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Byrkjeflot, Haldor; Mordhorst, Mads; Petersen, Klaus

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Nordic Studies in a Global Context

THE MAKING AND CIRCULATION OF NORDIC MODELS, IDEAS AND IMAGES

Edited by
Haldor Byrkjeflot, Lars Mjøset,
Mads Mordhorst and Klaus Petersen

ROUTLEDGE

The Making and Circulation of Nordic Models, Ideas and Images

This critical and empirically based volume examines the multiple existing Nordic models, providing analytically innovative attention to the multitude of circulating ideas, images and experiences referred to as "Nordic".

It addresses related paradoxes as well as patterns of circulation, claims about the exceptionality of Nordic models, and the diffusion and impact of Nordic experiences and ideas. Providing original case studies, the book further examines how the Nordic models have been constructed, transformed and circulated in time and in space. It investigates the actors and channels that have been involved in circulating models: journalists and media, bureaucrats and policy-makers, international organizations, national politicians and institutions, scholars, public diplomats and analyses where and why models have travelled. Finally, the book shows that Nordic models, perspectives, or ideas do not always originate in the Nordic region, nor do they always develop as deliberate efforts to promote Nordic interests.

This book will be of key interest to Nordic and Scandinavian studies, European studies, and more broadly to history, sociology, political science, marketing, social policy, organizational theory and public management.

Haldor Byrkjeflot is a Professor at the Department of Sociology and Human Geography at University of Oslo, Norway.

Lars Mjøset is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Oslo Summer School for Comparative Social Science Studies at the Social Science Faculty, University of Oslo, Norway.

Mads Mordhorst is Associate Professor at Copenhagen Business School (CBS), and the Director of the Centre for Business History, Denmark.

Klaus Petersen is Professor of Welfare State History at the Danish Centre for Welfare Studies, and Chair of Humanities at the Danish Centre for Advanced Study, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark.

Nordic Studies in a Global Context

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Contributors

Haldor Byrkjeflot is a Professor at the Department of Sociology and Human Geography at the University of Oslo. His research interests include the emergence and circulation of societal and organizational models, organization theory, bureaucracy, as well as historical-comparative studies. He has published articles on comparative management, the globalization of the MBA, changing knowledge regimes in universities, comparative labor systems, the role of bureaucracy in modern societies, and reforms and organizational dynamics in health and education. E-mail: haldor.byrkjeflot@sosgeo.uio.no

Sunniva Engh is Associate Professor of History at the Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History at the University of Oslo. Her research interests include Nordic foreign policy and development aid, the international history of aid and development, with a focus on population and health policies in South Asia, and India's foreign and security policy. Her recent publications include 'Georg Borgström and the population-food dilemma. Reception and consequences in Norwegian public debate in the 1950s and 1960s' in Östling, Hedenblad and Olsen (eds.) *Histories of Knowledge in Postwar Scandinavia. Actors, Arenas, and Aspirations* (Routledge 2020) and "Rockefeller Foundation og etableringen av Statens institutt for folkehelsen" in *Michael* (2019: 1). E-mail: sunniva.engh@iakh.uio.no

Alan Granadino is postdoctoral research fellow in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Tampere University, working in the Academy of Finland project "Foreign Policy in Alliance or in Non-Alignment?". He holds a PhD in History and Civilization from the European University Institute. His research interests include the entangled political, social and intellectual history of contemporary Europe. Specifically, he is interested in the history of European integration, European social democracy, the Nordic model and the Spanish foreign policy during and after the transition to democracy.

Andreas Mørkved Hellenes is a postdoctoral researcher on the project 'Nordic model(s) in the global circulation of ideas, 1970s–2020' (Project

8018–00023B) at Aarhus University, Denmark, and teaches in transatlantic relations at Sciences Po Paris. His academic interests include Nordic cooperation, the history of public diplomacy, cultural internationalism and nation branding, European integration, transport and communications history, global and transnational history. E-mail: amh@cas.au.dk

Tom Hoctor is Lecturer in Social Science at the University of Bedfordshire. He received his PhD from University College London in 2017. His research focuses on twentieth-century economic and political theory, especially theories of markets. He is particularly interested in how ideas about markets are translated into day-to-day politics and public policy. E-mail: Tom.Hoctor@beds.ac.uk

Pauli Kettunen is Professor Emeritus of Political History, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Helsinki. He was director of the Nordic Centre of Excellence NordWel (The Nordic Welfare State – Historical Foundations and Future Challenges). Kettunen's publications explore topics such as labor and business history, social and education policies, industrial relations, nationalism and globalization, and the conceptual history of politics. E-mail: pauli.kettunen@helsinki.fi

Malcolm Langford is a Professor of Public Law, University of Oslo, and an Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Bergen. He led the UiO:Norden project, Nordic Branding: Politics of Exceptionalism 2017–2020 and is co-editor of the Routledge Book Series Nordic Studies in a Global Context. He is also the Director of the Centre on Experiential Legal Learning (CELL), Co-Director of the Centre on Law and Social Transformation, CMI and University of Bergen and co-editor of the Cambridge University Book Series on Globalisation and Human Rights. His publications include *Limits of the Legal Complex: Nordic Lawyers and Political Liberalism* (Oxford University Press, 2021). E-mail: malcolm.langford@jus.uio.no

Carl Marklund is a researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History at Södertörn University. His research examines social planning, geopolitics and images of Sweden, e.g. in the Global South. His research focuses on the relationship between different forms of social planning and social visions. In particular, he is interested in the impact of scientific knowledge production for the development of various policy fields. He has researched and published on the global image of the Nordic welfare states, Baltic-Nordic regionalism and the recent return of geopolitics in the Baltic Sea Region. E-mail: carl.marklund@sh.se

Lars Mjøset is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Oslo Summer School for Comparative Social Science Studies at the Social Science Faculty, University of Oslo, Norway. He is also a member of the Norwegian Academy of Science. His main areas of research are political economy, comparative historical sociology and in particular studies of small open Western European economies. E-mail: lars.mjoset@sosgeo.uio.no

Mads Mordhorst is Associate Professor at Copenhagen Business School (CBS), Department for Management, Politics, and Philosophy. He is Director of the Centre for Business History, and he has at the moment a position as Professor II at Oslo University. He studies history from a cultural-historical perspective. Mordhorst studies the uses of history by companies and how companies create an identity through the use of history, with a focus on national identity and branding. He is a member of the editorial board at *Business History* and has more than ten books and Special Issues. He has published more than 30 peer-reviewed articles in journals such as *Business History, Enterprise and Society, Organization Studies; Business History Review.* E-mail: mmo.mpp@cbs.dk

Klaus Petersen is Professor of Welfare State History, Danish Centre for Welfare Studies & Chair of Humanities, Danish Centre for Advanced Study, University of Southern Denmark. Petersen's areas of research include welfare state development, Nordic cooperation on social policy, family policy, pension policy, early retirement schemes (Efterløn) and the immigration policies of the Danish welfare state. E-mail: klaus.petersen@sdu.dk

Byron Z. Rom-Jensen is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Aarhus in Denmark. His doctoral dissertation, also conducted at Aarhus University, studies the transfer and implementation of Nordic political ideas and programs in the United States in the 1930s and 1960s. He is currently participating in the project "The Nordic Model in the Global Circulation of Ideas, 1970–2020", combining transnational, conceptual and digital methods to examine the Nordic model's international diffusion. E-mail: bzrj@cas.au.dk

May-Len Skilbrei is Professor of Criminology at the University of Oslo, Norway. She has published extensively on Nordic prostitution policy, including the coauthored *Prostitution Policy in the Nordic Region: Ambiguous Sympathies* (Ashgate, 2013) and several articles and chapters on the case of Sweden. She was the vice-chair of the COST Action Comparing European Prostitution Policies: Understanding Scales and Cultures of Governance (ProsPol) (2013–2017). She is the co-editor of the Routledge book series Interdisciplinary Studies in Sex for Sale; in 2019, she co-edited the book *Rape in the Nordic Countries: Continuity and Change* (Routledge) and she is vice-director of LEX Research Network – Law, Gender & Sexuality. E-mail: m.l.skilbrei@jus.uio.no

Peter Stadius holds a PhD in history and is Professor in Nordic Studies and research director of the Centre for Nordic Studies at the University of Helsinki. His research interests include the image of Scandinavia and the Nordic region throughout history, and especially the dynamics between north and south in a European setting. E-mail: peter.stadius@helsinki.fi

Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen is a Professor at Copenhagen Business School, serving as Director of Imagine – Creative Industries and Institutions Research Centre. His research focuses on organizational and institutional change, institutional action and field structuring in creative and innovative contexts. His recent research has looked at the role of cultural intermediaries and forms of evaluative practices in the fields of film, media and gastronomy. Pedersen co-edited *The Negotiation of Values in the Creative Industries: Fairs, Festivals and Competitive Events* (Cambridge University Press), and *Technology and Creativity. Production, Mediation and Evaluation in the Digital Age* (Palgrave, Macmillan). E-mail: js.ioa@cbs.dk

Silviya Svejenova is a Professor in leadership and innovation and Co-Director of Imagine – Creative Industries and Institutions Research Centre at Copenhagen Business School. She conducts research on multimodal and temporal aspects of creativity and innovation, with a focus on creative industries, strategic leadership, and places of social inclusion. Svejenova has co-edited special issues of *Organization Studies* on food organizing, objectifying and (re)acting to novel ideas, and drivers of innovation in the creative industries, as well as special issues of *Research in the Sociology of Organizations* on creativity in the innovation journey. She is a senior editor of *Organization Studies* and a past chair of EGOS. E-mail: ssve.ioa@cbs.dk

Mari Teigen is Research Professor at Institute for Social Research in Oslo and Director of CORE – Centre for Research on Gender Equality and NORDICORE – Centre for Research on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation. Her research engages with change and stability in gender relations, through analysis of gender equality policy; social elites, gender segregation in the labor market and in academia. Teigen is currently co-editor of *Comparative Social Research* and of *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*. She serves on several boards and committees and is currently member of FRIHUMSAM-board, Research Council Norway. E-mail: mari.teigen@samfunnsforskning.no

1 The making and circulation of Nordic models

An introduction

Haldor Byrkjeflot, Mads Mordhorst and Klaus Petersen

Since the early twentieth century, Nordic societies have attracted the attention of international observers. From this attention grew the concept of a 'Nordic model', still today a dominant idea among academics as well as policymakers, experts, social movements and the like. For most people, 'the Nordic Model' represents a progressive pathway successfully combining factors such as economic growth, democracy, social and gender equality, social welfare, a highly skilled labor force, and high quality of living. However, for others, more critically minded, the Nordic model represents paternalistic, self-righteous, homogenous – quasi-socialist – welfare states which tax their citizens far too much and represent xenophobic treatment of asylum seekers and non-Western ethnic groups. In other words, we do not only find positive views of 'Nordic solutions'; there are also very strong negative images as well.

This does not only reflect the diverging ideological frames or political positions of the observers; it also reflects the movement toward multiple understandings of the Nordic model. Although mainly associated with developments in the sphere of socioeconomics, labor, and welfare (Christiansen et al., 2006; Dølvik et al., 2015), the Nordic model has expanded into labeling a diversity of experiences and perspectives in spheres like gender equality, education, daycare, prisons, design, food, and culture. The idea of Nordic models has thus traveled into new fields of expertise, culture, institutional spheres, or lifestyles, but there is a lack of knowledge on how this has happened and how the models in the different fields are related.

Drawing on theories of translation, cross-national policy transfer, diffusion theory, and transnational history, this volume emphasizes how ideas related to the Nordics as models and policies associated with them have circulated internationally. By circulation we mean 'a double movement of going back and forth and coming back, which can be repeated indefinitely' (Markovits et al., 2006: 2–3, see also Marklund and Petersen, 2013). This way, our circulation approach differs from the more one-directional translation perspective which focuses on the travel of ideas from source to receiver but shares the assumption that ideas and models get transformed during their journey.

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Historians have pointed out that knowledge related to Nordic exceptionalism, in its many manifestations, is a cultural construction (Sørensen and Stråth, 1997). This perspective does not reject the importance of institutional similarities or other kinds of common Nordic traits (or the opposite), but it emphasizes that our understandings and conceptualizations of such similarities and differences have been culturally constructed – and these constructions have real-life repercussions. The way we label 'the Nordic Model' matters. In this volume, we go beyond the Nordic realm and demonstrate how international circulation has informed the analysis of the Nordic trajectory as well as how the Nordic societies were socially constructed as models. Meanings, content, and values associated with Nordic models both historically and in the present may be related to their history of circulation (see also Petersen, 2011; Kettunen et al., 2016).

Rather than seeing a Nordic model as a something defined once and for all, we argue that it may be seen as what in conceptual history is called a 'collective singular' (Koselleck, 2011: 13), a concept that is mentioned in singular, but in praxis is used in different ways in space and over time. How this exactly happens is an empirical question addressed in this volume. These ways of using 'the Nordic Model' allow for exploration of the many historical layers that underpins it, which again opens for understanding the possible coexistence of different meanings activated at the same time. On the one hand, there are meanings on a synthetic level, claims about common traits in the five countries across more than one issue area (Chapter 3). On the other hand, there are also a set of meanings associated with specific issue areas or spheres, such as the Nordic model of healthcare policy (Chapter 11), prostitution regulation (Chapter 9), or New Nordic cuisine (Chapter 12). The aim of this book is to pay attention to the historical multitude of circulating ideas referred to as 'Nordic' at the general level, associated with the specific Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden) and linked to various fields.

The historical layers and dualities of the Swedish and Nordic models are discussed in more detail in the chapters by Kettunen and Petersen (Chapter 2) and Mjøset (Chapter 3). Kettunen and Petersen refer to the way there is both a nostalgia and a future-oriented aspect associated with the use of the model. First, there is the idea of a people's home that may provide a shelter from international competition, whereas the more future-oriented aspect of the model suggests that we all have to adapt to global markets in order to stay competitive (see also Chapter 4). Mjøset refers to three versions of the Swedish model: the radical, the cautious, and the liberal/conservative model. The first two models circulated in the mid-1970s in Sweden, while the liberal/conservative model has become more important over time. Currently the neoliberal Nordic model may again be challenged as the COVID pandemic has favored ideas of a strong public sector and state intervention, which may result in a return to previous perceptions of the Nordic models or to something new. The most important insight here, however, is that such ambivalent images of the Nordic model contribute to its circulation as it may be – or at least sound – attractive to a diverse set of audiences and carriers of ideas at the same time.

Approaches to the Nordic model

As demonstrated by comparative research (Esping-Andersen, 1990) and aggregated analyzes of indexes (Kirkebø et al., 2021), the Nordic countries often cluster, differing from other nation states and 'families of nations' (Castles, 1993) on multiple dimensions. Arguably, the most established feature is the Nordic welfare model with comprehensive and generous welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Christiansen et al., 2006). However, scholars have also highlighted other aspects related to particular institutionalized spheres of these societies such as gender equality (Hernes, 1987; Lundqvist, 2017), labor market relations (Hvid and Falkum, 2018), old age pensions (Petersen and Åmark, 2006), the role of experts and knowledge (Lundqvist and Petersen, 2010; Christensen et al., 2017; Österling et al., 2020), politics (Nedergaard and Wivel, 2017), industrial management (Byrkjeflot et al., 2001), and education (Blossing et al., 2014). This list can be expanded to include other perspectives such as Lutheranism (Markkola, 2015; Nelson, 2017), the role of Social Democracy (Brandal et al., 2013), Nordic democracy and political culture (Knutsen, 2017), Nordic cooperation (Strang, 2016; Mordhorst and Jensen, 2019), Nordic capitalism (Byrkjeflot et al., 2001; Fellman et al., 2008; Mjøset, 2011), and Nordic civil society (Stenius, 2010).

More recently, literature on the Nordic model has expanded beyond the academic (and political) market (discussed in Chapters 5–11) and ventured into the general popular life-style literature. In some ways, popular books on the Nordic model are not anything new, and the Nordic countries have for almost a century used the Nordic model brand as a selling point for products (see Chapters 12 and 13) and tourism (see Chapter 4). However, the post-2000s Nordic hype has engaged new topics such as popular culture, food, and comfort. Concepts like happiness, Nordic cuisine, and 'hygge' (Wiking, 2016) are associated with a Nordic way of living. Likewise, cultural innovations of New Nordic cuisine, Nordic design, Nordic Noir, and Nordic music have similarly become brands that are sold as products.

In this way, studies on the Nordic model – or rather the Nordic models (in plural) – have demonstrated its multiple societal and cultural dimensions. We want to add to and challenge the existent literature in four ways:

First, we add a historical and sociological dimension highlighting the dynamic character of the Nordic model. The term Nordic 'model' was popularized in the 1980s (see Chapter 4) although as many of the chapters in this book show Nordic societies and policies were already 'modelized' throughout the twentieth century. Over time, the content, the images, and the valorization of the Nordic model have changed significantly. We need to approach the Nordic model as something historically dynamic where meanings and connotations change over time.

Second, we add a transnational dimension. The Nordic model was not the result of splendid Nordic isolation, but of national Nordic processes constantly interacting with the outside world. Following the Finnish historian Pauli Kettunen (2011), comparison is not only an analytical strategy used by researchers but also a part and parcel of policymaking. National policy processes are based on cross-country learning and diffusion (cf. Rose, 1991), and political debates are loaded with comparisons. As pointed out by von Beyme (1994), the use of models is often serving domestic political purposes rather than aiming for a true representation of the model's origin in a scientific empirical sense. In this way, the image of Nordic societies in US or Chinese debates should not be expected to offer a 'correct' representation of Nordic social reality (see Chapters 5–8). However, when such images of a model – positive or negative, true or false – become part of the circulation of the 'model,' they might even have significant feedback and impact in its geographical origin. (This is demonstrated in several chapters, but see especially Chapters 5, 7, 9, 10, and 13 for this.)

Third, we add a political dimension by asking to what extent the discourse around the Nordic model has been part of domestic power struggles within the Nordic region. Chapters 5 and 6 show how the Swedish prime minister, Olof Palme, first rejected the suggested reference to Sweden as a model by journalists and politicians, but that he later appropriated the idea of a Swedish/Nordic model as a response to the challenge from the right of the political spectrum during the election campaign in 1976. Furthermore, as pointed out in Chapter 3, the Nordic social democrats adopted the Nordic model concept in the early 1980s as part of discussions in SAMAK, the discussion forum for Nordic social democratic parties and unions (see also Lundberg, 2006). Finally, the idea of a 'Nordic model' was again politicized as the Swedish moderate-liberal coalition government took an interest in the model concept as a way to assume issue ownership in the 2010s (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Fourth, we add a cultural and commercial dimension by asking how the Nordic model has transcended the borders of the political and academic spheres and ventured into the spheres of culture, lifestyle, and advertising. This way, the Nordic label also becomes an element in branding, as a means to promote and sell products. When the 'Nordic model' is applied to new spheres, new actors and networks are involved. Since the 1930s, the Swedish model has been especially promoted and defended internationally by diplomatic actors, public intellectuals, and other interested parties, but it was not until after 2000 that aspects of both the Swedish and the Nordic models and the creative industries were promoted as brands (Chapter 4; Kharkina, 2013). The international marketing of furniture and Scandinavian design was an early example of such a development (Chapter 13; Werner, 2008; Hansen, 2018), whereas in the more recent case of New Nordic Cuisine, we see the mobilization of a new movement that includes entrepreneurial chefs, bureaucrats, and politicians in the respective Nordic countries (Chapter 12; Byrkjeflot et al., 2013).

Theoretical perspectives

How can we understand such processes where ideas flow and are transformed as they move into new settings and models are constructed and deconstructed over time? Here different disciplines have offered different concepts, approaches, and theories. Historical studies have witnessed an emerging 'transnational turn' over the last decade, with scholars challenging the prerogative of the national state as the 'container' of historical development (Conrad, 2011). This line of criticism has come under various labels such as 'transnational history,' 'entangled history,' or 'Histoire Croisée' (Werner and Zimmermann, 2006). Such studies have changed the analytical gaze from national contexts and institutions toward the process of movement from one context to another. Focus in this strand of research has been on things such as transnational interactions, persons and ideas traveling across national borders, translation and national domestication of imported phenomena, as well as the role of international organizations and epistemic communities.

Within the social sciences, one may refer to at least two kinds of inspirations for circulation studies: translation studies (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996; Røvik, 2016; Rottenburg et al., 2011) and policy transfer studies (Rose, 1991; Dobbin et al., 2007; Baker and Walker, 2019). In both these fields of study, there has been a movement from more linear transfer models to a circulation approach (Stone et al., 2020). Departing from translation theory, Westney and Piekarri (2019) argue that it is not sufficient to focus on a few actors to explain the massive circulation of Japanese management concepts and practices to the West in the 1980s. Instead, they find their explanation in the 'development of an expanding translation ecosystem in which translators, translations, translation processes, and audiences interact and over time develop a "reverse flow" of models and practices.' Similarly, Djelic (2014) argues that transnational communities may, indeed, take a central role, some of them, like the neoliberal Atlas-network, are even 'born to diffuse.' In the case of 'the Nordic model,' it may not be possible to identify a single core network of translators; however, the chapters in this volume show there are international organizations and expert communities that continuously take part in the spread of models in various fields of knowledge and politics.

Both in translation and policy transfer studies, the normal way of proceeding is to focus on the diffusion (of something) from a source context to a sphere of reception. However, as observed in several chapters in this volume, it cannot be taken as a given as to what is 'origin' and what is 'audience' or 'receivers.' It is an empirical question and our circulation perspective allows us also to study the changing roles of actors. For example, Chapters 7, 12, and 13 (on development aid, Nordic Cuisine, and Nordic Design) show how diverse audiences outside of the Nordic region also take active part in model construction within the Nordic realm.

An important assumption in translation theory is that it matters how easily models travel and are adapted to new contexts and whether they are 'branded' with reference to their country/region of origin or not (Jaffe and Nebenzahl, 2006). The perceptions about what is a credible source may change over time and according to context. Røvik (2002: 122) suggests 'that an organizational recipe's capacity to flow depends on whether it is clearly associated with organizations or individuals that are widely recognized as authoritative actors and models.' Both Teigen (Chapter 10) and Langford/ Skilbrei (Chapter 9) argue that the success of the Nordic models they have studied relate to the reputation the Nordics have for being leaders in the field of gender equality. In the current period the Nordics seem to be attractive sources for ideas, more so now than in the early 1990s, for instance, when the Swedish economy was in crisis.

A brief outline of the book

Our book includes case studies of how various notions of a Nordic model have circulated in international organizational, intellectual, and political circles and public spheres. The focus is on the Western world covering countries such as the United States, Spain, France, and the United Kingdom – and of course the Nordic countries themselves. Combining historical, comparative, and transnational perspectives allows for a critical empirical examination of models, ideas, and images related to Nordic experiences or constructions of 'the Nordic' in transnational institutional spheres and societies outside the Nordic realm. The chapters analyze quite different types of Nordic models and policy circulations covering fields such as welfare, democracy, gender equality and gender quota, prostitution legislation, food, and furniture design. Part 1 deals with large-scale models such as 'the Swedish model,' social democratic model, welfare models, and models of scientific synthesis. This is still the predominant way of talking about the Nordic region when associated with the term model in the singular. Part 2 addresses more specific models like the development aid model, prostitution regulation model, board quotas, New Nordic cuisine, democratic design, and 'Nordic New Public Management.' In the chapters there are examples of how models have emerged and circulated in international professional networks and organizations such as among lawyers and public servants (e.g., Chapter 8 on the ombudsman), chefs (Chapter 12 on Nordic cuisine), or international organizations (Chapter 7 on development aid). Some chapters focus on specific processes of translation and transnational interaction, whereas others provide a discussion of possible effects and repercussions in the Nordic countries as well as elsewhere in the Western world (and in Chapter 7 also in Africa).

The rich empirical findings in the individual chapters highlight the dynamic historical nature of ‘the Nordic model.’ They show that there has clearly been change over time in the kind of images and ideas associated with the Nordic region. This includes a diversification in what is counted as a ‘Nordic model,’ appropriating aspects such as regulation of prostitution, crime literature, and food. The chapters also demonstrate that these Nordic models do not have one clear origin but were sometimes developed as deliberate efforts to promote Nordic interests and at other times developed by outside observers or by academics trying to define the Model. A cacophony of actors was involved in the formulations and circulations of ‘the Nordic model’ – policymakers, experts, organizations, parties, states, and many more. It took place in multiple arenas and in different spheres – from media debates to more closed circles and on international, national, or subnational levels – sometimes interacting, and at other times not. In other words, ‘the Nordic model’ has many faces and has traveled sometimes in mysterious ways. This brings us back to the underlying question, what is the Nordic model? Our answer is fairly simple: It is an empirical question that we need to answer through historical-empirical investigations. That is what the chapters in this book will do.

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Part 1

The Nordic model as socio-economic and political construct

2 Images of the Nordic welfare model

Historical layers and ambiguities

Pauli Kettunen and Klaus Petersen

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to historicize ‘the Nordic model.’ Historicizing does not simply mean demonstrating that notions of a Nordic societal model existed prior to the more recent launch of this expression, but more importantly, to study the actual processes of representing Nordic specificities as a kind of model. The notion of a Nordic model was constructed during the gradual transformation of the five Nordic nation states into welfare states. More recently, the Nordic model has been subject to a (re-)branding as a combination of competitiveness and social investments, associated with contests about the political ownership of the model. We outline the dynamics and periods of these developments and discuss the ambiguities included in the images of a Nordic model.

Welfare states did not develop within closed national containers. They evolved through the interaction of domestic factors, cross-border transfers of ideas, and transnational interdependencies (Haas, 1992; Conrad, 2011; Kettunen and Petersen, 2011; Obinger et al., 2012). A key feature of this process was comparison as a political practice that played a major role in political agenda setting as well as in the production and transmission of social knowledge (Kettunen, 2006; Ogle, 2015: 4–9). This topic is especially important in connection with research on the Nordic welfare states (Petersen, 2006). The transnational attribute ‘Nordic’ implies a frame of reference, institutionalized in Nordic cooperation, for comparisons among the Nordic countries as well as between them and the rest of the world. Such meanings of the Nordic become especially evident in a historical analysis of both national and international social policy debates. On the one hand, it is reasonable to argue that ‘the Nordic element has never lastingly gone beyond national frameworks’ (Sørensen and Stråth, 1997: 19); on the other hand, ideas of the ‘Nordic’ have functioned as an important transnational reference point for national institutions and identities. This duality of the Nordic in relation to the national appears in concepts such as ‘Nordic Democracy,’ ‘Nordic Society,’ and ‘Nordic Welfare State.’ These concepts have functioned as referential frames for national societal developments,

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making it possible for the Nordic societies to be different and similar at the same time.

At least from the 1920s, the Nordic countries have periodically joined forces to establish Nordic political influence, projecting an image of the progressive *Norden* bringing new ideas to the international scene (Petersen, 2006). In this process, ideas of the Nordic were promoted, circulated, transformed, and returned to sender. Both the intentions and the intensity of these circulations changed significantly over time as the Nordic specificities were successfully 'modelized' in comparison with social policy arrangements elsewhere. As a political practice, comparison involves both positive and negative diffusion as well as the construction of narratives, stereotypes, rankings, hierarchies, and eventually models. Different comparisons display different dynamics. In intra-regional comparisons, the Nordic countries occupied different stages of development. Thus, being a Nordic welfare laggard became a part of Finnish and Icelandic national identities. In Finland, experiences of a conflictual history, including the Civil War of 1918, contributed to an identity of a Nordic exception. As a framework of intra-Nordic comparisons, at the same time, a notion of the Nordic group of countries representing a front-runner model of welfare was developed in wider international comparisons, both by Nordic and foreign politicians and experts.

We argue that this can be described as a 'modelization' process driven by national and regional interests articulated in an international context. We argue here that the attribution of 'Nordic' to what gradually became a societal model had two major consequences. First, it boosted the attention given to the small Nordic states on the international scene. Second, transforming national policies and ideas into distinctly Nordic characteristics was a means of legitimizing national welfare states that pacified political resistance against social reformism, resistance that came from both the left and the right.

We focus on four historical phases: The formative phase of modern social policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the interwar period, the Cold War period, and the ongoing post-Cold War era. In the concluding discussion, we suggest a framework for understanding the historical resilience of the images of a Nordic model. The ambivalence of the images of a Nordic model, appearing in several dualisms in the uses of the concept, allowed not only for the settling of conflicting interests but also for the continuation over a century of both continuities and discontinuities.

Images of Nordic problems in the formative period of modern social policy (1880–1914)

Notions of Nordic (or Scandinavian) society can be traced back to at least the nineteenth century, associated with ideas of Scandinavism, Nordism, Nordic culture, and later in the early twentieth century a unique Nordic democracy and governance (Sørensen and Stråth, 1997; Musial, 2002; Janfelt, 2005; Hemstad, 2008; Kurunmäki and Strang, 2011). Within welfare state historiography, the origins of the Nordic model are usually located in the late nineteenth century when social reforms and modern social policy arrived onto the political scene throughout the Western hemisphere. As Daniel T. Rodgers (1998) has demonstrated, social policy was a trans-Atlantic discussion, with ideas moving both within and between nation states. Even though Denmark, Sweden, and Norway later became known as forerunner countries with respect to modern social legislation, 'Nordic' developments were heavily influenced by ideas coming from other areas.

This early wave of social reforms was in most countries closely related to nation-building, war, and societal modernization. During the nineteenth century, international comparisons, oriented toward the horizon of expectation associated with modernization, became an important factor in the construction of national politics, national economies, national societies, and their collective actors. The comparison was a political practice that informed and framed national decisions (Kuhnle, 1996; Åmark, 2005; Kettunen, 2006; Petersen et al., 2010, 2011). In the Nordic countries, we can point to the early well-established (regional) Nordic cooperation between key professions connected to social reforms, such as lawyers, economists, educators, and other groups of public servants (Wendt, 1959; SAMAK, 1986; Edling, 2006; Petersen, 2006). Such specialist networks were supported by initiatives toward closer political cooperation, such as the Nordic monetary union of 1872 and the *Nordic Inter-Parliamentary Association* from 1907.

This Nordic epistemic community (cf. Haas, 1992) developed through common definitions of social problems and openness toward the flourishing market for social policy innovations around 1900. Rodgers (1998: 8–32) illustrates this point by examining national demonstrations of social policies at the 1900 Paris World Exhibition. In the pavilion for 'social economy,' each country was profiled with something that their social policy experts supposed to express their particular inventions for solving the so-called social question: consumers' cooperative movement in Britain, state-administered social insurance in Germany, mutual assistance and insurance in France, and welfare capitalism organized by private companies in the United States. Yet as Rodgers remarks, all these social policy ideas had already been mixed in different eclectic and contradictory national combinations.

Images of a distinctly Nordic approach to social policy were not widespread around 1900 and were mainly deployed for domestic legitimation. Only from the 1920s and 1930s did the Nordic countries move from a peripheral position in international social policy debates toward the center of attention.

The interwar period: from the social policy periphery to the center of attention

In the 1920s and, especially, 1930s, international attention directed to the Nordic region increased, as illustrated by a growing 'social tourism literature.' American and British authors such as Marquis Childs (1936) and

Frederic Howe (1936) reported about Nordic societies having successfully transformed themselves, now offering high levels of coordination and social security without sacrificing traditions, social cohesion, or (from the 1930s) democracy (Musial, 2002). Both Howe and Childs, discussing, respectively, Denmark and Sweden, referred to national developments rather than any kind of Nordic model, with books entitled *Denmark – the Progressive Way* and *Sweden: The Middle Way*. However, the usage of the 'way' – metaphor in the book titles signals a temporality and the potential of Nordic countries as models of development for other countries. As summarized by the historian Peter Baldwin 'Where Scandinavia had earlier attracted notice mainly from those interested in, say, pig farming or temperance movements, it suddenly found itself the center of international attention' (Baldwin, 1990: 59).

The Nordic countries themselves became aware of this international attention. At the Second Nordic Travel Meeting in 1937, representatives of the Nordic tourist organizations discussed 'Touristic Nordism,' arguing that 'In our propaganda, our social development must also be considered. We have in Norden much to offer and it is not wise always to talk about ourselves as being the small ones' (Petersen, 2009). A cursory review of Nordic tourist brochures from the 1930s and 1940s reveals that democracy, social stability, and social welfare were used to attract tourists. In a Danish tourist brochure from 1938, it was even emphasized that Denmark could, indeed, serve as a model for the world:

> For those interested in social problems, Denmark is a land of greatest interest. Danish social legislation and the Danish cooperative system … are known everywhere. They serve indeed as models to the world.

The trigger for generalizing the Nordic experiences into some kind of 'model' (what we refer to as a process of 'modelization' whereby generalized characteristics gradually become a model in its own right) was the interplay between concrete developments in the Nordic countries and the international circulation of 'Nordic' images. In the following, we look more closely at two important and interrelated cases: The regional cooperation between the Nordic Ministries of Social Affairs and the Nordic cooperation within the International Labour Organization (ILO). Both cases demonstrate how the idea of a Nordic welfare model was an outcome of the interplay between the national and transnational components.

Nordic social policy cooperation: regionally and internationally

In June 1918, at a Scandinavian meeting for national parliamentarians in Copenhagen, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish politicians agreed on the need for closer social–political cooperation.[1] This meeting was followed up nine months later by the first Nordic social–political meeting held in Copenhagen in April 1919.[2] The delegations included national experts, civil servants, representatives of interest organizations, and welfare agencies, as well as politicians including the Ministers for Social Affairs.

This first Nordic meeting established common goals and agendas for successive talks. First and foremost, there was an agreement to coordinate national Nordic policies toward the newly founded ILO and its first conference in Washington later the same year (see below). Second, the countries agreed to strengthen existing traditions of mutual orientation on national social policy developments. Third, and more wide reaching, they expressed a common wish for 'uniform guidelines and forms for social development and mutuality concerning social rights and duties, in so far as this is found in accordance with specific conditions within the different Nordic countries.'[3]

In the 1920s, the degrees of modernization, economic and political capacities, and the existing social policy legislations clearly varied between the Nordic countries. Consequently, more uniform social legislation was not an uncontroversial goal (Petersen, 2006: 67–98). By the late 1920s, however, Nordic social policy meetings were being held on a regular basis for politicians, civil servants, and experts, and these meetings became the platform for a Nordic social policy epistemic community (cf. Haas, 1992). This resulted in intensified streams of knowledge transfer between the countries as well as strengthening ideas about a transnational Nordic social citizenship. The first steps in this direction were several mutual social policy agreements between the Nordic countries, and the most important of these, the Nordic Poverty Treaty (*Den Nordiske Fattigdomskonvention*), was signed by Finland, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway in October 1929. The treaty ensured all Nordic citizens who settled in another Nordic country social rights and established a system for reimbursement of expenditures between the countries.

A key issue for this epistemic community was the coordination of Nordic policies toward international organizations such as the League of Nations and the ILO. This desire for a united Nordic front on the international scene was important for the development of a Nordic (or Scandinavian) model as an international 'brand' in the following decades. Since its founding in 1919 as an autonomous organ within the League of Nations, the ILO has been a forum for developing and demonstrating a Nordic pattern of international cooperation and a Nordic model of national society, not least due to its tripartite structure of representation, with delegates representing governments, workers, and employers. In its very structure, the ILO came to reflect a notion of a modern society in which organized capital and organized labor, together with the government, generated social regulations, ameliorating the tensions between the international economy and national society. The ILO also introduced a model for international cooperation in which intergovernmental and inter-societal dimensions would intertwine (Kettunen, 2013).

Nordic cooperation very early achieved a recognized status in the administration of the ILO. The Nordic countries assumed common mandates in the governing body and in various ILO committees. All three participating groups – governments, workers, and employers – also established their own practices of Nordic cooperation within the framework of the ILO, such as preparatory meetings in Geneva at the beginning of labor conferences. Soon after the foundation of the ILO, the Nordic employer organizations established their own office for ILO activities in Brussels, where the international employers' federation was situated. H. C. Ørsted from Denmark acted as the chief of the Nordic employer's office from the early 1920s until the early 1950s (Sjöberg, 1958: 78–80).

For Nordic cooperation in the workers' group of the ILO, the preconditions were much more limited in the 1920s. The Finnish and Norwegian trade unions were more leftist than the Danish and Swedish ones and had deep suspicions toward the ILO, considering it to be an organization of class compromise. Until the early 1930s, the Norwegian central organization of trade unions refused to nominate a worker representative to international labor conferences (Heldal, 1996). It took until 1936 before the Norwegian central organization of trade unions finally joined the reformist trade union international, the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), which coordinated the workers' group within the ILO. Joining the IFTU also opened the door to the Joint Committee of the Nordic Social Democratic Labour Movement (SAMAK). When the Norwegians joined the IFTU and SAMAK in 1936, the Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, and Swedish trade union confederations also came to an agreement about their intensified cooperation in the ILO. The practice of advance negotiations on issues coming onto the ILO agenda was established (Valkonen, 1987: 185).

While Denmark, Sweden, and Norway were at the top in the international statistics of unionization in the 1930s, Finland had remained one of the least unionized countries in Europe. However, this difference ended up contributing to a deeper Nordic identification among the Finnish trade unionists. In their efforts to make the unions stronger and influential, the Finnish trade union leaders exploited both the ILO's tripartite principle of representation and the criteria they claimed governed 'Nordic democracy.' The concept of Nordic democracy, as defined in the cooperation among the Nordic Social Democrats in the 1930s and further demonstrated at forums such as the Days of Nordic Democracy in the late 1930s, included a combination of parliamentary political democracy and institutions of collective negotiation and agreement on labor markets. It thus became easy for the Finnish trade union leaders to combine the Social Democratic interpretation of Nordic democracy and the ideals of the ILO (Kettunen, 2009, 73).

In reports of the ILO General Director during the 1930s, the Scandinavian responses to the Great Depression, notably the novelties of employment policies, were praised as an excellent model.[4] They were also discussed in the International Federation of Trade Unions. According to a report by the IFTU secretariat to the IFTU general council meeting in Copenhagen in 1935, the Scandinavian countries had 'decisively shown what good fortune can be brought to the whole nation by the activities of a democratic Labor Government.' This had an encouraging effect 'on other democratic countries, where progress has also been made with Trade Union propaganda for economic planning on a democratic basis.'[5]

The engagement of Scandinavian labor parties and trade unions to national political decision-making also limited their possibilities to act as agenda setters within the IFTU and the ILO workers' group. This was the case, for example, in their cautious view on options to reduce working hours in the early 1930s (Kettunen, 2013). On the other hand, the ILO's tripartite structure implied that no member country or group of countries (such as the Nordics) spoke with one voice in the ILO. For example, the Nordic employers opposed the presentation of Scandinavian employment policies for use as an international model. When the British General Director of the ILO, Harold Butler, in his annual report to the international labor conference in Geneva in 1936, once again raised the Swedish employment policy as a model for other countries, both the Swedish and Finnish employer representatives felt themselves compelled to reject such a recommendation.[6]

During World War II, the officials of the ILO began to plan for the post-war period as early as the spring of 1940, even though the war had made the ILO's work – now relocated from Geneva to Montreal – considerably more difficult. The concrete result of this post-war planning was the Philadelphia Declaration in the spring of 1944, a document that, in conjunction with the charter of 1919, now constitutes the definitive statement of the ILO's principles, a part of its Constitution. The core of the Philadelphia Declaration consisted of guidelines for social and economic policy at the national level: full employment, the interdependence of social equality and economic growth, the principle of collective agreements, and the participation of both employers and workers in the formulation and implementation of social and economic policy.

As sources of inspiration for national post-war planning in the Nordic countries, the ILO and the Philadelphia Declaration were less significant than the British Beveridge Plan and various intra-Nordic initiatives (Wium Olesen, 2002). In any case, the post-war development of Scandinavia, especially in Sweden, was perceived not only by some Nordic citizens but also by many outside the Nordic region, as uniquely consistent steps along a universal pathway to progress, envisioned in the Philadelphia Declaration. The Nordic social policy cooperation seemed to promote this vision and confidence in a virtuous circle of social equality, economic growth, and enhanced democracy.

The Nordic 'middle way': universalizing Nordic experiences during the Cold War

The period from 1945 to 1980 is generally considered the Golden Age of the welfare state. This was also the case in the Nordic region. Social rights were expanded in terms of coverage and benefit level, and new programs were introduced. Social expenditures and taxes skyrocketed, both in absolute and relative terms. Even though the Nordic welfare states had long institutional legacies and underwent an incremental change, it is in the decades from the 1950s through the 1970s that they take on the classical characteristics highlighted by comparative welfare state research; features such as universalism, social citizenship, high levels of redistribution, tax financing, gender equality, and strong states. Building on the image of a Nordic model established during the interwar period, the Nordic welfare states during the Cold War became a model both within the Nordic region and internationally.

The Cold War context had a decisive impact on ideological debates on social policy and social policy models (Petersen, 2013). The Cold War consolidated the split within the left between Communist and Social Democratic movements, and this division on the Left served as an impetus for coalitions between Centre-Right and Centre-Left against the larger evil of Communism and the Soviet threat. An observer at the time, Klaus Knorr, argued that the welfare state could be considered the 'most constructive defense of the free world against Communism' (Knorr, 1951: 448). Furthermore, the Cold War meant that international social policy debates became structured along the lines of the general East-West divide, and systemic competition was a *Leitmotif* both on the international scene and at the domestic level.

The ability of the Western European democracies to develop various ideological forms of social capitalism created room for the expansion of social security. In Germany, the *Soziale Marktwirtschaft* tried to balance the two sides (Zinn, 1992; Ptak, 2004), and the Nordic countries went even further, launching the idea of Nordic welfare state as a 'middle way' between capitalism and socialism (Nelson, 1953). In many ways, this image of a model was based on ideas promulgated in the interwar period such as 'Nordic Democracy' and Childs' 'middle way.' In the Cold War era, however, the social policy became even more salient. The successful incarnations into a Nordic welfare model were the subject of heated debates, both domestically within the Nordic societies and internationally. Within the black-white logic of the Cold War, the Nordic welfare model became a realistic utopia for center-left progressives, whereas those on the center-right characterized it as a dystopia of state paternalism or as a thinly disguised socialism (see also Chapter 4 in this book by Carl Marklund).

The attribution of 'Nordic' to the national experiences of the Nordic welfare states was important for several reasons. First, it projected the Nordic societies as democratic, peaceful, etc. Second, it created a platform for Nordic cooperation in terms of both policy formation and a more generalized Nordic 'branding.' Third, it gave a stronger voice and position to the Nordic countries (and related actors) in international debates. Finally, even though the Nordic countries held very different formal positions during the Cold War – three countries being members of NATO, two being neutral – the

Nordic framework allowed for a joint profile, including even neutral Finland despite its special relationship with the neighboring Soviet Union.

We cannot elaborate on all these aspects here. We will instead focus on the international circulation of the image of a Nordic welfare state model. This was not simply the result of Nordic actors who, with their intentions and strategies, sent out messages that were then received, interpreted, and domesticated outside the Nordic region. The process was rather a continuous recirculation and revamping of images that were projected and then reimported in different forms. Furthermore, the construction of the idea of a Nordic welfare state model happened through numerous channels and was facilitated by a multiplicity of mechanisms. One of these channels was cultural institutes – national semipublic institutions intended to promote the language, culture, and literature of the individual Nordic country. Although nationally grounded, these cultural institutes, dispersed in many countries around the world, promoted the Nordic–Scandinavian brand both on their own and in close interstate cooperation (Christiansen, 2009; Glover, 2011). Another formative platform was the initiatives of the Nordic countries for development assistance. After 1945, the Nordic countries became leading spenders on foreign aid. Recent studies in the history of foreign aid show how ideas about the Nordic welfare state played an important role in this respect (Bach et al., 2008: 75ff). In a volume from the early 1950s discussing Nordic aid to the developing world, the Danish social policy expert Henning Friis talked about the Nordic countries as 'frontline soldiers of peace, freedom, and social policy,' arguing that the national welfare state should be projected into the international level (Bach et al., 2008: 75). Finally, the idea of a Nordic model of welfare – building on traditions established in the earlier periods – was constructed through cooperation and comparison, based on a Nordic epistemic community with a shared value system, resulting in a projected Nordic identity or hegemonic frame of reference (Lægreid and Pedersen, 1994). This projection of a unique Nordic value system had a significant impact within the Nordic countries as well as influencing the Nordic approach to the outside.

Freedom and welfare

Influenced by international attention (positive and negative), Nordic politicians and experts placed themselves at the top of the international social policy hierarchy. From this summit, it was only a small step to universalizing the 'unique' Nordic experiences into a general model that should be applied to other aspiring welfare states. It is noteworthy how this universalization process also allowed for the development of a concept that could bridge differences in social policy development within the Nordic region. An illustration of this somewhat arrogant, missionary way of thinking occurred in 1947, when the Icelandic Minister of Social Affairs, Stefánson, argued that even though Iceland lagged behind the general Nordic social–political development, the Nordic Ministries should jointly produce

> … a comprehensive account for the social political development in the Nordic countries, which could be comparative, and other countries might benefit from. I, for my part, believe that the Nordic countries are the highest ranking when it comes to social political legislation.
>
> (Petersen, 2006)

Six years later, Stefánson's suggestion was realized as a book with the ambitious title *Freedom and Welfare* was published as a joint enterprise of the Nordic Ministries of Social Affairs. In the preface to the volume, the Ministers of Social Affairs modestly stated:

> All five countries are parliamentary democracies and they are free democracies dedicated to the basic humanitarian rights they have worked and are working today to promote the welfare of their peoples. They do not claim to have found any final solution to the many and intricate social and economic problems with which our industrialized age is beset. It is hoped, however, that this account of the experience gained by the Northern countries in dealing with a number of these problems will be accepted as a modest contribution to the cause of promoting mutual knowledge and understanding among the peoples of the world.
>
> (Nelson, 1954: II)

The book is not only illustrative of Nordic self-confidence, exemplifying how identity construction and international branding came together. A close reading also reveals that the target audience was in the United States (Marklund and Petersen, 2013). It would be tempting to see evidence of this audience targeting in the use of terms such as 'the Northern countries of Europe' instead of 'the Nordic countries' since the adjective 'Nordic' was contaminated in the specific US context because of its frequent use in the early twentieth century by defenders of racial hierarchies.[7] However, a risk of anachronism would be obvious because in Nordic self-descriptions in general, 'Northern countries' were replaced with 'the Nordic countries' only later in the 1950s. A more persuasive sign of the targeting of a US audience was the avoidance of the term 'welfare state.' An American review praised the book for demonstrating 'the broad implications that are attached to the term "welfare" in northern countries.' She was apparently satisfied that the term in its Nordic usage did not evoke 'the connotations associated with the welfare state.'[8]

Indeed, the term 'welfare state' was used only once over more than 400 pages of text. While this indicates that the concept had not yet achieved such a central role in Nordic self-descriptions as it would later on (Edling, 2018), the absence of reference to a 'welfare state' also demonstrated a branding strategy: in the US context, 'welfare state' had a very bad press in the early Cold War. In 1949, President Truman had thus warned his political allies against using the term 'welfare state' as it was becoming a 'scare word' (Petersen, 2013). This was the result of an intense campaign from opponents of rising taxes and 'big government,' attacking the term itself as being a stepping stone toward Communism. 'Reactionaries hunted around for a new phrase,' stated George Meany, secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of Labour in a speech to the US Congress in April 1950 (Procter, 1950: 115). Whereas the branding was designed for a specific context, the book clearly – although with a rhetoric of modesty – proclaimed the Nordic experiences to be a model for the rest of the world. Obviously, *Freedom and Welfare* did not dramatically change the nature of the US welfare state, however, and despite the general American skepticism vis-à-vis the Nordic welfare model, Nordic policies and policymakers occasionally served as inspiration for US policy makers (Rom Jensen, 2017).

