Langen investigates the spatial references in a specific bill to houses as places fundamentally off-limits to city authorities. He discusses the imagined social consequences of protecting the spatial privacy of city dwellers even for the short duration of the Struensee regime, during which it was illegal for the police to enter peoples' private homes. By studying both the ordinance of Struensee and the countermeasures taken after his fall, Langen exposes the controversial qualities that were ascribed to private life by the public.

The tenth and final chapter leaves the city altogether and examines a peasant rebellion in rural Sweden. Using court records, Sari Nauman investigates accusations made against a bailiff who had taken payments for private gain when conducting his public affairs. Nauman shows how the peasants adapted their actions to different public spaces, using the courthouse to present their argument, the courtyard to perform their punishment, and the open road to dispose of the body. Together, the actions speak to the peasants' spatial awareness and to the importance of publicly performing accusations, even those that concerned private business.

From the chapters in the second section, we conclude that private and public spheres were especially malleable because people moved into and out of them – and people used this malleability to their own advantage. Private actions and private lives took place within public actions and public lives, not in isolation from them. By looking at the interaction between private and public, rather than treating the two notions as distinct and antagonistic, the studies collected here let us see how early modern people navigated the private aspects of life, along with all the potential dangers and benefits that accompanied those private aspects.

Notes

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- 2 Ariès 1986.
- 3 Regarding the conditions for the rise of the idea of the private, see, among others, Ariès 1986; Crowley 1999; Gowing 2000; Harvey 2001; Stobart 1998; Vickery 2008.
- 4 For a notable exception, see Laitinen 2017a. Scandinavian research on the private is discussed further below.
- 5 Warrend and Brandeis 1890, 195.
- 6 With the technological developments in the 1950s and 1960s, privacy began to enjoy more general interest in the Anglo-American world, culminating in Alan Westin's 1967 book *Privacy and Freedom*. See Holvast 2009, 15.
- 7 Koops et al. 2017.
- 8 Thomson 1984, 272–89.
- 9 For further information see: <https://mothsordbog.dk/kort-om-moth-og-hans-ordbog>
- 10 http://static.ordnet.dk/moth/faksimiler/Moth_P/P_154.jpg, 'privat: borgerlig enig'.
- 11 http://static.ordnet.dk/moth/faksimiler/Moth_P/P_154.jpg, 'privatstand, privat sag, privat-skole'.
- 12 Bay 1798, 705.
- 13 Nielsen 2000, 'privately'.
- 14 Sahlstedt 1773, 422.
- 15 Ibid., 425. On *offentlig*, see SAOB, Spalt O 265 band 18, 1949.
- 16 Ibid., 381.
- 17 Spegel 1712, 327; Swedberg [1714] 2009, 468. See also the discussion on *privat* in early modern Swedish dictionaries in Charlotte Christensen-Nugues' chapter in this volume.
- 18 SAOB, Spalt P 1896 band 20, 1954.
- 19 Habermas [1962] 2001 (English translation: Habermas 1989). See also Koselleck [1959] 1973 (English translation: Koselleck 1988).
- 20 Cowan 2013, 42.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 See, for example, Cott 1977; Ryan 1981.
- 23 See in particular the two introductions in Davidoff and Hall [1987] 2019. See also van den Heuvel 2019.
- 24 Eibach 2011; Orlin 2007; Vickery 2008.
- 25 Barker and Chalus 1995; Cohen 2008; Gowing 2000; van der Heijden 2013; Longfellow 2006; Whyman 2009; Vickery 1993.
- 26 Goodman 1992, 13–20. For recent takes on this, see the excellent overview in van den Heuvel 2019. See also Crane 2009; Laitinen 2017b; Muurling and Pluskota 2017; Williamson 2015.
- 27 Besides the examples below, see Justitz 2002; Williamson 2015.
- 28 Vickery 2008, 167.
- 29 Muurling and Pluskota 2017.
- 30 van den Heuvel 2019.
- 31 Jütte 2015, 2016. On the material aspects of privacy, see also Crowley 1999.
- 32 Gowing 2014; Longfellow 2006.
- 33 Gowing 2000; Hall 2019.
- 34 van der Heijden and Muurling 2018.
- 35 Rahikainen 2019, 106–7.
- 36 For an English introduction to the Danish-Norwegian political history, see, for instance, Munck 1998.

- 37 The Norwegian nobility had been non-existent since the Middle Ages.
- 38 'Forordningen om grevernes og friherrernes privilegier 25. maj 1671', in Schou 1777, 69–90.
- 39 On the peasantry see Christiansen 1995; Munck 1979.
- 40 For an English introduction to the Swedish political system, see Nilsson 2017, 115–29.
- 41 Glete 2002, 174–212; Hallenberg, Holm and Johansson 2008.
- 42 Sweden was in war with Russia 1741–3 and 1788–90, but in the long run, this did not affect Sweden's status as neutral.
- 43 Müller 2013, 2019.
- 44 Feldbæk 1997.
- 45 Ilmakunnas 2019; Lyngby 2015.
- 46 On commerce in early modern Scandinavia, see, for example, Ågren 2016; Feldbæk 1993, 1997; Runefelt 2015; Simonton 2019. On port cities, see Lawton and Lee 2002; Reimann and Öhman 2021.
- 47 Sennefelt 2011, 2014. On the Copenhagen coffeehouses, see Hoff 2015.
- 48 See, for example, Ågren 2013, 2018.
- 49 Ågren 2017, 140–7. See also Norrhem 2007; Taussi Sjöberg 2009.
- 50 Hallenberg 2008; Linnarsson 2017, 2018.
- 51 Engelhardt 2006, 33–63; Horstbøll 1989, 26–50.
- 52 Brilkman 2016.
- 53 For the Scandinavian Reformations and their political and legal impact, see, for instance, Korpiola and Pihlajamäki 2021.
- 54 Nina Javette Koefoed has written extensively on the subject. For an English introduction, see Koefoed 2018. See also Pleijel 1970.
- 55 Johansson 2002, 258; Villstrand 2011, 342–5. On the impact of literacy on Swedish society, see Nauman 2017, 151–3.
- 56 On Pietism, see Larsen 1984. For the Danish Poor Laws, see *Forordning om Betlere i Danmark af 24 September 1708*, art. 7 and 20, in Schou 1722, vol. 2, 178: 20.
- 57 For a comparison between the Danish and Swedish approaches to the freedom of the press, see Nordin and Laursen 2020, 217–37.
- 58 Ulrik Langen's and Frederik Stjernfelt's research project: *Trykkefriheden og en ny offentligheds tilblivelse*, Investigate the Danish prints 1770–1773, <https://www.carlsbergfondet.dk/da/Nyheder/Nyt-fra-fondet/Nyheder/Trykkefrihed-og-tilblivelsen-af-en-ny-offentlighed>; Skuncke and Tandefelt 2003; Bodenstein 2016, 123–53.
- 59 See, for example, Laitinen 2017a, 153; Ulväng 2004, 205–10; Skuncke and Tandefelt 2003; Bodenstein 2016, 123–53.
- 60 <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/artiklar/2015/Urbanisering-fran-land-till-stad/>
- 61 <https://danmarkshistorien.dk/leksikon-og-kilder/vis/materiale/danmarks-befolkningsudvikling/>
- 62 Ågren 2017; Hassan Jansson 2017; Laitinen 2017b. On open households, see Eibach 2011.
- 63 Ilmakunnas 2019; Linnarsson 2014; Sennefelt 2011.
- 64 On the reception of these refugees, see Aminoff-Winberg 2007; Nauman 2019.
- 65 See, for example, Schjerning 2019.