

The Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies (NSM)

Ninth Nordic Conference September 19-21, 2013

Activity Report 2010 – 2013

Introduction

The current board of the Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies (NSM) was elected at the eight Nordic conference in Middle Eastern Studies in Bergen, Norway, in the fall of 2010. At the time of the conference in Bergen the seat of NSM was in Bergen. However, in late 2010 and early 2011 the new board initiated a process moving the seat of NSM from Bergen to Lund. This coincided with an ambition to create a new home page and to find procedures for how to bring new members to the Nordic society. A first initiative was a PhD-course held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul in 2012. During the period 2010-2013 the board has consisted of the following members: Liv Tønnessen and Jørgen Jensehaugen (Norway), Dietrich Jung and Ehab Galal (Denmark), Hannu Juusola and Anitta Kynsilehto (Finland) and Pernilla Myrne and Leif Stenberg (Sweden). During the period the board has held five meetings.

Financial overview

In conjunction with the move of the NSM from Bergen to Lund the board decided to close the Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish bank accounts and open one single account in Sweden. The total funds transferred from the four accounts to the new one was 54 873, 51 SEK. The transfer of funding was achieved in the second half of 2012 and the aim was to get a clearer overview of the economy of the society and to reduce the costs of bank fees. Since the new account was set up the Society has received additional funding through membership fees, Conference participation fees, a grant from Crafoord Foundation and NSM activities sponsored by the Finnish Institute in the Middle East (FIME), the Center for Middle East Studies, Lund University, and the Lund Municipality (see the attached review of the financial status of NSM). Unfortunately, a conclusive and audited financial account is not present today, but will be during the fall. The audited report of the financial status will be sent out to members and the board

intends to work out a procedure for how members can approve the financial report electronically.

The opinion of the financial situation of NSM is according to the board reasonably stable, but in order to create a more thriving economy NSM needs to attract more members and receive more grants. This has been well known within NSM for long, and therefore the current board is proud of the grant we received from the Crafoord Foundation to support the organization of the ninth Nordic conference as well as the funding we have received through the generosity of sponsors. However, a task for the board during the next period is to receive funding that makes NSM more financially secure during a longer period of time.

New Web Page

During the period the board has initiated the creation of a new webpage for NSM - <http://thenordicsociety.se>. The board thinks the new web page is functional and decent, but in order to become a hub for the Nordic Society it is dependent on contributions from members. During the fall of 2013 the ambition is to review the web page and improve it. In relation to the ninth Nordic conference the objective is also to publish the abstracts of the conference on the web page. Ideally we will end up having a web page that is functional in the sense that the information visitors desire is easily reached and that the page can be maintained and updated with a minimum of costs and labor.

PhD-course in Istanbul

The Nordic society held a PhD-course October 1-7, 2012, at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul. The title of the course was "Secularism, Nationalism and Religion". The participants were 15 PhD students from all Nordic countries and five invited lecturers from Nordic countries as well as Turkey. The course was a combination of seminars with the invited scholars, excursions to, for example, Sabanci University, the seat of the Orthodox Patriarchate and the office of the Mufti of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the students presenting papers related to their own PhD-work.

Move from Bergen to Lund

The move from Bergen to Lund has been somewhat time consuming, especially since Lund is also the host of the ninth Nordic conference. However, in Lund we have been able to allocate the resources to create the needed administrative support of the Nordic Society. Hence, the board considers it suitable to continue the cooperation with the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Lund University since it gives NSM administrative support it would not otherwise receive.

Babylon

Babylon, the Nordic Journal of Middle East Studies, is the only Nordic journal with an academic focus on the Middle East. In the last three years the board has taken several steps for further integrating Babylon into the Society. This has been done through the webpage, on which we publish both Babylon's Call for Papers and the articles that have won the "Babylon prize". We have also decided that members of the Society get a reduced price when subscribing. Normal subscriptions cost 170NOK, while members pay 120NOK for a one year test-subscription, or they can make a three year subscription for 330NOK.

Upcoming activities

In order to increase the number of members of the Nordic Society the board would like to establish a system of NSM contact persons at Nordic universities, colleges and institutions of higher learning. They should be regarded as a form of NSM ambassadors and the undertaking could be divided between a teacher and an MA-student. The responsibility would be to inform about NSM activities and to encourage colleagues to become members.

The idea of opening up the Nordic Society for MA-students has been considered important by the board. MA-students should be able to become members of NSM. New members in disciplines outside the fields of humanities and social sciences such as engineering, natural sciences and medicine are also welcome to join.

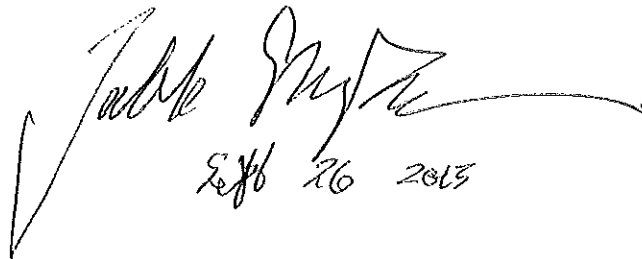
The board's ambition is to arrange a PhD-course between the triennial Nordic conferences. However, in order to make membership in the Nordic Society more attractive the PhD-courses should only be open for members in the Society. Meaning that applicants to the course must become members before they apply.

September 18, 2013,



Leif Stenberg

Chair, Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies



Jack Gustaf
Sept 26 2013