A more receptive context for generalizing Nordic experiences was the ILO, which in the Cold War era turned more attention to decolonization. In 1956, the *International Labour Review*, a journal of the ILO, published a detailed overview on the social–political cooperation between 'the Northern Countries of Europe.' The article was written by Kaare Salvesen, an official in the Norwegian Ministry of Social Affairs and Chairman of the United Nations Social Commission. Salvesen had recently, as an invited UN adviser at a social policy conference of Arab countries, informed them about Nordic cooperation. Concluding his overview, Salvesen noted that:

> These five countries follow one social policy in its broadest sense: they introduce successively, and try to co-ordinate, national programmes consistent with a common view of the responsibility of the community towards those in distress, upon the necessity to give everyone fair and equal opportunities, upon the relation between the State and the individual, and upon the interrelationship between economic and social progress. The result is that the pattern of social legislation is, although differing in details, more homogeneous over the Northern area than it is in many federal States.
>
> (Salvesen, 1956: 357)

The Nordic countries were thus represented as both a model of regional international cooperation and a model of national society, and both models were found relevant also in the context of decolonization.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the conditions in the colonies, then in the throes of liberation, were brought to the forefront in the discussion of international social norms and in the activities of the ILO. Changes also appeared in the interpretations of the Cold War intersystemic conflict (cf. Halliday 1994) and the role of different societal models. The French chair of the employers' group, Pierre Waline, argued in 1961 for employers' active participation in the ILO in order to defend progressive capitalism to confused Asian and African trade unionists and employers, who would have to choose between East and West. According to Waline, the system of industrial relations that had been perfected in the Netherlands and in the Scandinavian countries provided the key to the future. According to Waline, the technical assistance programs of the ILO could then spread this gospel, and together with strong support for the principle of freedom of association, this approach would defeat the appeal of Communism (Haas, 1964: 206). Obviously, not all employers shared this view. Nevertheless, acting as representatives for the tripartism model became an important aspect of Nordic identity in the context of the ILO after World War II. In the Nordic participation in the ILO, the idea of international cooperation as a comparative learning process was consciously combined with the traditional Nordic confidence in popular education. The ILO launched programs of 'workers' education,' aimed to train the workers of former colonies to become 'active and responsible partners in the nation-building process,' and within these programs, the Nordic modes of tripartite participation were promoted by the governments and trade unions of these countries.[9]

One cannot talk about any generally shared appraisal of the Nordic welfare model in the 1950s and 1960s. Controversial views appeared both outside and inside the Nordic region. Social democrats and social liberals embraced the idea of a progressive Nordic model, while left-wing critics saw it as an empty promise, a tactical integration of workers into capitalism; as for the center-right, they were sceptic or even outright hostile towards an idea of comprehensive state-organized social security. However, the circulation of the Nordic approach to welfare and the more intense debate during the Cold War had long-lasting effects: First, the growing attention and contestation regarding a specifically Nordic approach to social problems contributed to the modelization of the Nordic welfare state; second, building on the historical layer from the interwar period, the Cold War cemented the image of democratic progressiveness as a viable alternative to Soviet-style Communism and US-style capitalism. Third, mobilized by a Nordic epistemic community, the image of a Nordic model, in its own right, gained traction within the Nordic countries.

Since the late 1950s, forecasts of a convergence between capitalist and socialist paths of modernization emerged within the expanding social and political sciences (see, for example, Tinbergen, 1961; Aron, 1963; Galbraith, 1967). Among the candidates for the resulting universal societal model was the 'functional socialism,' elaborated by the Swedish social scientist Gunnar Adler-Karlsson (1967). Support for the essentially Western idea of convergence could be found in various notions of a 'Third Way,' including the images of a Nordic 'Middle Way.' However, convergence theories lost much of their premises after the 1970s. In the 1970s, it was easy to develop interpretations based on a crisis of capitalism. However, it became more and more difficult to refer to the economic and social developments in the Eastern bloc as attractive models or powerful potentials. Since the 1980s, the metaphor of the Third Way no longer came to mean an alternative between capitalism and socialism but was instead applied to economic and social politics bridging between Keynesianism and neo-Liberalism, i.e., between different modes of regulating capitalism.[10]

The popularity of the Nordic model in the post-Cold War era

Cross- and trans-national 'comparative imagination' (Frederickson, 2000; Sluga, 2004), inspiring comparisons as political practice, was an integral part of what we retrospectively can interpret as the long history of a Nordic model of welfare. However, it was only in the 1980s that the expression 'Nordic model' came into wider use. The comparative discussion on 'models' – now limited referring to different patterns of regulating capitalism – gained impetus from the end of the Cold War inter-systemic conflict and from the encounters between globalized capitalism and nation-state institutions.

Since the 1980s, crucial aspects of the notion of national society that were associated with the expanding welfare state and parity-based negotiations and agreements in the labor market have been severely challenged in the Nordic countries, as elsewhere. The transformations associated with globalization increased the economic and social asymmetries concerning the role of spatial ties. The increased mobility and increased asymmetries between different actors in terms of their mobility reinforced and, still more, changed the role of economic competitiveness in the definition of national political agendas. In a new way, competitiveness came to refer to potentials of a national society to offer an attractive operational environment to globally mobile economic actors: companies, investors, and people belonging to the 'creative class.' Since the millennium, the concept of 'branding' has frequently been invoked to denote these efforts to make countries attractive to market actors, indicating a kind of commodification of national societies.

In the Nordic countries, changes have taken place under conditions of relative institutional continuity. 'The Nordic welfare state' – often interchangeably used with 'the Nordic welfare society' – is a very popular term in the Nordic countries (Edling, 2019). No political party can expect to gain electoral success by declaring itself to be in opposition to the welfare state. The arguments for a radical deregulation that emerged in the 1980s have been pushed to the margins. Today, everyone seems to be in favor of the welfare state.

With varying emphases in different Nordic countries, rescuing the welfare state became one of the most widely shared arguments in the politics associated with concerns about the aging of the population and the so-called sustainability gap from the 1990s, and the financial crisis that began in 2008. Those concerned about economic competitiveness or advocating austerity politics have motivated these concerns with the necessity of creating or maintaining resources that can sustain the welfare state. Maintaining a viable welfare state is used as an argument for restrictive immigration policies as well as for the promotion of labor immigration. Those defending the welfare state against the pressures of globalized capitalism argue that the welfare state, through its security networks and risk-sharing systems, generates competitive advantages. Rescuing the welfare state seems to be a goal that legitimates many different means, and a means that legitimates many different goals (although one may question how well the Nordic welfare state succeeds in coping with its various rescue operations).

Are we witnessing the end or a new beginning?

In January 2011, Sweden's New Conservatives released a document for the World Economic Forum in Davos. The document, called *The Nordic Way*, sought to rebrand the Nordic Model as a model of liberal economic growth with a social conscience in a time of financial crisis (World Economic Forum, 2011; Swedish Institute, 2012). This document was considered an attempt to claim ownership to a reinterpreted version of the Nordic model, and the reaction by Swedish Social Democrats came promptly: they applied to protect the concept of 'Nordic model' as a registered trademark. This again fueled protest from Nordic Council of Ministers in an affidavit to the Swedish Patent and Registration Office: 'The Nordic Model belongs to the cultural-political heritage of all the Nordic countries and their citizens.' However, after several rounds of discussion, the Patent and Registration Office decided in favor of the Swedish Social Democrats, who were thus granted, for the next 10 years, a privilege of using 'The Nordic Model' (Kettunen et al., 2015: 87–88).

One can safely conclude that the Nordic welfare states have changed as a result of their responses to the challenges of globalization and Europeanization. However, the idea of a model appears to be very flexible. In the decades of expanding welfare states, the Nordic model of welfare was developed and promoted as a consistent pattern of social reform and change. Since the 1990s, the Nordic model has regained international attention due to its capacity to reform and restructure itself in the era of flexible capitalism. This kind of capability and flexibility has become a key component of the Nordic model concept itself. It has increased the possibility to make widely varying interpretations of the Nordic model, all equally legitimate, as well as expanding opportunities to commit oneself to the model and to the battle over its ownership.

Concluding reflections: the ambiguity of the Nordic model

In this chapter, we have traced the history of the idea of Nordic welfare for well over a century, through to our day. Naturally, it is not possible to offer a complete mapping of this process of 'modelization' within a book chapter. However, our survey demonstrates that the notion of a Nordic welfare model has been both durable and capable of continuing reconfiguration. The long-term perspective underscores the historical layering of different elements in the ideas of Nordic welfare, resulting from a complex process of circulation between national, regional, and international experiences and identities. In the following, we will offer a framework for interpreting this historical layering and its ambiguities.

In public and scholarly discourses after the 1980s, 'the Nordic model of welfare' appears as a historical interpretation connecting the past, the present, and the future. It grasps and mixes the different historical layers discussed in this chapter. It also includes dualisms that imply either divergent views or inherent paradoxes in one and the same view concerning the contents of the model. In the following, we distinguish between five partly overlapping dualisms.

First, a dualism of nostalgia and actuality is involved in the terms *Norden* and 'Nordic' in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. The nostalgia may be for the 'people's home' that was at one time sheltered from the outer world, for the role of the exceptionally consistent representatives of universal moral norms, for a society that was the object and subject of rational knowledge, or for a unique type of peace-loving popular internationalism. However, alongside or combined with nostalgia, there are the efforts toward the actualizing of 'Nordic.' They appear in the discussion about the future-oriented competitiveness of 'the Nordic model.' Attempts to unite nostalgia and actuality also appear, most obviously in varying combinations of enduring characteristics and creative innovativeness constructed in Nordic branding.

In assessments of national adaptations to globalized capitalism or European integration, we find a *second dualism* in the usages of 'the Nordic model.' Here the term 'model' may refer to either an old structure now threatened through globalization and European integration or to an effective way of responding to the new challenges. The Nordic model that is perceived as a target of threats is usually identified with the welfare state. A newer concept, the 'competition state,' is usually used by critical scholars, describing a move away from the Nordic model of welfare. There are occasional signs of adopting 'competition state' as an affirmative concept for how to respond to the new challenges of globalization by reforming the Nordic welfare model and giving first priority to one of its old ingredients, the goal of greater competitiveness.[11]

However, the Nordic model as a response is most often associated with positive economic consequences of the (somehow reformed) welfare state (Andersen et al., 2007). This implies an economization of social policy in two different senses: as an argument for the recognition of the economic importance of social policy and as an argument for reforming social policy in a way that could meet the requirement of its being a productive factor, providing 'social investments' and increasing 'social capital.' As far as the Nordic model of welfare is developing into a 'social investment welfare state' (Morel et al., 2012), we can talk about an institutional conversion in which the old welfare-state institutions are modified to serve new competition-state functions.[12] Seen as a capacity for self-reform, this kind of change appears to be a crucial part of the 'new super-model' brand of the Nordic model.

In the world of different models, the concept of model remains ambiguous, also in a way that implies a *third dualism* of the Nordic model. On the one hand, 'model' refers to deep-rooted, persistent cultural beliefs, norms, and values that have given rise to and uphold different kinds of welfare policies and institutions. On the other hand, the concept of model refers to best practices and comparative transferable knowledge to be utilized in cross-border policy learning. At the level of policy formulations, this dualism has been actualized in discussion on the preconditions and limits of exporting or importing elements of another model, for example, to what degree and how the Nordic model could inform welfare policies in China (Kettunen et al., 2014). In efforts to ensure national competitiveness, attempts to combine universal 'best practices' with a particular competitive advantage, 'niche' or 'edge,' have been a way of linking the two understandings of 'model.'[13]

Focusing on the exceptionalism of the Nordic model, a *fourth dualism* can be identified. Our historical analysis indicates that the Nordic pattern of reforming society was often interpreted as a uniquely consistent way of advancing on the universal path of social progress. The aforementioned books by Childs in 1936 and by the Nordic social ministries in 1953, as well as the role of the Nordic countries in the ILO, exemplify this merging of the Nordic and the universal, and it is expressed both from Nordic and outsider perspectives. However, another, newer way to describe the Nordic uniqueness also appears. From a perspective of a completed construction of the Nordic model, commentators have characterized it as a unique combination of principles and practices that seem incompatible (e.g., high taxes and competitive economies) but nevertheless works as the bumblebee that flies against all odds.

Oxymoron-type expressions are used by scholars to represent essential features of the Nordic model. One of them is 'statist individualism.' It was coined by the Swedish historian Lars Trägårdh with Swedish references, but it has gained political influence as a characterization of the Nordic model in general. Originally, in the 1990s, the argument was targeted against the right-wing critique of the allegedly patronizing welfare state. However, the way 'statist individualism' has been recently used in the branding of the Nordic model seems to focus on a combination of confidence and social capital with individualism as the essence of the model. This idea can be used in center-right politics, not only for contesting Social Democratic claims to ownership of the welfare state but also for arguing that the extension of individual choice through market-based solutions is the most appropriate policy for implementing the principles of the Nordic model (see especially World Economic Forum, 2011).

The fifth dualism concerns a longer-term ambiguity in the roles and meanings of 'Nordic.' In the Nordic discourses we have examined in this chapter, 'Nordic' has referred to a transnational regional framework of international cooperation, including intra-Nordic relations and Nordic contributions to wider international collaboration. At the same time, it has also referred to a mode of change and reform in a national society, appearing in national 'Nordic welfare states.' Both these aspects are included in the nostalgia associated with 'Nordic.' They appear in a narrative of unique, peace-loving popular internationalism and in a narrative of shaping the nation states into uniquely universalistic welfare states. However, not only Nordic nostalgia but also historical welfare-state research, including this chapter, has contributed to bridging these two narratives. The Nordic ideational and institutional framework of cooperation, comparison, and competition played a significant role in the making of five different national welfare states. The idea of a Nordic model of welfare was developed and demonstrated in the acts of Nordic cooperation that took place in wider international contexts, and the model took on different meanings in each national context.

At the same time as the popularity of 'the Nordic model' has greatly increased, Nordic cooperation in welfare policies, one of the old core areas of Nordic collaboration, has considerably diminished (Kettunen et al., 2015). The Nordic model of welfare has become more nationalistic. This does not mean that differences between the 'five exceptions of one model' should increase. This kind of nationalism may entail more similarities as it is associated with attempts to meet the imperatives of globalization that are conceived as national challenges. When 'the Nordic model' is discussed as a target of threats associated with globalization, the notion of a model has often been constructed by means of a nostalgic welfare nationalism, sometimes associated with protectionist or xenophobic nationalism. When 'the Nordic model' is discussed as a response to the challenges of globalization, the notion of a model is associated with national competitiveness. In these ideational constructions of the Nordic model, mythical ingredients of Nordicness seem to play a significant role, while the history of Nordic social policy cooperation does not.

Notes

1 See VPM, September 16 1918, ILO-Commission (National Archives Sweden), FI:1; Minutes 'Nordic social political cooperation', November 7, 1919, Department of Social Affairs (National Archives Denmark), International Department, 1929, record 23.

2 Protocol and supplements for the Nordic Social Policy Meeting in Copenhagen April 1919, ILO-Commission (National Archives Sweden), FI:1.

3 Quoted from the Minutes 'Nordic Social Political Cooperation', 11 November 1919, Department of Social Affairs (National Archives Denmark), International Department, 1929, record 23.

4 Especially at the International Labour Conference. Seventeenth Session. Geneva 1935. Report of the Director. Geneva 1935, 18–19; International Labour Conference. Sixteenth Session. Geneva 1936. Report of the Director. Geneva 1936, 24–27.
5 Report of Secretariat on the Activities of the International Federation of Trade Unions during the period from 1st April, 1934, to 31st March, 1935. IFTU Nr 94. International Institute of Social History (IISG), Amsterdam.
6 International Labour Conference. Twentieth Session. Geneva, 1936. Report of the Director. Geneva 1936, 24–27; International Labour Conference. Twentieth Session. Geneva, 1936. Record of Proceedings. Geneva 1936, 127–128, 134–135.
7 The term 'Nordic' was frequently used to denote racial hierarchies in the interwar period. This was strongly criticised in reviews of the literature in leading academic journals referring to this as 'Nordomaniac', the 'Nordic Guard', 'Nordic superiority', 'the Nordic alarm again', 'the Nordic Propaganda', and as 'occasional outbursts from the Ultra-Nordics'.
8 Review by Helen Fisher Hohman in *Social Service Review*, 1956, vol. 30 (2), 229–232.
9 For example, 'An International Experiment in Workers' Education.' *International Labour Review*, 1958, vol. 57, 186–194.
10 Concerning the revised 'Third Way' among the Swedish Social Democrats, see Åmark (1992) and Andersson (2007).
11 In Denmark, the Social Democratic minister of finance, Bjarne Corydon, in 2013 acknowledged 'competition state' as a good concept for up-to-date national politics ('Corydon: Konkurrencestat er ny velfærdsstat', *Politiken*, (23 August 2013). Scholarly support for this view is provided by Pedersen (2011).
12 On conversion as a form of institutional change, see Thelen (2003); for studies importing 'competition state' into scholarly discussion, see Cerny (1990), Streeck (1998), and Palan and Abbot (1999).
13 This mode of thought and action was influentially advocated by Porter (1990).

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3 Social science, humanities, and the ‘Nordic model’[1]

Lars Mjøset

Introduction

The relation between social science and politics does not lend itself to easy generalizations. For a long time, there was no close relation between political invocations of Nordic common features and the systematic knowledge provided by historians and social scientists on that question. While academic scholars through the twentieth century contributed compilations of facts about the Nordic countries, we find that only in the late 1960s did a few social scientists start the research projects that paved the way for the systematic study of common Nordic traits in line with current standards of research. We label these researchers ‘pioneers’ in the specific sense that they laid down the foundations for research on such common traits. But their followers only began to explicitly investigate such traits in the early 1980s – just at the time when the notion of a Nordic model was launched in political circles. That notion, however, was not at all related to the research of the pioneers and their followers.

This chapter provides *both* a review of research *and* an exercise in the sociology of knowledge. The review is not just a description of relevant research along a timeline as if knowledge on common Nordic traits accumulated in a linear sense. Two conceptual frameworks are used to classify and evaluate the various strands of research under review. A sociology of knowledge framework establishes a typology of public spheres. A more specified sociology of social scientific knowledge specifies relevant features of the public sphere of science, distinguishing three different ways of doing social science (history included). Key elements of these conceptual frameworks will be introduced in separate sections at the point where they are necessary for the argument (cf. the sections below on public spheres, types of party organizations, strong and loose comparisons).

Combining the two frameworks, the analysis focuses on the role of boundary terms that circulate between various public spheres. The Nordic model is identified as a boundary term that emerges in the political public sphere in the early 1980s, generalizing an earlier, cautious understanding of a Swedish model. The main problem investigated is what happens to social science

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studies of Nordic common traits (Nordic model) once this term circulates from the political into the scientific public sphere.

The review covers efforts by social scientists to establish synthetic accounts of common traits between trajectories of socio-economic development at the macro level. Such accounts have to tackle the explanatory challenge of combining national and transnational factors, paying attention to both comparative specificities and transfers between the units analyzed. Unlike narrower, sectoral definitions, such synthetic understandings are claims about common traits in the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) across more than one issue area. We are particularly concerned with research that has laid the foundations for and made claims about a model with reference to the complementarities between institutional domains such as the welfare state, parliamentary democracy, the state apparatus (central and local), labor markets, education, skills, and innovation.

Boundary terms

One concept should be presented up front. A *boundary term* originates in one public sphere (science, politics, culture), but circulates as it becomes central to discussions in more than one sphere. Stakeholders agree on such terms, in spite of their differing agendas. This is what Miettinen (2013: 89) refers to as *transdiscursive* terms. He finds that in discussions across the science/politics divide, such terms focus attention, integrate formally separate issues, facilitate discussions between different social groups, create broad ideological consensus, and empower proponents of specific views. In short, they provide interpretations of the present, what Mannheim called 'diagnosis of our time' (Miettinen, 2013: 21). It is important to note that as such they are terms or labels, they are not concepts formed through systematic scientific investigation. As we shall see, scientific disciplines can relate their concept formation to boundary terms in different ways.

Miettinen mainly focuses on what such terms do in terms of coordinating administration, politics, and interest groups. He studied the term 'national innovation system' which evolved in interaction between research (evolutionary economics) and policy making (The Finnish Science and Technology Policy Council). In this chapter, we mainly study circulations in the opposite direction. Our main question is thus: when a boundary term circulates from politics into science, what are the effects on research in the science sphere? We study many different political and administrative agents, and a number of social science disciplines.

We find that since the 1990s, the 'Nordic model' became a boundary term facilitating communication across public spheres, especially politics and research, providing a common reference in many different discourses. From that time, the Nordic model was investigated by an increasing number of academic disciplines and invoked by a widening circle of political parties. In that situation, research on the Nordic model was drawn away from the careful contextual specification that prevailed among the pioneers and their followers. This discussion invokes our specified sociology of social science, a distinction between three practical philosophies or styles of social science (Mjøset, 2009). While the research of the pioneers expressed a *contextualizing* style, developing concepts to analyze institutional complexes as singular historical outcomes, the disciplines that responded to the Nordic model as a boundary term, were committed to either the *standard* or the *social-philosophical* practical philosophies. Both of these generalize in decontextualizing ways, relying on either definitive concepts (standard) or epochal concepts (social philosophy). The value of these distinctions will emerge from the analysis below.

Toward the end of the chapter, particular attention is paid to specific research projects in economics and history, projects that express the standard and social-philosophical style, respectively. The discussion intends to demonstrate both strengths and weaknesses in the way scholars in these disciplines contribute to the accumulation of knowledge in the form of synthetic claims about Nordic common traits. Comparison with the earlier work of the pioneers/followers leads to a number of critical remarks, in the hope that this will stimulate self-reflection among scholars analyzing Nordic models in different disciplines.

Late 1940s – the Rehn/Meidner model

In the late 1940s, the Swedish Social Democratic party (SAP) government struggled to avoid inflation in a situation of full employment and potential overheating of the economy. The Ministry of Finance, led by one of the party's main intellectuals, Ernst Wigforss, suggested an incomes policy that would imply wage moderation, particularly for workers in the least productive firms.

The Swedish trade union confederation (LO) sensed that this might undermine its membership support in these sectors. Two LO economists, Gösta Rehn and Rudolf Meidner, educated under the Stockholm school of economics, suggested an alternative model which avoided incomes policies (Erixon, 2017). LO would pursue a 'wage policy of solidarity' in the centralized wage negotiations. Workers in all firms would claim an average wage level, putting pressure on low-productivity firms, but securing a generous profit level in high-productivity firms. As long as the most productive capitalists reinvested their above-average profits (avoiding too much waste and conspicuous consumption), this would boost the transformation of Swedish manufacturing industry. Inflation would be avoided by generally tight fiscal and monetary policies, while full employment would be safeguarded by active labor market policies through the State Labor Market Board (AMS), which organized reskilling and geographical mobility.

To show how this model had only a limited circulation, we apply a typology of public spheres.

Public spheres

A science public sphere (science sphere, for short) can be distinguished from two interconnected political public spheres, as well as a cultural literary sphere. The science sphere involves curricula, peer-reviewed scientific publications, conferences, and internationalized disciplines with different disciplinary profiles. The political sphere is divided between a mobilizing sphere, involving social movements pursuing contentious politics (Tilly, 2007), and an administrative sphere of routine politics involving governing political parties and the bureaucracy.

Political parties often emerged as social movements whose arguments spread into the mobilizing political public sphere. The Nordic labor parties are cases in point, serving as the political extension of unions aggregated in trade union confederations (LOs) which pursue workers' economic interests. As the parties attained governmental responsibility following the turbulence of the 1920s and 1930s, their politics became routinized. Policy making in the administrative public sphere, involving bureaucracy, government, and parliament, gained in importance. Parties thus faced an administration/mobilization dilemma: an increasing gap between routine (managing the state) and contentious (reproducing support from a sufficient amount of voters) politics (Esping-Andersen, 1985).

In the case of the Rehn/Meidner model, communication across public spheres was limited: 'model' was understood in line with the economics discipline mainstream, internal to the science sphere. The model was reported in at least one scientific publication (Meidner, 1952). There was no spread to other academic disciplines. In the early post-war decades, the model was only considered in the relatively closed public spheres of Swedish economic policy making, strictly inside the administrative layers of the political public sphere: bureaucrats in the finance ministry (administrators socialized into the same economics terminology), SAP politicians, and LO staff. Only later was it labeled a 'Swedish model' (Leion, 1974). In spite of the existence of a few common institutional features (e.g., centralized wage setting) and the existence of Nordic congresses of labor federations, a broader discussion of the Swedish Rehn-Meidner model as a Nordic model did not emerge.

Mid-1970s – a Swedish model launched in political public spheres

Another notion of the Swedish model was launched by the Swedish social democrats in the mid-1970. There was some French/international attention to a Swedish model in the late 1960s (see Chapter 5 by Hellenes), but the actual struggles on how to understand it started in the Swedish political public sphere in 1974.

Only in the 1958–1974 period did the Rehn/Meidner model guide Swedish economic policies (Erixon, 2017). LO unions in exporting sectors soon criticized the policy for consequences such as structural rationalization, high labor mobility, and authoritarian work organization (Stråth, 1998). Illegal strikes in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Korpi, 1981a) indicated that parts of the LO grassroots opposed SAP's routine politics. An LO-employed economist, Leion (1974), synthesized the criticism.

Responding to this mobilization, both LO and SAP waged new policies. Meidner headed the LO committee that developed a proposal for wage earner investment funds (WEIF). It addressed a main asymmetry in the Rehn/Meidner model, the problem of excess profits in the most productive firms. The funds would control increasing shares of these profits, dampening wealth inequalities, and increasing union power over investment decisions. The proposal challenged the historical (Saltsjøbaden) compromise at the core of Swedish reformism since 1938: Employers had accepted social democratic welfare state reforms (secured by the large number of SAP MPs), as long as they were allowed to retain control over investments and shop-floor management. In June 1976, the LO congress decided to pursue the WEIF-reform, suggesting the negotiation of a new historical compromise.

As governing party, SAP had already embarked on a more cautious line, embracing milder economic democracy reforms (laws on employment security (LAS) and codetermination (MBL) in 1974 and 1976). In contrast, the LO 1976 decision opted for the strongest possible version of economic democracy: in the longer term, unions would displace employers' decision-making autonomy. The emphasis was on the contentious politics of the union grassroots, with less concern for routine politics.

Hellenes (Chapter 5) notes that wider circulation of the term 'Swedish model' started as both the social democratic and the non-socialist press discussed these matters in 1974. In 1975, and especially after the 1976 WEIF decision, the Conservative party attacked SAP's concern for economic democracy, arguing that any violation of the original historical compromise was an attack on democracy. Two interpretations of democracy here clashed: employers and conservative politicians insisted on political democracy only, while the labor movement wanted to extend democratic participation further into the economic domain.

The labor movement was internally split on how far to extend economic democracy: LO surprised SAP in 1976, and despite some verbal support, the party elite regretted the WEIF proposal and sought to modify it (Stråth, 1998). When SAP made the Swedish model its major PR-slogan in the 1976 electoral campaign, that term differed markedly from the one implied in LO's proposal, which was concerned with the contentious question of investment control, and suggesting negotiation of a new historical compromise. The SAP claim to a Swedish model summed up the historical achievements of social democratic routine politics under the stable historical compromise until the late 1960s, celebrating its best results (welfare, safety, full employment).

The discussions that circulated the term 'Swedish model' in Swedish political public spheres 1974–1976 implied three divergent claims to such

Table 3.1 Three claims to a Swedish model

	Organization	*Historical compromise*	*Economic democracy*	*Capitalism/ democracy*
Radical	LO	Fundamental renegotiation	Challenge employers' control over investments and work organization	Capitalism can no longer be reconciled with democracy
Cautious	SAP	Revision	Negotiate and/ or legislate codetermination, board representation	Capitalism and democracy can be reconciled (reformist position)
Liberal/ conservative	Non-socialist parties, employers (SAF)	Retain as agreed in 1938	Not a legitimate part of the democratic agenda	Democratic principles were never meant for the sphere of production

a model. In Table 3.1, the two different understandings within the LO/ SAP-discussions are labeled the radical versus the cautious one. These two versions of the Swedish model circulated in different ways. The radical notion was mainly reproduced in international academic discussions inside the science sphere, spilling over only into marginal left-wing politics. The cautious concept, in contrast, was generalized into a Nordic model and circulated broadly between politics and research. Finally, the liberal/conservative notion (Table 3.1) played a role as Swedish employers responded to the WEIF challenge but became less relevant as non-socialist intellectuals and think tanks found they could hijack the cautious notion and disconnect it from the achievements of social democracy.

Types of party organization

A second conceptual resource in our analysis concerns political parties. They are main political organizations that operate in-between mobilization, contentious politics, and routine politics. They contribute many candidates for terms such as 'the Swedish model' that circulate in politics and beyond. We employ Katz and Mair's (2018) periodization of the mass party (the late 1940s to early 1970s), the catch-all party (the 1970s to the 1990s), and the cartel party (since the 1990s). The periodization is tailor-made for social democratic parties, but the last two phases apply to any party with a large share of the vote. The cartel party organizational form emerged since the 1990s in conjunction with the new consensus on austere economic policies and delegation of power to the EU in many European states. The larger parties effectively (more than consciously) create a cartel in which the policy choices converge despite rhetorical disagreements.

SAP's use of 'Swedish model' in the 1976 electoral campaign indicates the final stage of the party's transformation from a mass party to a catch-all party competing for middle-class votes, thus downplaying LO's efforts to counteract increasing inequalities of wealth and to push for radical economic democracy in the large manufacturing firms.

Swedish debates in the 1980s

In later debates on the Swedish model, the three different understandings (Table 3.1) often circulated together in political and cultural public spheres: the left-labor version clashing with the right-leaning/employer version, and the cautious position wavering between claims that the early post-war model was seriously threatened (when labor was in opposition) and promises that it was being revised in the light of new challenges (when labor was in office). Conservatives held that even the cautious version would eventually undermine democracy, quoting the radical version as proof.

When the social democratic party returned to government in 1982, the WEIF proposal had been thoroughly modified. By the time it was implemented in 1983, SAP's economic and social policy making was increasingly influenced by a moderate group of social democratic bureaucrats and politicians, with Kjell O. Feldt and Erik Åsbrink as key persons. Despite this victory for the cautious version of the Swedish model in politics, even this watered-down proposal generated massive mobilization by the non-socialist side (parties and employers' organizations), defending the conservative-liberal version. If – as Meidner (1993: 226) implied – Sweden by 1976 had been 'closer to the ideal of a classless society than any other country,' the hostilities whirled up by the WEIF-reform was one reason why its path changed. In a couple of decades – according to the radical interpretation – Sweden became the Nordic country that had departed the furthest from such radical ideals. In that period, the generalized concept of a Nordic model emerged.

That concept generalized the *cautious* notion of the Swedish model. The Swedish debates had already circulated it in politics, so it was easy to find similar elements (mixed economy, centralized bargaining, generous security net) in the other Nordic countries. But even that generalization was no simple process. At the time, social scientists had searched for Nordic common traits within the relatively autonomous science sphere. This scholarly development took place in sociology and political science. In order to cover this part of the story, we present another main conceptual element: the use of strong comparisons as a methodological tool that specifies sensitizing concepts.

Strong and loose comparisons

According to Blumer (1954: 140), the natural sciences employ *definitive* concepts, which define the traits common to a class of objects, allowing inference directly from the concept to the understanding of a singular case and its relevant empirical properties. In contrast, the human/social sciences use *sensitizing* concepts, which are *not* able to define such common traits (attributes, benchmarks). Applied to singular cases, they only give 'a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances' (Blumer, 1954: 148). Sensitizing concepts require a specification for each new case.

This point was further developed in the case-based methodology of grounded theory. This 'constant comparative method' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 102) is a way to develop middle range theories that explain by developing and adjusting sets of sensitizing concepts to specific cases. Generalization only covers the cases that are actually investigated. Theory is thus not predictive. We define *strong comparisons* as case comparisons that study similarities and differences across properties of the cases relevant to the explanatory purpose. Empirical comparisons of all relevant properties are provided for all cases and for one or more specified periods. Strong comparison implies filling all the cells of such a case/property matrix. *Loose comparisons* fail to satisfy this criterion: all cells are not filled, empirical information across cases is not fully comparable, and similar properties are not covered in all case accounts. One form in which such loose comparisons appear is the edited volume with country chapters and only very short introductory and concluding chapters.

The overall methodological framework for the use of strong comparisons is what we have called a contextualist approach (Mjøset, 2009). Such an attitude was shared by three researchers that can be seen as pioneers because they laid down the foundations for proper research into Nordic common traits.

Pioneers of comparative social science in the 1960s and 1970s

In the post-war period, social science was upgraded across Western Europe, mainly inspired by US adaptation and upgrading of European traditions (Mjøset, 1991).

Three pioneers of sociology/political science posed distinct research questions that led them to study selections of nation states, the Nordics included. Through systematic, strong comparisons of these countries, they also became pioneers of the study of state and society in Norden. They are Stein Rokkan (Norwegian, 1921–1979), Walter Korpi (Swedish, 1934–), and Dieter Senghaas (German, 1941–). Their work enabled later researchers to pose the question of common Nordic traits.

The pioneers conducted comparisons both within the Nordic area and between Nordic and non-Nordic countries. Two of them compared within the Western world, while Senghaas also compared with third world countries. They combined qualitative/historical and quantitative/statistical methods. Their historical range differed: Korpi mainly analyzed the period from the 1930s to the present, Rokkan and Senghaas mainly the age of industrialism since the nineteenth century, but Rokkan even made excursions further backward.

None of these pioneers made any claims to a Nordic model, but each of them displays a 'relation to values,' as Weber (1973 [1904]) called it. Rokkan (1970) saw the Nordic countries as early instances of multiparty mass democracy. Korpi saw Sweden as the country that recently had extended democracy the most, turning political democracy into social democracy and then demanding radical economic democracy (see above on the WEIF proposal). Senghaas considered the Nordic countries as some of the earliest cases of small countries achieving catch-up industrialization that fulfilled a major development goal – economic growth with equity. Among the pioneers, only Senghaas applied a regional label: 'The Scandinavian development path' (*Entwicklungsweg*), mainly analyzing Finland (working paper ca. 1980, later Chapter 2 in Senghaas, 1982).

This development of conceptual frameworks in the science sphere took place in relative autonomy from other public spheres. Unlike economics, these upstart disciplines (sociology, political science) had few direct connections to the administrative public sphere. They did not make models related to national accounts and planning. They studied historical mobilization, returning to the more institutionalist/legal, historical kind of political economy that mathematized economics had left behind. True, like most scholars in the 1960s, the pioneers aimed at general theories. Rokkan tried out formal conceptual frameworks from Parsons and Hirschman, Korpi developed a power resource framework that modeled historical compromises between collective actors (referring to rational choice theory), and Senghaas combined dependency theories from development economics with linkage theories of economic growth. But each of their conceptual frameworks was related to the relevant contexts by means of strong comparisons. In this way sensitizing concepts were contextualized into components of conjunctural explanations of the outcomes under study. Their methodological self-understanding may have been conventional (closer to the standard approach, Mjøset, 2009), but their comparisons yielded comprehensive case accounts and contextualized generalizations, typical of the contextualist approach.

Korpi published some of his most important scientific works (synthesized in Korpi, 1983) during the historical context of the WEIF debates 1976–1983. He studied the administration/mobilization dilemma (as defined above) through large survey materials on the situation of Swedish metalworkers (Korpi, 1978). He further generated an empirically based taxonomy that ranked Western countries depending on the degree to which labor movements had been able to accumulate wage earners' power resources (in parliamentary democratic institutions) to counter the power resources of employers (investment and labor process control) (Korpi, 1983).

Some may argue that Korpi was biased. He related to the WEIF debates in the public sphere like any other active citizen. As a SAP member, he wrote in the party journal (Korpi, 1981b), criticizing LO's scheme for being too syndicalist. Modifying LO's suggestion that only unions would be represented on the funds' boards, Korpi (1982) proposed broader board representation by local governments and civil society groups. In the end, as we saw (p. 37 above), both proposals lost out.

Korpi's views in the WEIF debates were based on his research, but his interventions in the mobilizing political sphere did not affect the concepts he – as a researcher – chose to employ when formulating his research questions and developing explanations of contemporary processes. Below, we argue that such grounding was lost when a new wave of researchers just took the reality of a Swedish or Nordic model for granted.

In principle, developing the pioneers' strong comparisons, one should be able to determine whether – and in what respects – the Nordic countries display enough similarities to merit conclusions on common traits. These conclusions might then be aggregated into properties of a synthetic understanding of Nordic common traits, valid for a certain historical period. *Several* synthetic models would be possible, depending on the research questions asked and the properties involved. Thus, on the basis of these results and additional research, some of the pioneers' followers explicitly began to discuss Nordic common traits.

The Late 1970s to the early 1990s – social science followers searching for common Nordic traits

In the mid-to-late 1970s, the followers extended the work of their teachers in many ways, addressing both old and new research questions. They did so just as the Swedish model claim surfaced in Swedish political public spheres (see p. 37 above). Possibly, this led some of them to investigate claims to common Scandinavian or Nordic traits. Still, the question of a Nordic model did not come up in these scholarly debates. The questions they asked related to current debates in both political and cultural public spheres, but answers were developed *within* the science sphere, relatively independent of circulating terms from other public spheres.

The Australian political scientist Francis G. Castles (1978) – drawing on concepts and findings from Rokkan – was the first follower to thoroughly analyze common Scandinavian traits, labeled a social democratic 'image' of society. Other Rokkan-students (Lafferty, 1971; Østerud, 1978; Kuhnle, 1975, 1978, 1981) had analyzed Nordic countries, but only comparing, not studying common traits. Later, Kuhnle also studied common traits (Alestalo and Kuhnle, 1986).

In several influential contributions, sociologist Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1980, 1985) – using Korpi's data set (Esping-Andersen, 1990) – suggested a typology of welfare regimes, linking state, labor market, and family. He distinguished the social democratic regime from the conservative (continental Europe) and liberal (Anglo-Saxon) regimes. Later, political scientists Evelyn Huber and John D. Stephens (2001; summing up research since the

1980s) – based on their own dataset – explicitly used the term 'Nordic social democratic welfare state,' analyzing the three Scandinavian countries and Finland. There were several other followers, and the following four points apply to all of them.

First, the work of the followers yielded no converging conclusions on common traits. Like the pioneers, the followers did not think of *one* Nordic model when they designed their projects. Claims to common traits were made on the basis of careful comparisons, both within Norden and with non-Nordic cases.

A striking example is the joint work of the most influential pioneer/follower team. In the mid-1980s, Esping-Andersen and Korpi explicitly discussed common features of Nordic welfare states. In their original calculation of power resource and decommodification indexes, they found that Finland ranked lower than Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Esping-Andersen defined decommodification by the combination of universalism (pension provision) and generous benefit levels, securing maximum personal independence from the market. Nordic traits could not be reduced to high decommodification scores since also Belgium and the Netherlands scored high here. A distinct Nordic approach emerged only when the egalitarian orientation was included. The same conclusion was brought out in a clustered case comparison between Scandinavia, Austria, and Germany (Esping-Andersen and Korpi, 1984). They explicitly challenged a view held by several Rokkan followers (including Kuhnle) that the post-war welfare states were explained by political consensus rather than by the relative power position of the labor movements (Esping-Andersen and Korpi, 1986: 71).

Referring to complementarities between the welfare state and other institutional complexes, their approach was definitely synthetic as defined above. They emphasized that egalitarianism (less skewed income distribution) was also taken care of via taxation, collective bargaining, and manpower retraining measures (active labor market policies).

Second, the fifth sovereign member country of the Nordic council (founded 1952), Iceland, was seldom included in these comparisons. Among the pioneers, only Rokkan (1981) included the country on equal terms with the others. Among the followers, Iceland was fully included in a comparison of the five Nordic post-war economic policy models (Mjøset, 1987), and in studies of its welfare state in a comparative Scandinavian perspective (Ólafsson, 1993). The fact that Iceland shares a Nordic early history is a challenge for any research-based discussion of a Nordic model (Mjøset, 2011a) since its historical development from around the Napoleonic wars displays more elements of economic dependency, later and more one-sided industrialization, and a weaker coalition for bureaucratic autonomy than any of the other Nordic states.

Third, many of the followers were inspired by the radical version of the Swedish model. They had been socialized into academic social science during the student revolt. That revolt was no broad social mobilization; rather it was a mobilization internal to the institutions of higher learning. Attempts to broaden mobilization into general politics hardly ever led to more than small-scale political organizations expressing revolutionary romanticism. The best research on the Nordic countries was never driven by such sentiments. Still, many young scholars at the time were inspired by the continuities between the Rehn/Meidner model and the WEIF proposal. Especially non-Nordic scholars here saw a 'third way' to democratic socialism. Martin (1975, and several other publications) was an early case, followed by Stephens (1979; cf also Huber/Stephens, 2001). However, none of these scholars idealized the WEIF proposal since they all followed the Swedish situation very closely.

Fourth, the followers later directed attention to the issues brought up by the feminist movement. Esping-Andersen (1999) and others, driven by discussions with feminist researchers, argued that high female labor force participation rates were an integral part of the social-democratic welfare regime. Esping-Andersen coined the concept 'defamilialization,' social policies that render women autonomous to engage in the labor market or to set up autonomous households. Defamilialization turned out to be one of the strongest instances of a single common trait. The main demographic outcome was a relatively high fertility rate, making the emerging 'aging crisis' less of a problem in Norden than on the continent. However, that outcome could be observed in at least one continental welfare state too, namely France. Specified comparisons, particularly referring to the French pronatalist tradition in family policies, were needed here. There is now a large literature covering the 'women-friendly' welfare states in the Nordic area, celebrating the region's recent tradition of state feminism (Hernes, 1987), another case of a mobilization/administration link.

Concerning family policies as an important branch of social policies (in contrast to the principle of subsidiarity typical of Catholic countries), policy ideas have circulated across public spheres connecting state feminist activists (whether in academia or in movements) and administrators in social affairs ministries. This was the first time social researchers focused on potential common traits that were not directly linked to the history of the social-democratic labor movement (Lister, 2009). Bergqvist et al. (1999) provide comparisons of gender and politics in all five Nordic cases, concluding with a balanced count of similarities and differences. They do not claim to study a Nordic model in this field.

1980s social democratic politics – emergence of the Nordic model in political public spheres

In the early 1980s, the cautious notion of the Swedish model was generalized for Norden. This was accomplished within SAMAK, the discussion forum for all the Nordic social democratic parties/organizations (Lundberg, 2006; Parr, 2007). Following committee work in 1981, the former Norwegian finance minister, Per Kleppe, in 1982 presented a paper (to the SAMAK congress) entitled *The Nordic Model. An outline for discussion*. In the dry bureaucrat language of the administrative public sphere, he surveyed the main challenges to Nordic social democratic routine politics in the early 1980s.

The main external challenge was the lower average rates of world economic growth as well as the coming of newly industrializing, low-wage competitors. In addition, there were internal challenges, largely unanticipated consequences of labor's (and other governing parties') policies during the preceding 'Golden age': the fact that the various national 'Keynesian' varieties of economic policy making were less effective (stagflation); unruly grassroots at the factory level; and protests focusing on nature conservation.

Kleppe regarded the old model as a synthetic one, combining solidaristic wage-policy in collective bargaining, a welfare state safety net, 'Keynesian' economic policies, and redistributive arrangements. The new model he suggested was an upgraded version of the *cautious* Swedish model. The main Swedish representative on the SAMAK committee was Feldt, a clear proponent of the cautious – against the radical – version (Table 3.1). However, one point was shared with the radical version: the old model was regarded as outdated. But Kleppe's new model would pursue the cautious line, not push toward the radical WEIF alternative.

Kleppe's 'outline for discussion' only used the phrase 'Nordic model' in the title. In the main text, 'Scandinavian model' was the preferred label. He generalized the Norwegian and Swedish experiences, and to some extent the Danish one as well. It mattered little for his attempts to define a new model that Finland and Iceland most likely did not share all elements of the old model. For instance, their wage negotiations had been wound up with devaluation cycles (Mjøset, 1987). Kleppe was probably aware that the Finnish and Icelandic members of SAMAK were eager to follow and learn from the three leading Nordic social democracies. He could also reasonably assume that Iceland and Finland faced the same external challenges as the three others. Whether the internal challenges were similar for all SAMAK members was never discussed.

The analysis conveyed a deep sense of the administration/mobilization dilemma. Kleppe noted that some might consider it strange to discuss 'technical questions' such as the composition of state budgets and credit flows. But he stated as a fact that the economics experts are in control. If politicians did not interfere 'with the work of the "technicians," these "technicians" will strongly limit the politicians' chances of achieving their goals' (Kleppe, 1982: 15). Thus, a new model – like the old one – should be able to forge renewed links between an administrative elite and the movement's grassroots. The administration/mobilization dilemma should be solved by forging a closer connection between contentious and routine politics.

But at the same time, the quest for a new model was – as in the case of the cautious Swedish model – related to the labor parties' efforts to succeed as catch-all parties. Kleppe urged a Norden-wide discussion of what the movement could do to mobilize voters to support the same political forces that had guaranteed welfare, equality, and security throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Kleppe's notion of the old model, like the earlier cautious Swedish model claim had little basis in research. As shown above, by 1980 researchers had come up with terms such as 'social democratic image of society' and 'Scandinavian development path.' But Kleppe's account shows no inspiration from such explorations of common traits. His political reference to a Nordic model was not a case of a concept circulating from the science sphere into politics.

