

September 2018

CASTOR – Research group on Social Differentiation, Communities, and Social control

Research strategy 2018-2021

RESEARCH PROFILE

CASTOR is based on sociological and criminological studies. The issue of social differences and inequalities as well as their consequences for people's inclusion and exclusion in society is at the centre of CASTOR's empirical and theoretical work. Although the Danish society is one of the world's most equal, with an egalitarian society model that enjoys support from the majority of the population, the dividing lines between included and excluded are pronounced, and in some areas, differences, diversity and inequalities are increasing. This presents a challenge to social cohesion and solidarity in the Danish society

CASTOR explores social and cultural aspects of new forms of differentiation based on the interplay between class, gender, ethnicity and age. These inequalities are investigated in topics such as cultural consumption, citizenship, trust, crime, consequences of sentencing, civic engagement, and various forms of welfare state interventions. CASTOR also focuses on new forms of inequalities, such as increasing demands on the individual's competences in the educational system and in the labour market. Another important aspect is global challenges, where migration, refugees and transnational movements give rise to new challenges at the local, national, transnational and global level. These tendencies call for a stronger comparative perspective in research design and analyses.

Key research fields:

- Civil society, voluntary work and trust
- Gender, masculinity and intersectionality
- Social skills and cultural capital
- Group-related crime, including drug markets
- Marginalisation and social control
- Work life, education and family
- Political identities and political radicalisation
- Welfare institutions and new welfare technologies
- Migration, refugees – new social boundaries, communities and solidarity forms
- Transnational crime

CASTOR's ambition is to continue as a significant national and international sociological and criminological research unit with a high degree of scientific quality and societal relevance.

We support this ambition by creating space for collective discussions and mentoring of junior scholars. We have a strong focus on talent development that can promote PhD students and young researchers and facilitate research of high international quality that enhances the possibilities of developing research careers.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

Publishing and social impact

CASTOR has a dual publishing strategy. We emphasise, on the one hand, top quality research published in internationally recognised journals. On the other hand, our research should aim for broader societal impact. To support the first aim, we will continue to promote publishing in high-ranking journals by both junior and senior researchers. Over the coming period, we will focus particularly on supporting young researchers in publishing internationally. This is done via presentations and discussions of draft articles at research seminars, by conducting academic writing workshops, by having senior researchers and young researchers co-publishing, and by exchanging experience about international publishing.

Social impact is a second focal point for CASTOR. We have a broad understanding of social impact ranging from research influencing legislation, over transmission of new knowledge to social developments, to contributions to teaching materials as well as written and oral contributions to the wider public debate. In recent years, significant part of the group's research has been developed in collaboration with public institutions, voluntary associations, NGOs and local communities, which have subsequently been able to utilise the acquired knowledge. Furthermore, concrete collaboration has been developed with artists, which has led to a new type of research result dissemination along with contributions to the public debate about how art and research can be mutually enriching.

In addition to promoting publication and social impact, CASTOR contributes to the sociological and criminological research community through editorial work for national and international journals. We also contribute to the development of a Danish data infrastructure for research purposes, for instance through participation in the work group Danish Research Data for the Social Sciences.

EXTERNAL RESEARCH FUNDS

In recent years, the awarding of external competitive research funds from, in particular, the independent research councils and private research funds as well as ministries have supported CASTOR's research profile. A number of large, collective research projects are in progress, and we expect to be able to continue to attract funding on the same level as we have managed until now. In the period 2011-2017, CASTOR received well over DKK 18 million in external research appropriations.

POST-GRADUATE STUDIES AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT

All young researchers (PhD, Post.Doc. assistant professors, and affiliated scientific and teaching assistants) participate in CASTOR's meetings and scholarly discussions, and they all present their projects and parts of their dissertation work in the course of their research. We emphasise a good academic form and discussion culture. A significant prerequisite for successful PhD courses is a good work environment where participation in a dynamic research groups complement PhD supervision.

Another significant factor for successful PhD programmes is the possibilities to attend relevant PhD courses at a high level. We will continue to contribute to post-graduate study activities, both within the Social Science Doctoral School at AAU and in collaboration with national and international research training networks.

Over the last 10 years, 12 PhD students affiliated with CASTOR have been awarded the PhD degree.

We have a number of examples where PhD graduates continue into Post.Doc. positions as partners in new collective research projects. We also have a number of successful stand-alone post.doc. projects that have been supported by external funds.

If we look at *talent development*, CASTOR has conducted successful courses with elite students from the Master's degree programme in sociology who have been integrated into the research group. Though the formal elite programme has been abandoned, we will continue to link students to individual research projects, for instance via employment as student assistants, as this is a good way of recruiting possible candidates for PhD programmes. We also offer teaching assistants and scientific assistants the opportunity to take part in the research unit.

In terms of AAU's Talent Management Programme (targeted at assistant professors/Post.Doc. and young associate professors), one of CASTOR's members has been selected as 1 of 4 talents at the Faculty of Social Sciences in 2016, and we aim to have more young researchers accepted into this programme. In addition to this, several of CASTOR's members have achieved support from the Faculty of Social Sciences' talent programme for young researchers. Finally, several of CASTOR's PhD students have received the Ministry of Higher Education and Science's Elite Research travelling scholarship, and one of the PhD students has been selected for the PhD Cup.

TEACHING

CASTOR's primary teaching area is the sociology and criminology programme, and some of the group members teach in both programmes. The members also form part of other courses offered, including, among others, the Master's programme in social work and various professional Master's programmes. As part of our efforts to promote research-based teaching, we work continually to integrate the research group's profile and projects in our teaching. . This happens primarily in the

Master's programmes where it is also an objective to integrate talented students into the research group's work.

For CASTOR, another important teaching task has been the conducting of PhD courses. Over the last 10 years, the group's senior members have been active in conducting both methodological and design courses as well as a large number of thematic courses.

ORGANISATION

As of January 2018, CASTOR consists of 18 members: 3 professors, 7 associate professors, 3 assistant professors/Post.Doc., 4 PhD students and 1 scientific assistant. In addition to this, there are 2 adjunct professors and a group of external and associated members. The research group meets approx. every three weeks for paper presentations, draft articles or oral presentations. We aim to have one two-day seminar a year, which can be organised both with scholarly presentations and as academic writing workshops in order to promote publishing. A main priority is that PhD students present papers every semester. Further to this, the group frequently discusses matters of strategic concern. In addition to the research group meetings, we have informal lunch meeting.

NETWORKS, RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS AND EDITORIAL WORK

CASTOR takes part in research collaborations and scholarly networks, both nationally and at a Nordic and international level. This is important in order to ensure that the quality of the research is at an international level, and that young researchers are in contact with important international research environments. Strong networks also help pave the way for publishing in journals and keeping up with the international research agenda. Finally, networks may contribute to initiating research collaboration across national borders etc.

CASTOR also takes part in the editing and international editorial panels of several national and international journals.