Since the early 1980s, the Nordic model was increasingly on the agenda in the social democrat movement, especially in SAMAK. Two points, however, should be noted: First, SAMAK applied Chatham house-like rules, blocking circulation to the broader political public sphere (Parr, 2007: 33). Second, SAMAK was less concerned with common Nordic traits than with what the five countries could achieve together. In the 1980s, they discussed whether the Nordic countries could solve the new challenges by concerted action. But such Nordic concertation failed in the early 1990s crises, and SAMAK became more preoccupied with the chances that social-democratic principles might be reinforced via the EU level.

It took some time before the notion of a Nordic model became really influential in social and historical research. The 1980s saw the publication of a lot of follower works (Esping-Andersen, 1980, 1985, 1990, and various others), projects that had been conceived and started too early to be fully affected by the growing political attention to a Nordic model. Only since the late 1980s and through the 1990s has the term been more widely quoted in both political and science spheres. This circulation from the political to the science sphere turned the Nordic model into a boundary term.

The spread of the Nordic model as a boundary term since the 1990s

At the time, higher learning and research changed in important respects. The number of skilled social researchers grew, university departments and independent research institutes expanded. Economics had played a role in state planning since the late 1930s; now the younger social sciences followed suit. The university became a mass university, while the evaluation of research proposals became more systematic and funding more focused on value for society.

As for politics, government power increasingly shifted between social democratic and non-socialist coalitions. The cautious notion of the Nordic model seemed to function even with non-socialist governments. Social democratic parties were transformed into cartel parties sharing responsibility with the main non-socialist parties for tight economic policies and structural reforms. There was a political learning process: non-socialist parties and think tanks gave up criticism and instead embraced the cautious model, holding that it could sustain employers' interest in growth and stability.

These broader changes form the background to a more subtle change in the science sphere. Through the 1990s, an increasing number of social researchers internalized the Nordic model to such an extent that it was written into their research proposals. They allowed a boundary term ('the Nordic model' or varieties thereof: 'Nordic welfare state,' 'Nordic capitalism') to be part of the outcomes they wanted to explain. They accepted the reality of an entity that the earlier followers had only explored on the basis of the work of the pioneers. Now, in contrast, the aggregation to Nordic common traits was accomplished before the research started. These researchers took the model for granted already when defining their research problems. For lack of a better term, we label them *new wave researchers.*

These researchers no longer asked whether all the Nordic cases could be subsumed under one concept. They reasoned like Kleppe and a corps of other social democratic politicians, generalizing the Swedish experience (somehow akin to Norway and Denmark) even for Finland and Iceland. If comparisons were made at all, they were loose comparisons, as defined above. Whatever qualifications followed in the course of the analysis; some ambivalent notion of the Nordic model survived in the conclusion.

Boundary terms spread because they facilitate communication across public spheres and establish common reference points in discourses. Their meanings differ across the various actors and groups that refer to them. The adoption of a boundary term as a scientific concept is not necessarily a problem, at least not if researchers treat it as a sensitizing concept, to be specified via strong comparisons. However, since the term is used across different discourses, it lends itself easily to lose comparisons. This again invites styles of generalization that are insensitive to actual cases. The new wave analyses often referred to the three Scandinavian countries, sometimes with Finland added, or all five Nordics. But for macro-units such as a country – however small – this implies that researchers ignore the specific contexts within which actors in the various countries operate. This is so regardless of how open the economy is and how many international regimes the state has committed itself to. Loose comparisons do not seriously address criteria for including cases, the period for which model claims are made, the issue areas included, and the properties involved.

New wave research appeared first in sociology and political science, both in qualitative and in quantitative projects. Although twitter-size assessments are unfair, two examples may be quoted. The project reported in Kauto et al (1999, 2001) used variables-based methods, analyzing regression net effects within specific social policy domains. The very brief concluding chapters fragment into unsystematic counts of subsections of social policies where the case countries differ as compared to subsections where they are similar. A later project for SAMAK provided five extensive country studies of qualitative analysis and descriptive statistics, but the final synthetic report (Dølvik et al., 2015) portrays Nordic developments primarily in aggregate terms, thus failing to provide the strong comparisons that could have been constructed from the country studies. In both cases, it may well be that strong comparisons ended up as residuals because of strict time limits as funds for research began to run out. But the problem should be noted anyway.

Pioneers, followers, and new wave researchers should not be conceived as generations. In other words, even after new wave research appeared, there have been studies that approach the strong comparisons of the pioneers/followers. Examples are the Bergqvist et al (1999) study already mentioned, as well as the account of the 'Nordic labor relations model' by Bruun et al. (1992), and studies by American scholars Baldwin (1990), and Luebbert (1991), both of which also provide important comparisons with non-Nordic cases.

In the following, we discuss the consequences of the more frequent and wider circulation of the Nordic model boundary term between the political and science public sphere (summarized in Table 3.2). Inside the science sphere, the term inspired a larger range of disciplines, triggering research in line with their various disciplinary profiles. This implied that both the standard and the social-philosophical attitudes were more frequently represented. These profiles had less of tradition for comparison, so it was easy for researchers to take the 'model' for granted in the new wave sense. In the following, we investigate economics and one branch of history, representing the standard and social-philosophical approaches, respectively.

Nordic model for economists

The economics discipline seeks rigor through a combination of mathematical formalisms (usually constrained optimization) and a general theory of actor motivations (producers maximize profits, consumers maximize utility). This combination yields idealized models that are used as thought experiments.

Comparing economic models to models in physics, Cartwright (2007: Ch. 15) found that since economic models lack bridge principles that translate them into empirical experiments, the mathematical formalism chosen plays a more important role than in physics. Unlike with physics laws, internal validity comes at the cost of external validity. In what economists' dub 'toy economy' models, assumptions about economic realities are stated in ways that fit the formalism. In economics, the prestige of modeling is so high that many scholars succeed in publishing work that ignores external validity.

When it comes to quantitative, empirical methods, the difference between economics, sociology, and political science is less pronounced. All these disciplines employ statistical analysis of large, non-experimental datasets. Historically, economics was the pioneer. However, unlike the other social sciences, modern mathematized economics has no tradition for case studies.

Comparative methods play no significant role. Strong comparisons contrast with most elements of the economics disciplinary profile.

The Nordic model first caught the interest of some academic economists. A dialogue with political science and sociology was facilitated by an interest in rational choice modeling in parts of these disciplines. Within political science, Michael Wallerstein already in the 1980s (with Adam Przeworski) combined historically informed work on labor and politics with considerable skills in economic modeling and quantitative data analysis. From the early 1990s, Wallerstein cooperated with Norwegian economist Kalle Moene.

Substantively, they studied topics that sociology and political science had brought up, especially drawn from the radical interpretation in continuity with the Rehn/Meidner model. But their method of analysis was different. Consistent with the disciplinary profile of economics, they used constrained optimization formalisms with econometric empirical checks. Like other new wave scholars, they took the Nordic model for granted. Like earlier research in the 1980s, they saw the model as being 'in retreat.' Later, they were less certain. They avoided the dilemma between the radical and the cautious interpretation (Table 3.1) by arguing that whatever the fate of social democracy in Europe, 'Nordic lessons' were highly relevant for social reformers elsewhere and particularly in the third world (Moene, 2008: 368).

After Wallerstein's death in 2006, Moene continued along the same lines in the ESOP project (2007–2017) at the University of Oslo. The topic of Nordic lessons for third world countries had been investigated by pioneer Senghaas since the mid-1970s (Mjøset, 2007). It is a proof of the divergence between social science disciplines that the ESOP project never considered the lessons that had already been drawn in that project, led by Senghaas. One may guess that one reason was that Senghaas never employed constrained optimization models or statistical inference. In contrast, he pursued a series of case studies by means of strong comparisons.

The ESOP project spread selected findings into political and cultural-political spheres, at least in Norway. Still, the main repercussions of the project were internal to the international economics profession. Methodologically, the ESOP researchers demonstrated to other economists that the advantages of the Nordic countries could be modeled by toy economy techniques. They mostly modeled the small open Nordic economies taken in isolation. It is, however, equally possible to draw up a toy economy model of the world economy, choosing assumptions and mathematical form, concluding that Nordic capitalism is 'cuddly capitalism' (Acemoglou et al., 2012).

Such parallel toy economies are not competing theories. Each model is a thought experiment. There is no way to discriminate empirically between the various toy economies modeled, each of which depicts one way of thinking about various aspects of an economy. The 'cuddly capitalism' toy economy thought experiment runs counter to the ESOP idea of beneficial 'learning from Norden' in poor countries, but thorough *empirical* investigations – moving beyond toy economy models – would be needed to answer that question. Stiglitz (2015) provided a reply with more case material on the United States, but he still basically pursued thought experimental modeling.

Somewhat later, applied macroeconomists also became concerned with the Nordic model. Many such experts had been involved in fiscal and monetary management of the Nordic economies under new conditions since the 1980s. The most relevant schools were varieties of Keynesianism, but all strands agreed that the region's varieties of centralized labor market bargaining are quite efficient institutions despite their breach of free-market principles (Andersen et al., 2007; overview in Erixon, 2011; Mjøset, 2011a).

We now turn to a specific humanities tradition, at the opposite end of the disciplinary spectrum from economics.

Nordic model for cultural turn humanities

Contemporary humanities contain several disciplinary profiles. We focus on the discipline of history, but even that discipline in itself is more diverse than economics. Modern historical science has traditionally been committed to archives-based research on aspects of national histories. From the 1960s student movement on, historians were also influenced by sociology/political science. Since the 1990s, the so-called linguistic or cultural turn implied additional influence from the aesthetic humanities.

History's disciplinary profile today combines these three impulses. First, process tracing based on archives and other sources allows reconstruction of chains of events tied together by singular causal conjunctures. Second, the social science impulse leads to histories of economic development, various social groups (workers, women), and international developments. This implies a historical study of contexts within which such historical processes are embedded. Third, the recent cultural turn requires interpretation of the historical evolution and impact of knowledge regimes.

The aesthetic humanities disciplines interpret human works of art. The cultural turn generalized such methods to the study of texts and artifacts. This analysis can be conducted in entirely formal terms, moving close to linguistics and cognitive science. But mostly, interpretation also involves judgments on the context of the work in terms such as 'Zeitgeist' (*spirit of the age*), identity, or some existential archetype. Such terms may become boundary terms if they start to circulate between science and cultural literary spheres. At times, they are linked up with social philosophical theories of modernity within sociology, contributing their versions of the kind of synthetic accounts that we here study. We shall discuss two cases of such cultural studies-inspired history.

Swedish historians Bo Stråth and Lars Trägårdh both regard Nordic 'modernity' as a special case of Western modernity. They generalize the Swedish case, despite cursory remarks about differences to other Nordic cases in certain respects. None of them conduct any strong internal Nordic comparisons. Both conduct some loose external comparisons with other areas of the West (Stråth with Germany, Trägårdh with both Germany and the United States).

Trägårdh's (1997) main external comparisons are with liberal United States and Christian democratic Germany. Their political cultures, he claims, stem from the generalization of the political privileges of the bourgeoisie (the United States) and the nobles (Germany) to the lower classes. Sweden, by contrast, leveled upper-class privileges down to the level of the peasants. His core category 'statist individualism' indicates that the 'rather universal drive' of 'striving for individual freedom and prosperity (life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness)' has been thoroughly institutionalized by the Nordic states. He also summarizes his overall comparison in a triangular form (Berggren and Trägårdh, 2011); Sweden fuses state and individual, ignoring the family; the United States fuses family and the individual, with skepticism against the state; Germany finally fuses the state and the family, ignoring the individual.

Stråth claims that Western modernity implies a tension between freedom and equality, which is solved in Nordic modernity through 'individualism with solidarity' (Stråth, 2012: 28). For instance, he suggests that when Nordic intellectuals/clergy mobilized tradition by constructing the 'figure of the peasant,' they reduced 'the conflict between freedom and equality' (Stråth, 2012: 29).

These formulas are quite similar, but Trägårdh emphasizes the individualist side more than Stråth. Trägårdh downplays as much as possible any autonomous impact of social mobilization and formation of associations within civil society, thus ignoring a long line of research (e.g., Jansson, 1988; Nielsen, 2009; Stenius, 2010). Maximizing the contrast to US developments, he regards Nordic civil society solely as a function of the state. To the extent the labor movement is mentioned, its success in the 1930s–1970s period is analyzed as an effect of conditions established earlier, such as the reformation and peasant influence on the state. (In this respect, the interpretation in Sanandaji (2015) is similar, but the analysis of the state differs.)

In contrast, Stråth (2012: 25) links Nordic modernity to 'images of a Social Democratic model,' implying 'progressive and egalitarian development,' including more economic and political elements. Still, even Stråth puts heavy emphasis on the historical conditions antedating the red/green alliances of the late 1930s.

Both Stråth and Trägårdh rely basically on cultural studies, histories of ideas, and political philosophy. Stråth, however, has a large publication list of historical studies that he can rely on. Full causal conjunctures are hardly discussed. Both scholars hint that the cultural matters they trace have explanatory relevance. But it is never demonstrated empirically that the added 'modernity' factors – pertaining to the knowledge regime – are necessary to correct earlier explanatory deficiencies.

History and strong comparisons

It should be emphasized that there are many recent historical contributions of relevance to the study of Nordic common traits that do not share such a strong cultural studies commitment. Rather, they mostly combine social science impulses with historical process tracing. Some of these studies (such as Hilson's (2008) historical overview and political scientist Knudsen's (2010) study of Protestantism and the origins of the welfare state) are on the verge of strong comparisons but often struggle to accommodate history's commitment to reconstruction of singular cases. Although it is unfair to comment on major historical contributions in just a few sentences, the following remarks must suffice.

It is striking that the Fellman et al. (2008) study of Nordic capitalism includes country chapters on Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden that apply the same economic history periodization, while the brief introductory and concluding chapters make no serious attempt to define properties and make comparisons within each period. The Christiansen et al. (2006) volume covers all five cases, providing many valuable comparisons within separate areas of the welfare state, but again, introductory and summary chapters fail to provide synthesis. (It should be emphasized that a similar criticism would apply to most of Mjøset, 2011b.) In this case, they do not provide a satisfactory analysis of complementarities between the various institutional complexes. Furthermore, an interesting attempt is made to reduce the importance of comparisons by suggesting that parts of the explanation rely on international networks and regimes of Nordic, European, and Western range. However, this balancing between regional and national explanatory factors is not carried out in sufficient detail. The role of domestic factors tends to be minimized with reference to a generalized critique of 'methodological nationalism,' one that possibly hits many earlier historical works on Nordic cases, but not the social science work as represented by the tradition from the pioneers.

Finally, with his study of the development of Nordic democracy, Nielsen (2009) does a masterly job of weaving together material from the four large Nordics (and partly even Iceland) in a net of impressionistic comparisons and selected case accounts. The conclusion provides an explicit and balanced discussion of 'one Nordic model – or several Nordic ones' (Nielsen, 2009: 568). Thus, is the most valuable historical work so far when it comes to accumulating case material according to topics and periods although provision of an explicit case/property matrix would be a breach of the more literary/philosophical style chosen by Nielsen for his magnum opus.

Generalization of the model since the 1990s

In the wake of troubles in the 1970s/1980s, converging groups of economic experts played crucial roles in reforms of tax/pension systems and other structural reforms, bringing economic management on a new footing, with fiscal rules, central bank autonomy, European integration, and a focus on external surplus.

The macroeconomic interpretation mentioned above has been used to shore up both the two non-radical interpretations distinguished in Table 3.1. An upgraded liberal-conservative version argues that there were no alternatives to the cuts and austerity measures pursued during the periods of high unemployment since the 1990s. Austerity measures adapted the Nordic economies to the new external realities of EU single market integration, financial deregulation, and transition to a European single currency in the Eurozone. All five countries did well in the China boom, particularly 2001–2008.

The new mainstream expert consensus was blessed by the EU and the OECD (Sapir, 2006). In the early 2000s, it was generalized as a Nordic capacity for adjustment to whatever external shocks that might emerge. The revised model implied increased inequalities in income and wealth and higher average unemployment rates but was still celebrated as a liberal-democratic Nordic model of trust, consensus, and discipline. Unlike Anglo-American liberalism, the model was founded on trust in the state, and unlike continental models, it 'defamilializes' society by generalizing the dual-income family (cf. Trägårdh's triangle). First confined to expert circuits, this interpretation gained more general attention after the 2008 financial crisis. It was also reinterpreted in line with liberal political philosophy and spread via liberal think tanks (Sanandaji, 2015; Gissurarson, 2018).

Since the profiles of economics and humanities interpretations are so different, cooperation is unusual. But we shall cover one striking attempt at synthesis. Klas Eklund has a prominent background on Sweden's 'bureaucrat right' (*Kanslihögern*). He was earlier linked to SAP, state secretary under Feldt, author of economics textbooks, and is now a chief bank economist. In a pamphlet (Eklund, 2010) presented to the Davos World Economic Forum January 26–30, 2011, he outlined the new mainstream expert consensus. His analysis was shored up historically by Berggren and Trägårdh (2010).

Their main claim was that the self-realization/autonomy inherent in Nordic statist individualism (now dubbed 'strong,' 'extreme,' 'radical') equals the main principles of the market (Berggren and Trägårdh, 2010: 13). Not solidaristic institutions, but rather such individualism explains why Nordic people are 'more willing to accept the market economy both as consumers and producers.' Nordic development in the twentieth century is here reduced to one goal: 'to liberate the individual citizen from all forms of subordination and dependency within the family and in civil society.' Thus, all main institutions, such as the welfare state, the health care, and educational systems, are expressions of 'a long history of investing in individuals and providing access to resources that allow them to maximize their value in the market place' (Berggren and Trägårdh, 2010: 14, 17). The main difference from classical liberal political philosophy is that a strong state balances civil society.

While praising 'the fundamental coherence and vitality of Nordic capitalism,' their discussion of what other countries can learn is timid. They warn that reference to 'values' and 'culture' only will not be helpful, suggesting instead 'down-to-earth analysis of concrete institutions and policies' (Berggren and Trägårdh, 2010: 24). They are sure that the Nordic 'social contract' sustains a resilient type of capitalism but consider it an empirical question whether that contract is 'strong enough to withstand the polarizing impact of immigration and increased diversity' (Berggren and Trägårdh 2010: 23). It is not the end of history after all; the model may still be under pressure.

As always, Iceland is interesting here. The cultural preconditions emphasized by cultural turn historians (reformation, the peasant figure) apply to Iceland too. But Eklund's analysis – as most analyses of Nordic common traits – did not include Iceland. Once Iceland is taken seriously as a case, it is plain that it did *not* display a strong adaptive capacity in the 2008 global financial meltdown. Its financial system crashed miserably. Thus, shared Nordic historical preconditions do not always translate into superior adjustment capacity, contrary to Gissurarson's (2018) claims.

Economists and cultural turn-oriented historians represent two different styles of decontextualizing generalization (standard and social-philosophical in Mjøset 2009). Their disciplinary profiles are both adverse to strong comparisons. These disciplines were inclined to formal or cultural generalizations, incompatible with a case-based, contextual strategy of generalization. Economists' generalizations come as toy economy models with questionable external validity. Their concepts are definitive (in Blumer's sense) only inside of the mathematical model. Cultural turn historians came up with formulas (freedom and solidarity/statist individualism) intended to tap a deep-seated political culture. They do not reflect on their epochal terms as boundary terms, thus failing to treat them as sensitizing concepts. Instead, they combine loose comparisons (mostly only external) with more or less idiosyncratic interpretations of the present pieced together from historical terms, political-philosophical concepts, and sociologies of modernity.

These economists and historians seem to end up in similar dilemmas. If Stråth wanted to link his analysis of the present to a radical political position, he would have to realize that a very similar analysis can be used to shore up a liberal position (cf. Berggren and Trägårdh, 2010, discussed above). As for the economists – as we saw – their modeling cannot decide whether one should regard the Nordic model as a template for third world countries or as a case of cuddly capitalism. The research is simply not sufficiently contextualized. Abstract and general frameworks fit all.

Conclusions

Circulating as a boundary term, the Nordic model attracted wider interest. Table 3.2 summarizes the interaction between science sphere developments (diversification in disciplinary attention within social science and the humanities) and political sphere developments (ideological divisions, administrative concerns).

The generalization of the cautious Swedish model to a Nordic model marks the turn into the second period. The transition between the second and third periods spanned all of the 1990s. Since then, we find historical, geographical, and disciplinary extensions in the science sphere, and a larger share of decontextualized generalizations. In political terms, the Nordic model was no longer considered exclusively as a social democratic one.

Although terms circulate from political public spheres to the science sphere, conceptions of the Nordic model within the science sphere are also affected by factors internal to that sphere. In social science and the humanities, various conceptions are increasingly insulated within different disciplines. Few scholars have the urge to discuss across disciplines. Those engaged in political and cultural disputes in public spheres outside of science can pick and choose from whatever discipline in the science sphere that legitimates the arguments they favor.

Our survey yields a rough guide to three main positions in contemporary debates. They parallel the three interpretations of the Swedish model in Table 3.1, and each position relates to the Table 3.2 periodization.

The radical interpretation turns Swedish social democracy at the peak of its power – Rehn/Meidner model to the 1976 WEIF proposal – into a norm (examples: Dow and Higgins 2013; Therborn, 2018; Andersson, 2015). In this view, the Swedish model is now a neoliberal one, the early post-war version at most survives as a political ideal on the socialist left.

The second, social democratic/centrist interpretation still traces the origins of the model to the 1930s, emphasizing the labor parties' influence in all Nordics. This reflects the second period. Although that model faced major challenges, and at times failed to mobilize new voter support for the catch all labor parties, it has still proven resilient under recent external challenges (cf. the SAMAK/FAFO-project, Dølvik et al., 2015).

The third interpretation is the revised liberal one exemplified not only by Trägårdh's synthesis but also by mainstream economic experts' statements. It emphasizes resilience since the 1980s but brackets the historical importance of the labor movements. Some varieties may even argue that the period of social democrat dominance was the cause of the 1970s/1980s troubles (Gissurarson, 2018). To the extent it is extended historically, the main claim is that the most important specificities of the Nordic countries emerged before labor had any political influence (Fasting et al., 2011; Sanandaji, 2015). In this interpretation, any element of threats to the model is played down. There is no need to search for a new model.

Table 3.2 Emergence and circulation of synthetic Nordic model claims

Period (model claims made)	*Science sphere*			*Politics*	*Communication across public spheres (Nordic model as a boundary term)*
	Historical extension of the model	*Geographical extension*	*Science/disciplines*		
1 Swedish model (to mid-1970s)	1940s to 1960s	Sweden only	Economics early. Sociology/political science (pioneers) insulated in the science sphere	Social democratic networks	Mainly between Swedish social democratic administrators, LO, and party. 1970s: politics driven
2 Social democratic model (to late 1980s)	1930s to early 1980s	First Scandinavia, then Finland added, then all Nordics (SAMAK members)	Sociology/political science pioneers and followers. Early new wave research	Social democratic model, non-socialists critical	Social science conceptualization relatively insulated from politics and administration. Since mid-1980s, spread of the boundary term from politics into science
3 A model claimed by all (since 1990s)	Extension of time period forward and backward. Early modern period to present	All Nordics	All disciplines, particularly economics and history. New wave type research dominates	All parties, ideologies and interest groups embrace the model	A variety of controversies involving three main interpretations: left wing (cf. period 1), social democrat/ centre (cf. period 2), liberal-conservative right (period 3)

But the celebration of resilience may not last long. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, a number of other new challenges appeared: a new economic cold war, decreasing capacity of great power cooperation, and multiple setbacks for EU integration. While the liberal-conservative Davos enthusiasm of the early 2010s still could count on China as the growth engine of the world economy, the new friends of the Nordic model will surely have to think twice. Even for the politicized claims to a Nordic model, proper periodization and contextualization of both external and internal challenges are unavoidable.

Note

1 I am thankful to Andreas Mørkved Hellenes, Reijo Miettinen, Stein Kuhnle, Robert Marc Friedman, John Bowman, Haldor Byrkjeflot, and Klaus Petersen for comments on earlier drafts. I dedicate this paper to Per Kleppe (1923–2021), who, on his retirement from politics, turned up at the University of Oslo as a keen student of comparative social science.

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4 The utopian trap

Between contested Swedish models and benign Nordic branding[1]

Carl Marklund

Introduction

While the Nordic countries are generally considered comparatively calm, they occasionally attract more intensive attention. For example, the image of Sweden became highly contested internationally as former US President Donald Trump in mid-February 2017 referred to a television program aired by Fox News that described Sweden in general, and the city of Malmö in particular, as disproportionally troubled by the allegedly negative effects of immigration and multiculturalism (Rapacioli, 2018; Truedson, 2018).[2] Trump's statement quickly spread across the world, leading also to heated exchanges in Sweden itself on the actual status of Swedish society domestically as well as the image of Sweden abroad, *Sverigebilden*, reflecting growing internal political polarization while highlighting the importance of transnational circulation of ideas and images: While most observers refuted the negative imagery as mostly based on 'fake news' and 'alternative facts,' others claimed Fox News' uncovered the realities of Swedish multiculturalism.[3]

There are naturally demonstrable social problems in Sweden today, just as in most societies and recent studies commissioned by the Swedish Institute confirm that the country's international reputation remains largely positive (Swedish Institute, 2019). Yet, there is also a growing trend identifying Sweden as an example of misguided, if not failed, integration, in combination with liberal or progressive values. This view is gaining currency in established news outlets as well as on social media and alt-right circles (Traub, 2016; Swedish Institute, 2017), recently complicated by the Swedish response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Baldwin, 2021; Swedish Institute, 2021, Aucante, forthcoming). This negative attention is not just motivated by more or less newsworthy events in Sweden itself. It is also driven by Sweden's long-time reputation as a policy 'model' for liberals and progressives across the world – not least in the United States as Democratic politicians such as Bernie Sanders, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Kamala Harris have expressed support for Nordic welfare policies. The recent wave of critical attention has naturally contributed to further cement this close association

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between 'Sweden' and 'progressive' values generally, and the welfare state model in particular (Godeanu-Kenworthy, 2020).

Today, these progressive values as well as the welfare state model are generally *positively* connoted with all the Nordic countries, overtaking previous focus on Sweden (Nedergaard and Wivel, 2018; a recent example is Dorling and Koljonen, 2020). However, there have been rather few cases of comparable *negative* international media attention toward the other Nordic countries: The world reporting on the 2008–2011 Icelandic financial crisis (Chartier, 2011); the *Jyllands-Posten* Muhammad cartoons controversy in 2005; and the protests against Norwegian sealing, whaling, and oil extraction from the 1980s and onward may be cited as such examples (see also Chapter 13 by Mads Mordhorst). But they appear both more limited in scope and less sweeping than the recurrent and often vague 'Sweden-bashing' which the 'last night in Sweden'-imbroglio plays into. Nevertheless, these contentious images do share some important features (Marklund, 2017).

First, they would probably not generate as much global interest if they did not explicitly contrast with the preexisting and generally positive images of the Nordic countries as prosperous, peaceful, and open welfare states ranking high in various socio-economic indexes. Second, there is the idea that the welfare state model – either 'Nordic' or named after individual Nordic countries – not only embodies certain specific progressive values but has done so in a generally profitable way, not the least with regard to satisfaction with life and human development (Andersen, 2007; Greve, 2010; see also Marklund, 2013b).

Regardless of whether these rankings reflect reality very accurately or not, evidence as well as imageries of socio-economic problems in Nordic societies tend to appear more newsworthy and interesting than similar reports from other societies, as they contrast with the internationally widely held assumption that social ills would be marginal, if not entirely absent in such advanced welfare states (Pred, 2000). In a sense, Trump's 2017 statements derived from a generally positive image of Sweden of the past, preconditioning the negative image of Sweden of the present. This mechanism can be described as a kind of 'utopian trap,' where the possibly exaggerated expectations of the absence of social problems can be rhetorically contrasted with the continuous persistence of old and generation of new social problems, even if relatively minor in international comparison (Marklund, 2013a).[4]

As such, the Nordic countries have played not only a number of contested but also remarkably stable roles on 'the global marketplace of ideas' (Åsard and Bennett, 1997), in a pattern of global circulation and media representation, where purposive 'nation branding' strategies have played a significant but often overstated role. These images reflect both domestic individual Nordic political needs, intra-Nordic rivalries, and collaborations and political and rhetorical purposes abroad. Here, the concept of 'model' has played a key discursive role, with a long history preceding its deployment with the Nordics (Alasuutari et al., 2018). In tracking the circulation of various

'Nordic models' – asking what political and social needs this 'modelizing' of Nordic societies have answered to – this explorative study seeks to provide a mapping of communication of conceptual usages of Nordic models, both national and interregional, in a selection of different types of materials, ranging from English language printed books via US press to English language academic journals.[5] Second, the study seeks to analyze how and why Sweden has taken on a lead in this 'modelization' as illustrated by its evolution in US public debate. Third, the study outlines how this legacy of joint Nordic and Swedish models is used as a rhetorical resource in Nordic regional or transnational branding and individual Nordic national public diplomacy (Aronczyk, 2013; Valaskivi, 2016), highlighting its function infusing the globally circulating images of Nordic progressivism on the one hand and Nordic models on the other hand.

Mapping models

When taking an interest in the role played by these small peripheral Nordic countries on the global market of ideas, it is necessary to first track the scope of this attention to different national Nordic models – i.e., 'Danish model,' 'Finnish model,' 'Norwegian model,' 'Swedish model' – as well as other possibly competing international policy models. One way of mapping the field is provided by the Google Books Ngram Viewer, which charts frequencies of any set of comma-delimited search strings in Google's text corpora, in this case in English language, due to its centrality in global communication (see Figure 4.1).

While this basic overview appears to confirm the disproportionate interest in the Swedish model, first taking off from circa 1970 and further increasing from circa 1980 and onward, we can also track a rapidly rising interest in the 'Scandinavian model' from circa 1975 to the early 1980s. Then it rapidly declines, rising again around 1990, followed by a minor decrease.

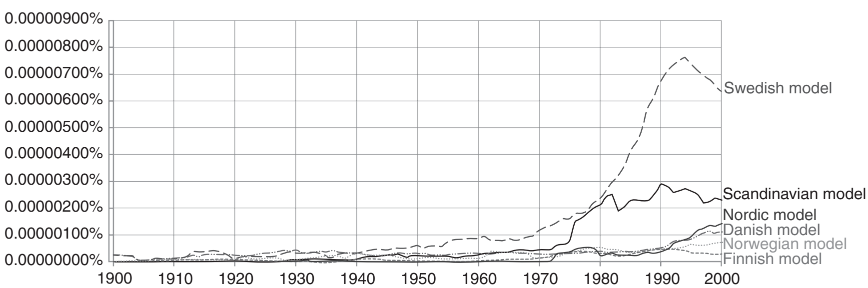

Figure 4.1 Graph of frequency of various 'models' between 1900 and 2000 from the corpus English with a smoothing of three.

Source: Google Books Ngram Viewer

From the mid-1990s, the references to the Swedish model go down, relatively speaking, while the references to the Nordic model as well as the Danish, Finnish, Norwegian models increase. A comparison with a general interest in the Nordic countries, *sans* the model, also confirms the disproportionate interest in the *Swedish model* above *Sweden itself*, while clearly indicating the steep increase in attention to Finland and Norway, not only due to their geopolitical and military significance during the Second World War but somewhat preceding the war (see Figure 4.2).

A more detailed survey of three influential and internationally highly circulated American nationwide newspapers – *The New York Times* (1851–2007), *The Washington Post* (1877–1994), *The Wall Street Journal* (1889–1993) illustrate these oscillations, at least in US debate (see the first column in Table 4.1). Many of these references are unrelated to the socio-political model and rather concerned with fashion models and classified ads for car dealers, kitchen appliances, furniture, etc.

How are we to understand this statistic? First, it does not include television, radio, internet, and film as arenas for circulation, means of communication, and sources of information. Neither does it isolate the socio-political model from other conceptual constructions coupling 'Nordic' with 'models' such as for example the frequent associations between the 'model' and various products as well as individuals, as mentioned above. It does not record relevant qualified phrases such as, for example, the '*welfare* model,' the '*social* model,' or the '*political* model.' Furthermore, it does not cover other ways of expressing a coherent image of society which may resemble the Nordic model – such as the 'Norwegian *system*,' for example – or various ways of expressing exemplarity – such as 'method,' 'way,' 'prototype,' 'alternative,' 'ideal,' 'experiment,' or 'example.' Neither is it possible to determine without looking into greater detail whether a reference to the Nordic national or regional model is primarily normative or descriptive.

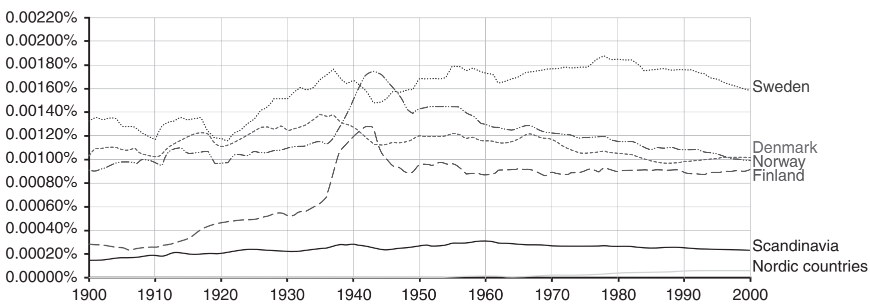

Figure 4.2 Graph of frequency of Nordic countries between 1900 and 2000 from the corpus English with a smoothing of three.

Source: Google Books Ngram Viewer

Despite these obvious limitations, the popular conception of the relative Swedish dominance vis-à-vis the other Nordic countries in US parlance can be verified with some degree of certainty. At the same time, the Nordic countries have not been widely overrepresented as *models* if compared to 'other' relevant socio-economic models, at least not in the nationwide news outlets selected for study here (see the first column in Table 4.1).

However, the Nordic models are comparatively more prevalent in English language academic publications, as listed in the JSTOR database (see the second column in Table 4.1). The first search presented in the second column below is inclusive, including all indexed titles to ensure basic compatibility with the searches of the newspapers. The results give only some 60 hits for the Nordic model (first mentioned in 1975), but 200 for the Scandinavian model (first relevant mention in 1946, followed by the next occurrence in 1968), and 362 for the Swedish model (first relevant mention in 1943, pertaining to the Swedish collective bargaining system on the labor market). Most of these instances refer to socio-political or welfare state models, confirming the notion that the international social science discussions on Nordic models as well as their various national embodiments have been considerable, reflecting their function in comparative political and social sciences. Yet, these figures must be compared with the far higher numbers for the American, Soviet, British, German, Chinese, and Japanese models, reflecting the centrality of these countries in the context of the global Cold War and evolving post-industrial society.

These usages of the model concept in conjunction with the Nordic countries refer to a wide range of different scholarly perspectives and social science theorizing – from 'varieties of capitalism,' 'corporate culture,' and 'worlds of welfare' via 'forms of political system' to 'multiple modernities.' The conceptualizations sometimes pertain to the economic, political, and social organization of the society under discussion. But in most cases, these phrasings concern some specific aspect of that society. The Swedish model, for example, is typically activated in analyses of the country's political system, referring to its administration, constitution, democratic system, forms of government, political parties, parliament, or to the socio-economic organization of the labor market, health system, social policy, and gender policy. This kind of modelization becomes demonstrably more common than the former usage from the 1970s and onward. A similar shift – away from concerns with democracy as to specific social affairs – is also visible in references to the Nordic and Scandinavian models in the same time frame. Throughout, however, there is a recurrent reference to Nordic policies as the result of purposive design and application of social science evidence in these academic applications of the model metaphor to describe Nordic societies.

To better track the shifts within this socio-political charge in the modelization of Nordic societies, the second search of JSTOR has been limited to key social science disciplines where model references pertaining to socio-economic models and specific social institutions are likely to

Table 4.1 Occurrences of various models in The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, and JSTOR database

	NYT, WP, WSJ	*JSTOR (All Titles)*	*JSTOR (Selected Fields)*
Danish model	50	49	33
Finnish model	9	37	26
Nordic model	8	59	44
Norwegian model	14	31	26
Scandinavian model	28	200	166
Swedish model	137	362	274
American model	1,568	1,707	969
British model	613	912	649
Chinese model	-	836	296
German model	533	886	492
Japanese model	347	633	363
Soviet model	604	1,634	882

Sources: ProQuest; JSTOR.

occur: The result of the search of economics (149 titles), history (294 titles), political science (146 titles), and sociology (121 titles) is presented in the third column in Table 4.1. The search shows that the Nordic model, the Scandinavian model, and the Swedish model are comparatively more common in these fields than either the Danish model, the Finnish model, or the Norwegian model, while the other models typically occur about half or less, with the notable exception of the British model which reaches the same level as the Nordic, Scandinavian, and individual Nordic models (see the third column in Table 4.1).

The Swedish model has thus been in *more* common usage than either the Nordic or the Scandinavian model in both English language academia and media. Also, the Nordic countries have been slightly overrepresented as *socio-economic models* if compared with other relevant models, raising the question of what political and social needs this modelizing of Nordic societies have answered to and followed from.

New deal and middle way

How are we then to understand these shifts in modelization of the Nordic countries? Arguably, the Nordic countries did not feature very prominently internationally until the 1930s, neither individually nor as a group, except for the attention they generated in the context of certain international crises – such as in 1905, 1917, 1918, 1920/1921 – as well as diplomatic agreements, exhibitions, jubilees, and state visits. During the height of the Great Depression, however, public intellectuals, journalists, and politicians in the West, not the least in the United States, began to question capitalism and liberalism, generating a new genre of looking for policy-oriented solutions in other societies. Many American intellectuals and politicians looked to totalitarian states, such as Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union (Pells, 1973; Schivelbusch, 2006; Patel, 2016). Yet others took an interest in the Nordic countries, as they appeared to combine a controlled form of capitalism with parliamentary democracy. As Kazimierz Musiał (2002) has shown, this interest also focused on the Nordic countries for joining modernity and tradition, progress with moderation. While interest in the Nordic countries took off already in the early 1930s, Sweden moved to the fore in US debate from the mid-1930s with the 1936 publication of American journalist Marquis Childs' book *Sweden: The Middle Way* (1936; see also Kastrup, 1985: 43–45; Ohlsson, 1992; Ottosson, 2002; Marklund, 2009a).

The concept of the 'middle way' as employed by Childs to analyze the Nordic countries had already been activated as a byword for US President Franklin D. Roosevelt so-called Second New Deal in 1935. In the early years of the New Deal, the pragmatic attitude of the Roosevelt administration toward mitigating economic and social crisis received widespread public support. However, as the 'Brain Trust' of Roosevelt advisers proposed universal health care, unemployment benefits, increased labor market regulation, state-trade union collaboration, and higher taxation on interstate trade, business circles, and conservatives attacked the administration's efforts as 'un-American' totalitarianism. In this context, the New Dealers sought new ways of presenting the Administration's proposals as being small-scale, local and pragmatic, far removed from any totalitarian planning. For example, John Dickinson, a prominent lawyer close to the administration published in 1935 a book entitled *Hold Fast the Middle Way*, arguing that the New Deal embodied American values of moderation and pragmatism (Dickinson, 1935; see also Schlesinger, 1960: 647ff). Childs' book served to pin Dickinson's rather vague concept to the tangible results of the small Nordic countries in controlling capitalism without imperiling democracy (Kastrup, 1985: 61; Hilson, 2006; Marklund, 2010; Stadius, 2013).

Looking back at the Nordic euphoria of the 1930s, American-German political scientist and sociologist Dankwart A. Rustow argued that 'Sweden's economic and social policies appeared to have realized the fondest dreams of large masses in Western civilization' (Rustow, 1955: 3). While even the most enthusiastic US proponents of Nordic policy exemplarity usually emphasized that the Nordic countries were too small, too homogeneous, and too unique to provide direct models to the United States, the generally positive image proliferated. In fact, this enthusiastic reporting somewhat worried the press officials at the American-Swedish News Exchange (ASNE) in New York (Markham, 1932). They feared that overly positive accounts could generate unrealistic expectations which in its turn could easily turn into liabilities as they attracted hyperbole, jealousy, and ridicule, an early example of the risks presented by the utopian trap (Kastrup, 1985: 62).

Others embraced the positive views. Swedish social reformer Alva Myrdal (1941) suggested, for example, that Swedish population and family policy could be generalized to combat the spread of totalitarianism. Her husband, Swedish social scientist Gunnar Myrdal (1941), relied upon this interesting interplay between exemplarity and experimentality associated with the Nordic countries when he called Sweden his 'population laboratory' (Sellin, 1938). While marginal, the ideas on Nordic exemplarity became influential enough for skeptics to emerge: Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter (1976 [1942]: 325) – then in the United States – suggested in 1941 that it would be '…absurd for other nations to try to copy Swedish examples: the only effective way of doing so would be to import the Swedes and to put them in charge' (see also Joesten, 1943).

Cold War and Swedish model

Naturally, the Second World War affected the US images of all the Nordic countries in fundamental ways, as evidenced by the graph in Figure 4.2. Danish and Norwegian information activities in the United States largely succeeded in relaying positive images of resistance and non-collaboration, while Finland's case was decidedly more complicated. Sweden's reputation declined following US criticism of Swedish neutrality. It became a delicate task for Swedish post-war public diplomacy to combine the positive 'middle way' imagery of interwar Swedish domestic policies with wartime and post-war Swedish foreign policy (Undén, 1947).

Nils Andrén and Yngve Möller (1990: 69–70; see also Nilsson, 1950) have described this as an attempt at 'ideologically motivating Sweden's choice of role between the two blocks, launching the Swedish model as an alternative of a particular value as an image to copy.' While Undén did not explicitly speak of the Swedish model, Swedish officials at the time sought to align internal and external policies with one another through the unifying lens of the generally positive foreign views of the former (Hedin, 1946; Lindblom, 1948). In fact, Swedish US-based public diplomacy played a key role in modelizing Sweden, as the ASNE collaborated in publishing University of Alabama professor Hudson Strode's (1949; see also Kastrup, 1985: 154) book *Sweden – Model for a World*, which explicitly spoke of Swedish society as exemplary, even though the author somewhat distanced himself from this conclusion in the preface.

Generally, the Nordic countries enjoyed moderate, if mostly positive, press in the United States at the time. Yet, increasingly negative reporting on the domestic policies of Sweden also began to emerge arguing that Sweden had moved away from middle way of the 1930s into full-fledged socialist planning. These accounts of Swedish domestic policies were now firmly located in the Cold War security universe. While US military observers in the late 1940s conceived of Sweden as well equipped to guarantee the security of NATO's Northern flank, Swedish attention to economic planning and social welfare was now assumed to make Sweden less prosperous and thus militarily weaker.

In view of the need to present the Nordic countries to an educated Anglophone audience globally, the Nordics themselves identified the interwar reputation for progressive social policies as a unique selling point, as evidenced in the publication of *Freedom and Welfare* (Nelson, 1953). While rejecting the accusations of socialism, *Freedom and Welfare* reconfirmed the interwar association with pragmatism, prosperity, and peacefulness, claiming that 'the Northern peoples are realists, and in their "social engineering" they have never followed any one general formula' (Nelson, 1953: 38–39). In US 1950s social science literature, the Nordic societies gradually evolved into ideal types of both the welfare state and compromise politics, which both the American and the Soviets were expected to converge with (Rustow, 1955; Myrdal, 1960).

While there is little evidence for any Soviet interest in Nordic models at the time, actual Nordic policies did interest policymakers at least in the United States, where ASNE continued to promote information on how peaceful labor relations had evolved in Sweden. The 1959 Swedish pension reform, the subsequent establishment of investment funds in 1960 to boost the productive sectors of the economy (pursuant to the Rehn-Meidner Model, as developed in 1951), and the almost complete labor peace seemed to support the idea of the welfare state as the superior method by which to guarantee stable economic growth. These policy models interested Democratic presidential candidate John F. Kennedy in preparation for the 1960 elections. Naturally, this made contemporary US perceptions of Sweden as a prosperous society a problem for Kennedy's opponents. President Dwight Eisenhower made passing comments about 'a very friendly country' – initially believed by many to have referred to Denmark – which follows 'a socialist philosophy and whose rate of suicide has gone up almost unbelievably.' In a clever rhetorical reversal, the President claimed the interwar 'middle way' for Republican presidential candidate Richard Nixon, while pinning socialism to the Nordics and, by extension, the Democrats (Wiskari, 1960; Tumin, 1961; Andersson, 2009; Rom-Jensen, 2017).

A *wealthy* and *socialist* Nordic country, such as Sweden, thus proved rhetorically more dangerous to the welfare state critics in the 1960s, than Nordic *freedom* and *welfare* had been in the 1950s, confirming yet again the salience of the utopian trap. After winning the 1960 presidential elections, the Kennedy Administration did, in fact, take a closer look at Swedish taxation and labor policies, described as the policies 'a free-enterprise welfare state,' rather than socialism – this formulation, in fact, originating with the ASNE (Kastrup, 1985: 299–300). The study trips of US administrators as well as British trade unionists to Sweden in 1962 resulted in a great deal of attention toward Swedish policies as well as the establishment of the Advisory Committee on Labor-Management which received several Swedish labor and business delegations. While it is difficult to assess the actual policy impact of these relations, contacts established in this context proved fruitful, especially with Walter Reuther, which later led to policy exchanges between Tage Erlander and Olof Palme with Hubert Humphrey, Lyndon

B. Johnson's Vice President (Rom-Jensen, 2017). Policy attention was also reflected in academic analysis. For example, Andrew Shonfield's *Modern Capitalism* (1965) influentially included Sweden as a case in his analysis of different types of capitalism, which exercised a strong impact on comparative politics and comparative political economy for years to come, eventually influencing the more recent Varieties of Capitalism literature.

Welfare state criticism

While the other Nordic countries perhaps did not attract as much positive attention as Sweden in the United States during the early 1960s, they did not suffer from the gradual reversal of this reputation by the early 1970s either. Despite all the efforts of the ASNE to the contrary, Sweden was increasingly perceived in the United States as socialist, mostly as a result of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme's critique of the American military involvement in Vietnam, the social democrats' ideological emphasis upon 'economic democracy,' and American social science radicals, actively looking for 'socialist' alternatives to US policy models (Fleischer, 1967; Rosenthal, 1967; Jenkins, 1968; see also Tomasson, 1971). Emerging US counter-culture elites took an interest in 'progressive' or 'radical' alternatives to US capitalism and consumerism in Western Europe, including Sweden, thus reinforcing the socialist stereotype, possibly beyond its actual reach, as noted by Susan Sontag in 1969 (Marklund, 2009b). Originally rather vague and often bemused themes on Swedish boredom and Swedish sin in the 1960s, sometimes explicitly following from the 1960 'Eisenhower-hypothesis' on the allegedly negative social consequences of the welfare state (Arnberg and Marklund, 2016), gradually fused into more alarmist reports on 'Sweden's surrealistic socialism' by the mid-1970s (cf. *Time*, 1976). These accounts primarily referred to heavy taxation and bureaucratic regulation as systemic faults of the welfare state, and by this time, Sweden had transformed in US debate as epitomizing the archetypical welfare state.

At the same time, serious international academic interest in the Nordic countries boomed by the mid-1970s due to the centrality of the welfare state in shaping these societies, a factor which also played a significant role as the Swedish model gradually entered domestic political usage in Sweden itself, from the mid-1970s and onward (see Chapter 5 by Andreas Mørkved Hellenes). The concept of the Scandinavian model became a standard reference for the fiscal, taxation, and labor market policies of the Nordic countries, which were often somewhat misguidedly conceived of as following Swedish precedents. However, as Sweden and the other Nordic countries – as most of western Europe – experienced economic downturn, re-assertive business interests, and recurrent labor market conflict from the late 1970s and culminating in the early 1980s – the relative absence of which had been one of the Scandinavian/Swedish model's unique selling points in the past – the reputation of Sweden's successful combination of prosperity and security began to wane internationally, not the least in the eyes of Swedish observers

(Downie Jr., 1981; see also Korpi, 1980), but this view appears also somewhat exaggerated as Sweden hardly experienced a more severe crisis than comparable western societies, in what appears a replay of the utopian trap.

These oscillations confirm the close association between perceived and expected performance in the global circulation of Nordic models. Again, as Sweden and Finland suffered from an economic downturn in 1991, American economic and political commentators often referred to the former country as having succumbed to 'a particularly virulent form of Eurosclerosis,' to paraphrase an expression of Walter Korpi's, while Finland's crisis was more directly associated with the fall of the Soviet Union (Samuelson, 1993). Having been used as a model in the past also contributed to Sweden's usefulness as a warning example in the present: In the early 1990s, numerous articles in *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* argued that the Swedish model produced similar shortcomings as communism, often relaying statements by Swedish economists, such as Assar Lindbeck and Anders Åslund (e.g., Frankel, 1990; Hoagland, 1990; Horowitz, 1990). Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson (1990) responded with an open letter in *The Washington Post*, protesting the view of the Swedish model as 'socialist,' pointing out that the country had always had an 'open market economy.'

While Gøsta Esping-Andersen's (1990) academically highly influential *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* clarified both the association between the Nordic welfare states and *capitalism* as well as *social democracy*, the framing of the Swedish model as *socialism* had become firmly established in global public discourse by this time. *The Wall Street Journal* (1991) regarded the bourgeois electoral victory that year, otherwise marked by financial turmoil in Finland and Sweden, as evidence of 'Swedish voters are finally tiring of something the world's left has long praised, the "Swedish model" of socialism.' Instead, the newspaper noted, 'talk of the "Danish model" of economic recovery has replaced the "Swedish model" of a cradle-to-grave welfare state,' arguing that 'the Danish experience also could set a precedent for states such as Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia looking for ways to develop their small economies' (Forman, 1991). While Sweden's reputation was fading by the early 1990s, the notion of Nordic exemplarity had become so firmly established that the decline of one Nordic model society – Sweden – quite naturally transformed into the expected rise of another – Denmark.

Branding Nordic progress

Exemplarity – the Nordic model and its derivatives – has thus been both an asset and a liability in the global circulation of the image of Nordic countries as indicated by the recurrence of utopian traps detailed in this study. Today, by contrast, Nordic nation branding professionals apparently assign a considerable degree of significance of the model as a brand in itself. As the Nordic Council of Ministers decided to launch in 2014, a new strategy for the 'international profiling of Scandinavia' globally under the joint initiative

'Team Norden,' 'the Nordic perspective,' and 'the Nordic model' is explicit to be presented to the world in international fora such as G20, IMF, and the World Bank. The reason for this initiative is to be found in global interest in the Nordic countries, as 'we appear to have answers to some of the questions the world is posing itself right now – how to build an open society capable of progress and of coping with crises,' concluding that '[w]e should respond positively to this curiosity and use it as a source of inspiration for further social improvements' (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2014).

Again, as in the early 1950s, it is thus the alleged foreign interest that promotes the joining of forces to present the Nordic countries to the world. In the 60 years that have passed, the joint Nordic values of freedom and welfare have been replaced by concepts such as progress and openness. A complicating factor, however, is that the Nordic countries are today being used (positively) for rather different ends by different actors internationally (*The Economist*, 2013; Moody, 2016).

While the Nordic countries quite predictably attract criticism from populists and conservatives due to the esteem they enjoy among progressives and liberals, there is another complicating factor in branding the Nordic countries jointly today: there is a wide-ranging debate within the Nordic countries as to the more precise character of the recent domestic transformations of the Nordic model. Some view the typically liberal reforms of the 1990s and 2000s as the main reason for continued Nordic economic success. Others conclude that the Nordic model has, in fact, been substantially weakened by deregulation, New Public Management, privatization and now needs to be 'rebuilt' or 'renewed' (Greve and Kvist, 2011; Kananen, 2014; Ivarsson Westerberg et al., 2014; for contrary views, see Lindbom, 2011; Rothstein and Ahlbäck Öberg, 2014).

While positive accounts still abound, there is also a marginal but growing international and not necessarily right-wing discussion as to whether the Nordic countries – despite their high ranking in numerous indexes – do live up to their global reputation of being good, open, and safe societies for all, following recurrent reports on rising inequality, growing right-wing populism, increasing crime rates, and persistent structural discrimination, to not mention the ecological footprint of the Nordic countries (Brown, 2008; Booth, 2014; Moore, 2014). This genre reflects also a vague sense of self-doubt proliferating within the Nordic countries too, to some extent echoing commonplace concerns with post-truth politics, populism, and protectionism in the face of the challenges of globalization, concerns which conceivably contrast with the Nordic countries overall socio-economic performance (Koivunen and Ojala, 2021). In addition, there appears to be a sense of disparity among the Nordic countries on several issues, especially their different public responses during the 2015 European refugee crisis, where Sweden is often cited as an outlier in terms of 'generosity,' even if actual policies have tended to converge toward more restrictive levels since (Eakin, 2014).

How may then the Team Norden branding effort deal with such internally Nordic as well as inter-Nordic fragmentation? Allowing for the possibility of divergent Nordic *policies*, the strategy of choice this far has been to concentrate the framing of the branding narrative upon largely shared Nordic *values* – quite irrespectively of how the individual Nordic societies seek to politically approximate these values.[6] Similarities with regard to values obscures divergences with regard to policies. In the strategy document for the international branding of the Nordic region for 2015–2018, entitled *The Nordic Perspective*, the focus is upon promoting five specific Nordic values: Openness, trust, creativity, sustainability, and compassion/tolerance/equality (see the left figure in Figure 4.3) (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015).

The Nordic values as outlined in the Team Norden effort are to some extent coterminous and even interchangeable with the Swedish 'core values' [*kärnvärden*] which have since 2008 been placed at the center of Swedish public diplomacy and branding efforts under the aegis of the Nämnden for Sverigeinformationen utomlands. Departing from the observation that earlier Swedish public diplomacy has lacked a clear thematic stand, passively reacting to whatever positive or negative opinions which may circulate in global views on Sweden, liberal editor, politician, and former Director General of the Swedish Institute, Olle Wästberg (2011), commissioned the search for a more proactive platform for Sweden information abroad. The resulting platform, launched in 2008, identified four core values as characteristic for Sweden: Openness, authenticity, care, and innovation (see the right figure in Figure 4.3). These values in their turn provide the basis for the 'position' of 'progressivity – a will to improve' [*progressivitet – en vilja att förbättra*] which is assigned a key role in this post-modern search for a common denominator of Swedishness (Swedish Institute, 2008: 7–8).

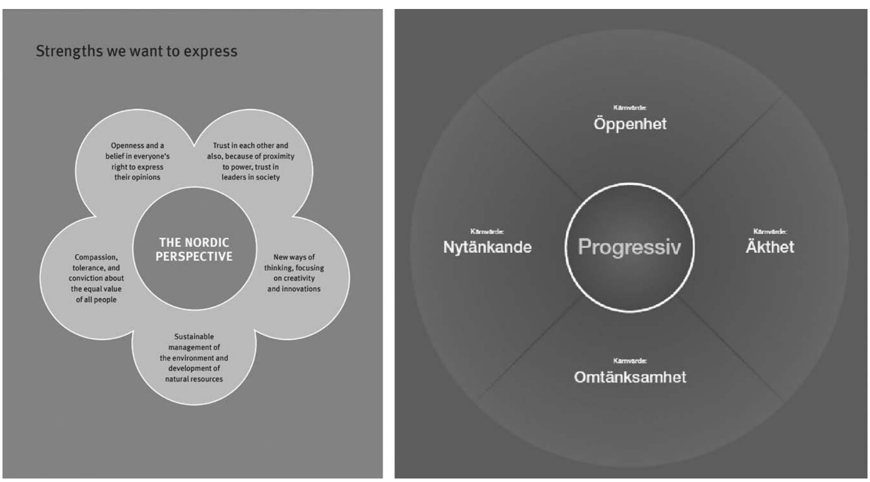

Figure 4.3 The Nordic perspective and Swedish progressivity.

Sources: Nordic Council of Ministers, *The Nordic Perspective* (2015); Swedish Institute, *Sverigebilden 2.0* (2008)

While the Swedish platform from 2008 was explicitly stating that these values were unique to Sweden, they resemble closely the later Nordic perspective. Here, the branding effort appears to reflect Nordic social values, at least as reflected by the World Values Survey (WVS). The WVS confirms the existence of a Nordic sub-region of 'Protestant Europe,' with Sweden as the most profiled case – characterized by exceptionally low traditional-survival values and exceptionally high secular-rational-self-expression values (Figure 4.4) – a predilection which is also underscored by the recent mapping of the shifting, more liberal values of recent migrants to Sweden (Institute for Future Studies 2019). In this mental mapping of sorts, these shared values apparently underpin the possibly divergent policies which constitute the welfare state and Nordic model. The joint political as well as branding appeal is obvious, as may be evidence from the consistently high rankings of 'soft power' accredited to the Nordic countries in international lifestyle magazine *Monocle's* (2017) annual Soft Power Survey.[7]

Conclusion

The strong connection between the welfare state, progressive values, and the Nordic countries has increasingly been used also in the international outreach efforts of the Nordic countries. This association is frequently invoked in commercial contacts between Nordic producers and service providers and increasingly environmentally and socially oriented consumers globally, not the least in Asia (Arup, 2010). Reversibly, semiofficial attempts at public diplomacy during the Swedish center-right governments of 2006–2014, respectively, tended until recently to refer to the Nordic model rather than the Swedish model, positively embracing novel concepts such as the 'Nordic Way' launched at the World International Forum in Davos 2011.

The welfare state appears to have become less Swedish and more Nordic throughout the 1990s and 2000s. In the same way that the welfare state had assumed a 'socialist' hue due to its Swedish associations in the 1960s, its Nordic connection has been used to somewhat dilute its social democratic veneer in Sweden. While at least the Swedish labor movement has viewed the previous center-right government's interest in the 'Nordic' welfare state as an attempt to obscure the social democratic origins of the welfare state and to claim a share in its rise, both the Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party brand the Nordic model as a viable response to the challenges of globalization (cf. Sandberg, 2013; Dølvik et al., 2014).

It is, therefore, interesting to note how the leading party of the preceding center-right government, the conservative Moderate Party, used the concept of *Sverige – Föregångslandet* (Sweden – The pioneering country) in its ultimately unsuccessful 2014 election campaign. Similarly, the incoming red-green coalition's Prime Minister Stefan Löfven drove home the same point in the government policy statement after having won the elections,

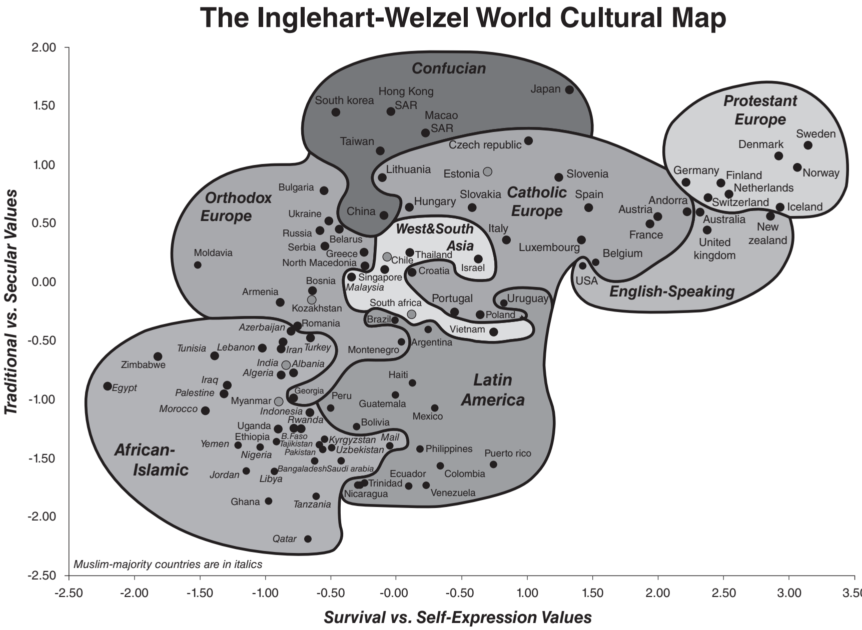

Figure 4.4 World Values Survey 2015.
Sources: World Values Survey (2015)

specifying that the *Swedish* model should be presented before the world, while the Moderate Party in April 2019 offered its political platform under the caption of the 'new' Swedish model, signifying the continued domestic importance of this originally externally oriented concept.

The image of the Nordic model, the individual Nordic countries, as well as the welfare state as such are becoming jointly politically recharged again, at the same time as there are tendencies toward competition and fragmentation remaining in between the Nordic countries with regard to exemplarity. Attracting attention abroad serves as evidence of success for politicians at home. There appears always to be at least one Nordic country excelling on one parameter of socio-economic performance or another – thus facilitating the Nordic countries' serving as each other's 'branding lifebuoys' – at least as long as the group altogether performs comparatively well (Marklund, 2013a). This may, in fact, serve as an independent factor in explaining the region's continued policy attractiveness and modelization potential: Even if individual Nordic countries may conceivably suffer from problems and exhibit less successful policy choices, the multiple experiments conducted by Nordic countries as a group serve as an opportunity to reconfirm the paleofuturological stereotype on the global market of ideas of the Nordic countries as imaginary testing grounds, social laboratories, and experiment stations for future politics. For this reason, and irrespectively of which figure of thought appears attractive in confronting common political and social challenges – the middle way in the 1930s and 1950s, the welfare state model in the 1940s to the 1990s, or progressive values in the 2000s – the utopian trap appears to be continuously at work, especially with regard to Sweden, attracting negative attention where there is positive expectation.

Notes

1 This work was supported by the Independent Research Fund Denmark (Project 8018-00023B).
2 'Stockholm Syndrome', available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqaIgeQXQgI [accessed April 13, 2021]
3 For example, the Swedish condition –*svenske tilstand* – became a feature of Norwegian public debate in the 2017 parliamentary elections.
4 This is also a primary reason for why Swedish cultural diplomats often sought to moderate the high hopes associated with the middle way imagery in the 1930s and why Swedish public diplomats and politicians expressed sometime caution with regard to the Swedish model imagery in the 1970s and 1980s. With regard to the latter, see Chapter 5 by Andreas Mørkved Hellenes.
5 This part is a reduced sample of a pilot study in digital humanities, tracking the concept of the Nordic model as well as other relevant policy models, entitled "Mapping Models: The Shifting Fates of the Nordic Model on the Global Market of Ideas," originally presented at Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies 103rd Annual Meeting May 2–4, 2013, San Francisco Hilton Hotel and the UiO:Norden conference on Global Challenges, Nordic Experiences, University of Oslo, 20–21 March 2017.During the finalization of this chapter, it has come to my attention that a similar research design is employed by Koivunen et al. (2021) in their chapter 'Always in Crisis, Always a Solution? The Nordic Model as a Political and Scholarly Concept', in A. Koivunen and J. Ojala (eds.), *The Nordic Economic, Social and Political Model: Challenges in the 21st Century* (London: Routledge), 1–19.
6 Personal communication with Bodil Tingsby, 23 September 2015.
7 In the 2017/2018 ranking Finland reached position 18, Norway 15, Denmark 11, and Sweden 8.

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5 Tracing the Nordic model

French creations, Swedish appropriations, and Nordic articulations[1]

Andreas Mørkved Hellenes

Introduction

In his 2017 presidential campaign, Emmanuel Macron made repeated references to the 'Scandinavian model,' allegedly a source of inspiration for his program to reform France.[2] In so doing, Macron followed in the footsteps of another French political maverick: the journalist and businessman-cum-politician Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber. More precisely, it was in the wake of Servan-Schreiber's book *Le défi américain* that the *modèle suédois* was introduced and circulated to later become a flexible, catchall term for the progressive image of Swedish society, not least within Sweden itself. It has since long been common for scholars to posit that the term was coined by Servan-Schreiber (Stråth, 1993a; Aucante, 2002; Musiał, 2002; Glover, 2009; Marklund, 2009) and note in passing that it spread from the Swedish to the Nordic level in the 1980s (Stråth, 1993b; Christiansen and Markkola, 2006). Beyond this, however, little attention appears to have been given to questions concerning the circulation and appropriation(s) of the particular concept of a Swedish, Scandinavian, or Nordic model: all of them having nevertheless been the object of a wide range of studies in history and the social sciences, most particularly welfare state studies, both in Sweden, *Norden* and the rest of the world. This prompts the question as to how and where this circulation from the French via the Swedish to the Nordic level actually occurred.

The point here is not to deny that both tropes of Nordic and Swedish exemplarity and attempts at modelling Nordic societies have a long history in travel literature, in the political vocabulary of western Europeans and Americans, and social and political science literature (Musiał, 2002).[3] Rather, the purpose of this chapter is to trace the more systematic and intertextual transnational historical articulations and circulations of the concept of the Swedish and Nordic model(s).[4] Swedish historians such as Björck (2008) and Edling (2013, 2019) have studied the semantic struggles surrounding certain key concepts in Swedish contemporary history, some of them homegrown, others a result of gradual processes of cultural transfer. Taking the cue from such studies, this chapter adopts a pragmatic nominalist

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approach to conceptual history, searching for the specific terms and their changing usages (Edling, 2019: 4). It is, therefore, necessary to consider the way that these concepts have been filled with layers of meaning by various actors at different times and through the stages of their emergence; in other words, how the concept has been modified through its circulation over borders (Werner and Zimmermann, 2006).

This focus allows the chapter to do two things. First, it permits to offer a more comprehensive view of the makings of the concept of the Nordic model. By looking beyond social and political science scholarship and systematically explore other sources, such as digitized press and magazines alongside relevant institutional and personal archives, the contested character of the model concept in public culture and political debate becomes much more evident.[5] Second, by exploring the transnational circulation of the concept, the chapter broadens the set of actors and sites and offers a wider politico-cultural perspective on the Nordic model in the global circulation of ideas. In this way, the chapter contributes to the growing research on not only the foreign images of Sweden and the Nordic countries but also, increasingly, the entangled usages of the reference to the Nordic model in politics and policy-making both inside and outside of the Nordic region (Hoctor, 2017; Rom-Jensen, 2017; Hellenes, 2019).[6] While the space at hand does not allow for an investigation of all relevant sites, texts, and actors in this circulation process, it will permit an examination of the border-crossing trajectory of the Swedish and Nordic model through its arguably most important stages. This story begins in Paris.

The French rise of the Swedish model

In December 1968, looking back on an eventful year across the globe, the influential Parisian news magazine *L'Express* stated that the 'Swedish model,' due to its combination of capitalist productivity with social justice, together with a perpetual willingness to change and rejuvenation, now represented the most humane model on the world's horizon.[7] The leader was signed 'JJSS,' the signature of the magazine's founder and owner: the journalist and *polytechnicien* Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber. To be sure, Servan-Schreiber's interest for models of reform predated the events of May '68; the modernization of French society was a central theme on the pages of *L'Express*, a magazine that since its creation in 1953 had represented the import of American business values and management theories (Boltanski, 1981). Such ideas of Servan-Schreiber's came into full fruition in the 1967 book *Le défi américain*, a plea for change and reorganization of Europe, and especially France, to better face the challenge represented by American investments in its industry (Servan-Schreiber, 1967). Its style was alarmist and its aim was to change the future. Quickly a bestseller, the book was first in France to popularize the notion of the turn to the post-industrial society and became a symbol of the *zeitgeist* (Bothorel, 2005: 349). To put it with historian Richard Kuisel (1993: 201), it popularized the position of French 'Americanizers': public officials, managers, and social scientists enthusiastic about some of modern America's realizations although not advocates of uncritical imitation. But it was also conceived, marketed, and written as a global book, partly as a synthesis of, partly as a dialogue with what one could term the futurists' international – a transnational group of social scientists and policy makers concerned with finding scientific predictions for the future of the world (Andersson, 2018). It thus linked French discussions about modernization, represented by contributions from Michel Crozier, Louis Armand, and Claude Gruson with the analyses of influential American thinkers such as John Kenneth Galbraith, Herman Kahn, Daniel Bell, and the recently established Hudson Institute's study *The Year 2000*. It was in part through these analyses that Sweden came to be singled out; according to the Hudson Institute's predictions, four countries would by the turn of the millennium have attained the status of post-industrial societies: the United States, Canada, Japan, and Sweden, alone among European nations (Servan-Schreiber, 1967).

As such, Servan-Schreiber's book was nothing like the 'Swedology' of earlier decades, where political observations were mixed with tourist musings in synthesizing attempts at grasping the realities of the country (Östlund, 2014). Together with Japan, Sweden was portrayed in *Le défi* as a contrast to the United States and introduced in special appendixes at the end of the book. In short, Sweden represented a successful attempt at building a modern, prosperous, and technically advanced capitalist society. Not by copying American ideals, but by finding an original way that included respecting laws of competition, state subventions to parts of the advanced industry, the agreements between the parties on the labor market, and a public ethos of social and economic progress. 'The originality of the Swedish model,' wrote Servan-Schreiber, '*is the intelligent merging*, in one single country, of these factors that exist in a less coherent way in other industrial societies (Servan-Schreiber, 1968a, 1968b: 312).' To summarize, Sweden offered Europe a much-needed alternative to America.

A few months after the publication of *Le défi*, it had sold 400.000 copies, becoming one of the most-sold essays in French history (Kuisel, 1993: 154). Its author toured Europe with a series of public discussions about the topic, and in *New York Magazine*, the businessman John Diebold wrote that '[F]ew books in the French language can ever have been the center of as much attention in this country – six months or a year prior to their publication in English (Diebold, 1968: 54).'[8] Servan-Schreiber's book was translated into seven other European languages, among them Swedish.

Although Servan-Schreiber's opinions of Sweden did not go unnoticed in the Swedish press, it was the release of the translation *Den amerikanska utmaningen* in March 1968 that transformed it from Parisian intellectual curiosum to a relevant reference in Swedish contemporary debate. In his short introduction, the translator Johan Åkerman, a renowned economist, highlighted that Sweden was singled out as a lodestar for Europe, 'due to our industrial specialization and our social structure' (Åkerman, 1968: 9). But whereas the original's *modèle suédois* in, for example, the English translation was rendered as the *Swedish model*, this was not the case in the Swedish edition, where Åkerman instead chose the term *det svenska systemet* [the Swedish system] (Åkerman, 1968).[9]

In general, the Swedish reviewers of *Le défi* balanced between two positions: on the one hand, including Sweden in Servan-Schreiber's 'Europe,' portraying the book's American challenge as a threat to all western European countries, and on the other hand, underlining Sweden's distinctiveness from Europe, taking the book as evidence that Sweden had, in fact, already tackled the American challenge. This latter interpretation became dominant not least after Servan-Schreiber came to Sweden a couple of months after the publication of the Swedish edition. The visit was no ordinary journalist trip. Prime Minister Tage Erlander invited Servan-Schreiber as a personal guest to his official residence at Harpsund, and the latter responded enthusiastically at the prospect of discussing with the Swedish Prime Minister.[10]

The visit was covered like that of a head of state. 'Finally,' *Expressen* wrote, 'a newspaper man was received like a prince (Lindgren, 1968).' As the Frenchman set out from Paris correspondents launched what came to be his main message to the Swedes: Sweden should assume its leading role and join the EEC (Ehrenmark, 1968; Griggs, 1968; Nilsson, 1968). 'I have come here to unsettle the Swedes. I'm not sure that they understand how important they are for the future of Europe,' Servan-Schreiber declared, speculating fantastically that a Swedish adhesion to the EEC would force the Community's NATO members to quit the military alliance and move toward Sweden-style active neutrality (Ahlenius, 1968).[11] In a televised talk show, Servan-Schreiber faced the journalists Åke Ortmark and Gustaf Olivecrona and explained at length in English why and what he meant by attributing Sweden model status.

> Sweden… speaks to the imagination because of its very special blending of many things that in our country are generally opposed, for instance social justice has been opposed to economic development; here, it is reconciled. State responsibility has been opposed to free enterprise; here it is reconciled. And all of that in a country that is highly developed, and has a foreign policy of independence… the reason I asked… the Swedish government last night to come actively into the debate in Europe, is because the Swedish model is the most interesting one for the future of Europe.[12]

After initial skepticism against Servan-Schreiber following his media appearances, Tage Erlander became more amicable toward the Frenchman after his visit to Harpsund (Erlander, 2015). Despite still considering his views on Sweden 'unrealistic,' Erlander nevertheless praised his 'richness of thoughts and ideas' and soon after started including references to Servan-Schreiber in his speeches (Erlander, 2015). The visit made Servan-Schreiber an official 'Sweden-friend,' and his book stayed on bestseller lists well into the following autumn. *Svenska Dagbladet* resumed the feeling after a 'unique journalist visit in Sweden,' noting that 'Servan-Schreiber has given Sweden more fame … than perhaps anyone else (Plogvall, 1968).'

The Swedish rejection of the Swedish model

Although the concept of the Swedish model first appeared in the context of French stagnation and the menace of Americanization, it was the aftermath of the national crisis of May '68 that would introduce it more broadly in French and Swedish public culture. This was closely related to the situation following de Gaulle's demission from the presidency in April, after his failure to secure popular support in a constitutional referendum that de facto became a plebiscite on the General's political future. In the ensuing presidential campaign, no less than four of the candidates made explicit references to Sweden as an example to follow. To Swedish diplomats and correspondents in Paris, the publicity reached such heights that one started talking about a French *Swedomania* (Lindström, 1969; SvD, 1969). *Aftonbladet*'s Herman Lindqvist, for example, noted that French politicians now spoke about 'something they call "the Swedish model," and they do not mean Swedish girls (Lindqvist, 1969).' He recounted how the new president, Georges Pompidou, had told in an interview how he saw the ideal society as 'Sweden, with a bit more sun,' a quip that became a commonplace in reports from Swedomaniac France.

French experts also entered the debate to explain what this 'model' that politicians frequently cited actually consisted of, including the essential question of whether or not it was importable to specific French conditions. The economist Jean Parent, for example, published in 1970 the much-praised book *Le modele suédois*.[13] To *Dagens Nyheter*, Parent argued that '[T]here has been created some sort of French mythology about Sweden. Pompidou, Servan-Schreiber, Mendès-France have taken the cream off the cake and used it in their political speeches… Sweden has been presented as a kind of economic paradise (Thalin, 1970).' As Aucante (2015: 27) has observed, Parent's 'Swedish model' was an expression of particular conditions, an original 'social equilibrium' that could hardly be exported abroad.

Despite such scholarly warnings, the political name-dropping of Sweden continued well into 1970. In a French context where societal reforms were on the agenda, not the least to appease radicalization after the events of May '68, the reference to the Swedish model appeared as a convenient way for center-right politicians to position themselves as modern, progressive, and reform-inclined. Such was the case, for example, of Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas' project for a *Nouvelle société*. Within the new Socialist Party (PS), conversely, the Sweden-fad seemed less impressive, as a consequence of the centrist and left-Gaullist embraces of the Swedish model (Fulla, 2016: 218–219). This was not unproblematic for the Swedish Social Democrats. When Servan-Schreiber, as the newly elected president of the centrist Radical Party, wanted an official endorsement from Sweden, Olof Palme wrote him a personal congratulation, but the party refused to send representatives to the Radical Congress.[14]

When Palme came on his first visit to Paris as Prime Minister in spring 1970, Sweden's role as a potential model for France was thus a hot topic. Here Palme's communication – in fluent French – was very clear. He tried as firmly as he could to establish that Sweden did not see itself as a model, rejecting the appellation altogether both when he spoke to his hosts and to the media.[15] In a TV interview, Palme stressed the point that there were still important political tasks ahead for him and other Swedish politicians. When the interviewer stated that one often, in France, cited the 'Swedish model,' Palme quickly added, with a smile, 'with a bit more sun,' and continued:

> Yes, we are naturally very happy if one is interested in the Swedish society; yet, our society is not a model, because it is not achieved. What is interesting is possibly the manner in which we seek to solve our problems, but it is not a society without problems.[16]

The international press conference that closed the visit only strengthened the positive image that had been spread. To the question of whether or not the Swedish model had been present in discussions with President Pompidou, Palme resumed his earlier position on the matter: 'Sweden isn't a model at all, Sweden is a country… If all we had to do was administering a model-machinery, I would quit politics. To me, what's interesting is to change the society.'[17]

Both in articles and interviews, Palme continued to reject the Swedish model, proposing instead that what one perhaps could talk about, was a particular Swedish method of reforms to improve society in the right direction (Palme, 1971; Nilsson, 1972; Palme, 1972). Similarly, his close collaborator Carl Lidbom emphasized in a reportage from Sweden produced by French TV titled 'Le "modèle suédois"' that he never 'talked about the "Swedish model"; one often hears this expression used abroad, and I can assure you that it is not a Swedish expression.'[18]

Despite Palme and other Swedish spokespersons' insistence that the Swedish model was not part of their vocabulary, the term caught on, spreading also outside of France, for example, in Denmark (Stråth, 1993b: 57). From 1969 and onward, 'the Swedish model' was moreover established as a category in its own right within the Swedish MFA's annual reports monitoring foreign images of Sweden, regrouping now not only French press writing about Sweden as a model but also those of other countries; tellingly, the French *modèle suédois* was replaced by the Swedish *svenska modellen*.[19]

Criticism from the left

Palme's rejection of the Swedish model concept harked back to earlier episodes when officials had sought to correct foreign depictions of Swedish happiness (Glover and Hellenes, 2020). This became more acute in the early 1970s, with increasing criticism against the party from the left. It was in this context that the Swedish model made its definitive entry into the domestic political debate. In Sweden, the LO-economist Anders Leion was among the first to introduce the concept. Leion had written the first report of the government-appointed Committee on Low Income, which from 1965 looked into the conditions of Swedish low wage earners on the labor market, whose results provided fuel for a critique of Social Democratic policies (Andersson, 2006: 46–56).[20] As a result of these polemics, it was shut down by the government in 1971. In 1974, Leion published a debate book titled *Den svenska modellen*, against the backdrop of the Social Democrats' bad election results in 1973 (Stråth, 1998: 111). Leion included a series of proposals in order to address the new societal problems of the 1970s, pointing to the failure 'of what abroad often is called the Swedish model' in handling transformations in the economy and on the labor market (Leion, 1974). The cornerstones of the Swedish model, as Leion defined it, were the policies of structural rationalization, labor mobility, and solidarity wage policy for economic growth that had been developed through the postwar decades in Sweden, in other words what increasingly was referred to as the 'Rehn-Meidner model,' after the two LO economists who had laid down its theoretical foundations in the 1950s.

Den svenska modellen caused much debate, both before and after its publication. Rapidly named an enfant terrible of LO, Leion was quoted favorably by bourgeois newspapers and cited by Moderates in the Riksdag. The public criticism against the party from within its own ranks added considerably to the news value of the publication (Ekstrand, 1974; Expressen, 1974a). 'From having been meant as a guarantee for the working classes, the Swedish model has now become a threat against them,' wrote *Expressen* (Palmborg, 1974; Ramsby, 1974; Expressen, 1974b, 1974c).

To some extent, the debate also provoked a mobilization around the concept of the Swedish model from Social Democratic debaters, such as Olle Svenning, a former state secretary under Erlander. From his place as columnist in *Aftonbladet*, Svenning defended the Swedish model as 'our societal system (Svenning, 1974a, 1974b, 1974c).' In the mid-1970s, thus, the Swedish model definitely made its way into Swedish political usage, as a flexible concept used in a number of different instances: a 'singular societal system' built by a century of popular movements; a 'suitably mixed economy' for the world to emulate; or an 'evolutionary model' of socialism as opposed to a revolutionary one, just to provide some examples (DN, 1975; Moberg, 1975; Nyblom, 1975). In September 1975, *Aftonbladet*'s Dieter Strand proposed an overarching definition, describing vividly the inauguration of the Social

Democratic Party Congress, where a silent protest against Franco was concluded by a few solemn words by Palme, followed by 'Arbetets söner,' that 'most Swedish of labor songs,' before the party leader went on to talk in length about an environmental project for lake Trummen outside of the mid-sized town of Växjö. 'This,' wrote Strand, 'is the Swedish model. It is the classical Social Democratic mix, known from every people's house and every party congress (Strand, 1975).' In the words of the Social Democratic journalist the Swedish model came to stand for a combination of a global outlook and local concerns that had been characteristic of the Swedish party at least since Per Albin Hansson's days, in other words Social Democratic Sweden's past and present.

The Swedish appropriation of the Swedish model

While Strand's idyllic report from the Party Congress of 1975 underlined continuities with past congresses and within Social Democratic practices, its aftermath would also provoke a direct conflict over the concept of the Swedish model. At the congress, the party launched an ambitious new program including a renewal of labor relations and increased democracy in the workplace. In the Riksdag, Moderate leader Gösta Bohman warned that radicalized Social Democrats threatened to turn their back on the Swedish model:

> Our mixed economy has worked well…. Foreign observers talk as a rule not without envy – about "the Swedish model", a system that has succeeded in uniting social responsibility, freedom and peace on the labor market with high efficiency in business.[21]

In the Riksdag debate, Palme reacted violently against Bohman's words, not least his hints that Swedish democracy would be threatened by continued Social Democratic rule:

> When peasants and workers in Sweden agreed on the crisis policy that lifted our country out of the misery of mass unemployment, the leader of the Right explained that one thus strengthened the antidemocratic forces. Now Mr Bohman tries to claim for himself the foreign praise of the Swedish model that he and his party have fought against with tooth and nail.[22]

Where Palme earlier had refused to accept the notion of the Swedish model, he now claimed ownership of it. His appropriation of the concept was a simple operation, by redefining the Swedish model as precisely that which he had previously used as a contrast to the idea of model: the 'Swedish method' of step-by-step reforms.

> This is the Swedish model – that we, albeit carefully, experiment, change society in accord with the changing demands of the people and the

> development of the productive forces, but always with the fundamental aim to defend Swedish democracy.[23]

In different ways, both parties tried to mobilize history, and more specifically the narrative of democratic Sweden's rise from a poor agricultural nation to a wealthy industrial welfare state, in their bids to win the Swedish model for their side. For Palme, it was evident that the Social Democrats were the architects of this development, often against bourgeois political forces.[24] For Bohman, the core of the Swedish model was the 'mixed economy,' echoing in this respect Servan-Schreiber's key concern of a separation between the economic and political spheres. In his argument, the Swedish model had originated outside of party politics, more precisely in the sphere of the economy. As the elections of autumn 1976 approached, the Moderate leader reiterated claims that the Social Democrats now threatened the Swedish mixed economy and the Swedish model that had gained so much praise abroad.[25]

Bohman's rhetoric should be seen in perspective with the contemporary shifts in the Swedish political debate, where the battles over the opinion took new shapes as the idea of wage-earner funds gained traction and became more defined. Mobilizations on the side of the Swedish Employers' Association (SAF) turned it into a veritable policy- and opinion-building organization by the mid-1970s, directed first and foremost against the Social Democratic Party and LO (Stråth, 1998: 220–221). Protest against the wage-earner funds became the big symbol that united these efforts. During the upcoming electoral campaigns, the Swedish model – a concept that was not present in the party program of 1975 – was frequently referred to, not least in the context of the wage-earner funds.[26] Ingvar Carlsson thus portrayed the Social Democrats' support of the LO proposal as 'living up to the so-called Swedish model,' in line with Palme's argument that its core was to adapt to the demands of Swedish society (Carlson, 1976).

By the elections of 1976, thus, the Swedish model had become the object of a veritable politicosemantic struggle. Confronted with the opposition's messages of a Swedish model praised abroad but threatened by Social Democratic rule, the ruling party reacted by putting the concept center-stage in their electoral campaign. In the big public duel between the main candidates Palme consequently portrayed the bourgeois coalition as a menace to the Swedish model, while Bohman said it was exactly the other way around (Crona, 1976). The concept now appeared not only in political rhetoric but also in the Social Democrats' visual and textual campaign material. On big ads titled 'The Swedish model,' Palme and Finance Minister Gunnar Sträng stood shoulder by shoulder, explaining what was meant by the concept:

> Together, the Swedish people has made Sweden a welfare country. Many countries today see Sweden as an example to follow. One talks about the Swedish model. The Social Democrats have been entrusted to lead this

> development towards greater social justice, security and liberty for the people. The nature of our politics is today the same as under the leadership of Per Albin Hansson and Tage Erlander. Broad popular reform politics in close collaboration with the wage earners. This is the Swedish model.[27]

Through this operation, the Social Democratic Party claimed ownership of the Swedish model; it was to be understood as the Swedish society as a whole, in the form of the welfare state that had developed under 40 years of Social Democratic rule. It was, therefore, unsurprising that the Social Democratic electoral defeat echoed around the world. The fall of the model became a central perspective in the international press and was widely interpreted as signifying the end of the Swedish Social Democratic experience. On the day after the elections, Olle Svenning offered a bitter analysis in *Aftonbladet*:

> The Swedish model has fallen. It was crushed after 44 years. It came to an end when the economic situation of people is better than ever before, there is more work than in any previous period, and greater social security than at any previous stage. The Swedish model burst when it had become more efficient than ever before.
>
> (Svenning, 1976)

In 1976, for the Swedish Social Democratic press, too, the electoral defeat was equaled to the end of the Swedish model. In this respect, it is certainly true that the Swedish model was created in the rear window (Stråth, 1998: 19). Yet at the same time, this far from signaled the disappearance of the concept.

Toward the Nordic model

The Swedish Social Democrats' appropriation of the Swedish model concept occurred at a time when their societal project experienced strong challenges both from within Sweden and from the outside. In the late 1970s Swedish political and social science literature, this backward-looking construction of a fixed Swedish model abounded.[28] Furthermore, it became a key rhetorical weapon used against the bourgeois governments, accused of ruining the model in their failure to handle the labor conflicts following the 1979 energy crisis and big strikes of 1980 (Marklund, 2013: 277). Historian Urban Lundberg has argued that such defensive positions on behalf of the achieved welfare state constructions became a central feature of not only the Swedish, but the Nordic Social Democrats during the 1970s and that the concept of a 'Nordic model' took shape in the context of the Joint Committee of the Nordic Social Democratic Labour Movement (SAMAK) (Lundberg, 2006: 275–277).

Indeed, soon after the model concept entered the active vocabulary of Swedish Social Democrats, it also emerged in the Nordic sphere.[29] The new international challenges such as oil price shocks and the ensuing crises triggered 'comprehensive and intense platform activities within the various co-operative bodies of Nordic Social Democracy' (Lundberg, 2006: 276–277). The rise of neoliberalism, both abroad and at home, signaled a threat to the postwar welfare state for its political architects. In this context, prominent members of the Scandinavian Social Democratic parties started to refer to a 'Nordic' or 'Scandinavian' model. In February 1981, the Danish Minister for Social Affairs, Ritt Bjerregaard, gave a talk in Oslo with the title 'Is the Scandinavian model dead?' Stirring debate both in Norway and Denmark, Bjerregaard declared that the model was not dead, but that it was 'moving,' and called for a reform of the Social Democratic parties (Bjerregaard, 1981). Soon after, at the Congress of the Norwegian Labour Party, chief ideologue Einar Førde warned that a failure for the so-called Scandinavian model would have international repercussions (Adresseavisen, 1981; Røyseland, 1981). At the Nordic Council's plenary meeting that summer, Olof Palme declared that '[T]he struggle for a peaceful transformation of society and international solidarity that is often called the Nordic model is threatened by icing winds from the right that have started to find their way over our borders (Ljungberg, 1981).' At the same time as these vocal representatives of Nordic Social Democracy started to include the Scandinavian or Nordic model in their rhetorical vocabulary, a more analytical approach to the concept was also underway. On the initiative of Norwegian Minister of Planning Per Kleppe a SAMAK working group had been created during spring 1981 to formulate a distinct 'Scandinavian model' different from those of other Western countries. According to Kleppe, the term was modeled on the already established concept of the Swedish model (Parr, 2007: 31).[30] The group included a number of figures from the Nordic Social Democratic parties, among them the later Swedish Finance Minister Kjell-Olof Feldt. Against the backdrop of its discussions, Kleppe penned the draft 'A new Nordic model.'[31] It was presented at the Nordic Labour Movement's Congress in Sandefjord in 1982, and described by *Dagbladet* as the Congress' 'most innovative document' (Holm, 1982). The report started with invoking the former glory of the Scandinavian model and its long standing as a successful example for other countries before Kleppe stated that the preconditions for the model had profoundly changed during the 1970s.[32] Economic growth in the export-dependent Nordic economies had suffered dire consequences after the oil crisis, and recent efforts to tackle these problems had revealed that the traditional toolbox, including Keynesian economics, no longer worked satisfactorily.[33] During the same period, oppositional forces had grown in strength, both in the form of the green wave and the success of the Conservatives. Introspection was, therefore, called for Kleppe contended, not unwilling to learn from Social Democracy's critics.[34] The core idea in the report was that economic growth was the key to reaching the overarching goals of Social Democracy: work for everyone, social justice, more equality between the sexes, and better local communities. In order to achieve this, it was necessary to put aside sector interests and look at the total picture; the necessary willingness to change was another central message in Kleppe's report. The report stated that the Social Democrats by and large now were in favor of a market economy, and Kleppe proposed that the state should introduce new frameworks for more efficient markets and new governance systems for more efficient institutions, along with a prioritization of action in domains that would engender economic growth and restructurations.[35] As the Norwegian Labor Party's leader Gro Harlem Brundtland stated in her discussion of the report in the opening address to the Congress, the dilemma of the Nordic labor movement was now not whether or not it should govern the economy, but which parts it should govern.[36] This was the 'new Nordic model.'

The transnational trajectory of the Swedish and Nordic model

This chapter has explored the trajectory of the concept of the Nordic model, from the first mentions of a Swedish model in Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber's 1967 bestseller *Le défi américain* to the Kleppe report's articulation of a new Nordic model in 1981. In conclusion, the chapter will point out some of its main contributions. First of all, it has shed light on the contested character of a concept that was intensely political in both France and Sweden, and later on the Nordic level, oscillating between notions of a mixed economy and of representing a way toward democratic socialism. In its overarching ambition to restructure the economy to create new growth, the Kleppe report drew on the work of both the Norwegian party's *Long-Term Program* and the Swedish party's crisis program *Future for Sweden*, both of which had been met with internal criticism for being too willing to abandon traditional Social Democratic policies in favor of a line closer to that of the bourgeois parties (Andersson, 2006: 112–116). This had also been the reaction to Bjerregaard's talk from her Danish comrades (Hermund, 1981). If, as Lundberg suggests, the conscience of a Nordic model grew through the 1970s in parallel with new challenges and a defense of the social achievements of organized labor, it seems that the concept was first articulated and came into wider circulation through the Kleppe report. However, when Kleppe launched 'The Nordic model' in 1982, it was consciously placed as standing on the threshold. Analogous to how Swedish Social Democrats had appropriated the Swedish model, it looked back at what already seemed a golden era for Social Democracy when many foreigners turned to the Nordic countries for inspiration and ideals. But, similar again to the Swedish situation, it also looked forward although the aim of introducing democratic socialism was replaced with that of a return to economic growth: Kleppe's 'Nordic model' was intended as a tool for new thinking and the promotion of adequate solutions for a different age, to help overcome the perceived crisis of Nordic Social Democracy. From this first articulation of the concept, it bore within itself a palpable tension, referring, on the one hand, to a legacy of past success and, on the other hand, to a future of possibilities. At the same time, this flexibility has made the model concept, both in its Nordic, Swedish, and, indeed, today, Finnish, Danish, and Norwegian versions, a key political concept at home and a frequent reference abroad used by a variety of political and ideological actors. Against this backdrop, it is no surprise that the Swedish Social Democrats in 2018 again went into the election campaign with the old-new slogan '[T]he Swedish model must be developed, not dismantled.'

Second, in exploring the transnational circulation of the concept, the chapter has shown how the circulation process took place in different steps, adding layers of meaning from France via Sweden to the Nordic level. This investigation prompts us to recognize the asymmetries within the Nordic region, which are perhaps only accentuated when studying the Nordic on the global level (Marklund, 2013). Andersson and Hilson (2009: 223) observe the double position of Sweden in relation to its Nordic neighbors during much of the twentieth century, being both 'the silent reference point for what is considered Nordic or Scandinavia' in the eyes of many foreigners, and central for how the other Nordic countries identified themselves as Nordic. We cannot fully explore the conceptual history of the Nordic model without considering its entangled Swedish prehistory. Servan-Schreiber's Swedish model was not a Nordic model; there were particular reasons related to Swedish economic, industrial, and foreign political specificities that made the country stand out in the eyes of the Frenchman debating the future of the advanced industrial democracies. When the Swedish Social Democrats in the mid-1970s won ownership of the concept, on the other hand, it was quickly generalized as an avatar for Social Democracy, in a time of increasing challenges. This in turn made its expansion into the Nordic social democratic sphere – at a moment when at least the Scandinavian experiences were more similar than they had been in the late 1960s – a relatively easy operation.

Finally, this attempt at tracing the roots of the concept of the Nordic model suggests that we must consider a multiplicity of actors, heeding the call of Kettunen and Petersen (2011) that, doing historical research on welfare state models, we must recognize that we're operating in a 'field where images of change, and thus of the past, the present and the future, are constructed not only by researchers but also by many different actors such as politicians, business leaders, consultants and journalists.' The chapter has highlighted both the role of diplomats, correspondents, and politicians as intermediaries capable of influencing processes of intercultural transfer. They were the translators necessary for the model concept's circulation between public cultures and political arenas from France to Sweden and *Norden*.

Notes

1 Research for this chapter has been funded by the Independent Research Fund Denmark (Project 8018-00023B). I am grateful to Eirinn Larsen for valuable comments to a previous version of the chapter.
2 'Macron veut importer le modèle scandinave', *Le Monde* (March 3, 2017). See also A. Lefebvre (2018), *Macron, le Suédois* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France).
3 For a case in point in the latter category see the chapter on Sweden in A. Shonfield (1965), *Modern Capitalism. The Changing Balance of Public and Private Power*, (London: Oxford University Press).
4 The association of Sweden with the model concept had already occurred; in one American publication it had been characterized as a 'model for the world', and in 1961 the British intellectual Perry Anderson used in passing the term the 'Swedish model' in an article. See H. Strode (1949), *Sweden: Model for a World*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co); and P. Anderson, 'Sweden: Mr. Crosland's Dreamland', *New Left Review* (January–February 1961), 4–12.
5 On the transdiscursive character of the Nordic model concept see Lars Mjøset's contribution to this volume.
6 See also several contributions in this volume.
7 J. J. Servan-Schreiber, 'Le choc de 68', *L'Express* (December 30, 1968), 16. Unless otherwise indicated all translations from French and the Scandinavian languages to English are my own.
8 J. Diebold, 'Unity in Face of Challenge', *New York Magazine* (August 5, 1968), 54.
9 See 'Not om de svenska resultaten', 206–210; 'den svenska modellen' was however used once in a footnote, see footnote 82, 229.
10 Letter from J. J. Servan-Schreiber to T. Erlander (April 19, 1968), Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek (ARAB), Tage Erlander's Papers (TEA), 4.7:2.
11 K. Ahlenius, '"Sverige kan tvinga EEC-länderna ur NATO"', *Dagens Nyheter* (May 2, 1968).
12 'En fransk utmaning', (May 6, 1968), *SR*, TV1, Kungliga Biblioteket (KB), Audiovisuella medier.
13 J. Parent (1970), *Le modèle suédois*, (Paris: Calmann-Lévy).
14 Letter from O. Palme to J.-J. Servan-Schreiber, undated; Note from A. Ferm to O. Palme, undated, ARAB, Olof Palme's Papers (OPA), 3.2:54.
15 'Middag Quai d'Orsay. Tal till Chaban-Delmas' (April 14, 1970), ARAB, OPA, 4.2:59.
16 *JT 20h* (April 13, 1970), ORTF, Bibliothéque Nationale de France (BNF), Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA). Available online: http://www.ina.fr/video/CAF97047315/interview-premier-ministre-suedois-video.html (Accessed 6-11-2015.)
17 'Conférence de presse accordée par le Premier Ministre Olof Palme à la presse internationale à Paris, le 15 avril 1970', (April 15, 1970), Ministère royal des affaires étrangères, Service de presse, 7. Transcript in ARAB, OPA, 2.7:4.
18 'Le "modèle suédois"' (March 8, 1971), *Objectifs*, BNF, INA.
19 *Sverige i utländsk press 1969* (1970), (Stockholm: Utrikesdepartementet), 1.
20 A. Leion (1970), *Inkomstfördelningen i Sverige. En sammanfattning av Låginkomstutredningens första delbetänkanden*, (Stockholm: Prisma).
21 Riksdagens protokoll [Proceedings of the Riksdag] 1975/1976: 11 (October 29, 1975), 12.
22 Ibid., 41.
23 Ibid., 50.
24 Ibid., 55.

25 Riksdagens protokoll 1975/76: 59 (February 4, 1976), 11–12.
26 For the party program see K. Misgeld (ed.) (2001), *Socialdemokratiska partiprogram. 1897 till 1990*, (Stockholm: Arbettarörelsens arkiv och bibliotek), 74–104.
27 'Den svenska modellen', ad for the Social Democratic Party, *Aftonbladet* (September 1, 1976).
28 See for example the contributions to the Swedish Institute for Future Studies seminar on the Swedish model, published in *Återblick på den svenska modellen – om den fanns* (1979), (Stockholm: Sekretariatet för framtidsstudier), and I. Elander (1979) *"Den svenska modellen": recept även för 80-tallet?,* (Stockholm: Sekretariatet för framtidsstudier), as well as A. Leion (1979), *Solidarisk lönepolitik eller löntagarfonder? Den svenska modellens sammanbrott*, (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren) and A. Hedborg & R. Meidner (1984), *Folkhemsmodellen*, (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren).
29 In the mid-1980s, in one of the early Nordic investigations of Nordic models from a clearly defined social science perspective, Lars Mjøset similarly observed that the Swedish model, 'contrary to the other Nordic models' by this point was a well-established concept; moreover, it was a slogan. See L. Mjøset (ed.) (1986), *Norden dagen derpå. De nordiske økonomisk-politiske modellene og deres problemer på 70- og 80-tallet*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget), 121–122.
30 To my knowledge, Parr is the first to shed light on this first conscious articulation of a 'Nordic model'.
31 P. Kleppe, 'En ny nordisk modell', (November 1981), ARAB, Arbetarrörelsens nordiska samarbetskomité (SAMAK), Series F2, Vol. 4. While actually finished in December, Kleppe dated the final draft one month earlier because he had taken up the job of secretary-general of EFTA from December 1. See Letter from P. Kleppe to S. Dahlin, (December 17, 1981), ARAB, SAMAK, Series F2, Vol. 4.
32 P. Kleppe, 'Den nordiske modellen – et debattinnlegg', 1. ARAB, SAMAK, F2:4.
33 Ibid., 2.
34 Ibid., 6.
35 Ibid., 10–11.
36 G. H. Brundtland, 'Åpningstale, Nordisk Arbeiderkongress, Sandefjord, 15–17 juni 1982', ARAB, SAMAK, F2:4.

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6 Adapting the Swedish model

PSOE-SAP relations during the Spanish transition to democracy

Alan Granadino and Peter Stadius

Introduction

This chapter analyses how the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español* – PSOE) understood and used the concept 'the Swedish model' rhetorically during the Spanish transition to democracy in the mid-1970s. Furthermore, it aims to shed light on the bilateral relations between PSOE and the Swedish Social Democrat Party (*Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti* – SAP) during these years, providing an account of the exchange of ideas and experiences between SAP and PSOE. Thus, this chapter deals with the circulation and meaning of the Swedish model from a hitherto unexplored perspective – that of Spanish party politics.

Our focus on the relations between these two parties is justified by the state of the art. In the context of what has been called the crises in Southern Europe (Varsori, 2009), the European social democrats provided great support to PSOE during the Spanish transition to democracy. The German Social Democrat Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* – SPD) and the French Socialist Party (*Parti Socialiste Français* – PSF) in particular influenced PSOE (Ortuño, 2005; Muñoz, 2012; Granadino, 2016; Kassem, 2016; Salm, 2016). These parties represented two competing trends within the Socialist International (SI) in terms of foreign and economic policy, and they disagreed on the issue of the relations between socialists and communists in Western Europe. Notwithstanding all the above, it is still a common assumption in Spanish literature that one of the main sources of international inspiration for PSOE during these years was the Swedish/Nordic model (Mateos, 2016).

Focusing on the relations between PSOE and SAP will shed light on this puzzle. Choosing SAP, and no other Nordic social democrat party, as the representative of and catalyst for the Swedish model responds to three factors. First, the literature suggests that the Swedes were more deeply involved in the democratization processes in Southern Europe than any other Nordic social democrats. Second, at the time the Swedish social democrats were the main representatives of a Nordic model of social democracy – 'the Swedish

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model'. Third, the high international profile of the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, and his public criticism of Franco's dictatorship in Spain, suggests that SAP's relations with PSOE might have been especially significant.

Our main argument is that PSOE was interested in the political and ideological line of the Swedish social democrats, especially between 1976 and 1979. The leaders of the Spanish party emphasized the ideological affinity between PSOE and SAP and used the concept of the Swedish model to facilitate the ideological transition of the party from Marxism to social democracy in a context in which the latter term had been discredited among the Spanish left. Furthermore, this paper supports the argument that SAP tried to actively help the radicalized PSOE of the early 1970s towards a social democratic path. The Swedes provided the Spanish with economic, technical, educational, and moral support. In this process, SAP was influenced by the Iberian context and by the internal debates of the Spanish socialists. SAP re-conceptualized and re-branded their party and their model as part of an effective policy transfer to enhance Swedish soft power in Spain. As a result, SAP and the Swedish model were facilitators of the ideological moderation of PSOE.

Finally, we argue that the Swedish model, as understood by PSOE, changed during these years of rapid political transformations. Initially the Spanish socialists overlooked it; then, it went from being a model of social democracy that could lead to the radical transformation of the economy and society, to being a model of feasible international neutralism. These changes were connected to the image of SAP's leader Olof Palme, to the active support of SAP for PSOE, and to the rapidly changing political needs of PSOE in the context of Spanish transition.

This chapter is based on primary sources, mainly from the historical archives of PSOE and SAP, and on published sources. Its interpretative framework is based on the theories of cultural transfers and policy transfers. The former is understood as a process in which the national contexts of donors and receivers do not exist independently of one another before and during the transfers, and as a process in which there is active selection and appropriation on the receiving end (Bourdieu, 2002; Nygård and Strang, 2016). Furthermore, cultural transfers and reception processes are conceived here as a sequence of a broader and longer circulation process (Keim, 2014). In this sense, this paper offers a case study that constitutes a particular instance of the circulation of 'the Swedish model' during the Cold War. Policy transfer refers to the travel of country-specific policy models and best practices. Classical policy transfer theory has evolved around the parity of government-to-government transfers (Rom-Jensen, 2017: 33). In this case, we focus on two parties with very different positions in their respective countries at the time. However, this case represents a typical moment of projected rupture and urge for change stemming from dissatisfaction with a current policy, which is one criterion for policy transfer (Rose, 2005: 1). The dynamics of policy transfer become that of a lesson drawn from abroad being used in domestic politics as proposals for new policy. Possible pre-existing policy traditions and path dependencies are thus combated not just with the policies themselves but also by selling a more comprehensive foreign image, in this case, the Swedish version of the Nordic Welfare State. This image leaned on established images of a progressive Scandinavia or Nordic region (Stadius, 2010). This broader image tradition, we argue, is also part of the argument and persuasive power offered by Sweden as a model. As Byron Rom-Jensen has showed in the case of policy transfers related to the United States, a general trend of Americanization supported US policy advancements internationally (Rom-Jensen, 2017: 36). The Nordic-Swedish case is far more modest but still carries a similar quality of attraction as a model.

Spain in the 1970s and the concept of 'the Swedish model'

At the beginning of the 1970s, everyone in Spain assumed that Franco's dictatorship could not continue unchanged after the death of the dictator (Preston, 2004). Franco had envisaged the continuation of his regime in the shape of a Monarchy. Although he had not foreseen the democratization of Spain, most of the political families[1] that composed the regime acknowledged that the country should evolve politically. However, when it came to possible democracy, there was an issue that concerned the regime. Surveys on Spaniards' political preferences showed that the majority of those who had political interests were in favour of socialism and/or social democracy[2] (Gillespie, 1989).

Political parties had been banned in Spain since 1939. However, at the beginning of the 1970s, the main party in the clandestine opposition in terms of members and activities was the communist party (*Partido Comunista de España* – PCE), which in the 1970s adopted the Euro-communist ideological line. Moreover, there were several socialist parties acting clandestinely. All these parties shared two ideological characteristics: anti-capitalism and the aim of 'democratic rupture', meaning the rejection of any kind of reformist alternative proposed by the regime after Franco's death.

PSOE was one of these parties. It was the oldest political party in Spain, and it carried weight in the historical memory of the people for the role it played during the Second Republic (1931–1939). However, after more than 30 years in exile, it was practically inoperative. In 1972, some members sought to rejuvenate the party. The organizational and ideological renovation split the party in two: PSOE renovado and PSOE *histórico*. In January 1974, the SI recognized the PSOE *renovado* (hereafter PSOE) as the only representative of Spanish socialism (Ortuño, 2005). From then on, PSOE tried to promote a new identity aimed at regaining its hegemony within the left-wing Spanish opposition (Guidoni and González, 1976: 40). It was built in opposition to both Soviet communism and West European social democracy. The latter was discredited among the Spanish left for having allowed Franco's regime to survive, for being too friendly with the United States (US) and for having become the managers of capitalism. PSOE's renewed ideological line was sanctioned by the 13th Congress of the party in exile (Suresnes, October 1974), at which a new executive committee led by Felipe González was elected.

In this frame, the concept of 'the Swedish model' started to be used in Spain. Analysis of the main Spanish newspapers – *La Vanguardia Española* and *ABC* – suggests that the Swedish model was introduced to Spain in an echo of the discussions in Great Britain and France at that time.[3] Certainly, the concept became better known to the Spanish public from February 1971 onwards, after *ABC* published a translation of an interview with Olof Palme, entitled *El Modelo Sueco*. Palme described the main characteristics of Sweden's social system and policy of neutrality to conclude that 'Sweden does not offer a model, but a method' (Los Domingos de ABC (Madrid), 1971: 7–11).[4] In September 1973, *ABC* paved the way for the emergence of a genuine Spanish discussion on the Swedish model, publishing a column called again '*El Modelo Sueco*'. In these and other similar articles, the Spanish conservative media would assign certain values and meanings to the Swedish model before the transition to democracy. Thus, they anticipated and conditioned the appropriation of this concept by the Spanish left.

The Spanish media presented this model positively, implying that it could represent an example for post-Franco Spain. The reason was that Sweden, 'under the Swedish crown', had been living in harmony for decades. This was not only due to the stabilizing effect of the monarchy (Gómez-Salvago, 1975: 23) but also because the political left had managed the economy of the country 'always in a pacific and exemplary dialogue' with the opposition. Swedish democracy[5] was considered as the 'plus ultra' example among the western democracies, the Swedish secret being 'tolerance' (ABC, 1973: 26).

The Swedish model could be considered an example for the future of Spain, in which the socialists would probably have to play an important role, for one more reason. It was a system created by the left that had not led to socialism. It was an example precisely because the Swedish social democrats did not socialize the means of production and under their system private initiative had flourished (La Vanguardia Española, 1976: 21).[6]

Thus, in the early 1970s, the interest of the Spanish conservatives in the Swedish model functioned as a prescription for the socialists in the future democratic system. In a context of a banned and radicalized leftist opposition in Spain, the Swedish model illustrated to these parties what would be the acceptable limits of behaviour in a democracy. This, in turn, limited the potential attractiveness of the Swedish model for the Spanish leftist opposition in the early 1970s.

Initial SAP contacts and strategies when PSOE abandoned clandestine status

After the SI recognized the renovated PSOE in 1974, the main social democrat parties of northern Europe did not increase their contacts with the Spanish. They considered the new leaders of PSOE to be too young, inexperienced, radical, and willing to ally with the communists. For Swedish diplomats, it was 'astonishing' that the Marxist character of PSOE was accentuated during the Suresnes Congress in October 1974.[7] At that time, the main international partner of PSOE was the PSF, which also experienced a leftwards shift at the beginning of the 1970s. The PSF tried to promote a trend called southern European socialism in the Iberian Peninsula, based on the ideas of building socialism in democracy, the implementation of self-management (*autogestion*) in every field of social life, and the programmatic union between socialists and communists (Granadino, 2019).

The passive attitude of European social democrats towards PSOE changed at the beginning of 1975 when the Portuguese communists strengthened their hand in the Carnation Revolution. The logic behind this change was that supporting PSOE would help it to become a moderate social democrat party that could regain its former dominant status in the Spanish Left (Muñoz, 2012: 184). Thus, PSOE could counterbalance the communist influence on the Spanish working class. Furthermore, this would prevent PSOE from importing the model of the French union of the left.

In the wake of the political developments in Southern Europe, SAP felt the urge to strategically downplay the communists both in Spain and in Sweden. In the post-May '68 context, the international economic crisis showed the limits of the ability of social democracy to transform society. SAP had to face strong criticism from the social democrat left, notably the youth organization and trade union leaders. Furthermore, the renewed Swedish communist party (*Vänsterpartiet Kommunisterna* – VPK) rejected the Soviet model and adopted a more attractive Euro-communist line that could threaten the hegemony of SAP among the Swedish left. For SAP, taking the lead in the solidarity activities with the Spanish opposition was a moral duty as well as a way of restraining the potential influence of Euro-communism.

SAP became interested in PSOE as a party that could be helped towards a social democratic path. The Swedes considered the strong position of the PCE in comparison with PSOE to be a potential problem after Franco's death. The estimation at the SAP-dominated Swedish Ministry of Foreign affairs was that

> [The] socialist Party, which probably has fairly strong support among the Spanish population for historical reasons, suffers from the lack of a strong organization. Difficulties in this matter will also continue to haunt the party later in the event of a freer post-Francoist era.[8]

Thus, SAP intensified its relations with the Spanish socialists. Felipe González visited a regional SAP Congress in Malmö in March and met Olof Palme, a meeting that helped the Swedish Prime Minister 'to understand the Spanish reality much better'.[9] Some weeks later, a high-level delegation of the Swedish party visited Spain. Officially, this was 'to strengthen the links between Spanish and Swedish socialists' although according to the Spanish newspapers, the specific reason of the visit was to both provide economic support to PSOE and initiate a strategic cooperation supporting the construction of a viable party and union structure, which PSOE lacked (Pueblo, 1975).

SAP prepared its strategy to gather support for PSOE among its grassroot organization, the leading social democratic labour union *Landsorganisationen* (LO), and the Swedish people at large. There were solid grounds for activating the grassroot levels of SAP. Spain was a well-known tourist destination, and the dictatorship had been a hot topic and moral question among a larger Swedish public since the late 1960s. In Vilgot Sjöman's famous new left generation fiction documentary *Jag är nyfiken, gul* (*I am Curious (Yellow)*) from 1967, the main character, Lena Nyman, stops people in the street asking if Spain should be boycotted as a tourist destination; her father had been fighting in the Republican Forces in the Spanish Civil War. Spain was one of the more important stages for Palme's active and high-profile foreign policy. And there were also veterans, or relatives of veterans of the International Brigades, who could easily be mobilized to support the Spanish left at the prospect of a major political change. It was in SAP's strategic interest to monopolize this heritage, originally firmly rooted in anarcho-syndicalist groups (Lundvik, 1980), for the new cooperation with PSOE.

At the same time, the Swedish government had to be careful not to violate the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, which stipulated the rule of ideological non-intervention between the signatory states. In this light, financial support to PSOE became a sensitive issue. In fact, during the above-mentioned visit to Spain, SAP's international secretary Pierre Schori 'strongly denied any rumours in the press of economic aid'.[10] Notwithstanding this statement, clandestine economic support was key at the time. According to Swedish diplomatic sources, PSOE received 60,000 Swedish crowns (an estimated 840,000 pesetas) when González visited Sweden in March 1975.[11] Moreover, in January, SAP's treasurer, Nils-Gösta Damberg, and Bernt Carlsson had planned to meet with representatives of PSOE in Brussels, Paris, and Toulouse to discuss PSOE's needs of financial contributions.[12]

In April 1975, the vice mayor of Stockholm, John Olof Persson, asked Rolf Theorin, organizational secretary and member of the SAP board, to act strategically concerning the upcoming 40-year anniversary in July 1976 of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and to monopolize the heritage of the Swedish volunteers in the International Brigades for the current strategic causes of SAP. Persson urged Theorin, who was nicknamed the 'Fellini of SAP', to find old war posters and reprint them as postcards to be sold during the anniversary celebrations in Sweden. The idea was clearly to mobilize the memory of the Civil War towards SAP-driven, both ideological and financial, support for PSOE.[13] As Persson put it in a letter addressed to

Theorin, ‘if we don’t take the initiative now, the communists will make the cause of Spain their own’.[14]

In September 1975, PSOE’s international secretary, Pablo Castellano, was present at SAP’s Congress, where he had a private talk with Palme.[15] After that, SAP initiated a campaign ‘For the freedom of Spain’ (*För Spaniens frihet*) in Sweden. The slogan was a conscious re-connection with the solidarity for Spain expressed internationally during the Civil War. Starting in October 1975, circular letters were sent to local party and labour union organizations, urging them to collect money. In the first days, 400,000 SEK was collected, and after that, the party received between 10,000 and 25,000 SEK on a daily basis, which was channelled clandestinely to PSOE.[16] At the same time, the SI created the Spanish Solidarity Fund to support democracy in Spain. The Bureau asked the member parties to provide urgent and generous financial and material aid to PSOE (Ortuño, 2005: 39–40). On November 20, the day of Franco’s death, the SAP donated 75,000 SEK through this fund.[17]

The Swedish Social Democratic Youth League (SSU) became especially active in promoting democratic change in Spain. In a letter to the local clubs, dated 3 March 1976, members were urged to support the Spanish democracy against fascism economically:

> The decisive battle for democracy has to be fought by the Spaniards themselves. However, we in Sweden can also help in this battle through solidary acts of support. That is the reason why the Spanish social democracy pleads for support from Sweden.[18]

The wording here is interesting since the members of the SSU are asked to support ‘Spanish social democracy’. There are apparently two different narrative standards: one for the south and one for the north. When Palme spoke at the PSOE party congress on 5 December 1976, he called it a ‘congress of the democratic and socialist alternative’.[19] Before Spanish audiences and in communications with PSOE, he tended to use the term democratic socialism instead of social democracy for both the Spanish and his own party. This shows deliberate re-conceptualization.

The challenge for SAP was both factual and conceptual: how should social democracy be re-conceptualized for a southern European audience? In the dossier, the leftist non-communist groups (basically only PSOE) are described under the label ‘democratic socialism’.[20] This concept had been used by Palme on some occasions and stemmed from the Minister of Finance during the 1930s and 1940s, Ernst Wigforss (Berggren, 2010: 422). It now came in handy in promoting northern European social democracy, widely unpopular among the radicalized Spanish left. This concept would be used during the following years to re-brand Swedish social democracy in Spain and Mediterranean Europe at large.

The Spanish left embraces the Swedish model

After the establishment of closer relations and cooperation with SAP and other European social democrats in the spring of 1975, PSOE's leaders understood that these parties expected them to temper their ideological stance (Muñoz, 2012). While the support of SAP and other parties of the SI for PSOE fomented political moderation, it simultaneously augmented criticism against PSOE from the rest of the opposition for being a moderate and social democrat. This in turn increased the need to radicalize the PSOE's public discourse, which led them to criticize European social democrats for being puppets of the capitalist US. However, in this narrative PSOE separated the Scandinavians[21] from the rest of the social democrats. The reason for this was that the Nordics were not marionettes of the United States, demonstrated by the fact that they 'kept an active neutrality' in the international arena (El socialista, 1975: 11).

In this frame, it is our argument that the leaders of PSOE used the concept of the Swedish model – considered equivalent to Swedish social democracy – to facilitate the ideological shift of the party from anti-capitalist socialism to social democracy between 1976 and 1979. But before that could happen, the meaning of this concept had to change in Spain.

This occurred in the second half of 1975. Between August and September, the Spanish regime condemned to death and executed several members of the opposition. Before the executions, Palme and the Swedish Minister of Finance, Gunnar Sträng, took to the streets of Stockholm to demonstrate against the sentences, and they raised funds for the Spanish democratic opposition using the above-mentioned slogan *För Spaniens Frihet* (Figure 6.1). Furthermore, at the annual SAP party congress the day after the executions, Palme used harsh language against Franco's regime, calling its members 'satanic murderers'.[22]

The reaction of the Spanish conservative newspapers to the Swedish leaders' initiative was furious (ABC (Madrid), 1975a: 79). Palme's attempts to damage the Spanish image and to 'fund the Spanish opposition with the aim of overthrowing the Spanish regime' (Blanco y Negro (Madrid), 1975: 29) made him a public enemy of official Spain. The media started a smear campaign against him that also modified the image of the Swedish model in Spain (ABC (Madrid), 1975b: 21). Palme's actions coincided with the Swedish debate on the implementation of the Meidner Plan and the introduction of economic and industrial democracy in Sweden, which allegedly would lead the country to socialism. This allowed the Spanish conservative media to connect the deteriorating image of Palme to an emerging hostility towards the Swedish model.

When the social democrats lost control of government in the Swedish elections of 1976, *ABC*, echoing the arguments of Anglo-Saxon critics of Sweden,[23] only highlighted the dark sides of the Swedish model.

Figure 6.1 Olof Palme did not hesitate to take the streets to show his solidarity for ‘Spain’s freedom’. The public is urged to support the solidarity action of the Swedish labour movement. © Keystone Press/Alamy Stock Photo

> Suddenly, the Swedes realized that they were dominated by an implacable bureaucracy obsessed with the equalitarian ideal. [They] have arrived at the hypertrophy of civility; children are educated in the excellence of being normal, conformism has become the State religion, any kind of initiative is discouraged … To summarize, Sweden instead of resembling a happy Arcadia, reminds one of the slightly inhuman images of an Orwellian universe: a record of criminality and suicides, auto-exile of artists and ambitious youngsters; the kingdom of boredom.
>
> (Alferez, 1976: 44)

This change of the image and values attached to the Swedish model rendered it interesting to the Spanish left, who also found a friend in Palme, now a persona non-grata for official Spain. The bilateral relations established between PSOE and SAP were also relevant for the Spanish socialists’ change of attitude towards the Swedish model, as we will see below.

At the same time as *ABC* criticized Palme, the progressive journal for Spanish emigrants in Europe, *Exprés español*, published a graphic report on the demonstrations in different European cities against the executions carried out by the Spanish regime. On the front page of the journal was a large photograph of Palme holding a cash box. The accompanying text presented Palme as '… a man who, for sympathy with the Spanish people, repudiates Franco's regime'.[24]

The Spanish progressives continued to be interested in the Swedish Prime Minister in the following months. In May 1976, after the death of Franco, the left-leaning journal *Cambio16* published an interview with Palme, the first that he ever gave a Spanish newspaper or journal. In the introduction, he was described as the opposite of the Spanish regime leaders. 'He drives his own car, goes to the supermarket, pays his traffic fines … and, where necessary, he demonstrates in the streets against issues such as … the Spanish executions of last September'. This reinforced the positive image of Palme and of Sweden for the Spanish progressives. He was presented as the leader of an equalitarian country, where the Prime Minister was just like everyone else, in dramatic contrast with Spain.

One of the issues that the interview touched upon was Palme's understanding of the Swedish model. He explained:

> there is not a Swedish model to be exported. However, it is notable that there is international interest in our politics. … In the last decades [this interest] has been especially centered on our social policy. That same policy that has put us in the top line when it comes to welfare and standard of living.

Furthermore, Palme subtly directed the attention of the interviewer to a new, exemplary aspect of their policy. 'In the last year, we have noticed a new interest abroad in our economic policy'. He went on to say, 'the OECD presents us as a model' of how to deal successfully with the international crisis through the regulation of demand. He finished his reflection on the Swedish model with a summary that sounds like a prescription; 'to summarize, our experience demonstrates the tight relation existing between social improvements and economic development. Actually, they condition each other mutually'.

This model not only provided the highest living standards in the world and equality thanks to the management of the capitalist economy but also resonated positively with PSOE's ideology. Implying that the Swedish model was the model of SAP, Palme said:

> As a party, we believe in democratic socialism as an alternative to the two dominant systems … Neither capitalism nor communism represents today the dream of freedom of the European peoples … For us, democratic socialism is the [ideology] that develops that dream of freedom. It is a movement that emerges from the will of freedom and the commitment of the people.
>
> (Cambio16, 1976: 42–45)

At a moment when PSOE was dreaming of freedom and defining its own identity, the use of words such as freedom, and democratic socialism instead of social democracy, was probably not innocent. As pointed out above, Palme may have decided to avoid the term social democracy to sound more appealing to the Spanish leftist audience.

While the Spanish perception of the Swedish model was being transformed, Palme visited Spain in December 1976 for PSOE's 27th Congress, the first that the socialists had held in Spain since 1932. At this Congress, PSOE approved a clearly anti-capitalist line, committing itself to a socialism characterized by the combination of economic planning and *autogestión* (worker self-management) and officially defined itself as Marxist. In terms of foreign policy, the party confirmed its opposition to Spain joining NATO. Moreover, PSOE's previous executive committee was re-elected.

PSOE radicalized its ideological line precisely when the party was introduced to Spanish public opinion and when the clarification of the situation of the Spanish left – the union of the different socialist groups and the balance of forces between socialists and communists – was at stake. This radicalization unsettled its international partners. The main study of the relations between PSOE and SPD argues that the German social democrats felt uneasy with the rhetoric employed by PSOE. However, they were satisfied with the re-election of the executive committee because it was considered a guarantee that the party would become more moderate in the future (Muñoz, 2012: 354–355).

PSOE's leaders were under pressure from two fronts. On the one hand, a radical rank and file and a tough competition with PCE and other socialist parties pushed them towards the left. On the other hand, the Spanish regime, and the persuasion of the European social democrats, pressed them to accelerate the process of ideological moderation. Other factors, national as well as international, made PSOE's ideological clarification complicated. Nationally, an important part of the Spanish electorate was favourable to voting socialist or social democrat. However, in Spain, these trends were considered different from each other, and PSOE needed to overcome the disorientation of the electorate.[25] Internationally, the US government was supervising the Spanish transition. They supported the political reform of the regime, which implicitly set limits to the left (Lemus, 2011). Thus, PSOE needed to be firmly placed on the left but not be excessively radical, while attracting voters who identified with socialism and social democracy, seen as different concepts in Spain.

At the Congress, Palme delivered a speech in which he reconceptualised his understanding of social democracy for the Spanish audience and tried to reconcile the two trends of socialism coexisting within the SI – southern European socialism and social democracy. According to him, social democracy was '… a bit more than some formal liberties. We have considered it as a way to fulfil the will of men, to carry out social improvements, to transform society, to impregnate with democracy all the spheres of social life'.[26]

After the Congress, members of PSOE asked Palme about his opinion on the different tendencies coexisting within the SI. He answered,

> regarding the issue of the so-called 'socialism of the north' and 'socialism of the south' that would be represented [on the one hand] by the line of Olof Palme and Willy Brandt, by the Nordic parties, and [on the other hand] by François Mitterrand and the southern parties, … that exact difference does not exist … The fundamental ideas of socialism are the same, the methods of social change are also the same…. There are distinctive features, it is true, … but there are no essential differences between the Nordic socialist parties and the French or Spanish socialist parties.[27]

Thus, Palme eased the task of the leaders of PSOE in overcoming the dichotomy between socialism and social democracy within the party and in Spain. Overall, his definition of social democracy was compatible with democratic socialism and *autogestión* as it was understood by the Spanish party. The leaders of PSOE took on Palme's idea, and in the months before and after the democratic elections in Spain (held in June 1977), they attempted to minimize the differences between socialism and social democracy, specifically connecting the latter with Sweden. Swedish social democracy was a good example to blur the difference between these ideological tendencies without giving up socialism because, according to González, '[The Swedish social democrats] want to make radical transformations of the social and economic structure'.[28]

The internal debate on the identity of PSOE did not end after the Congress. Although the party declared itself Marxist, the social democratic tendency within its leadership started to claim PSOE's right to use the social democrat label (Múgica, 1977: 3; Turrión, 1977: 3). This provoked internal criticism (Andrade, 2012). The leadership of PSOE tried to contain the critics by blurring the very conceptual difference between socialism and social democracy that they had emphasized in the past. This became evident in González's first appearance on Spanish TV in April 1977. He stated that the differences between these ideologies were not that great because 'neither socialists nor true social democrats renounce the final aim of socialism: the disappearance of social classes' (El socialista, 1977a: 1). Bernt Carlsson, the general secretary of the SI and a member of SAP, intervened in the debate as well. In an interview with *El socialista*, he contributed to blurring the difference between the terms socialist and social democrat: 'I am socialist and social democrat. You cannot forget that the first person who used the term "social democrat" was Karl Marx … The name is not important, [what is important is] the programme'. (1977b: 9)

In this context of internal discussion on the identity of the party, an article appeared in PSOE's official newspaper that analysed Palme's vision of social democracy and the Swedish model. The article was based on a recent Spanish translation of Serge Richard's book *Le rendez-vous suedois*. According to Palme, the Swedish model was the deepening of democracy in its political, economic, and social dimensions. In the article, the Swedish model looked very similar to the idea of *autogestión* that PSOE advocated. The Swedish experience was called 'socialism with a human face' and summarized as a 'non-violent way towards socialism through responsible reform'. (Rico Lara, 1977: 17)

Five days after the publication of the article, June 15, 1977, democratic elections were held in Spain. In the set of arguments that PSOE circulated among its members before the elections, the party recognized that it wanted to capitalize on the goodwill enjoyed by the European socialists, specifically that of the Swedes and Germans.[29] Scholars have shown that the European social democrats, especially the SPD, supported PSOE during the electoral campaign. However, according to the memoirs of Alfonso Guerra, PSOE's then secretary of propaganda, SAP made the greatest contribution. The graphic designers who worked for the Swedish party helped create the image used by PSOE in the campaign (Guerra, 1984: 104).

The increase in PSOE–SAP bilateral relations after 1977

PSOE's positive electoral results – it became the leading opposition party with 29.3% of the votes – utterly altered its position in the political system. After this, other socialist parties started to integrate into the more successful PSOE, which contributed to changing the internal structure and the ideological underpinning of the party (Mateos, 2013). From this moment on, PSOE's ambitions grew, and it sought to appear more attractive to the voters of the centre (Juliá, 1990). In this new context, bilateral relations between SAP and PSOE increased. The Spaniards were still interested in capitalizing on the goodwill attached to the Swedes, but now their focus became learning how the Swedes were organized, exchanging ideas on foreign policy and gaining SAP's political and financial support for the upcoming municipal and trade union elections.

In Sweden, SAP was now an opposition party. However, their international engagement increased, especially that of Palme, who was elected vice-secretary of the SI in 1976. The Swedes wanted to maintain their solidarity with and to increase their ideological ascendancy over the Spanish party, which now existed in a new democratic and legal context. PSOE could be an important partner within the SI for SAP's development of a neutral and active foreign policy not only because the Spanish supported this line but also because they could be a bridge between Europe, Latin America, and the Maghreb.

At the same time, PSOE needed to appear as a responsible opposition party in Spain as well as internationally. One way to do this was to connect the party to the image of the Swedish social democrats. Thus, when González visited the United States for the first time in November 1977, he had to convince the American leaders of his reliability, especially as PSOE was officially a Marxist, anti-capitalist party that opposed Spain's potential NATO membership. According to the American newspaper *The Baltimore Sun*, González tried to do this by showing '… that he is like the social democrats of northern Europe with whom the United States feels comfortable …' (La Voz de Galicia, 1977).

When it comes to the increase in bilateral party relations, in November 1977, representatives of SAP spent a week visiting several Spanish cities. They wanted to get to know PSOE and the socialist trade union UGT better. At the end of the visits, Gunnar Stenarv, the spokesperson of the Swedish delegation, gave *El socialista* an interview. He said that, besides studying different opportunities for future cooperation, both parties wanted to compare their international policies, a field in which they had many ideas in common (1978a: 20).

In January 1978, another delegation from SAP visited Galicia, in northern Spain, on the invitation of the local federation of PSOE. Around the same time, several members of PSOE visited Sweden as guests of SAP, with the aim of initiating 'the exchange of experiences on the internal functioning of each party'.[30] These visits happened just before the trade union elections in Spain, and the Swedes also used these trips to offer economic support to the UGT.[31] On February 28, SAP transferred 100,000 SEK to PSOE's bank account.[32]

In November 1978, a delegation of PSOE and UGT visited the city of Norrköping in Sweden, where they received training. 'Each of the Spanish representatives [was] informed about how the political and trade unionist fields in which they will have to work in Spain function in Sweden'. The conclusion of PSOE's representatives was that although their party and SAP were very different, 'we have to start considering many of their forms of organization [for implementation] in our country [Spain]' (El Socialista*,* 1978b: 2). Moreover, both parties agreed on developing cooperation even further in the following months.[33] Thus, 'two Swedish experts on municipal and electoral issues [would] visit the [Spanish] province [Ciudad Real] at the moment of the campaign for the municipal elections … Such contacts will be extended to the realm of the trade unions (UGT-LO)'. Furthermore, after the Spanish municipal elections, the Swedes planned to invite 'an important number of socialist mayors to visit Sweden in order to acquire municipal experience' (El Socialista*,* 1978c: 25).

The numerous visits of PSOE's delegations to Sweden and vice versa suggest that the Spanish socialists learned a great deal about the daily functioning of the Swedish party, the trade unions, and the municipalities in which the social democrats governed. These experiences, which included exchanges of ideas and political practices, probably influenced the middle cadres of PSOE. However, the relevance of these exchanges to the party is difficult to measure, among other things because PSOE was also collaborating with other parties of the SI, such as the PSF and the SPD, in the field of cadre formation (Muñoz, 2012; Granadino, 2016).

At the leadership level, González visited Sweden in September 1978, where he attended the Congress of SAP. This was part of a tour that included visits to Malta and Yugoslavia. One of his aims was to gain international support for PSOE's policy of neutrality.[34] For the Spanish media, González's trip implied that PSOE wanted to adopt a generic Swedish model. A Spanish journalist asked González in Stockholm about the applicability of this model in Spain and his answer was: 'Of course. There is a common ideological standpoint. Even some practical realizations of Swedish socialism are very interesting in terms of application in Spain, such as the cooperative effort … and the regularization of the market'. González also provided information about SAP's interest in supporting PSOE. According to him, the Swedes had great hopes that PSOE would represent a new model of socialism for the south of Europe.[35]

PSOE's temporary abandonment of the Swedish model

Despite the intensification of the relations between the two parties and the support provided by SAP, the Swedish model – and social democracy in general – still encountered resistance in PSOE. In an interview with the political scientist Richard Gunther in July 1978, González was asked if there was any society that he regarded as a model. The leader of PSOE answered ambiguously:

> I don't like to speak of models. If we are talking about certain characteristics that we would like to have existing in Spain, I could certainly refer to Sweden, in which there is both liberty and equality. But socialism in Sweden is not the same as socialism in Spain.… Sweden … does not serve as a model in my view.[36]

In May 1978, the recently elected honorary president of PSOE, Enrique Tierno Galván, reflected on socialism as an alternative system in Western Europe. He considered there to be two kinds of socialism, *socialismo agórico, socialismo de plaza* (outward socialism), existing in southern Europe, and *socialismo de hogar* (domestic socialism/inward socialism), existing in northern Europe. For him, 'the messianism of the Nordic countries was finished'. Probably due to the existence of welfare in the north, the tension between social classes had diminished. Thus, the Nordics '… lack a collective utopian motor, as it exists in the Mediterranean countries, that acts as a catalyst for the revolution'. According to him, models imported from the north were not valid for PSOE. The problems in the south of Europe had to be resolved taking into consideration 'the peculiar personality, the messianism, the enthusiasm, of the Mediterranean people' (El Socialista, 1978d: 14–15).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, PSOE would not display as much public interest in the Swedish model as they had in the previous years. Several factors explain this. In 1979, after the general, trade union, and municipal elections, PSOE was the main party of Spain. Thus, from this moment on, the main rival of the socialists was not on the left. It was the coalition of parties that governed Spain, the UCD. Moreover, the success of the party in the municipal elections of 1979 created an enormous demand for qualified middle cadres to occupy governmental responsibilities at the local and regional levels. This provoked a massive arrival of new members who were ideologically more heterogeneous than the previous members (Tezanos, Cotarelo, and de Blas, 1989). Furthermore, the newborn Spanish democracy provided funds to the political parties according to their electoral results, which – together with bank credits – made international economic support less relevant for PSOE (Mateos, 2016). Additionally, the leaders of the party consolidated and strengthened their control over the party after the extraordinary Congress of 1979, in which PSOE abandoned Marxism. All these factors made it easier for PSOE to moderate its ideological line in order to compete for the voters of the centre, which made it unnecessary to look for substitute terms or bridges to adopt a moderate ideological stance.

In 1979 and 1980, the Swedish model lost its relevance to PSOE as a rhetorical device for adopting a moderate ideological line. Notwithstanding this fact, the exchange of ideas and experiences between the Spanish and the Swedish had a strong impact for a long time. The concept of the Swedish/Nordic model was mobilized by PSOE again in the 1980s when the Spanish welfare state was being constructed, and some of its elements – health care, education, and to some extent social care services – were universalized in the 1980s following the Nordic social democrat model (Guillén and Luque, 2014). On the other hand, in the same decade, PSOE lost interest in the Swedish policy of active neutrality as, once in power, the party advocated the permanence of Spain in NATO.

Conclusion

During the transition to democracy in Spain, several meanings were attached to the Swedish model, and this concept was used for various political purposes by the conservatives as well as by the progressives. For PSOE, this model became interesting after the death of Franco in November 1975 and initiated a process of policy transfer connected to the rupture of the political system. The Swedish model and SAP practically merged in the discourse of the Spanish party. PSOE used it as a best practice to follow, while at the same time disguising its social democratic content through rhetorical re-conceptualizations. This typical feature of cultural and policy transfer, the re-formulation and adaption of content, is clear in the way PSOE used the image of the Swedish social democrats in different ways depending on its immediate political interests. The original ideas and their function in Swedish society were not important; their adaption to Spanish conditions was.

When PSOE had to compete for the hegemony of the left before the elections, it tried to project a radical but at the same time reliable image, for which the party sought to associate itself with the Swedish social democracy. In this context, the Swedish model was understood as a system of political, social, and economic democracy. Once the political system in Spain changed and PSOE became the main party of the left, its interests changed and so did the use that the Spanish Socialists made of the Swedish model, and image they attached to it. PSOE connected this model to the Swedish international policy of neutrality, and at the end of the 1970s, it diminished public reference to Sweden, SAP, and the Swedish model. With regard to PSOE–SAP relations, the argument here is that the Swedes actively tried to help the radicalized PSOE of the early 1970s onto a social democratic path. SAP was an active actor in providing PSOE with financial support, ideas, experiences, and knowledge. In order to be persuasive, the Swedes had to adapt to the Spanish context, and they made an effort to re-conceptualize and re-brand as part of effective policy transfer.

Notes

1 Especially Monarchists, Liberal technocrats and Catholics.
2 'Informe Especial. El Socialismo en España (I)', Cambio 16, 139 (15/07/1974): 26; 'Los españoles se mantienen a favor del socialismo', El socialista (first half of February 1975): 13.
3 On the case of France, see Chapter 5 by Andreas Hellenes. La Vanguardia Española, 22/04/1971, p. 54.; La Vanguardia Española, 27/09/1972, p. 19.; La Vanguardia Española, 15/01/1970, p. 22.; 'El gobierno laborista quiere inspirarse en las formulas del socialismo sueco', ABC, 14/01/1965, p. 31.
4 The original interview was published in the French magazine Preuves.
5 To better understand the rhetorical use of Swedish, and in general Nordic, democracy as an exemplary model by international actors that pursued specific, domestic, political purposes see: Kurunmäki, J. and J. Strang (eds.) (2016), Rhetorics of Nordic Democracy (Helsinki: Studia Fennica).
6 See also, 'Profesor Lausén: el porvenir económico español ha de basarse en un desarrollo políticamente congruente', La Vanguardia Española, 14/09/1972, p. 27.
7 Promemoria 03/07/1975 (Herrström), p. 10. Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti. Volym: F 02 D: 24. Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek (AAB).
8 Promemoria 03/07/1975 (Herrström), p. 21. Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti. Volym: F 02 D: 24. AAB.
9 Letter from Pierre Schori to Felipe González, 27/03/1975. Caja 71-E, carpeta 2, documento 1. Fundación Pablo Iglesias (FPI).
10 SAP-delegationens besök, 16/04/1975 (Bernström), Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti. Volym: F 02 D: 24. AAB.
11 Bausch from Madrid 04/03/1975, Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti. Volym: F 02 D: 24. AAB.
12 Letter from Bernt Carlsson to Francisco López Real, 27/12/1974. Caja 71-E, carpeta 2, documento 1. FPI.
13 Ibid.
14 Rolf Theorin. Partistyrelsen, 19/04/1975, Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti. Volym: F 02 D: 24. AAB.
15 Comisión Ejecutiva del PSOE. Informe al Comité Nacional. Enero 1976. 004058.002, Fundación Largo Caballero (FLC).

16 Éxito de la recaudación a favor del PSOE, 09/11/1975. Caja 71-E, carpeta 2, documento 1. FPI.
17 Letter from Bernt Carlsson to Rodney Balcomb, 24/11/1975. IISH, Socialist International Archives, 812.
18 Till Klubbarna, 03/03/1976, p. 3, Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti. Volym: F 02 D: 24. AAB.
19 Anförande på PSOE:s kongress den 5 December 1976 (Olof Palme), Olof Palmes arkiv. Volym: 2.4.2: 042. AAB.
20 Promemoria 03/07/1975 (Herrström), p. 9. Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti. Volym: F 02 D: 24. AAB.
21 It must be noted that although Norway and Denmark, unlike Sweden and Finland, were NATO members, PSOE's newspaper used the concept Scandinavians. This was probably an unintentional mistake, but it reflects the extent to which Sweden was the main representative of the Nordic/Scandinavian countries for the Spanish socialists.
22 'Speech by Chairman Olof Palme on the draft proposal for a party programme', p. 12, available at http://www.olofpalme.org/1975/09/28/programkommissionens-forslag-till-nytt-partiprogram [accessed February 15, 2018]
23 Without attempting to establish any direct connection, it is notable that the arguments used by the Spanish conservative media are in line with the arguments that circulated internationally criticising the Swedish model in the 1970s. See: Huntford, R. (1971), The New Totalitarians. For more on this see: Marklund, C. (2015), 'American Mirrors, and Swedish self-portraits. US Images of Sweden and Swedish Public Diplomacy in the USA in the 1970s and 80s', in Clerc L., N. Glover and P. Jordan (eds.), Histories of Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding in the Nordic and Baltic Countries Representing the Periphery (Brill/Nijhoff), 172–194.
24 Exprés español (1975), n. 62, available at http://agfitel.es/hemeroteca/admin/pdf2/AGFITEL_Expres_Espanol_1975_197511.pdf. [accessed February 18, 2018]
25 Memorandum sobre perspectivas de trabajo ITE. Fundación Largo Caballero (FLC), 004056-001. See also: Guía Electoral PSOE. Elecciones 1977. FLC, 0040057-004.
26 Olof Palme. Discruso pronunciado el 5 de diciembre en el congreso del PSOE, Olof Palme Arkiv. Volym 2.4.0: 076. Arbetarrorelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek
27 Olof Palme, 'No hay socialismo del norte y del sur. Es el mismo', El Socialista (especial XXVII congreso, 3): 6.
28 Contestaciones a las preguntas hechas a Felipe González por Algemeen Dagblad, Rotterdam. 23/09/1976. 66-G 5, Archivo Histórico del PSOE, FPI.
29 Guía electoral. PSOE. Elecciones 1977, p. 39 and p. 41. 004057-004, FLC.
30 Letter from Carlos de la Cruz to Marianne Stockhaus, 26/01/1978, Sveriges socialdemokratiska abetareparti. Volym: F 02 D:24. AAB.
31 Letter from Carmen García Bloise to Nils Gosta Damberg, 23.02.1978. Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti. Volym: F 02 D:24. AAB.
32 Letter from Nils Gösta Damberg and Eva Olofsson to Carmen Rodriguez, 08/03/1978. Caja 71-E, Carpeta 2, doc. 3. FPI.
33 Informe de la visita de una delegación del PSOE al Partido Socialdemócrata sueco (SAP), 9-15/01/1978. Caja 71-E, carpeta 2, doc. 5. FPI.
34 Intervención de Felipe González; primer secretario del Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) al 27 Congreso del Partido Socialdemócrata Sueco (SAP), 23/09/1978, Caja 71-E, carpeta 2, doc. 3. FPI.
35 'Felipe González en Estocolmo', Diario 16, 24/09/1978. Caja 67-G, Carpeta 1, doc. 6, FPI.
36 Interview 74, An interview with Felipe Gonzalez, 20 July 1978, Archivo Gunther de la transición española, Fundación Juan March.

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7 The 'Nordic model' in international development aid

Explanation, experience and export

Sunniva Engh

Introduction: aims, approach and argument

In 2015, Norway's National Museum opened the exhibition 'Forms of Freedom. African Independence and Nordic Models.' The exhibition, which the previous year had been the Nordic countries' joint contribution to the Vienna architectural biennale, investigated the work of Nordic architects in the East African countries Tanzania, Zambia and Kenya during the 1960s and 1970s. The exhibition stated that

> It is well known that Nordic architects played key roles in establishing modern welfare states in their home countries. Their efforts to help modernize and build up the liberated colonies in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, on the other hand, have received far less attention.
>
> The liberation of Tanzania, Kenya and Zambia in the 1960s coincided with the founding of development aid in the Nordic countries, where there was widespread belief that the social democratic model could be exported, translated, and used for nation building, modernization, and welfare in Africa….
>
> The Nordic social democracies and the new African states established solid bonds built on a shared progressive outlook, good intentions, and an almost naïve belief in the potential to replant the Nordic model in an entirely different geographic, demographic, and cultural context.
>
> (The National Museum – Architecture, 2015)

Much could be said about the national museum's portrayal of Nordic aid and its aims; however, most importantly, the assumption of a conscious effort to export the Nordic societal model and way of life to East Africa is oversimplified (Engh, 2015). Lately, the portrayal of Nordic aid as consisting of a more or less straightforward export of a social democratic societal model to other countries has become more prevalent, in academic research as well as in popular literature and the media. This portrayal could be seen as reflecting one or more by now more or less established

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'truths' or understandings of Nordic aid, closely tied to the dominant Nordic narratives and self-understandings (Andersson, 2009; Andersson and Hilson, 2009).

This chapter questions the use of the term 'Nordic model' in relation to Nordic international engagement and more particularly to Nordic development aid, asking how fruitful this concept is for studying Nordic aid policy or Nordic aid projects. It also contributes to conceptual clarification, showing the several ways in which the term 'Nordic model' is used within development discourse and development research, implying that the term may, indeed, have different functions at different times and within different contexts. The chapter starts with a brief historical background on Nordic development aid efforts, pointing out the similarities and differences in the countries' approaches to development issues, and the basis for the widely held belief that there is such a thing as a Nordic model for development aid. The main section discusses the different ways in which the concept Nordic model is used within development discourse and literature, showing how the concept fulfills three distinct functions: as a justification for development aid, as a form of aid practice and as an export article in aid. The chapter then returns to the initial question: how useful is the concept of the Nordic model in discussions of development aid?

The Nordic countries and development aid

In the early post-1945 period, development aid was viewed as a means by which a brave, new world of modernity, prosperity and equality could be conceived, coordinated and created. Since then, development aid has been transformed through gradually evolving approaches and slogans, some of which have come full circle. For the Nordic countries, development cooperation has been, and remains, a prioritized part of international politics and an arena for particular activism and engagement. As the modernizing mission of development aid gradually becomes history, the time is ripe for a historically informed assessment of the particular Nordic aid to the global south, or the Third World, in contemporaneous parlance (Engerman and Unger, 2009; Engh and Pharo, 2009; Paaskesen, 2011). Although in 1995, a much-cited article declared the Nordic Model dead as a foreign policy instrument, the continued use of the term Nordic model in relation to the Nordic states' foreign engagement indicates that the term is still relevant (Mouritzen, 1995).

Examining the Nordic countries' aid profiles, a number of overarching similarities appear in terms of timing of entry into the field, organizational setup and aid policy generally and thematically. Many of these similarities also manifest themselves in the countries' presence in the field, in actual development cooperation projects and programs. The Nordic states, and especially the Scandinavian ones, have traditionally been considered to be particularly generous development aid donors. The Nordics are also seen as pursuing a distinct aid profile, placed within a tradition of humane internationalism, marked by a feeling of moral obligation to alleviate global poverty and combined with a realist conviction that poverty alleviation will serve the long-term interests of the Western countries (Stokke, 1989; Olesen et al., 2013). The Nordic donors are often understood as vanguards of development work for their inclusion of new areas (e.g., the inclusion of African countries in aid programs during the 1960s and Latin American countries during the 1970s), issues (e.g., human rights, environmental protection and good governance) and groups (e.g., the poorest of the poor, women and children). They are also believed to have cooperated closely with each other to achieve their development aid goals and to have paid close attention to the sensibilities, goals and sovereignty of the recipients (Selbervik, 2003; Vik, 2008). Since the 1950s, a core principle for Danish and Norwegian aid has been that aid should be provided on the recipients' own terms, without any political or economic ties or motives – a principle which has remained an ideal if not always a reality (Simensen, 2003; Friis Bach et al., 2008).

A main similarity in the Nordic countries' experiences with aid lies in *timing* and *institutional set-up*. Although support for international organizations such as the UN is usually seen as a typical Nordic feature, recent research has found that this has not been unqualified: the Scandinavians reluctantly joined the League of Nations, and even UN membership had few enthusiastic supporters in the early days (Götz, 2016). From 1949 to 1950 onward, all the Scandinavian countries supported the UN's Expanded Program of Technical Assistance (EPTA). Whereas Sweden and Norway engaged in bilateral aid beginning in the early 1950s, with projects in South Asia and Africa, Denmark preferred to channel all its aid through the UN and EPTA until the 1960s (Brunbech, 2008). Sweden and Norway's early bilateral aid programs were in different ways and to different degrees run by ad hoc administrations which included voluntary sector representation and, in the case of Sweden, also business, export and trade interests. (Nilsson, 2004; Öhman, 2007). In the 1960s, Nordic aid became institutionalized. In 1962, Sweden and Norway both launched new aid administrations: the Board for International Aid (NIB, *Nämden för internationell bistånd*) and Norwegian Development Aid (NU, *Norsk utviklingshjelp*). In 1965, NIB was replaced by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and in 1968, NU was replaced by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). Denmark also enacted its first aid legislation in 1962, which was reviewed in 1971. The Danish Foreign Ministry administered all Danish aid through the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). In 1965, Finland also established an office for development aid within its Foreign Ministry, which in 1972 was reorganized into the Finnish International Development Assistance (FINNIDA). Iceland was a relative latecomer in this respect, with a 1971 Act on bilateral development assistance, and the 1981 act that established the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA). Thus, institutionalization of Nordic aid began in the early 1960s and evolved through a wave of reorganization in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

A second similarity is found in the *political justifications* underpinning the Nordics' aid efforts, which appear strikingly parallel and enduring, combining elements of realpolitik, self-interest and idealism. Explanations for the Nordic states' commitment to providing development aid include these countries' strong social democratic norms, a desire to spread their welfare-state ideals and their own security needs and economic objectives (Bergman, 2007). In the case of Norway, the initial interest in development aid was mainly a result of changes in the international political environment. This commitment gained ground in the 1960s and 1970s as newer generations of voters and politicians with greater interest in North-South matters became dominant, and the consensus has since remained stable (Simensen, 2003). In Denmark, public and political interest in development aid was slower to develop. During the 1960s, public attention to development matters increased considerably, but this did not translate into political action until the latter half of the decade; the years 1965–1967 mark a turn in Danish aid policy, with an emphasis on increased transfers (Brunbech and Olesen, 2013).

At some more or less critical junctures, development assistance was used with a view to gain political advantage with the countries' domestic audiences, the voters. For example, in the latter half of the 1960s, the Swedish Social Democratic Party debated the aid target of 1% of the GDP; the eventual inclusion of this target in the party platform was, in part, to attract younger generations of voters who often were more radical and internationalist (Ekengren and Götz, 2013). Similarly, when Norway in 1952 launched the Indo-Norwegian fisheries project, an important rationale was to distract or placate the considerable opposition to Norwegian NATO membership (Pharo, 1986).

A third main similarity in the Nordic countries' aid profile is *the function of aid in the countries' broader foreign policies* as a foreign policy tool with which to attain status and standing in the international system (Mouritzen, 1995; see also de Carvalho and Neumann, 2015). In particular, the Scandinavian countries' self-assumed roles as international leaders in the development field seem to have provided them with a spill-over effect regarding their general standing in international affairs. The wish to increase influence through joining forces was certainly a central motivation when the Nordics first launched joint development aid projects in the early 1960s (Engh and Pharo, 2009). Over the years, however, each of the Scandinavian countries increasingly came to pursue an international profile as either a 'humanitarian great power' (Sweden, Denmark) or a 'peace nation' (Norway) (Leira, 2013, 2015). Sweden's 'active foreign policy,' from 1962 to the late 1980s, was perhaps the most extreme version of this, distinguished by Olof Palme's tenure as Prime Minister. In this period, Sweden showed increased international engagement on a number of issues, such as decolonization, the East-West divide and development and human rights, and it often criticized US foreign policy harshly. Significantly, this tendency to pursue status and standing through active international engagement was increasingly sought on an individual, national basis rather than a joint Nordic one. As the wish to wave one's own flag increased, joint Nordic efforts lost their appeal (Engh and Pharo, 2009: 126–127). Development aid's function in the Nordics' broader foreign policies as a foreign policy tool to increase their soft power or status in the international system became more pronounced toward the end of the 1900s and during the early 2000s.

This role or function of development aid engagement is also reflected in the countries' own dominant narratives about themselves and their self-understanding as well as in their own official explanations of their large interest in development aid: the contemporaneous perception of a lack of a recent colonial past and therefore no ulterior motives. In Sweden's case, a particular point was often made in relation to the country's neutrality in the Cold War that Swedish aid would reach out to developing countries with which the West struggled to connect. In Swedish political debate '… the picture of a reliable and generous provider of development assistance has become an integral part of Swedish identity in international relations' (Ekengren and Götz, 2013: 35). Interestingly, Glover shows how the Swedish Institute, responsible for Sweden's cultural relations with other countries and also for the first Swedish aid efforts, has moved from a restrained promotion of Sweden in the late 1940s to an assertive marketing of 'Brand Sweden' in the early 2000s, using 'progressiveness' as its key concept (Glover, 2009). Norway's self-perception also seems to have developed during the last decades of the 1900s, particularly in connection to Norway's high foreign aid profile and involvement in peace brokering. Indeed, this identity and self-understanding may have evolved on a regional level as well, with aid-giving becoming a 'Nordic trademark, an essential part of being Nordic' (Brunbech and Olesen, 2013).

The idea of a Nordic model in development aid: explanation, experience and export

The term 'Nordic model' is used in at least three different ways in the development aid literature: to explain the Nordic countries' commitment to development aid, to describe a particular Nordic development aid experience and to characterize something inspiring or exported through Nordic development aid. *The Nordic model as explanation* refers to a view which sees the Nordic domestic societal model as a cause for the particular Nordic support of development aid. *The Nordic model as experience* identifies a particular Nordic way of providing aid, a uniquely Nordic model of aid giving or practice. *The Nordic model as export* refers to an understanding of Nordic aid as more or less consciously working toward mirroring or even recreating the Nordic societal model, or selected parts of it, in the recipient countries

– either through specific individual aid projects or through prioritized issues and areas in aid. This third understanding of the Nordic model may also include a certain ideological affinity with the recipients of aid, which has marked Nordic aid through the greater parts of the post-war period. Based on the donors' interpretations of the recipients' views of what a 'good' society consisted of rather than on actual policy, this ideological affinity could be real or, more often, imagined (Simensen, 2003; Paaskesen, 2011).

The use of the concept Nordic model has been greater in social science research than in the humanities. This may reflect the scope of inquiry; most Nordic histories of development aid have so far been investigations at the national level, either of a country's aid policy over time or of individual aid projects, and relatively few studies examine aid at a Nordic or even Scandinavian level (Engh, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2013). Research coming out of the social sciences, on the other hand, has to a greater degree been based on government white papers and parliamentary debates. This may be a useful approach with regard to domestic and international perceptions, but it tells us less about what goes on in the field.

The Nordic model as explanation

It is as *explanation of* the Nordics' interest in and commitment to development aid that the concept Nordic model has made its greatest impact on research and literature. A host of authors from a range of academic disciplines have sought to justify the Nordic aid commitment with reference to the Nordic way of life, Nordic values and norms and Nordic economic and societal models. Lumsdaine's 1993 *Moral Vision in International Politics: The Foreign Aid Regime 1949–1989* argued that the Nordics' 'humane internationalism' was the main driver behind the provision of aid, pointing out the possible connections between national welfare policy and enthusiasm for aid (Lumsdaine, 1993). Over the years, Nordic international engagement has inspired several researchers to brand the Nordic aid approach as 'humane internationalism' (Pratt, 1989; Lancaster, 2006). Noël and Thérien's linking of various countries' aid policies to Esping-Andersen's welfare state typology became particularly influential; they argued that 'Welfare principles institutionalized at the domestic level shape the participation of developed countries in the international aid regime' (Noël and Thérien, 1995). More recently, the international role of the Nordics has been understood as 'norm entrepreneurship,' both generally and, more particularly, in connection to their UN commitment (Ingebritsen, 2002; Björkdahl, 2007a). In addition, much attention has been given to the central role of Swedish and Nordic values: '… there is a close affinity between the values that shape Sweden's provisions for domestic welfare and its pursuit of redistributive justice at the international level' (Bergman, 2007: 88; see also Kuisma, 2007; Björkdahl, 2007b).

How well do these assumptions stand up when we look beyond official policy statements and take aid experience and history into consideration?

First, although there undoubtedly seems to be a correlation between a welfare state system in donor countries and a willingness to provide development aid, proving a causal relationship between the two remains a challenge. Second, looking at the history of development cooperation, it is possible to identify a whole range of reasons why the Nordic countries initiated development aid efforts, much in the same way that there are a number of reasons behind the increased volume of aid, or the involvement in a number of issues and geographical areas. For example, the first Norwegian development aid project, a fisheries project in Kerala in India, was launched as a 'positive' foreign policy to counteract the negative publicity surrounding Norway's NATO membership and rearmament efforts. Likewise, Sweden's active foreign policy was intended to serve as a counterweight to the country's neutrality in the Cold War.

Interestingly, the interpretation of the Nordic welfare state or Nordic model as an explanation for the Nordic states' development engagement appears to have become more common more or less in parallel with a main development in Nordic historiography. In the post-war period, research on Norden, Scandinavia and above all, Sweden, is marked by a persistent *Sonderweg* argument. This 'special path' or unique development argument sees welfare-state society and the Nordic or Scandinavian model of society as products of shared historical experiences, similar institutions and a number of assumed Nordic values (Stråth and Sørensen, 1997; Stråth, 2004). Furthermore, this historiographical canon leads to an understanding of the development of the welfare state and the Nordic model as teleological, as something intrinsic to Nordic political culture and being, rooted in ideas of rationality, reformism and modernism. In this perspective, the Nordic countries virtually *embody* modernity (Andersson, 2009). Importantly, as Musial has shown, the particular Nordic modernity is also seen as having a distinctive *moral* quality (Musial, 2000). During the 1950s and 1960s, the notion of a Nordic *Sonderweg* 'took on the proportions of a specific egalitarian social democratic community of destiny, in clear distinction to what was seen as a capitalistic (…), conservative, and Catholic continental Europe' (Stråth and Sørensen, 1997: 20). Indeed, the *Sonderweg* argument not only marks Nordic historiography but has also been adopted by an international audience, particularly an American one, through which the idea of a Nordic, Scandinavian, or Swedish, model has been equated with modernity and functioned as a utopia. Already during the interwar period, after Marquis Childs' 1936 observation of Sweden as a 'middle way,' Sweden and Scandinavia were inspiring American academics, politicians and bureaucrats (Childs, 1936). These countries were understood as constituting a modern, rational middle way – staking out an independent course between communism and capitalism (Marklund, 2009). Visions of Nordic modernity and models thus had a reflective function and were negotiated through an interdependent, mutually reinforcing process between foreign observations of *Norden* and domestic self-assertions (Andersson, 2009; Andersson and Hilson, 2009).

Whereas Nordic modernity was an inspiration abroad, it also became an integral part of Nordic actors' self-image and understanding. Thus, the *Sonderweg* idea also forged an influential self-image of modernity and moral quality, deeply associated with the Nordic model, the welfare state and the idea of the Nordics as offering a middle way, an alternative developmental trajectory to the dominant directions in international society. Throughout the twentieth century, this has been central to the self-image and self-understanding of Swedish and Norwegian politics, and importantly, it has become a core component of the countries' development assistance politics. Nordic development aid has been based on the assumption that development aid is a policy area in which the Nordic countries could and *should* play a particular role, and on the idea that they are in some way 'different' from other donors. The new initiatives in development assistance emerging in the early post-war period, and their inherent quest for modernity, seemed a natural arena for Scandinavians and became a prioritized matter.

At times, the Scandinavian countries' lack of a recent colonial past was emphasized as a factor which made them particularly suited to providing aid, as this seemingly precluded any ulterior or selfish motivation. This perspective is reflected in both contemporary political documents and the academic literature. More frequently, the countries' own social and political development was seen as so particular as to warrant a special role. For example, Danish aid supporters of the 1950s saw the Nordic societal model, and especially the welfare state system, as something that should be extended internationally, with the help of development aid (Simensen, 2003; Friis Bach et al., 2008).

Indeed, the assumption of a 'special development' or *Sonderweg* for the Nordic states at home soon seemed replicated in an idea of a 'special role' for the Nordics abroad. Thus, the understanding of the development of the Nordic model as a teleological trajectory, which Andersson describes, seemed mirrored in a similar understanding of Nordic aid as the next natural step on the teleological trajectory – the extension or export of the welfare state system internationally, through aid. Further, this idea of a 'special role' abroad seems to have established itself at a time when the idea of the Nordic *Sonderweg* was so pervasive that it was taken for granted.

Interestingly, the *Sonderweg* argument, the focus on Nordic visions of modernity and the coconstitutive nature of domestic and international ideals are all mirrored in recent research on Scandinavian and Nordic development assistance in the social sciences, influenced by social constructivism and its emphasis on norms in international politics; it has not yet been much discussed among historians of development assistance, however.

In sum, the Nordic societal model appears at best as one of several different reasons behind a country's interest in providing development aid, and several specific examples show that *realpolitik* rather than idealism was decisive when development aid projects were established, expanded or terminated. In addition, the emphasis on the Nordic model as an explanation of aid engagement may privilege altruistic, humanitarian motives for aid provision without adequate attention to *realpolitik*, security concerns and economic motives.

The Nordic model as experience

The Nordic model as experience refers to the use of the concept Nordic model when describing a particular Nordic way of providing aid, based on the assumption there is a particular Nordic model of aid giving or aid practice (Olesen et al., 2013). Examining the history of Nordic development aid, is it possible to identify a particular Nordic model for development aid practice, and if so, what are its main hallmarks? The internationally most noted (and often much hailed) similarity among the Nordic countries – their compliance with the aid norms and targets of organizations such as the UN and the OECD – is obviously accurate (Brunbech and Olesen, 2013; Ekengren and Götz, 2013; Pharo, 2013). Other distinctive Nordic features include a high percentage of aid being given on 'soft' terms, and a relatively progressive approach with regard to various priority areas such as 'poverty orientation,' women, population control and family planning, environment, human rights, good governance and democracy, even if the Nordics were not at the forefront in the two latter areas.

At the same time, however, there are a number of deviations from the assumed larger Nordic aid model, as shown by the historiography on the Nordics' aid practice. Although the Scandinavian countries' aid administrations developed in a similar tempo and pattern, Finland and Iceland must be termed relative latecomers to aid. This raises the question whether a Nordic trajectory within aid really exists. Similarly, although the large amounts of aid may appear as a never-ending intra-Nordic competition to be the most generous, it is clear that the race to the top has been relatively long and, importantly, has not included all the Nordic countries. The influence of the UN and OECD targets of 1%/0.7% ODA on the Nordic countries' policy and practice is difficult to overstate, described as a '…standard reference, or even fetish, when political parties wanted to display their aid goodwill' (Brunbech and Olesen, 2013: 94). Influence has varied over time, however. While Swedish and Norwegian political support for the 1% target has largely been overwhelming and constant since the 1960s, aid volumes were initially low. During the 1960s, the Nordic countries were among the least generous donors within the OECD group and remained so until the early 1970s. The countries' Development Assistance Committee (DAC) membership from the early- to mid-1960s onward created a certain incentive and pressure to increase aid flows (Pharo, 2013). In 1975, Sweden along with the Netherlands reached an aid expenditure of 0.7%of GNP; since then, Swedish aid expenditure has usually exceeded 0.85% and has for a few years even surpassed the 1% target (Ekengren and Götz, 2013). Norway passed the 0.7% mark in 1976 and the 1% target in 1982. The Norwegian aid flow has remained above the 0.8% mark ever since, with the exception of one year (2000) (Pharo, 2013). Demark, in contrast, was a relative latecomer, not reaching the 0.7% target until 1978 and the 1% mark in 1993 (Brunbech and Olesen, 2013). Finland and Iceland are the 'atypical' Nordics regarding aid volume. Finland reached a peak of 0.8% in 1991, but dropped to 0.3 in 1994, and since 2010 has stabilized around 0.5%.[1] Iceland was itself a recipient of aid until 1976.[2] Aid expenditure has risen very slowly, peaking at 0.47 in 2008 and then dropping sharply again due to the economic crisis.[3] Thus, while it is possible to distinguish a Scandinavian trajectory, the assumption of a Nordic one is questionable.

What about the other distinctive features, such as similar aid approaches? From their inception, the Nordic countries' aid programs have had a relatively large multilateral component, and all the Nordics have been very supportive of the UN as a world organization, with Iceland even pointing to its UN membership as the main foundation for Iceland's development cooperation.[4] Furthermore, the Nordic countries' aid administrations have been quick to adopt new and seemingly progressive issues in development. Indeed, Nordic aid has been highly coordinated, with a 'near total identity between the Nordic countries' development policy goals' (Olesen, 2008: 337). At the same time, variations exist. Sweden, for example, has seemingly sought an image of 'greater altruism, less concern about own interests, greater use of multilateral channels of distribution, more concern for the poorest countries of the world and less concern about the return flow to Sweden's own economy' (Ekengren and Götz, 2013: 29). In what became politically contested moves, Sweden and Norway, from 1969 and 1972 onward, respectively, supported a number of armed liberation movements in Africa, such as PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau, MPLA in Angola, Frelimo in Mozambique, SWAPO in Namibia and ZANU and ZAPU in Zimbabwe (Ruud and Kjerland, 2003; Simensen, 2003; Ekengren, 2011; Ekengren and Götz, 2013).

On other issues where the Nordics have been understood as progressive, such as matters relating to international economy and distribution, and the 1974 New International Economic Order (NIEO) initiative, the Nordic countries have combined relatively developing country friendly policy statements with a political practice which has not entirely matched their statements. As the developing countries demanded greater access to the world economy, Norway was in principle in favor of uniform rules in world trade while at the same time maintaining that the Norwegian economy needed protection through various exceptions and preferential treatment of its major industries (Kvale Svenbalrud, 2012; Pharo, 2013). A parallel can be seen in the Nordic support of human rights, democracy and good governance. Despite their ideals, the Nordics have traditionally displayed extensive willingness to accept degrees of dictatorial rule by recipient governments, especially those that maintained a seemingly progressive outlook, at least on a rhetorical level.

What drove the quick adaptation of new and progressive approaches in development aid of the Nordic countries? Was this a result of such approaches genuinely enjoying support in the Nordic publics, or were Nordic politicians and aid bureaucrats quick to adapt to new agendas in development in order to appear 'best in class' and to gain standing in international society?[5] Kvale Svenbalrud indicates that, in discussions at the UN, Norway sometimes showed as much if not more concern for its international standing than for addressing the UN matter at hand. For example, in 1976, Norway's UN delegation was simply instructed to 'go further in meeting the demands of the developing countries than what the other industrialized countries are willing to' (Kvale Svenbalrud, 2012: 168).

A variation on the idea of a Nordic model of aid as experience is related to *the organisation of* the aid sector: the term Nordic model[6] is also used to describe the set-up of the aid sector domestically, marked by a great degree of involvement by NGOs and academic environments. (Tvedt, 2003; Østerud, 2006; Olesen, 2008). As shown above, NGOs have been involved in Scandinavian development aid from its very beginning in the 1950s; however, since the early 1980s, the NGO involvement has grown exponentially (Liland and Kjerland, 2003; Ruud and Kjerland, 2003). NGOs are involved in official development aid as knowledge providers, aid practitioners and, simultaneously, aid recipients. In addition, they function as an aid lobby and constituency, encouraging the sector's expansion. This has been a tendency in all the Nordic countries: powerful aid constituencies were gradually formed, ensuring a continued and expanded aid effort. Pharo shows how, in Norway, a very 'strong, vocal and articulate triangle of interests supported development aid', i.e., a cluster of the private sector, the NGOs and a large number of academics. These groups also had in common that they had become increasingly involved in aid practice and were vested in its continuation and expansion (Pharo, 2013). A similar effect has been found in Denmark. There, a coalition of political parties, NGOs, private businesses and academics favoring aid expansion was forged as a result of the percentage-wise allocation of aid according to type and interest, which ensured that everyone got a share of the aid funds (Brunbech and Olesen, 2013).

The Nordic model as export

The Nordic model as export refers to a view of Nordic aid as more or less consciously working toward mirroring or even recreating the Nordic societal model in the recipient countries, either through specific individual aid projects or through prioritized areas for aid. The most direct connection has been made by Susan Holmberg, who describes Swedish development aid policy as explicitly motivated by a wish to export domestic ideals. Holmberg describes aid as a continuation of the *Folkhem* [People's home] ideology but pursued in the international domain (Holmberg, 1989). This argument is echoed in more recent research in political science and history, which suggests that the Nordic model has been understood as a 'superior way of organizing social, political and economic life' (Kuisma, 2007) and provides examples of Nordic cooperation in international organizations such as UNESCO where a main aim was to export Nordic values (Haggrén, 2009).

As far as actual Nordic aid cooperation is concerned, its history is quite brief. The Nordic Council in 1954 and 1958 discussed the possible potential for aid cooperation. None resulted. In 1961, the Council set up a ministerial committee for aid coordination. The respective ministers responsible for development aid, Jens Otto Krag (Denmark), Aase Bjerkholt (Norway), Ulla Lindstrøm (Sweden) and Heikki Hosia (Finland), participated. Soon a Nordic advisory council for development aid was established at the sub-ministerial level to consider various possibilities for joint Nordic aid projects. Several reasons for the establishment of joint Nordic aid cooperation may be identified. There was a politically motivated desire for increased Nordic cooperation, an interest in pooling resources and knowledge as both were fairly scarce, and an interest in gaining experience in the field.

The joint Nordic development aid cooperation may serve to illustrate a tendency typical for Nordic aid in the years 1960–1985. An ideological identification with recipient countries that stood for a societal model which, to Nordic eyes, appeared similar to the Nordic one, created lasting development cooperation through a number of projects. The East African countries Kenya and Tanzania held particular appeal for Nordic social democrats, who appreciated their forms of 'African socialism,' as expressed through Kenya's 1965 *Common Man's Charter* and Tanzania's 1967 *Arusha Declaration*. The fact that most of the African countries with which the Nordics cooperated had become single party states with varying degrees of dictatorship by the mid-1970s seems to have created little concern in the Nordic aid administrations, among politicians or the general public. Tanzania became a particularly prioritized country, and during the 1970s and the 1980s, the Nordic countries supplied between 25% and 40% of that country's total aid flow (Simensen, 2003).

Two joint Nordic aid projects stand out as having possibly been inspired by ideas of the Nordic societal model. First is the Nordic Tanganyika Centre (the Kibaha Centre), which was established in 1961. Based in Kibaha, Tanganyika, the project center included a number of features such as schools, an agricultural center and a health center. A central aim was to create a model to inspire, influence and encourage replication. Nordic thinking was particularly influential regarding working methods and operations: the agricultural center produced typically Nordic agricultural products and introduced Nordic teaching on agricultural methods. The school worked to adapt Nordic ideas on teaching to African needs for education. The health center represented distinctly Nordic approaches, emphasizing preventive medicine, family planning and reproductive health. Thus, the project was strongly influenced by the experts' cultural backgrounds and experiences (Røed, 2004; Engh and Pharo, 2009). This aspect mirrored the central role of experts in the Nordic states during a time of unprecedented faith in social engineering and the potential for scientifically based planning (Broberg and Roll-Hansen, 1996; Stråth, 2004). Influential ideas were thus pragmatically adapted to both the local recipient society and Nordic ideas of what successful development cooperation would constitute.

An interesting question is whether ideas from the Kibaha Centre may have influenced Tanzanian development policy more generally. There certainly seems to be a striking correlation between the 1967 *Arusha Declaration* and general values and ideas underpinning Nordic welfare state ideology. Kibaha may, indeed, have been one of the channels. The project received extensive attention from Tanzania's president, Julius Nyerere, who followed the developments in Kibaha carefully and who also had close connections to Scandinavian political elites (Engh and Pharo, 2009). In addition, the Nordic experts at Kibaha gained access to Tanzania's top political circles and had considerable influence.

A second project that could be said to represent an attempt to export the Nordic through aid is the joint Nordic cooperative project in Tanzania in the period 1968–1988. The project worked to establish a free and independent cooperative movement in Tanzania; the inspiration was the donor countries' own traditions and experiences with cooperative movements from the end of the nineteenth century which they believed could be modified and exported to benefit Tanzania's development. Tanzanian realities soon proved dramatically different from the Nordic ones, however, with Julius Nyerere's political visions constituting a major obstacle. Nyerere's infamous *ujamaa* policy, and particularly its intensification from the mid-1970s onward, entailed forced collectivization of arable land and the moving of the rural population into *ujamaa* villages. This policy, in the final instance, also brought about the dissolution of Tanzania's cooperative movement. In response to developments in Tanzania, Nordic aid administrators decided simply to convert the cooperative project into a rural village project; doing so directly supported the *ujamaa* policy (Paaskesen, 2010, 2011). As the 2015 exhibition 'Forms of Freedom' documented, Nordic architects created the plans for several of the *ujamaa* villages (Engh, 2015). During the 1980s, the project was reconverted to a cooperative project. However, the period of forced collectivization and removal to *ujamaa* villages had made cooperative efforts obsolete, and the project proved fruitless. The project eventually ended as a result of the donor countries' discontent with the joint Nordic aid work, and its inherent bureaucratic difficulties (Paaskesen, 2011).

Conclusions

To return to this chapter's initial question: is the concept 'Nordic model' a fruitful one for the study of Nordic aid policies or individual aid projects?

Does it provide any additional explanatory power or analytical insight? The evidence is somewhat mixed and uncertain, particularly as the concept takes on different meanings in different settings. As discussed above, both political and popular debate as well as academic literature on Nordic development aid employ the concept of Nordic model in three different ways: as explanation, as experience and as export. The history of Nordic development aid shows that, regarding the Nordic model as *explanation*, the Nordic societal model appears at best as one of several different reasons behind a country's interest for providing development aid. Several specific examples show that *realpolitik* rather than idealism has been decisive. At the same time, however, Nordic aid administrators and politicians have repeatedly referred to ideational factors in order to explain the Nordic enthusiasm for aid, something which a large body of research confirms. As argued above, the belief in a Nordic *Sonderweg* may, indeed, have helped create a similar interpretation of and self-image regarding Nordic development aid, that is, an assumption that aid is a policy area in which the Nordics could and *should* play a particular role, as the countries themselves represent a 'different' or 'alternative' developmental trajectory. Thus, although there are case studies showing that realpolitik was decisive in aid decisions, this does not mean that idealistic motivations were not also operative.

Regarding the Nordic model as a form of aid experience or aid practice, it is clear that the Nordic countries share a number of features and have for some time. However, there are also quite considerable variations among the Nordics. The similarities seem to be strongest among the Scandinavian countries, whereas Finland and Iceland show variations on the general pattern; for instance, both are relative latecomers to aid.

As for the idea of the Nordic model as something that is exported through Nordic aid, the picture is somewhat mixed. Whereas replicating the Nordic socioeconomic system in developing countries has not been an overtly stated policy, individual Nordic aid projects such as the Kibaha Centre and the cooperative project have undoubtedly been inspired by the Nordic societies and their values, ideas and solutions. Still, the examples from Tanzania show that local political conditions, rather than donor ideas, had decisive impact on these projects' development. The results, particularly in the case of the cooperative project, differed significantly from the Nordic model of society and its solutions.

The Norwegian National Museum in 2015 concluded that the Nordic countries assumed that 'the social democratic model could be exported, translated and used for nation building, modernization and welfare in Africa' (The National Museum – Architecture, 2015). But the history of Nordic development aid shows that the idea of exporting the Nordic model through aid is not merely too simplistic, but that it also stands in direct contradiction to a lasting principle of Nordic aid – that aid should be given unconditionally and on the recipients' own terms. Whereas this principle has not always been an easy one to follow, it has remained a core idea since the beginning of Nordic aid.

The primary sources provide limited support for the interpretation that a conscious, explicit wish to transfer the Nordic model of society to the recipient countries was a driver of development aid. Individual participants in a number of development cooperation processes may have felt that the aid openly or implicitly contained such a dimension, but there is an absence of evidence that this was an explicit Nordic policy. Archival sources on various aspects of Norwegian and Nordic aid history rarely reveal expressions of any particularly uniform idea about what the Nordic development model would amount to. At best, this view of aid was an unspoken, underlying assumption. In addition, it may not in fact be possible to trace any uniform understanding of the Nordic model through the many arenas and levels that constitute the aid cooperation process: the political level, different levels within the aid administrations, the interplay between the home and field offices of the aid administration and the actual recipients of aid, whether at government or user level.

Of the three ways that of conceiving what is meant by the Nordic model, it is the Nordic model as export that the historiography on aid offers the strongest support for, but only in terms of fairly delimited fields, such as health, population, agriculture, education and the cooperative movement. In these cases, it is far from obvious whether it was the Nordic model as a whole that was an inspiration, or whether it was, rather, specific selected features, such as welfare state-inspired schemes, public health care or gender equality. Nordic aid has often focused on areas and issues where aid administrators believed the Nordic countries could make a difference based on their own domestic experiences and knowledge, and these are precisely the delimited areas mentioned: cooperatives, fisheries, health and population.

The joint Nordic aid effort was of relatively short duration, and may partly be considered a consequence of the fact that aid was a recent policy field and resources needed to be pooled. As the national aid bureaucracies were built up and became more professional, individual countries' desire for own national aid projects and programs grew. This must be linked to the fact that aid was frequently designed to serve several purposes and publics, and that displaying a national rather than a regional, profile gradually became more highly prioritized by donors. This was precisely the reason that joint Nordic projects ran aground – the individual donors desired to display their own flags. Closely related to this was, of course, the ever more frequent, recurring need to show taxpayers the purposes for which their government's money was spent, and to promote the international profile of small donor states.

On the basis of historical works on development aid so far, it seems that a more systematic employment of the approaches of transnational history would have helped to see more clearly the fact that Nordic aid takes place within a wider framework than the nation-state and the region. Aid, after all, crosses borders. Thus, it should be no surprise that the phenomenon of development aid can be understood, and perhaps better grasped if viewed outside the national and regional frameworks, and placed within the partially overlapping ones.

Notes

1 See the OECD website: https://data.oecd.org/oda/net-oda.htm [accessed March 4, 2016]
2 OECD Special Review of Iceland 2013, available at http://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/Iceland%20Special%20Review.pdf [accessed March 4, 2016]
3 See the OECD website: https://data.oecd.org/oda/net-oda.htm [accessed March 4, 2016]
4 Iceland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Icelandic Development Cooperation': http://www.mfa.is/foreign-policy/development-cooperation/icelandic-development-cooperation/ [accessed March 4, 2016]
5 For Norway's status-seeking foreign policy behaviour, see Leira, 'The formative years: Norway as an obsessive status-seeker' and Benjamin de Carvalho and Jon Harald Sande Lie, 'A Great Power Performance: Norway, Status and the Policy of Involvement', in de Carvalho and Neumann (eds.), *Small State Status Seeking. Norway's Quest for International Standing*, pp. 56–73.
6 Alternatively, «Nordic» can also be substituted by the name of an individual country, e.g. the Danish model.

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Part 2

Nordic models in specific spheres

8 'A cross between Batman and a public ear'

How the United States transformed the ombudsman

Byron Z. Rom-Jensen

Introduction

The 1967 edition of *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* was the first to include the term 'ombudsman' in its English lexicon, providing several lines of Swedish etymology and defining it as 'a government official (as in Sweden or New Zealand) appointed to receive and investigate complaints made by individuals against abuses or capricious acts of public officials.' In 1971, *Webster's* introduced a new definition as an addendum to the first: 'one that investigates reported complaints (as from students or customers), reports findings, and helps to achieve equitable settlements.'[1] *Webster's* editorial choices reflected in microcosm a larger transformation of the ombudsman office following its arrival in the United States during the 1960s. The ombudsman title, if still alien to many Americans, was now widespread enough to warrant inclusion in a prominent American-English dictionary even as the office itself underwent extensive naturalization, with its mushrooming presence within the United States obscuring its Scandinavian origins. Connected with this process of naturalization, the meaning and responsibilities of the ombudsman changed, moving from a government official investigating public abuses to a more open-ended investigative position. In less than a decade, the Scandinavian policy had been woven into the fabric of American political and social institutions.

The global circulation of the ombudsman office is one of the most successful examples of the export of Nordic policy; yet, scholars interested in the ombudsman often overlook the office's placement within the Nordic model's blend of political values and state programs.[2] Partially accounting for this omission, the ombudsman originated in a political environment with goals and concerns very different from those of mid-twentieth-century Nordic politics. However, the policy's subsequent evolution reoriented the office to fit with a political culture of consensus-making and compromise, in effect carving a niche within the later Nordic 'view of the state as a benign institution capable of acting in the best interests of society' (Sørensen and Stråth, 1997: 19; Hilson, 2008: 33). The ombudsman helped guarantee the perpetuation of the cooperative relationship between the citizen and state

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by providing 'supervision' of their interactions as the public sector expanded to incorporate a range of social programs and activities (Hurwitz, 1968: 6). The ombudsman's presence in mid-century Norden thus reflects the model's emphasis on liberty within security, with the welfare state's prerogative to protect individual freedoms while maintaining expansive social benefits. Despite favoring more market-oriented entitlement programs, the United States' social safety net and associated bureaucratic structures likewise expanded rapidly after World War II, eliciting intense discussions about the 'intrusion of the state' and the resulting mitigation of democratic protections of rights (Quadagno, 1996: 6; Bell, 2010).

While common concerns about the state's growth and changing responsibilities paved the way for a transfer of the ombudsman office to the United States, diverging political structures and cultures nonetheless required a 'translation' of Scandinavian policy into local practices, institutions, and discourses. Notably, advocates of instituting regulative procedures through an ombudsman would have to place the policy within American normative and cognitive assumptions about the role and effectiveness of state institutions (Campbell, 2004: 79–85), while simultaneously navigating preexisting political enmities and alliances. Driving the resulting negotiations about power relationships between the state the citizen and their translations from a Scandinavian context was an epistemic community of legal and political scholars who acted as authoritative experts and advocates for the ombudsman (Haas, 1992: 20; Stone, 2004: 562).[3] To broadcast their expertise to American audiences, these scholars orchestrated public media campaigns, drafted model legislation, and collaborated with political actors to find solutions to state problems and, in doing so, define state interests. However, differences arose between experts and policymakers regarding the extent that Nordic methods of establishing trust between the citizen and the state should be preserved or revised.

This chapter explores the spread of the ombudsman as a manifestation of mid-century Nordic politics, briefly outlining its reorientation toward a Nordic model before investigating how transnational experts and American policymakers variously sought to interpret the office in light of foreign challenges and in the process redefine Nordic precedents. Following this process of transnational circulation, the ombudsman not only underwent an operational transformation in an American political and social context but also was unpacked and domesticated in a way that severed many of its ties to a Nordic political culture.

The origins of the ombudsman

Accounts of the ombudsman from the 1960s, when the office achieved worldwide renown, often bespeak a sense of surprise that the ombudsman originated 150 years prior in a Swedish political system with far different concerns. Although it formally ended absolutism and established greater legislative control over lawmaking and state finances, the constitution of 1809 ensured the state remained centralized by granting the monarch wide-ranging powers. In response, the Riksdag established a *Justitieombudsman* as a balance and a parliamentary check against legal abuses by administrative authorities acting under the king. Although chosen by parliament, the ombudsman's formal independence from both the government and parliament was intended to ensure the office's invulnerability to outside influence.

As Swedish democracy's expansion lessened concerns about the privileges of royal ministers, the purpose and functions of the ombudsman shifted to address, 'The extension of the activities of the society to new fields and the enormous enlargement of the administration' (Bexelius, 1965: 42–43). Accordingly, the ombudsman increasingly focused on supervising bureaucracy (Rowat, 1985: 3), with the prerogative to investigate and subpoena officials and civil servants based on citizen complaints of abuse or lawbreaking, and even publically reprimand or prosecute wrongdoers, although the latter function was so rare as to be nonexistent (Bexelius, 1965: 24–25). From a larger perspective, the new duties fit with the high rates of organization within Sweden's corporatist arrangements. 'Ombud' (meaning one who represents) came to refer to representatives throughout Swedish society: in the Riksdag, political parties, trade unions, and the workplace (Rosenthal, 1964: 227). Indeed, as state services expanded, the ombudsman became a mediator between the citizen and bureaucracy and a means of ensuring trust in a purportedly benevolent system.

With the ombudsman's placement as guarantor of 'justice and efficient administration of citizens' affairs, large and small' (Hurwitz, 1968: 40), it logically spread to other countries concerned with establishing trust in the government. With the Constitution Act of 1919, Finland drew upon its long-preserved legal system, originally developed under Swedish rule. Like its Swedish counterpart, the Finnish ombudsman investigated citizen complaints to ensure that decisions by bureaucrats and the judiciary were 'just,' while notably not aiming to restrict their independence (Gellhorn, 1966a: 360; Rowat, 1985: 15–27. See also Erikkalä, 2020: 70).

The policy again spread in 1955 when Denmark adopted an ombudsman to facilitate conflicts between administrators and citizens, which were 'more frequent and often more serious than in former days' (Pedersen, 1965: 76–77). Just like the Norwegian ombudsman, established in 1962, the Danish ombudsman's functions reflected its placement within the expanding framework of the mid-century Nordic welfare state. While chosen by parliament to ensure legality within bureaucracy, these ombudsman offices could also investigate 'arbitrary or unreasonable decisions' made by administrators (Means, 1968: 629), which in Denmark included the power to subpoena. The stipulations in both countries against examining the judiciary made it clear that the office was no longer primarily a means of controlling executive or judicial privilege but instead a buffer for citizen rights within an increasingly bureaucratized society. As Swedish ombudsman Alfred Bexelius summed up in 1961, an independent organization aimed at investigating wrongdoing in administration 'must necessarily help to maintain the confidence of the general public' given 'the new situation created by the rapid development of society' (Bexelius, 1961: 255–256). The Scandinavian ombudsman did not limit social services but guaranteed a measure of citizen liberty within it.

However, Scandinavia was not alone in facing challenges of expanding state responsibilities, and the ombudsman became a frequently studied policy throughout the 1960s. The result was a policy diffusion wave, as New Zealand, Tanzania, India, and the United Kingdom all adopted some form of the ombudsman. The Parliamentary Commissioner in the United Kingdom particularly provided a relevant example for the United States, given the translation of both intent and form of the policy to fit a non-Nordic political culture nervous about 'maladministration' or even 'authoritarian' bureaucracy (Schwartz, 1970: 57, 58; Stacey, 1971: 29).

Translating the ombudsman

This diffusion of the ombudsman innovation did not happen instinctively but rather was midwifed into existence by an epistemic community of experts who translated Scandinavian results for foreign audiences (Haas, 1992). These translators, acting as authoritative 'consultants,' gained legitimacy by prescribing popular, external remedies for local issues, often through widely circulated publications (Røvik, 1998: 157). Their efforts to de- and then recontextualize the ombudsman, defining aspects requisite for success while approving alterations to others, became prized by policymakers over independent investigation of foreign institutions, thereby severing the office from Scandinavian political culture (Røvik, 2016). The epistemic community consequently possessed wide latitude as 'brokers,' interpreting the functions and goals of the ombudsman and facilitating its movement from one setting to another, and as 'theorists,' promoting paradigms that emphasized bureaucratic solutions to modern political challenges (Rogers, 1995: chap. 9; Campbell, 2004: chap. 4). As Tero Erikkilä notes, the diffusion of the ombudsman thus, 'is hardly a testimony to the power of the idea but rather the transnational actors' ability to shape it to fit their needs' (Erikkilä, 2020, 48). However, these legal and political experts did not themselves possess policymaking authority and were dependent on decision-makers to implement programs based on their prescribed policy courses and mobilize popular support for these programs. This led to a level of conflict between the 'pure' policy models of the theorists and the 'diluted' programs actually realized in the United States.

Differences between experts and policymakers inspired an inevitable conflict between 'foreignizing' and 'domesticating' the ombudsman. Whereas advocates of foreignizing the ombudsman emphasized the program's success in Scandinavia and therefore supported maintaining as many policy features as possible from the original, supporters for domesticating the office were more interested in specific domestic issues facing the United States and accordingly more willing to make alterations (Røvik, 2016: 293). Further complicating this debate about adapting policy features—including goals, selection processes, and constraints—was that policies like the ombudsman consisted of both practical and normative components, which could become decoupled during the process of translation. These caveats meant that multiple outcomes of policy transfer were possible, including emulation, in which a foreign exemplar acted as the standard for local policy development; hybridization when elements of several policies were synthesized; and inspiration or 'fresh thinking' (Evans, 2009: 246).

The efforts of expert translators to popularize the ombudsman coincided with and, in certain cases, precipitated the popularity of the ombudsman in the United States in the 1960s. A search for articles in the *JSTOR* database containing the word 'ombudsman' returns only three articles from 1950 to 1959, but 608 from 1960 to 1970, the high tide of ombudsman acclaim. Even with the majority of the articles coming from English-speaking countries without an ombudsman and curious about its potential—such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and India—references to Scandinavia were frequent, sometimes detailed in extensive reports, sometimes with a single mention. Sweden, as the originator of the ombudsman, was the most cited country, but the other Nordic states (with the exception of Iceland) also appeared regularly.[4] Moreover, experts often attached a more generalized 'Scandinavian' or 'Nordic' moniker to the ombudsman, even when discussing its results in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and parts of Canada.

Two principal factors account for the circulation of a 'Nordic' ombudsman, as opposed to a strictly Swedish office. First, Denmark and Norway had recently implemented an ombudsman for reasons similar to other nations considering its adoption, making their experiences highly relevant. Second and more importantly, Danish experts had been especially active in disseminating information on their new ombudsman internationally.

The trailblazer in the midcentury propagation of the Danish ombudsman was Stephan Hurwitz, Denmark's first ombudsman and, according to the Associated Press, 'the main reason for the worldwide acceptance of that position as an institution' (Associated Press, 1981). Upon assuming office, Hurwitz set out on a public information campaign, penning multiple articles in Danish and English to publicize the functions and purpose of his office. In Hurwitz's articles, the ombudsman acted as a guarantor of the 'public trust,' guiding a highly competent and cooperative Danish administration while also protecting civil servants from erroneous charges. Moreover, Hurwitz stressed the 'Scandinavian' ombudsman's independence from partisan divisions, instead describing the office as a 'personal contact' for all citizens regardless of political leaning (Hurwitz, 1956a: 110, 1956b, 1958, 1960, 1961: 207).

Despite such acclaim, a foreign official alone would have found it difficult to sell the policy as a solution to other countries. Indeed, Hurwitz's early articles largely refrained from explicit recommendations for the spread of the ombudsman, instead broadcasting his own achievements. But Hurwitz was *not* alone in spreading news of the ombudsman in America. Throughout the 1960s, a transnational community of legal and political scholars coalesced around interest in the ombudsman and proved highly active in promulgating its record in Scandinavia to justify the office's establishment in the United States. In contrast to Hurwitz's 'personal contact,' American expert translators' ubiquitous references to the ombudsman as a 'watchdog' or 'watchman' recalled American concerns about misuses of administrative autonomy, aiding the appeal of the office (e.g., Abraham, 1960; Gellhorn, 1966a). Nonetheless, even while acknowledging that its original form may not be suitable for political structures in the United States, these experts advocated emulating the Scandinavian ombudsman policy as closely as possible. As partisans of 'foreignizing' the ombudsman, these scholars modeled an office for the purpose of establishing regulated and peaceable contact between the state and the citizen without explicitly opposing bureaucracy.

Among the notable translators was Stanley V. Anderson, a legal and international relations scholar, whose published articles and books included *Ombudsmen for American Government?* (Anderson, 1964, 1968; Reuss and Anderson, 1966; Anderson, 1969). In 1971, Anderson was appointed to head the Ombudsman Activities Project at the University of California Santa Barbara, which focused on tracking and furthering the spread of the American ombudsman (Hill, 1976: 15, fn. 21; Moore, 2010: 164). This put Anderson in close contact with Donald Cameron Rowat, a Canadian political scientist and another prominent figure for ombudsman advocacy. The most prestigious of the American experts was Walter Gellhorn. Gellhorn, a long-time legal professor at Columbia University and a vocal liberal proponent of individual rights (Thomas, 1995), first published on the Scandinavian ombudsman in 1962 (Gellhorn, 1962). His greatest contributions were two books in 1966: *Ombudsman and Others* and *When Americans Complain*. Gellhorn's books received extensive acclaim in both academic journals and popular newspapers (Bylin, 1966; Long, 1966; Chazen, 1967; MacFull, 1967; Auerbach, 1968) and were widely 'credited with establishing the Swedish notion of official mediation as a part of the American scene' (Thomas, 1995).

The models that Anderson, Rowat, and Gellhorn derived from this 'export of Scandinavia' (Rowat, 1964: 230) attempted to replicate 'Nordic' recognition 'that in the age of the welfare state, traditional controls are not good enough' (Rowat, 1962). Still, all three took pains to show that the ombudsman was not designed to restrict bureaucracy, but rather to bolster 'lessened confidence in public administration.' Indeed, Gellhorn pointed to experiences in Scandinavia as evidence that the ombudsman was 'most useful in a society already so well run that it could get along happily without having his services at all' (Gellhorn, 1966b: 192, 422). By setting Scandinavia as the standard for emulation, these assertions advanced a paradigm emphasizing greater administrative oversight as the solution for issues related to public sector expansion, an extension of the Nordic model's normative assumptions of liberty within security. The purpose of the ombudsman was, therefore, to remain the same: securing the effectiveness of the modern state although the experts all recognized that certain changes, including multiple ombudsman, might be necessary to account for the size of the United States. Other aspects, such as the ombudsman's independence and political neutrality, were also to be retained (Rowat, 1964: 232; Gellhorn, 1966c: 225–231; Anderson, 1968: 148–149). Just as important, Americans must not see the Scandinavian ombudsman as a 'panacea for the cure of government ills' (Gellhorn, 1966b: 47; Anderson, 1968: 155).

Around the same time that Americans experts were 'discovering' the ombudsman, various newspaper journalists and editors began promoting the office as a fit for American politics. In 1960, the *Baltimore Sun* wistfully speculated, 'Almost everyone can think of a case in which he would have been very glad to have one to hand, with all the majesty of Congress behind him' (Baltimore Sun, 1960). Journalists regularly linked the ombudsman to a Scandinavian 'national father-image,' with the officeholder acting as a citizen's defender against bureaucracy (Boston Globe, 1965) and, for conservative commentators, a safeguard against the 'welfare state' (Hutchins, 1966). For many popular writers on both sides of the political spectrum, the ombudsman seemed a promising and, much to the chagrin of Gellhorn, easy means of protecting the citizen and ensuring government accountability. Such enthusiasm carried into the first campaign for a US ombudsman in 1963.

The federal ombudsman

On February 10, 1963, Democratic representative Henry S. Reuss proposed that the US Congress should examine the feasibility of adopting 'the Scandinavian office of "ombudsman" to help constituents who turn to Congressmen for help' (Associated Press, 1963). Reuss wasted little time acting on his own recommendation, proposing a bill on July 16, 1963, for a congressional 'Administrative Counsel' based on the 'highly successful Ombudsman device.' Like the ombudsman, the Administrative Counsel was an investigatory office handling civilian claims alleging improper treatment or denial of rightful benefits. The position included a jurisdiction to investigate federal 'departments, agencies, or instrumentalities' although the president, Congress, and the federal judiciary were exempted. Yet Reuss's Administrative Counsel also contained important revisions for an American environment. Rather than a truly independent officer, the Speaker of the House and the President would appoint the Counsel for two-year terms, fitting with the constitutional cycles of the House of Representatives. Furthermore, to allay concerns about weakening 'congressional-constituent' relationships, members of Congress would bring the Counsel constituent complaints for investigation, rather than having citizens directly contact the Counsel. In its focus on easing congressmen's 'administrative burden,' Reuss's bill resembled a similar, failed proposal in Norway to decrease 'errands for constituents,' which would have made 'the Ombudsman dependent on the Storting to a degree quite incompatible with the basic idea of the office' (Means, 1968: 628). Dependency was not a concern for Reuss, who instead described the Administrative Counsel as 'an agent of Congress.' The Norwegian and other Scandinavian ombudsmen, while cited as 'a successful adjunct of democratic government,' were largely absent from Reuss's speech to the House floor.[5]

Support failed to materialize and the bill languished in the House Committee on Administration until the 88th Congress ended in January 1965. Unlike its Norwegian counterpart, the bill's opposition from Republicans and Democrats alike centered on their reluctance to surrender former congressional power. This opposition stemmed from an international inconsistency in perceptions of political authority, with the American emphasis on elected officials as the most effective agents for handling complaints at odds with the Scandinavian deference to experts. Opponents indicated this discrepancy as a sign that Scandinavian policy was inapplicable in a larger nation (Long, 1963; Cleveland, 1964). The resistance to the ombudsman thereby couched itself in a rhetoric of national difference, based on the poignant, if simplistic, argument that the United States was not Scandinavia.

In an article cowritten with Stanley Anderson, who had taken an advisory position in Reuss's office (Moore, 2010: 164), Reuss responded by promising that the Counsel would reduce congressional workload, increase efficiency, ensure separation of the state, and stop administrative malpractice. Despite including Scandinavian experience as proof that the ombudsman safeguarded individual rights, Reuss and Anderson also asserted any foreign influence was purely inspirational (Reuss and Anderson, 1966: 47–50). A second Administrative Counsel bill in 1965 drew heavily on Scandinavian examples, with no more success than in 1963.[6] However, a parallel bill proposed by Senator Claiborne Pell received a hearing before the Subcommittee on Administrative Practice and Procedure, headed by Missouri Democrat Edward Long, himself a supporter of the ombudsman campaign. Long opened the hearing by remarking that the ombudsman was the third Swedish word to enter the American vocabulary after 'skål' and 'smörgåsbord.' Indeed, the term 'ombudsman' would never effectively be translated into English, Reuss's abortive 'Administrative Counsel' notwithstanding. The application of the ombudsman as a 'loan word' nonetheless necessitated an explanation of how the office should function (Pernau, 2012: 7); in Long's Congressional hearing, its precedents abroad served to explain its operations and feasibility to American decision-makers. The choice of witnesses reflected the emphasis on a Swedish model: Swedish ambassador to the US Hubert de Besche and Sweden's ombudsman Alfred Bexelius, who had been touring the United States for three weeks to lecture on his office (*Ombudsman Hearings*, 1966).

The contents of the hearing and its results capture the difficulties of adapting programs designed for a foreign context. Presenting the duties of his office, Bexelius described how the ombudsman ‘strengthens the confidence of the public in the authorities,’ necessary as modern ‘citizens have become increasingly dependent on public agencies’ (*Ombudsman Hearings*, 1966: 13, 17). Attendees of the hearing pressed Bexelius to forecast the ombudsman’s role in the United States: its protection against wiretapping, elimination of administrative intimidation, and advantages over an elected official. Reuss, also in attendance, explained his Administrative Counsel plan and asked Bexelius to judge whether ‘such an adaptation of your Scandinavian device would retain many of the advantages of the ombudsman.’ Bexelius responded favorably although with some trepidation about the lack of direct citizen contact. Despite these positive responses, the hearings ended without suggestions for further action and the bill never made it out of committee (*Ombudsman Hearings*, 1966: 29). However, Long and Benny Kass, the subcommittee’s assistant counsel, supported Reuss as the congressman proposed a federal ombudsman again in 1967 and 1969, with Kass turning to American popular culture to familiarize the office as ‘a cross between Batman and a public ear’ (Long, 1966; Kass, 1967: 231).[7] As part of his efforts in Congress, Reuss—who had finally given in to popular vogue and adopted the title ‘Congressional Ombudsman’ (Anderson, 1969: 15)—invoked the recommendations of Gellhorn and Anderson, while also tapping the two experts, along with Rowat, to serve as advisors to a Milwaukee ombudsman that Reuss hoped would demonstrate the policy’s feasibility (New York Times, 1967a).[8]

Fears of losing contact with constituents, a lack of support among better-educated voters, and concerns about implementing a ‘foreign,’ ‘socialist’ policy combined to doom Reuss’s proposals (Gallup, 1965; Sacco, 1967). Although bills aimed at creating a federal ombudsman continued until 1973 (Anderson and Stockton, 1990), the most notable a bipartisan effort in 1971 that drew upon a model statute written by Gellhorn in *Ombudsmen for American Government?*, a federal ombudsman bill never passed.[9] Despite committed political advocates, the proposal came too close to upsetting the traditional powers of elected officials in the US federal system. The efforts of Reuss and his colleagues nonetheless left a mark in Congress, as a positive reputation combined with successful Scandinavian experiences to establish the ombudsman as the default method of bureaucratic regulation.

The early history of the Administrative Conference of the United States (ACUS) provides evidence to the extent that the ombudsman penetrated the American mindset. Begun as a temporary institution by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1953 and 1960, the ACUS sought to end ‘the cumbersome procedures, unnecessary expense, and the delays’ of federal administration (United Press, 1960; Kohlmeier, 1963). Notwithstanding similar goals in regulating administrative bodies, the structure and methods of the Administrative Conference varied greatly from the ombudsman. Instead of a single independent official and his small staff, the rolls of the ACUS were expansive and drawn both from within and without federal agencies (Gardner, 1972: 36–39). Moreover, the ACUS did not respond directly to civilian complaints but focused on general problems determined by a professional core working inside the agencies they intended to regulate.

Even before the approval of a permanent ACUS in 1964, the ombudsman idea proved pervasive in ACUS activities. As part of the 1960 iteration of the ACUS, Gellhorn had supported a broader, ombudsman-style mandate for the conference and produced a report on the Finnish, Swedish, and especially Danish ombudsman as a means of impressing upon his colleagues 'the scope and methods of any permanent organization that may grow out of the Administrative Conference.'[10] Gellhorn's reputation as a respected legal authority on the ombudsman encouraged President Lyndon Johnson to appoint him the first chairman of the ACUS (the only 1 of 15 candidates approved by Johnson).[11] Although Gellhorn declined the position, he served as a board member once the ACUS finally received funding in 1967.

Despite formal funding, Jerre Williams, the eventual chairman, found it difficult to differentiate the ACUS's application of internal regulation from the ombudsman's grievance-based inquiries. At an early appropriation meeting, Williams recalled being asked by Congressman Tom Steed, 'Will you investigate individual complaints—Will you be a "homespun man"?'[12] The misnomer indicates the continued foreignness of both the term and the concept 'ombudsman' to many Americans as well as Williams's struggle to distinguish his organization from the Scandinavian position. Such pressure eventually culminated in the ACUS executive council investigating the possibility of handling individual complaints during its first year of existence.[13]

Politicians and experts thus continuously worked a Scandinavian policy into other forms of bureaucratic control, even as the plan for a congressional ombudsman faltered. The Administrative Conference originated with goals and structures very different from the ombudsman. However, by 1968, the ombudsman was 'being used to describe any complaint-handling or appeal machinery' (Rowat, 1968: 35), consequently forcing Williams to position himself relative to such policy. Although the ACUS never did examine citizen complaints directly, the idea of fulfilling ombudsman functions continued to intrigue successive conferences into 1990 when the ACUS adopted Recommendation 90-2, which encouraged the creation of a federal ombudsman 'with major responsibilities involving significant interactions with members of the general public' (Anderson and Stockton, 1990). Fittingly, Walter Gellhorn, now in his mid-80s, chaired the meeting.

The state and municipal ombudsman

Campaigns to adopt the ombudsman were more successful within other administrative divisions. Taking place at a smaller scale, where notions of a single officer capable of handling complaints were less implausible and legislatures were more likely to be controlled by a single party, the state and municipal ombudsman offices nonetheless only really became successful after the idea had already firmly taken root in the United States. Thus, early bills in Connecticut (1963) and California (1965, 1967) failed to pass despite support from leading politicians and experts (Nader, 1963; Bylin, 1966; Los Angeles Times, 1966). Yet the popularity and tenacity of its expert-advocates of the ombudsman gave the legislation the resiliency to survive years of rejection and retooling. By 1967, Walter Gellhorn observed, 'bills to create American variants of the ombudsman system that has been identified with the Scandinavian government [sic] have now been introduced in 47 of the 50 state legislatures.' This widespread consideration made Gellhorn hopeful of 'transplanting ombudsmanship to our country' (Kuhnle, 1981: 125).[14] His conflation of the Scandinavian countries into a single political-administrative unit displayed the flexibility of foreign models even for the most acclaimed experts.

1967 also witnessed the first successful bill for a state ombudsman in Hawaii, drawing upon the 'Scandinavian model' (Wall Street Journal, 1970). In 1969, Herman Doi, director of the University of Hawaii's Legislative Reference Bureau, was appointed to the office and immediately departed for a three-week study tour in Europe.[15] Other states followed in Hawaii's wake (Nebraska, 1969; Oregon, 1969; Iowa, 1972; Alaska, 1976) although sometimes with great deviance from the original ombudsman. Oregon Governor Tom McCall, for example, bypassed the legislature altogether by unilaterally appointing an ombudsman (Rowat, 1985: 88), a far stretch from the independent check upon executive overreach found in the Nordic countries. The variations in form revealed a reorientation toward local situations and internal precedents, as Doi became an elder statesman of the ombudsman campaign, publishing on the policy and accepting invitations by states to explain his part in preventing 'bureaucracies from overrunning citizens' rights' (New York Times, 1970).[16]

Just as important to the spread of the ombudsman was the mature epistemic community led by Walter Gellhorn. As a conduit bridging the geographical and political gap between the United States and Scandinavian countries, Gellhorn raised awareness of the office and aided in the more practical requirements of its establishment. Legislators took notice, including the Senate of Maryland, which based a 1970 bill off a 'Model Ombudsman Statute' prepared by Gellhorn for the ombudsman-themed 1967 conference of the American Assembly, a public policy institute, which recommended, 'Ombudsman offices be established in American local and state governments' (Tibbles and Hollands, 1970: 356; Gregory and Giddings, 2000: 6).[17] Another conference in 1971 reveals the influence wielded by North American members of the epistemic community. The meeting of the 'New Jersey Ombudsman Committee'—consisting of academics, labor, business, and community-action groups in support of a state ombudsman bill—promoted Gellhorn as its notable invitee.[18] Bexelius, on the other hand, only received an invitation at Gellhorn's urging.[19] As the strength and standing of national translator experts increased, Scandinavia faded as the model for ombudsman policy.

Complicating the disassociation of ombudsman policy with Scandinavia were developments at the municipal level, as attempts to pass an urban ombudsman in the wake of minority riots in the urban north changed the focus of the office to diffusing racial tensions. Ironically, these efforts also came closer to approaching the Scandinavian ombudsman's emphasis on a 'personal contact' for building public trust. While the Scandinavian ombudsmen also had jurisdiction to investigate grievances against police, the United States' urban ombudsmen would give it a distinctly racial focus.

In 1964, liberal editor Marion Sanders was among the first to advocate an ombudsman in national print for solving America's urban discord, the same year that tensions between urban minorities and police boiled over into six-day riots in New York City. Sanders looked toward Sweden to correct the 'kinds of government failures which can precipitate violence and police brutality.' The ombudsman was, therefore, not specific to be a check on the police, but a means of solving certain institutional problems. Unlike a civilian review board to monitor police activity, Sanders assumed an ombudsman would be less onerous to conservatives and law enforcement, with half a dozen New York lawyers capable of filling Bexelius's shoes (Sanders, 1964: 134).

Sanders's prediction proved astute, as the New York City police force proposed an ombudsman in 1966 as an alternative to the civilian review board sponsored by New York's liberal mayor John Lindsay. Backing the proposal was William Buckley, Jr., founder of the influential conservative journal *National Review*. Buckley supported a New York City ombudsman as a means of protecting 'the little man' from the real 'bureaucratic labyrinths'—the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the educational department, and the sanitation department—and a federal ombudsman to roll back Lyndon Johnson's Great Society (Buckley, 1966; New York Times, 1966). These proposals subsequently led to endorsements of Buckley as the first New York ombudsman (Chamberlain, 1966). Initially, Lindsay opposed the policy; however, when the mayor's allies—the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the American Civil Liberties Union, and several labor unions—all threw in their support for an ombudsman, the mayor backtracked. At a press conference in late 1966, Lindsay declared that he had appointed a committee of officials to study the feasibility of an ombudsman several months prior and was awaiting their findings (Fulton, 1966). After Bexelius met with City Council President Frank O'Conner and NAACP President Roy Wilkens, O'Conner formally proposed an ombudsman for the city on May 12, 1967, based, in part, on Gellhorn's model bill (New York Times, 1967b).[20] However, continued discussions could not overcome Lindsay's resistance and the bill 'disappeared from sight' (Buckley, 1968; Rowat, 1985: 89) although new proposals sporadically emerged out of the Democratic controlled City Council (New York Times, 1969).

As the ombudsman became embedded as a standard response to racial tensions, New York City's policy discussions for improving municipal responsiveness to resident complaints were replayed in Los Angeles (1966), Oakland (1967), Newark (1968), and Detroit (1968)—cities with large black populations where long-simmering resentments erupted into violence during the 1960s. Reflecting this growing aspiration to establish trust in municipal government and law enforcement, the Kerner Report, written following a wave of riots in summer 1967, supported improved methods of facilitating communication between minority communities and police as part of the need for 'comprehensive grievance-response mechanisms in order to bring all public agencies under public scrutiny' (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968: 1, 5, 8).

In a reversal of conservative support for the ombudsman to limit federal bureaucracy, Republicans in communities like Berkeley, California offered stiff resistance to 'importing the Scandinavian system,' which they declared was part of a nationwide 'campaign of the radical Left' to 'assault' law enforcement (Berkeley Daily Gazette, 1968; Culbert, 1968). In spite of setbacks in many American cities, the urban ombudsman finally broke through in March 1967 when the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration 'recommended replacing local police review boards with general "ombudsman-type" complaint agencies' (Rowat, 1985, 14). In response to a further federal recommendation to allocate money to such agencies the following year (Frank, 1972), the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), created to administer Lyndon Johnson's antipoverty and antidiscrimination programs, gave approval to ombudsman trials New York City and Buffalo (Bennett, 1967). While the New York ombudsman failed to materialize, Buffalo's Citizens Administrative Service was approved for funding and ran for a year and a half (Tibbles and Hollands, 1970: 4).[21]

Like the state ombudsman, these efforts to institute a municipal ombudsman relied on American translator experts for knowledge and advice, hastening the office away from its Scandinavian roots by limiting reliance on its Nordic precedents. Both New York City and Newark-based legislation off Gellhorn's model bill (Gwyn, 1974: 2; Rowat, 1985: 90), while Stanley Anderson's Ombudsman Activities Project capitalized on federal funding by helping establish ombudsmen in Nebraska, Iowa, and Seattle-King County. In 1972, Anderson dispatched political scientist William Gwyn to assist Newark in a second attempt to establish an ombudsman. With ready access to so many domestic experts, Gwyn focused on gathering information from American ombudsmen about the rewards and obstacles of their work,[22] making a study tour of Scandinavia unnecessary. Newark's second attempt at ombudsman legislation advanced further than its first, actually passing and receiving OEO funding, although local political rivalries, manifest in the city's inability to agree on an appointee, left this funding idle.

Conclusion

As 'ombudsmania' took hold in the mid-twentieth century United States (Anderson, 1968: 155), the office's reputation for safeguarding democratic principles initially thrived from its connections with Scandinavia. American proponents of the ombudsman frequently linked the office with sustaining a strong, service-minded state and projected that such qualities could be translated into American institutions.

There remained, however, a stark divide between the expectations and desires of Gellhorn and other translator experts and the application of the ombudsman by American political figures. As 'foreignizers,' Gellhorn, Anderson, and Rowat generally advocated a process of emulation, retaining from Scandinavia the purpose of establishing societal trust in government along with features like independent action, while tweaking other aspects of the office to fit with American conditions. However, policymakers were more interested in 'domesticating' the policy to local contexts, modifying aspects as they saw fit. The resulting hybrid policies combined elements from different ombudsman offices worldwide or, more often, simply appropriated the ombudsman's popularity as inspiration for new programs. In the latter case, policymakers combined the image of the ombudsman as a safeguard or 'watchdog' of liberties with a more individualistic definition of liberty than in Scandinavia. This led to substantial and uneven changes to the Nordic office's normative objectives in order to restructure it for American political culture, where skepticism of large government encouraged decision-makers and public commentators alike to treat the office as a check on administrative power and expansion. Unlike in Scandinavia, liberty in security was oxymoronic for conservative proponents like Buckley.

Beyond altering its purpose, American policymakers made little effort to preserve Scandinavian methods. In some cases, a symbolic resonance back to Scandinavia masked substantial practical changes to the office's functions and forms. At the federal level, the Reuss bills imagined the 'Administrative Counsel' as an outlet for excess work placed on congressmen, rather than as a 'personal contact' between citizens and administration. The reluctance of Reuss' colleagues to transfer authority from elected officials to an appointed expert led proponents to alter its form even further, including potentially placing grievance mechanisms within the ACUS. Even more pronounced was the transformation of the ombudsman at the municipal level, where praise for Nordic precedents presaged the proposal of the ombudsman as an alternative to a civilian review board. That the urban ombudsman shared its Scandinavian predecessor's focus on establishing public trust does not disguise its underlying objective of solving racial tensions distinctive to the mid-century United States.

By the end of the decade, if Scandinavia was mentioned at all in American ombudsman debate, it was usually limited to noting the policy's original inspiration. Instead, American policymakers now relied on domestic precedents and the assistance of translator experts, who, in supporting attempts to establish the ombudsman across the United States regardless of their faithfulness to the Scandinavian original, furthered the transformation of the policy. Such substantial changes eventually led more stringent foreignizers to bemoan the spread of an American 'pseudo-ombudsman.'[23] The American ombudsman's forfeiture of 'trust' for 'control' as its primary aim was evident when journalist Roland Huntford's *The New Totalitarians*, written for Anglo-American audiences in 1971, condemned the Swedish ombudsman as 'an instrument of the civil service' in its dominance over individual liberties (Huntford, 1971: 131–134). In the international dissemination of the ombudsman, Nordic policy lessons thus circulated more effectively as inspiratory images of success than as ready-made program models. Ultimately, American suspicions of the state and the desire to erect bulwarks against its autonomy proved too pervasive to support a more extensive transfer of Nordic innovations. Nonetheless, in the following years, the presence of the ombudsman remained a sign of the possibility of transferring Nordic policies to the United States and an argument for continued implementation of a 'Nordic model' (Egerstrom, 2010). For all its reshaping in an American context, the ombudsman never fully lost its connection to the Nordic countries and their particular policy systems.

Notes

1 KABC, 'Handling the Complaints of Over 30,000 Citizens a Year,' *Gellhorn*, Box 110 (Ombudsman-Developments).

2 In a recent study of the ombudsman's global diffusion, Tero Erikkilä links a 'Nordic model' of the ombudsman with other Nordic democratic and governance measures, but does not explore in depth the historical development of perceptions of the policy's Nordicness (Erikkilä, 2020: 31–49). However, the institution's spread as part of a 'Nordic gender equality model' is explored in Blomberg et al. (2017).

3 The diffusion of the ombudsman into the United States also included negotiations about the relationship of the producer and consumer, seen in the growth and popularity of the ombudsman in newspapers and universities; however, I have however confined the study to the adoption of the ombudsman in purely political contexts.

4 Iceland's first parliamentary ombudsman was not established until 1987, significantly after the establishment of the ombudsman throughout the rest of the Nordic states.

5 H. Reuss, 'A Congressional Administrative Counsel, Along the lines of the Scandinavian Ombudsman, to Help Congressmen Help Constituents,' *CR-H*, volume 109, part 10, July 16, 1963, 12749–12751.

6 H. Reuss, 'An Administrative Counsel or American Ombudsman etc.,' *CR-H*, volume 111, part 2, February 3, 1965, 1880–1881.

7 E. Dirksen, 'Ombudsman,' *CR-S*, volume 113, part 7, 5 April, 1967, 8360–8363.

8 H. Reuss, 'A Congressional Ombudsman Would Help Congressmen Serve Their Constituents,' *CR-H*, volume 113, part 1, 23 January 1967, 1137–1140.

9 J. Scales to W. Gellhorn, 19 July 1971, *Gellhorn*, Box 112 (Ombudsman Proposals).

10 W. Gellhorn to E. Prettyman, January 3, 1962, *Gellhorn*, Box 232 (A-Administrative Conference, 3); W. Gellhornto E. Hutchinson, May 9, 1962, *Gellhorn*, Ibid.

11 J. Macy to L. Johnson, September 17, 1966, *LBJ*, WHCF, Box 371 (EX FG608, 1).
12 J. Williams to E. Goldstein, August 1, 1968, *LBJ*, WHCF, Box 371 (EX FG608, 3).
13 E. Morgan to J. Williams, September 15, 1969, *Gellhorn*, Box 235.
14 W. Gellhorn to Office of the Editor, October 3, 1967, *Gellhorn*, Box 107.
15 W. Gellhorn to Office of the Editor, October 3, 1967, *Gellhorn*, Box 107.
16 J. Moore, 'Hawaii's State Ombudsman Office an American Prototype?' Undated, *Gellhorn*, Box 112.
17 R. Hart to W. Gellhorn, February 20, 1970, *Gellhorn* (Misc. 1970 Ombudsman Letters).
18 W. Gellhorn to C. Nelson, January 15, 1970; W. Kramer to W. Gellhorn, May 13, 1970, *Gellhorn*, Box 110 (Misc. 1970 Ombudsman); S. Anderson to W. Gellhorn, March 17, 1971, *Gellhorn*, Box 114 (Ombudsman Local, 1971).
19 E. Melick to W. Gellhorn, February 6, 1971, *Gellhorn*, Box 114 (New Jersey Ombudsman).
20 E. Long, 'The Ombudsman,' *CR-S*, volume 113, part 13, June 28, 1967, 17654–17655.
21 Ombudsman Demonstration Project, 'Report to the United States Office of Economic Opportunity,' July 31, 1969, *Gellhorn*, Box 113 (State and Local Governments).
22 W. Gwyn, 'The Erie Ombudsman,' January, 1973, *Gellhorn*, Box 114 (Ombudsman Local, 1971).
23 P. Dolan to W. Gellhorn, August 26, 1969, *Gellhorn*, Box 113 (State and Local Governments).

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Gellhorn: Walter Gellhorn Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library (RBML), Columbia University in the City of New York.

LBJ: White House Central File, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963–1969.

WHCF: White House Central File.

9 Branding the Nordic model of prostitution policy

Malcolm Langford and May-Len Skilbrei

Introduction

By the late 1960s, a dominant Western imaginary of the Nordic nations was a paradise of sexual freedom and liberation (Arnberg and Marklund, 2016). Pornography was decriminalized in Denmark in 1969 and Sweden in 1972 (Kulick and Rydström, 2015), and already in the 1950s, Sweden attracted international attention for its introduction of sex education for seven-year-old children and production of films with explicit sexual content (Kulick, 2005). Shocking to some, progressive to others, these legal and social developments cemented the reputation of the Nordic region, and Sweden in particular, as the home of sexual liberalism. This liberal image was further strengthened by the Nordic model of 'penal exceptionalism' (Pratt, 2008; Ugelvik and Dullum, 2012). Gaining prominence from the late 1960s (Nilsson, 2012), the Nordics gained an image for less punitive approaches to crime, especially through shorter prison terms and a focus on offender rehabilitation.

A half-century later, this reputation of the Nordics has been replaced by a different and rather less liberal sexual imaginary, an image that also carries Swedish origins. Since the 1990s, Sweden has been committed to widening the net of criminal justice by broadening which acts are criminalized as sexual offences as well as increasing the level of punishment for such crimes (Skilbrei and Holmström, 2013). A key example of this shift in the legal and social approach to sexuality is the 1999 unilateral criminalization of the purchase of sex. This came to be known first as 'Swedish model' and later as 'Nordic model' of prostitution policy. Adopted in several countries (see Table 9.1), endorsed by the EU Parliament, and promoted as a progressive politics of gender equality, this model emerged as one of the regions' primary policy exports.

This chapter asks three questions about the circulation of Nordic prostitution regulation. The first is descriptive: How did the model emerge and circulate, and which actors were responsible for its circulation? The second is analytical: What was the content of the model, and how was it understood throughout the world? The third is explanatory: Why was the

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Table 9.1 Adoption of the 'Nordic model'

Country	*Law came into effect*
Sweden	1999
Norway	2009
Iceland	2009
Canada	2014
Northern Ireland	2015
France	2016
Ireland	2017
Israel	2020

circulation of the model so successful, both in shaping discourse and policy reform? In analysing this circulation, we introduce branding theory to circulation studies. We argue that policy mobility and diffusion can be deeply affected by *background* nation brands (which shore up or diminish legitimacy) and *foregrounded* actor strategies that seek to brand a policy in a competitive ideational environment. In our case, the two branding dimensions were also symbiotic. Sweden, in particular, both drew on and sought to strengthen its nation brand in promoting the criminalization of the purchase of sex.

The chapter proceeds as follows. In the next section, we show the remarkable spread of prostitution regulation as 'a' or 'the' Nordic model in the period 2012–2017 through a media content analysis. This is followed by a presentation of our theoretical framework and examination of the domestic emergence of the policy, its characteristics under export, and import. We conclude by discussing the causes of the policy's success.

The emergence of a new Nordic model

In order to understand the potential spread of prostitution regulation as Nordic model, we conducted first a global media content analysis. Using the media search engine m360, we identified 2,229 news media articles for the simple search term 'Nordic model' in English between 1 September 2012 and 1 September 2017. Given that international attention is directed at several Nordic models, this approach allowed us to place prostitution policy in a relevant discursive universe.

Figure 9.1 shows the distribution and source of those articles across different regions of the world – principally online news, newspaper articles and TV media websites. Given the search was in English, the apportionment hues unsurprisingly closely to the distribution of English-speaking countries (especially in North America and Asia) although there is large coverage in Western Europe. Even at this level, we can see the presence of prostitution regulation in media coverage of the Nordic model. Diffusion is especially high in Australia, which reflects how 'the Nordic model' of prostitution has been a key reference in ongoing debates on prostitution policies there (see O'Brien, 2017).

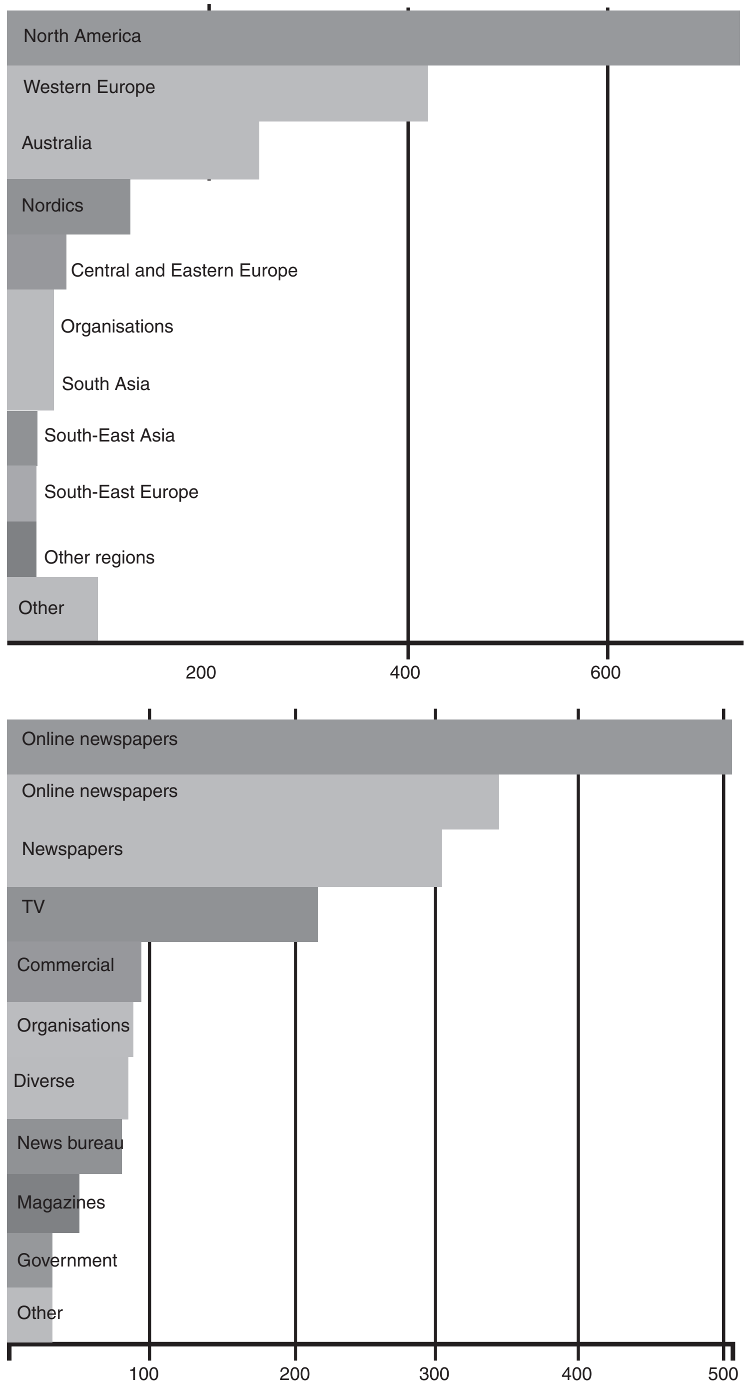

Figure 9.1 Distribution and source of English-speaking articles 2012–2017.

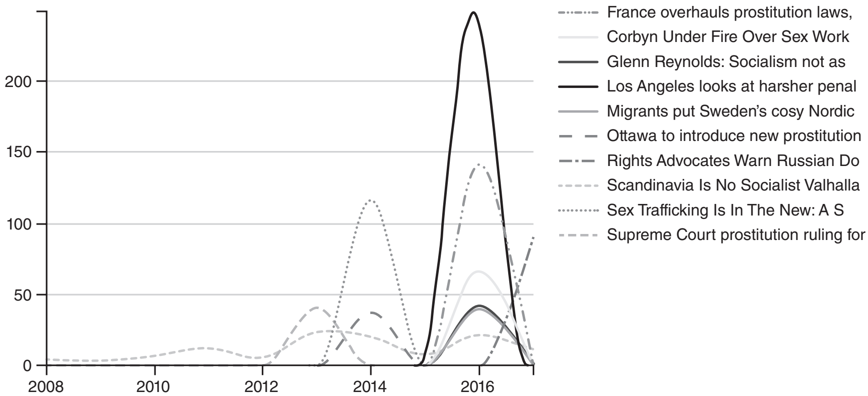

Figure 9.2 Top ten news stories.

Figure 9.2 shows the top ten news stories – i.e., where the same news event is covered by different media channels. The discussion of the Nordic model of prostitution features prominently, with three of the top ten stories. Coverage of France's adoption of the Nordic model of prostitution policy generated by far the most attention, with 151 unique articles, while the political debate in Western Australia for reform of the prostitution laws being the seventh most covered event. The remainder of the top ten stories deals, respectively, with the economic dimensions of the social welfare model, migrants, gender equality, domestic violence and architecture.

Using Nvivo, we generated also a word cloud of the most common words in the 2229 articles referring to the 'Nordic' and 'model'. Again, the content reveals a strong, if not very strong, focus on prostitution-related themes. Of the five most common words (excluding the Nordic model), two relate explicitly to the coverage of prostitution ('sex' and 'prostitution') and one partly (women). Drilling down further on the word usage, it is notable that some words that might appear to relate to the traditional social welfare model, concern prostitution. Thus, 59% of the 1,391 articles that contained 'worker' or 'work' refer also to 'prostitution', 'prostitute', 'sex' and/or 'sex worker' (Figure 9.3).[1]

To avoid an English bias, we conducted a survey of French-speaking media. In the period 2012–2017, the phrase Nordic, model featured 284 times in this database. We discovered, however, frequent usage of the 'Scandinavian model', and using this as a search term, we identified a further 596 articles. Figure 9.4 provides a word cloud image of the most frequently discovered words for both. Again, prostitution features highly in articles on the Nordic model as well as the 'Scandinavian model', with references to 'prostitution', 'clients', 'prostituées' and 'femmes' (women). As can be seen, 'prostitution' and 'women' are the fifth and sixth most common terms after 'model',

Figure 9.3 Nordic model word cloud – most common words.

'France', 'work' and 'politics'. Moreover, as with the English articles, many of the references to 'work' correspond with articles on prostitution.

The above analysis concerns only mass media. If we analyse other forms of text-based circulation, we find slightly divergent results. For example, our searches of Twitter at different times reveal that the Nordic model is almost exclusively related to prostitution. Although there are tweets addressing how the Nordic model addresses broader issues of social welfare (e.g., many current tweets address how the Nordic model and German Rhine model are best placed to navigate the emerging robot economy). If we analyse the academic literature, the social welfare model dominates. In the period from 2012 to 2017, the number of new academic articles that include the terms 'Nordic model' and 'welfare' is 4,110, while the number for the Nordic model of prostitution is 496. However, it is somewhat remarkable that so many scholarly articles have been published on the relatively new theme of prostitution policy in literature enlisting the term 'the Nordic model'.

This rise of prostitution regulation as a prominent and, in certain spheres, dominant discursive Nordic model reflects what the book editors describe in their introduction as the 'dynamic' and multivalent nature of the concept. While Marklund (2017: 623) is certainly correct to assert historically that the

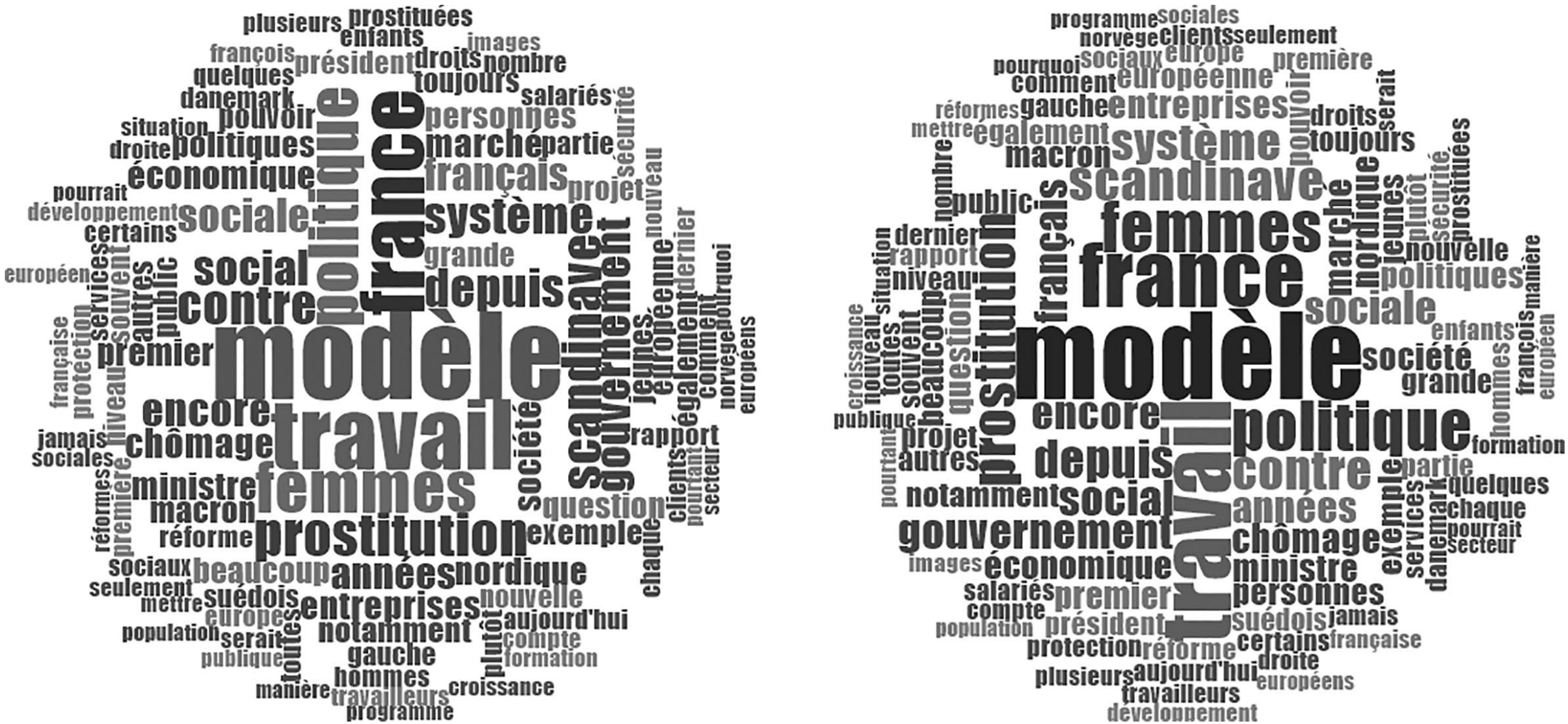

Figure 9.4 French news articles: 1 September 2012–1 September 2017.

welfare state is 'Scandinavia's best brand', it is less clear that this is always so. Alternatively, prostitution regulation can be viewed as the new Nordic welfare brand. The Nordic model of prostitution has, at least in name, a welfare dimension and, more importantly, draws heavily on the symbolic resources of the welfare state and gender equality in securing legitimacy.

In any case, prostitution regulation challenges the idea that one can distinguish easily between 'general' and 'specific' Nordic models.[2] Arguably, as we shall see in this chapter, the traditional welfare model and prostitution model have a co-constitutive relationship in circulation. The welfare model strengthens and shores up the Nordic brand for prostitution policy and provides some of its content, while the prostitution model represents a new advertisement for the traditional welfare model – presenting new ways in which welfarism has tackled apparently social problems, including criminal activity and gender inequality.

Theoretical framework

'Nordic models' can be understood as a cultural expression of place that provides valuable symbolic resources (Langford and Larsen, 2018). They constitute an 'imaginary' in which a society, as Castoriadis (1975: 465) puts it, 'creates for each historical period its singular way of living, seeing and making its own existence'. Thus, Nordic models (and exceptionalisms) can be understood and studied as a construction – a collection of discourses, ideas, images and symbols that may (or may not) correspond with 'reality' and form part of a broader 'Nordicity' (Browning, 2007).

In this chapter, we use two specific constructivist frameworks to analyse the Nordic model of prostitution regulation. The first are standard theories of diffusion and circulation, and specifically that of *policy mobilities*. Diffusion studies vary in their approach – between a focus on the 'spread' of conceptual objects (ideas, rules, institutions and practices); their 'transfer' with a focus on the actors, processes, local adaption and parallel process; and the process of 'construction' and 'mediation' of the objects throughout the entire process (Djelic, 2008: 546–552). While we are interested in the spread of the prostitution regulation, we are especially interested in transfer and dynamic construction. This involves close attention to the strategic actions of actors and an understanding that diffusion is primarily a 'historical and conceptual act' rather than a 'linguistic act' – conceptual change occurs in the very act of translation (Palonen, 1998).

In this respect, 'policy mobilities' literature in diffusion studies is of particular value. The term 'policy mobilities' originates in geography but has been integrated in critical policy studies (Peck and Theodore, 2010; McCann and Ward, 2013). It is intended to move beyond conceiving policy as something that is rationally communicated, transferred and applied, hence allowing it to encompass its more symbolic and disorderly sides (Newburn et al., 2017). Like much diffusion literature, policy mobilities literature sees the movement of constructs as neither linear nor uniform across time and space (McKenzie et al., 2019). It is concerned specifically with the movement of policy, which makes it highly applicable for studying prostitution regulation.

As Newburn et al. (2017) highlight, the concept of policy mobilities carries the concept of 'policy assemblage' by pointing to the process of 'temporarily bringing something – such as a policy – into coherence' (McKenzie et al., 2019: 4). A similar point is made by Peck and Theodore (2010) when they describe one of the characteristics of policy mobilities is the process of synthesizing policy. Thus, the policy is a social process. In this respect, Jones and Newburn (2007: 23) helpfully differentiate among these diverse elements, or levels, of policy: (1) 'ideas, symbols and rhetoric'; (2) 'the more concrete manifestations of policy in terms of policy content and instruments' and (3) 'the more practical applications of policy in terms of its implementation by practitioners and professionals'. As we shall argue, the policy package of the Nordic model of prostitution regulation travels with these three different aspects – but is dominated by the first: ideas, symbols, and rhetoric.

In analysing this circulation, we introduce branding perspectives to circulation studies, drawing on both marketing theory and critical branding studies. In our view, branding is relevant to the study of circulation in at least two respects. First, a nation's brand can be used to strengthen or weaken the legitimacy of a circulating policy. A 'brand' is a name or image that identifies and differentiates a product from other products, and a 'nation brand' consists of 'the unique multidimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all its target audience' (Dinnie, 2008: 15). Nation brands exist regardless of a state's or others' efforts. Aronczyk (2008: 49) observes that nations are 'already de facto brands, regularly projecting their assets, attributes and liabilities to a public at large'.

During the 1990s, nation branding emerged as an explicit phenomenon. As part of the turn to the 'competition state', Nordic states joined the global movement of 'nation branding' and, supported by an extensive 'nation branding industry', competed to promote and manage their image and ideas for commercial and political goals (Byrkjeflot et al., 2013; Neumann and de Carvalho, 2014; Angell and Mordhorst, 2015; Strang, 2016). Whatever the origins, the main point from an analytical perspective is that a country or regional brand, such as 'the Nordic', is a background presence in circulation and, crucially, is more than a mere shorthand for describing the origin of an idea, policy or material product. A nation brand provides also a symbolic resource or liability. Thus, an economic or regulatory model might be more or less attractive on the basis that it is 'American' or 'European', a football strategy because it is characterized as 'Brazilian' or 'German' or furniture design because it is sold as 'Danish' or 'Japanese' (on Denmark, see Chapter 13 by Mads Mordhost). Whether the particular idea or object is actually from the nation is less relevant – the use of the nation or region as an adjective brings to bear cognitive, emotional and subliminal associations. In practice, they can become 'sub-brands' of the nation brand.

Thus, treating brands analytically means using the analytical resources embedded in the idea and discipline of (critical) marketing to understand contemporary and historical social discourses and realities. Indeed, the Nordic region is an ideal place for investigating the idea of branding as an analytical category. The Nordics already have a powerful general brand (Browning, 2007; Marklund and Petersen, 2013; Marklund, 2017) – the Nordics have been described as 'moral superpowers' (Dahl, 2006), 'agents of a world common good' (Bergman, 2007), 'havens of gender equality' (UN-CEDAW, 2003) or the 'referent' for welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 1990). The labels in the region (Nordic, Scandinavian and five individual country names) constitute a form of brand capital and appear to lend significant discursive and aesthetic power to almost any imaginable political, social or commercial project. Indeed, the model of 'New Nordic Cuisine' seems to draw heavily on the legitimacy of the Nordic label given its rather dubious roots in the Nordic region (on Nordic cuisine, see Chapter 12 by Silviya Svejenova et al). As we shall see in the case of the Nordic prostitution model, it is arguable that the label has been helpful in overcoming its elements that are not consistent with standard progressive images of the region.

Second, the act of circulating can constitute branding. Browning (2007) defines branding analytically as strategic action that seeks to promote a stable and specific idea with a particular audience in mind. In other words, there is some form of strategic commodification that is reductionist in its message. The use of commercial frameworks as analytical constructs in diffusion studies is not necessarily new. Many authors refer to the 'packaging' of concepts for the purposes of circulation (Mitroff and Mohrman, 1987: 69; Czarniawaska and Jorges, 1996; Rottenburg, 1996: 216; Djelic, 2008: 546–550). In seeking to understand the fashionability of management techniques, Abrahamson (1996: 125) goes further and refers to the cultural industry's marketing strategies: selecting a limited set of art and artists, packaging and launching them and co-opting mass media process – a process of supply-driven rather than demand-driven innovation. This corresponds to many key elements in branding. In the case of the Nordics, Browning (2007) claims that the mobilization of Nordic identity in foreign policy during the Cold War was an exercise in branding. Drawing on Waever (1992), he argues that the Nordics sought to demonstrate superiority to a divided and militarized continental Europe through a rhetoric and foreign policy based on peace, humanitarianism and solidarity.

In the context of circulation theory, we can think of branding as a specific form of diffusion. In a competitive ideational environment, actors may draw on branding tools in order to attain more visibility or support for their particular 'product'. This might include strong differentiation, greater simplification, mythologizing or the use of different aesthetics and labels in promotion. A historical example in the case of the Nordics is universal suffrage. As Larsen (2021) points out, American suffragists decided to promote the Norwegian introduction of women's right to vote in 1913 as the first in the world, rather than the earlier and identical reforms in Finland, New Zealand and Australia. Norway provided a better ideational product since there were fewer doubts over its sovereignty – the other three were still disentangling their foreign policies from earlier colonizers despite being independent states.

In the case of prostitution, it is highly polarized and contested. The principal competitors are: (1) a Dutch model of full legalization and regulation; (2) a traditional model of full criminalization; and (3) a spectrum of approaches in-between. In this context, traditional political movements – whether feminism, conservatism, social democracy, human rights – have been often split on the best approach. As we shall argue, a strategy that created a distinct model in this policy jungle that could draw support from both progressive and conservative political forces would be attractive.

The emergence and content of the Nordic model of prostitution policy

What has come to be viewed as the Nordic prostitution model first emerged in Sweden and was later adopted and adapted by three other Nordic states. Throughout most of the twentieth century, prostitution in Sweden was considered formally a *public health* challenge. After the deregulation of the municipal prostitution law in 1919, the principal form of regulation was the *Lex Veneris* of 1918, legislation designed to stop the spread of venereal disease (Svanström, 2006: 145–146). This was complemented by a latent moral approach, whereby the vagrancy law – with the support of various vagrancy commissions – was frequently invoked to arrest sex workers and declare their earnings as illegal (Svanström, 2006: 146). However, opinion began to shift from the late 1950s as, and certainly by the 1980s Prostitution was framed as a *social problem* (Holmström and Skilbrei, 2017). This reformulation of the problem of prostitution entailed the establishment of targeted social services, but also new criminal justice responses were debated. Two white papers and a series of law proposals throughout the 1980s and 1990s suggested reintroducing criminalization of both the seller and the buyer of sex or to only criminalize the buyer.

Eventually, on 1 January 1999 as part of a larger law package on 'women's peace', legislation criminalizing the purchase of sex entered into force. The law's origins stemmed partly from a further evolution in views of prostitution. Prostitution was no longer only defined as a social problem that society should tackle with social measures, it was also defined as a result of and as something that contributed to *gender inequality*. With this came an understanding of prostitution as linked to power relations, both in structural and individual terms, and this is key to understanding the movement towards criminalizing 'the demand side;' the party deemed most powerful and blameworthy (Holmström and Skilbrei, 2017).

The new Swedish law gained significant attention internationally and constituted a contrast to how several other European countries at the same time decriminalized or regularized prostitution. The Netherlands marched decisively in the opposite direction of decriminalization and normalization with its 2000 law revision (see, e.g., Outshoorn, 2011). In this respect, the law was intended to prevent a similar development in Sweden but provide also a reference and beacon for debates elsewhere. Indeed, one of the government's explicit goals was to set an example to be followed by other countries (Prop. 1997/1998: 55), a key feature to which we shall return.

In addition, three other Nordic states largely followed suit. In 2009, Norway and Iceland criminalized the purchase of sex, reflecting both the trajectories of national discourses and the argument that to 'follow Sweden' would improve their ability to combat both prostitution and human trafficking.[3] In the meantime, in 2006, Finland introduced a partial criminalization of the purchase of sex, only criminalizing instances of buying sex from victims of human trafficking or from sex sellers who are 'the subjects of pimps'. The one Nordic country that has not introduced a partial or universal ban against the purchase of sex is Denmark. Despite proposals to introduce comparable legislation in the same period, the debate quietened after a criminal law reform committee weighed against its adoption.

With four out of five Nordic countries introducing new legislation that, to varying degrees, represented an abolitionist approach towards prostitution, defining it as a social ill that should actively be combatted, the 'Swedish model' was increasingly referred to as the 'Nordic model'. However, as McMenzie, Cook and Laing (2019) rightfully argue, Sweden continues to serve as the main example of this approach – the invocation of Nordic is as much a label as a policy description. As the legislation in the different Nordic countries emerged from different debates and was implemented differently, the shift in terminology from 'the Swedish' to 'the Nordic' model is more a political or instrumental move than one grounded empirically in actual policies.

This 'Nordic prostitution model' can be understood as containing three constitutive elements: criminalization of sex purchase, decriminalization of sex sale, and welfare support. These elements are best understood as 'ideas, symbols and rhetoric' (Jones and Newburn, 2007), rather than concrete policies. First, what is often considered core to the Nordic model in these and other debates is a simple and particular piece of legislation: The Sex Purchase Act, a law criminalizing the purchase of sex. Second, the simultaneous decriminalization of the sale of sex is presented (sometimes) as part of the model and often framed in the language of human rights and gender equality. In 2014, when the European Parliament voted for a resolution advising EU member states to both decriminalize the sale of sex and criminalize the purchase of sex, 'the Nordic model' was defined as a model that 'views prostitution as a violation of human rights and as a form of violence against women and criminalizes those who buy sex rather than those who sell it' (European Parliament, 2014b). Third, the model is often linked to a particular mode of social work, in which the law is meant to be part of a broader package of reforms that promote exit from prostitution for sellers. These three elements are neatly summed up by Corinne Isler and Marjut Jyrkinen (2018: 1):

> This model includes the criminalization of buying sex and pimping, the decriminalization of selling sex and the offering of exit services to people who wish to leave prostitution.

Moreover, over time, an additional communicative element has been added: that there is empirical evidence from the Nordic region which demonstrates that the model is equipped to abolish prostitution (and address human trafficking and unequal gender relations in the process).

To be sure, the point of this chapter is not to interrogate the actual existence of any model, and we shall investigate a plurality of representations in selected contexts. Mobility and language create space for evolution, while the strategic nature of much of its circulation means that both the exporters and importers of this Nordic brand will be the co-creators of its content and meaning, what in the policy mobilities literature is called 'mutation' (Peck and Theodore, 2010). Nonetheless, we can identify several paradoxes associated with the standard and stylized account of the Nordic model, as encapsulated in the summary of the European Parliament decision.

First, decriminalization of the sale of sex was not part of the legislative changes in the Nordic region. In Sweden, the sale of sex was decriminalized in 1918 and in Norway in 1902 as part of sweeping changes to the criminal code. In Iceland, the act of selling sex was decriminalized two years before the introduction of the Icelandic Sex Purchase Act, but these legislative changes were not directly connected (Skilbrei and Holmström, 2013). The framing of the Nordic model as a clearly defined and delimited policy reform package, including decriminalization, requires thus a stretch of the historical imagination. In the context of the region, it was primarily a move to criminalize.

Second, it may appear self-evident that countries such as Sweden and Norway would criminalize the purchase of sex based on the fact that prostitution was a form of sexualized violence and that it contravened human rights. However, this discourse was largely absent from the debate. Sweden criminalized the purchase of sex in 1999, well before the human rights discourse was integrated into Swedish policymaking. Moreover, the promoters of the Swedish Sex Purchase Act have protested later claims that they did so based on an understanding of prostitution as a form of violence (for ambiguities on the link between prostitution and violence in debates, see Östergren, 2017).

In Norway, in the political debates leading up to the 2009 criminalization, prostitution was typically spoken of as a form of gendered violence, but human rights were not a central concern. Rather, the application of human rights' arguments is typical for those who critique the Nordic model, such as central organizations in the sex workers' rights movement and Amnesty International.[4] Indeed, experimental work by Langford (2016) shows how exposure to such human rights arguments among the Norwegian public can trigger a significant decrease in support for the Sex Purchase Act in Norway. Indeed, there were several strands of debates that impacted the outcome of the vote in the Norwegian parliament: while gender equality was one of these, an equally strong motivation was the growing fears over trafficking and the impact of foreign sex sellers on public space and society (Skilbrei, 2012).

Third, the availability and quality of welfare services for sex workers has varied dramatically across the Nordic countries and over time. Although the introduction of the Sex Purchase Act was intended to be followed by an increase in investments in services for sex sellers, the Swedish government never fulfilled its promise here. As Florin (2012: 276) states: 'The government has done nothing to change this framework and little to guide or fund targeted service provision'. Welfare services for sex workers continue to be weak in Sweden, in direct contrast to claims made in the European Parliament. This was not the only aspect of implementation that has been little communicated internationally.

Finally, as noted, a key claim for advocates of 'the Nordic model' is that it has reduced the extent of prostitution and, sometimes, human trafficking. This claim was, for example, central in debates about the introduction of a ban against the purchase of sex in Northern Ireland (McMenzie et al., 2019) and France (Kingston and Thomas, 2019). Although the number of female streetwalkers seemed to decline in the period after the introduction of the 1999 Swedish Sex Purchase Act, later counts and estimates and research on online prostitution platforms provide little support for this claim (see the review of the evidence in Holmström and Skilbrei, 2017). Instead, evidence on the extent of prostitution is clearly a function of research design. For example, when Gunilla Ekberg (2004), human trafficking adviser to the Swedish government, concluded in 2004 that the Swedish Sex Purchase Act reduced successfully the size of the market, she relied on the number of women counted as active in street prostitution in the business hours of municipal-run social services in the three largest cities, despite the considerable shift in the market at this time to indoor and online prostitution throughout Europe (Sanders et al., 2017).

Thus, although there is a great willingness to refer to the regulation of sex services in the Nordic region as a 'model', its actuality is significantly more complex in practice. While it is often represented to contain three core elements – criminalization of the purchase of sex, decriminalization of the sale of sex and enhanced support for sellers – all these three elements are not present in any of the Nordic countries. Moreover, the claim that the criminalization of the purchase of sex has resulted in a significant reduction in the prostitution market is not well documented (Holmström and Skilbrei, 2017). Thus, from a policy mobilities perspective, the Nordic prostitution model is perhaps more 'ideas, symbols and rhetoric' than a 'concrete' policy or 'practical' application. In addition, its construction contains many typical elements of branding – a simplification that bears a resemblance to a product but without a level of 'slippage' that makes it appears inauthentic. Yet, given that the Nordic model is still presented as a fact, also by the European Parliament, this provides the background for our exploration below of the powerful circulation of the idea of what this Nordic model is and can achieve.

Exporting the Nordic model

We turn now to the question of how this Nordic model received so much attention – in particular, what was the process of 'transfer' in Djelic's (2008) framework: How did a model become so heavily referenced in policy debates in countries that otherwise differ radically from the Nordic states in their governance, ideology and traditional regulation of prostitution markets? In this respect, the strategic behaviour of two actors (state and non-state) is critical.

The success in the circulation of the Nordic model can be attributed first to the active engagement of the Swedish government and much later to the Norwegian government. The legislation was clearly adopted with the objective of circulation, policy mobility: It was a model to be used by politicians and activists in other countries (Government of Sweden, 2010: 29). Although the Sex Purchase Act was intended to have material effects outside of Sweden, the aim was not to simply ensure the replication of similar legislation elsewhere. Rather, the emphasis was on triggering a cultural shift by producing different kinds of conversations about prostitution. For example, in the parliamentary debates in 1998 on the legislation, the Swedish Minister of Social Affairs, Lars Engqvist stated the following:

> Sweden is a pioneer in this area and when we now have taken these steps [by criminalising the purchase of sex] we will be able to contribute to changing debates also in Europe.

Likewise, the formal proposal for the law was explicit about global intentions. In Prop. 1997/1998:55 (105), the following is stated:

> The trade of sexual services has in recent decades developed into an international industry. Although the investigation made the estimate (in 1994) that prostitution in Sweden is small compared to other European countries, according to various data from, e.g., the prostitution services, there are signs that this so-called international sex industry is also increasing in Sweden. That Sweden is taking this step is therefore

> an important sign to other countries which displays our attitude on this issue. The law can also be a support for the groups in different countries trying to counteract prostitution.

This export ambition was followed up with concrete efforts by the Swedish government to ensure the circulation of knowledge about the law and, not least, the specific concerns about prostitution it was designed to address. Indeed, examining debates on its introduction, possible problems with implementing the law were viewed as less important than the prospect of it sending the intended signal at home and abroad (on patterns of implementation, see Olsson, 2021). Therefore, the export was not necessarily material (the legislation) but symbolic (the sentiments and ideology that lay behind it). This foregrounding of expressivism had great consequences for how later critiques of the lack of implementation and possible negative effects for people who sell sex were received – they had little effect on the symbolic objectives of the law and could be dismissed without too great difficulty. The message to be conveyed by the criminalization of the purchase of sex was that it was an act of structural and individual gendered power that men generally, and sex buyers specifically, have over women. The law established that buying sex is abnormal in any country seeking gender equality (Kulick, 2005). With this, the Sex Purchase Act was firmly placed as a tool for and the expression of gender equality, an understanding that had been forged for several decades (Erikson, 2018).

Thus, governmental efforts were made to spread information about the Sex Purchase Act and the rationale behind it by organizing events in Sweden and abroad. Much of this was funded by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and organized via the Swedish Institute, which has a mandate to promote 'interest and trust in Sweden around the world'.[5] It involved a clear package if not a full-scale branding strategy. The film *Lilya 4-ever*,[6] directed by Swedish filmmaker Lukas Moodysson, was screened throughout the world in cooperation with Swedish embassies and consulates with the explicit intention of spreading knowledge on trafficking (Regeringskansliet, 2003). In addition to showing the film, this project also included seminars with representatives from the Swedish government (many of high rank), Swedish non-governmental organizations (NGOs), prostitution scholars, and women who had exited prostitution; organised often by representatives of local NGOs. In 2003, in Eastern and Central Europe alone, the film was shown as 'a part of this campaign' 125 times (The Swedish Institute, 2004).[7] Together, these actors debated trafficking and prostitution and which policies should be applied to combat both phenomena.

The efforts of the Swedish government soon attracted the attention of the *Economist*. In 2004, they noted both a new Swedish phenomenon and a pitched global policy battle:

> Not content with having won over domestic consumers, the Swedish government is self-consciously engaged in a battle for Europe, with the

> libertarian Dutch on the other side. It even has a roadshow, which begins with a showing the film 'Lilya 4-ever', about a trafficked Romanian teenager, and proceeds with speeches from ministers, police inspectors and reformed prostitutes. Peculiarly for a nation with such firm socialist traditions, the government has also teamed up with the White House to fund anti-prostitution campaigns in Europe.
>
> (Economist, 2004)

The Sex Purchase Act was a powerful vehicle and attracted attention in very diverse contexts, as intended. Asked by a political opponent in the Swedish Parliament about whether Sweden was doing enough to promote the Sex Purchase Act, the then minister for foreign affairs, Carl Bildt, stated (Swedish Parliament, 2007, our translation) the following:

> Sweden's Sex Purchase Act is seen as a role model for many other countries. It has made an impact internationally in terms of its normative and preventive effects and its potential for promoting attitudinal changes. Even though many countries are hesitant about the usefulness of sex purchase legislation, others reach out with questions about our experiences because they themselves are considering such legislation. … We will continue to bring up Sweden's Sex Purchase Act in all relevant international contexts.

This stance demonstrates the continuous expectation of the promotion of both the law and its underlying norms. As parliamentarian Carina Hägg stated in the said debate (Swedish Parliament, 2007, our translation): 'Minister of Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt intends to promote the Sex Purchase Act within the EU and internationally, not least in the UN'.

However, the Swedish (and later Norwegian) governments were not alone in their export efforts. Although the former invested significantly in communicating both the law and its benefits for gender equality, it would be mistaken to see its rapid diffusion (and partial uptake) as the mere result of a successful government campaign. The second central actor was international feminist lobby organizations, which quickly took the cue and used the case of Sweden to further their argument that prostitution should be abolished. Here, the stylized Swedish model commenced its evolution. While many backers of the law in Sweden described prostitution as related to gendered violence, not as a form of violence in and of itself, feminists elsewhere applied this definition very forcefully. Although, this depiction was more easily assimilated in the later Nordic model as prostitution was portrayed as a form of gender violence in the Norwegian debate (Skilbrei, 2012).

The success of international feminist lobby organizations in amplifying circulation, especially in various supranational forums, is interesting in its own accord. Although we are unable to yet identify to what extent the switch of the label from 'Swedish' to 'Nordic' was a strategic move by feminist organizations, they were one of the first to deploy the term.[8] These organizations were well established and highly influential in global policy-making spaces (Houge et al., 2015) and, for institutions such as the EU, represent grassroots interests and are a key part of the European democratic system (Börzel and Risse, 2007). Organizations working on gender and equality issues have been especially good at manoeuvring within this global landscape, using regional and global platforms, such as the EU and the UN, to strengthen and promote their policy demands (Outshoorn et al., 2012).

Such international civil society actors were active in their efforts to disseminate 'the Nordic' way of approaching prostitution, both in its normative and legislative form, not least by organizing campaigns and developing argumentation points and manuals. One example of the last technique is that the Australia division of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) has made a Nordic model resource page with arguments and infographics that can be used in debates.[9] Another is websites such as nordicmodelnow.org, which describe and promote 'the Nordic Model'.

The European Women's Lobby is perhaps the most significant transnational agent among these groups.[10] The following is an example from a web item on an event in Brussels that forms part of the expanding 'road show:'

> On Monday 8 December [2014], more than 120 persons reached out to the welcoming meeting room of the Mission of Norway to the EU, to discuss the Nordic model as an inspiration for the realisation of gender equality.
>
> This event, co-organised by the European Women's Lobby (EWL) and the Norway Mission, came 3 months after the evaluation of the Norwegian law on prostitution, and aimed at feeding into the European discussion on women's rights, at the eve of the 20 years of the Beijing Platform for Action, by assessing the impact of the Nordic approach on gender equality. It came at a strategic time to also take stock of current legislative developments towards the Nordic model in other EU countries (Ireland, Northern Ireland, Canada) and the growing abolitionist movement calling for a Europe free from prostitution, including in countries which have normalise [sic] prostitution as 'work'. (…) What is called the 'Nordic model' when it comes to violence and prostitution, is based on key values: equality, protection, considering prostitution as harmful to women and society in general, refusing gender stereotypes and the trade of the human body and sexuality.

Thus, the export of the Nordic model of prostitution regulation was driven heavily by coordinated campaigns from both the originating states and interested transnational actors. As shown below, the countries that were the most receptive to the model were within the orbit of these campaigns – especially European countries and local networks of feminist organizations with strong transnational connections. However, the importing actors – to which we now turn - were more varied, and there are some interesting country-level exceptions.

Importing the Nordic model

The import of the Swedish – and then the Nordic – model into domestic debates and law is a dizzying example of policy mobility. As mentioned above, in 2014, the European Parliament voted for a resolution advising EU member states to both decriminalize the sale of sex and criminalize the purchase of sex based on the Nordic model. In 2016, France adopted legislation to introduce the Nordic model, criminalizing the buying of sexual services and providing legal and financial aid to those exploited in the sex industry, generating significant international attention in the process. The Nordic model has also now been adopted in Canada (2014), Northern Ireland (2015), Ireland (2017) and Israel (2020), has been discussed in Luxembourg, Italy and even the Netherlands, and is at the forefront of various campaigns in other countries, often under the slogan 'Go Nordic', exemplified with the following Scandi knit visual on the Facebook page of the Australian section of the CATW (Figure 9.5).

Yet, although it may look like the Nordic model has *led to* shifts in policies elsewhere, the frameworks of policy mobilities and branding caution against thinking in this way, instead drawing our attention to what kind of instrumental and symbolic asset references to 'the Nordic' may produce in national policy debates on prostitution. In international debates on prostitution policies, the idea of the Nordic model is articulated with great confidence. Political parties and NGOs announce whether they are for or against the Nordic model; few questions its existence. Examples include the policy

Figure 9.5 Facebook homepage for coalition against trafficking in women Australia.
Source: Screenshot from Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/catwaustralia/

process leading up to a European Parliament resolution, where the report from the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, the so-called Honeyball report, states that the most effective way of combating the trafficking of women and under-age females for sexual exploitation and improving gender equality is the model implemented in Sweden, Iceland and Norway (the so-called Nordic model)' (European Parliament, 2014a).

Existing research has shown considerable global interest in the model. Many scholars conclude that the 'Swedish' or 'Nordic' model is among the international prostitution policies most often discussed and debated (Ward and Wylie, 2017; Crowhurst and Skilbrei, 2018; McMenzie et al., 2019). Moreover, the dominance of the 'Nordic' adjective suggests that this label may be more than a geographic and descriptive signifier model. Below we offer an analysis of how the Nordic origin of the policy, its Nordic branding, has served arguably in legitimating the policy and facilitating its mobility, by analysing two cases.

The first is the reception in Israel, which is illustrative of how the idea of a Nordic prostitution policy is both strengthened and further developed in transfer. The prospect of criminalizing the purchase of sex in Israel had been debated for over a decade, and a ministerial committee approved a bill on this issue already in 2012. Yet, due to political developments, it never went to a vote in Knesset, the Israeli parliament. In 2016, the question re-emerged after a new committee was set up to assess such a law (Newman, 2016); a bill was approved in 2018, and the law came into force in 2020.

In Israeli debates, the Nordic model was a key reference, including during the passage of the law. As discussed above, the Nordic Model is often presented as building on a framework of gender equality and human rights norms and presented as consisting of three elements: a criminalization of sex purchase, decriminalization of the sale of sex, and strengthening of welfare services for sex workers. It is further claimed to be an effective tool in abolishing prostitution, reducing human trafficking, and tackling unequal gender relations. Debates in Knesset built on the assumption that implementing 'the model' would decrease both prostitution and human trafficking (Jerusalem Post, 2018).

Yet, despite the discursive wrapping, their material import in Israel is somewhat doubtful. While the welfarist aspects were particularly highlighted, the new policies were not especially a break with long-standing development. The new law was presented in the *Jerusalem Post* (2018) as 'not only make frequenting of prostitutes a criminal offense, it seeks to help people leave sex work and find other careers'. In this respect, the introduction of a prohibition of the purchase of sex was followed by a strengthening of welfare services to sex sellers (Task Force on Human Trafficking & Prostitution, n.d.). However, while this may seem like an emulation of the Swedish approach in 1999, the Israeli policy was more a culmination of long-standing domestic policy developments. Services for people who wanted to exit prostitution had been strengthened considerably since 2008 (Shamir, 2018), and the 2018 law could be understood as a continuation of that policy, rather than a new development.

Most strikingly, the formulation of the Israeli bill pointed to a broader approach to purchasers of sex than just a punitive one. Although not yet in place, in debates leading up to the law, the punishment was to be replaced with participating in an educational program to 'impart knowledge and increase awareness regarding the damage caused to populations in prostitution' (Lee, 2013). This approach has no Nordic roots but is rather similar to programs offering sensitivity training instead of punishment for people who have purchased sex. (Majic, 2014). The Israeli experience thus represents arguably the power of the Nordic brand in providing legitimacy to a complex and distinct policy assemblage that bear little semblance to the prostitution policies as they are implemented in, for example, Sweden.

A second case, Northern Ireland, provides an interesting perspective on the politics of circulation and how gender equality norms are sometimes lost in translation. McMenzie, Cook and Laing (2019) analyse how references to Sweden were crucial in the process leading up to the 2015 criminalization of the purchase of sex, included in the *Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland)*. As in Israel, selling sex was already legal, but its purchase was criminalized with this new legislation; yet the two cases diverge on the content given to the law and illustrate pointedly the politics of circulation.

The successful bid for criminalization of the purchase of sex in Northern Ireland was driven by largely conservative groups who built allegiances with feminist groups, especially in Scandinavia. Many of the latter were invited to Northern Ireland to speak on the Nordic model. In the ensuing debates, the Nordic label of progressiveness was mobilized by conservatives to introduce long-desired criminalization. The result was that the reception of the Nordic model was rather thin. The punitive aspects of 'the Nordic model' were highlighted and the welfarist elements were overlooked. Assistance to people who sell sex was not strengthened and the gender equality dimensions in practice received muted support.

McMenzie et al. (2019) thus conclude that the case of Northern Ireland illustrates well that what the Swedish or the Nordic model *is*: it is not fixed, but rather, it is a resource that can be drawn upon in other contexts and for domestic political purposes. Put another way, Nordicity provides a powerful brand endorsement of both a model and its domestic interpretation. In Israel, the assemblage of 'the Nordic model' was represented in a way that facilitated more focus on social work than has ever been the case in Sweden. Northern Ireland, on the other hand, mainly retained the criminalization and level of punishment without exporting the assumed social support element or gender equality framework. In both contexts, references to the success of 'the Nordic model' facilitated the approach.

Conclusion: explaining mobility

While the Nordic model of prostitution policy represents weakly the diversity and practice that exists across and within the Nordic countries (Skilbrei and Holmström, 2013), it has spread globally and had significant traction in prostitution policy debates elsewhere. Adopted in law in many jurisdictions and promoted by the European Parliament, it has come to be a framework for global inspiration or a symbol for opposition by movements mobilizing against zero-tolerance visions for prostitution policy. As we find in our media content analysis between 2012 and 2017, it was the most discussed Nordic model, representing either a new Nordic model or a new iteration of the Nordic social welfare model.

In this chapter, we have not only sought to track the transfer of the model through analysing key exporters and diverse import contexts but also seek to explain how this model gained such prominence and was constructed and mediated in the process of circulation. One explanation is clearly the sheer volume of advocacy from Nordic governments and NGOs which has been relentless and well-resourced – analogous to a marketing or branding strategy in its focused and simplistic packaging and communication. The role of civil society organizations should not be discounted. Similar to what Tryggestad (2014) finds in relation to Norway as a norm entrepreneur in the field of gender and peace and security, the importance and legitimacy of civil society are often essential for establishing and justifying new positions.

However, that explanation is not enough. Instead, an important and qualitative explanation must be the nature of the message and the power of the background brand. In the early stages of promotion, the Swedish government actively linked a particular way of regulating prostitution with Swedish values, here with a particular focus on gender equality as a central norm in Swedish society. Later, governmental organizations and NGOs made efforts to export the Nordic model to the European Union, speaking in the EU lingo of harmonization and mainstreaming, arguing that what should be mainstreamed was the gender equality havens of the Nordic region. This is the case when, for example, the feminist lobby organization Equality Now in their factsheet on 'The Equality Approach to Addressing Sex Trafficking' simply states: 'Unsurprisingly, 3 of the top 4 countries [meaning Iceland, Norway and Sweden] with the highest level of gender equality have adopted this legal approach as a way to combat sex trafficking and sexual exploitation'.[11]

The Nordic model of prostitution can be understood as a strategy to create a *specific* Nordic brand, drawing on the rhetorical and aesthetic power of the general Nordic brand. The circulation of this prostitution model seems to rest heavily on the legitimacy of the Nordic label, utilizing its linguistic and substantive resources.[12] Both gender equality and welfarism feature strongly in the Nordic brand. The principle of gender equality is a cornerstone of what is perceived as a Nordic model of welfare, and it attracts a great deal of interest internationally. Legal strategies are central tools in how Nordic governments attempt to establish gender equality.

Efforts to promote criminalization of the purchase of sex draw heavily on these elements. As noted above, Equality Now equates the Nordic model with gender equality and the high standard of living in the region. Indeed, the switch by campaigners from the term 'Swedish model' to the 'Nordic model' more firmly placed the model in the realm of gender equality and social welfarism.[13]

In the case of prostitution policy circulation, researchers (Crowhurst and Skilbrei, 2018) have demonstrated that there is a particularly lively transnational exchange and a strong idea that prostitution is an area where policies would benefit from being harmonized. As demonstrated above, 'the Nordic model' can be put to use for securing agendas that are already present in domestic contexts but can be rebranded and legitimized as an uptake of Nordicity. Although the ideological underpinnings serve as an argument for policy change, the changes made may not actively reflect, for example, the aim of securing gender equality. The ideas inherent in the Nordic model are broad and flexible enough to allow it to be repurposed, and beyond the normative foundations that undergirded the movement in the Nordic countries to use criminal law to redirect attention and blame to clients instead of sellers. Thus, it is not the concrete instruments associated with the model alone (e.g., the criminalization of the purchase of sex) that mandates the reference to the model. As McMenzie et al. (2019) note, the debates in Northern Ireland mainly referenced the Swedish case, not the formulation of policy or experiences from countries that introduced a ban against the purchase of sex later, not even neighbouring Ireland. This strongly suggests that 'Swedishness' served as a symbolic resource in the debates.

Moreover, the power of the brand builds on the assumed effectiveness and coherence of the general Nordic model. The reception of the Nordic model on prostitution is rarely met with a critical analysis of its effectiveness or an understanding of the substantial differences between Nordic countries. Nordic researchers and others argue that the differences within and between the Nordic countries are too great for there to exist a Nordic model. Moreover, there is a constant debate as to the success of the model – with only modest reductions in prostitution and uncertainty over whether safety for sex workers has increased or decreased. Therefore, the term Nordic model of prostitution is perhaps best understood as a construction, and one intended to lasso certain understandings of prostitution regulation onto the Nordic brand.

Notes

1 Thanks to Charlotte Aslesen for assistance with this calculation.
2 See discussion in the editor's introduction.
3 Interestingly, although debates in, for example, Norway were ripe with references to the Swedish version of the law, the prospect of introducing a unilateral

criminalization of the purchase of sex was actually debated earlier and more forcefully in Norway than in Sweden (Skilbrei and Holmström, 2013), making the point that it is important to not confuse correlation with causation in policy scholarship.

4 For an analysis of how and why human rights are controversial issues in debates on prostitution, see Anne Gallagher (2001).
5 https://si.se/en/about-si/our-mission/
6 The title of the film when screened in Sweden was Lilja 4-ever.
7 Among other places, the film was screened in London, Paris, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Kaliningrad, Warsaw, Moscow, Budapest, Brest, Bucharest, Kiev and Sarajevo.
8 CATW argues (from 2009 from what we can surmise) that when Norway and Iceland introduced unilateral criminalizations of the purchase of sex, the Swedish model became the Nordic model (CATWA, 2017). Interestingly enough, CATW has in the last couple of years started to refer to it as 'the Equality Model' (see e.g. https://catwinternational.org/our-work/advocating-for-strong-laws/).
9 https://www.catwa.org.au/nordic-model-resources/
10 For examples of interventions, see: http://www.womenlobby.org/International-Day-for-the-Elimination-of-Violence-Against-Women
11 https://www.equalitynow.org/factsheets
12 A similar process has arguably occurred with New Nordic Cuisine: Byrkjeflot et al. (2013).
13 See http://www.womenlobby.org/Successful-launch-of-EWL-campaign-Together-for-a-Europe-free-from-prostitution

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10 The making and circulation of corporate quotas

Mari Teigen

Introduction

The Nordic countries are widely known for their gender-equality achievements. Most famous are their welfare-state policies fostering work–family balance through extensive parental leave and public childcare schemes (Esping-Andersen, 2009; Walby, 2009; Leira, 2012). However, the Nordic countries have also introduced other gender-equality policy innovations such as low-threshold monitoring of equality legislation during the 1970s, gender mainstreaming of public policies during the 1980s, bans on the purchase of sex during the 1990s, and gender quotas for corporate boards, or corporate quotas, during the 2000s (Skjeie et al., 2017). Gender-equality policies typically have traveled across the Nordic countries and, in combination with gender-equality progress in education, labor-market participation, and political representation, have established what is generally called the Nordic gender-equality model (Bergquist et al., 1999; Teigen and Skjeie, 2017).

This chapter examines what could be considered to be the most recent gender-equality policy innovation: gender quotas for corporate boards. Soon after the Norwegian parliament first adopted such regulations in 2003, corporate quotas attracted considerable international attention. Norway's making of corporate quotas initiated what has been called an 'avalanche' of corporate-quota policies in Europe (Machold et al., 2013). Currently, corporate quotas have been adopted by a number of European countries but only one other Nordic country—Iceland.

An important context for the appearance of corporate quotas on Norway's political agenda is the so-called Scandinavian welfare-state paradox: the stark contrast in the Nordic countries between the general gender-equality progress and continued gender differences in career achievements. It has been argued that this gap is due to (too) generous welfare-state arrangements and their supposed impediments to gender-equality progress (Mandel and Semyonov, 2006). Although the contrast between generally positive gender-equality achievements and persistent male dominance in the corporate world may appear to be a paradox particular to the Nordic

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countries, male dominance in top positions is a highly visible sign of gender inequality in any country. This backdrop likely is an important reason why corporate quotas soon became an initiative considered by policy actors in many countries. Moreover, it has been claimed that corporate quotas will have an impact on women's careers and hence their representation in executive management, so-called ripple effects (Teigen, 2015).

The strong debate influenced by Norwegian corporate quotas in a number of European countries illustrates the dynamic that bold reforms adopted first in one country often soon attracts attention and lead to new policies in other countries (Weyland, 2005). Although the Norwegian regulations inspired the circulation of corporate quotas to other countries, straightforward copying of Norwegian regulations has not necessarily resulted. This chapter, therefore, presents an analysis of the circulation of corporate quotas in Europe, investigating where they have been adopted, to what extent these policies vary, and, finally, how we can understand the wide popularity of such a highly controversial measure.

This chapter begins with a broad description of the main features of Nordic and Norwegian gender-equality policies and then gives a closer description of Norwegian corporate-quota policy. The main section presents an analysis of the making of corporate quotas in Norway, followed by a mapping of the recent travel of corporate quotas and other softer policies to promote gender balance on corporate boards in a number of European countries. The chapter ends with a discussion on how we can understand the circulation of corporate quotas and to what extent the policies that have circulated resemble the corporate-quota regulations that first emerged in Norway. Finally, this chapter addresses the basic question of why corporate quotas have gained such wide attention and circulation in and beyond Europe.

Making and circulation: input from theory

Advancing gender equality through policy adoption is a central building block in the Nordic model. However, as argued by Stone (2012), policies seldom emerge in a void but often result from ideas traveling across time, space, and countries. In the Nordic region, gender-equality policies have often been adopted and quickly traveled across countries. To some extent, the spread of policies across the Nordic nations has been facilitated by the role of the Nordic Council of Ministers through its role as an official body for intergovernmental cooperation in the Nordic region. The Nordic countries thus often pay a high degree of attention to policy reforms introduced by their neighbors (Teigen and Skjeie, 2017). At the same time, the international academic literature has attended to the Scandinavian welfare-state paradox, claiming that there is a trade-off between gender equality in the labor market, particularly generous welfare-state arrangements, and gender balance in the workplace (Mandel and Semyonov, 2006; Gupta et al., 2008). This research can be understood as a backdrop that has strengthened political concern and will to invent policies restoring the image of the Nordic countries as pioneers of gender equality.

The diffusion literature has emphasized the importance of regional learning as a mechanism of diffusion based on the observation that countries tend to imitate the policies of their neighbors (Dobbin et al., 2007). In this chapter, I map the circulation of corporate quotas and softer policies aimed at promoting gender balance in corporate boards and pay particular attention to how the circulation of corporate quotas fits with the Nordic model. Thus, a central question is to what extent a Nordic model is discernible in the circulation of corporate quotas.

A related concern is the importance of the origin or 'source' of a policy because a policy's capacity to travel is generally assumed to be greater when its source is viewed as authoritative (see introductory chapter by Byrkjeflot et al.; Røvik, 2016). Norway, as the source that introduced corporate quotas, has been central in national and international debates leading to the circulation of corporate quotas. Norway's role as a leader in gender equality has been a central element in debates on whether states and even the European Union (EU) should adopt corporate quotas (Lépinard and Rubio-Marin, 2018). However, being the source also leads to scrutiny for negative policy effects. As alleged in Ahern and Dittmar's (2012) much-debated article, corporate quotas have had negative effects on the economic performance of the companies subject to them. Although such studies are part of debates on policy adoption, foreignization processes—situations when the translating actors find it useful to refer to the source of origin to authorize the policy under debate (cf. introductory chapter by Byrkjeflot et al. in this book)—tend to occur at a more general level, concerned with Norway's reputation as one of the world's most gender-equal societies.

Another reason possibly important to the circulation of a new policy is the cost of introducing it. In the book *The Price of Gender Equality*, Van der Vleuten (2009) analyzed the varied success of women's activism in implementing gender-equality policies in the EU and EU nation states. All policy reforms have potential financial consequences, so new policies may threaten the interests, positions, and ideas of some groups more than others (Van der Vleuten, 2009). In EU policy, social politics have remained primarily a national affair as states have been reluctant to accept supranational policymaking. However, gender-equality policies constitute a clear exception partly because gender equality may be perceived connected to highly valuing the principle of equal rights. Still, gender-equality reforms have been strongly contested based on their costs and the threats they pose to the interests of privileged groups. Generally, the least-costly reforms enjoy the most success in the EU. In this context, corporate quotas are generally a low-cost policy, which may have led to their high attention and wide circulation. This policy's costs and benefits, though, have been a central concern in the debate, as mentioned in the widely cited article by Ahern and Dittmar (2012). At the same time, other studies have shown no effects or positive on company performance (Dale-Olsen et al., 2013).

The Nordic gender-equality policy context

Nordic gender-equality policies comprise mainly of three pillars: gender-equality legislation, family-friendly welfare-state policies, and gender-quota policies (Skjeie et al., 2019). In 1978, Norway passed probably the world's first gender-equality act.[1] The law was especially innovative in its combination of prohibiting gender-based discrimination and laying out positive duties and action to promote gender equality. Work–family policies in Norway, as in other Nordic countries, are built on the dual-worker/dual-carer family model (Ellingsæter and Leira, 2006; Ellingsæter, 2014). Key to promoting gender equality is the right to job-protected, generously compensated leave for both parents after child birth and publicly subsidized, high-quality childcare (Ellingsæter and Leira, 2006), including a quota for fathers in the parental-leave scheme (Brandth and Kvande, 2013). Norway long had unmet daycare demand, especially for the youngest children, but today, the vast majority of children younger than school age attend kindergarten (Ellingsæter et al., 2016).

The Norwegian gender-equality legislation's explicit provision favoring positive action paved the way for the introduction of preferential treatment and gender-quota policies (Teigen, 2018). The 1981 Gender Equality Act mandated that both genders be represented on public committees, and from 1988, the law required a balance of at least 40% for each gender on state-appointed commissions. The Municipal Act of 1992 applied the same regulations to municipal commissions. Most political parties also voluntarily adopted gender-parity policies. Since the mid-1970s, five major Norwegian political parties adopted such measures, but the Conservative, Progress, and Green parties have no such regulations. Party quotas entail a zipper system, in which candidates of each gender alternate on election lists, and each gender is represented by at least 40% of the members of internal party bodies.

Gender quotas for corporate boards in Norway

For around 25 years, legal regulations of gender quotas in Norway only applied to public commissions, boards, and councils. However, this changed in 2003 when the Norwegian parliament adopted gender quotas for corporate boards, including public limited liability companies (PLCs), intermunicipal companies, and state-owned companies. Corporate quotas were expanded to cooperative companies[2] and municipal companies in 2008 and 2009, respectively (Teigen, 2018). The numerous but mostly small- and medium-size limited liability companies (LTDs) are not subject to corporate quotas. Expansion of the scope of the legislation to include these companies, especially the largest ones, has been discussed but not taken up in recent political debates.

Regulations of the gender balance on PLCs board are set out in articles 6–11a of the Norwegian PLCs Act. Similar formulations apply to the other kinds of companies covered by corporate quotas. The gender-representation rules are applied separately to employee- and shareholder-elected representatives to ensure independent elections.[3] For state-owned and intermunicipal companies, regulations adopted in 2003 came into effect in 2004. For PLCs, the 2003 regulations were formulated as 'threat' legislation: Had PLCs not voluntarily met the requirements for gender composition by July 2005, the regulations would have gone into effect. Although female representation on PLCs increased from 2003 to 2005, the target of 40% of women was not reached. Consequently, in December 2005, the government decided to enforce the gender-balance regulations for the boards of start-up PLCs from 2006 and for all PLCs from 2008. The 40% target was met when the regulations were fully implemented in 2008. The rather tough sanctions attached to the legislation likely contributed to its successful implementation. The Companies Act applies identical sanctions for breaches of any of its rules, with forced dissolution the final step for companies violating the regulations of this Act. The Norwegian Register of Business Enterprises was set to ensure compliance with the gender balance regulation of company boards, as they are to all aspects of company legislation.

The black line in Figure 10.1 shows the change in the proportion of women on PLC boards, covered by corporate quotas, and the grey line illustrates the proportion of women on the boards of LTDs, not covered by corporate quotas. Women's representation on PLC boards leaped quickly after the 'threat' legislation (2003–2005) was enforced in 2005 continuing to rise, full implementation from 2008. However, the significant distance between

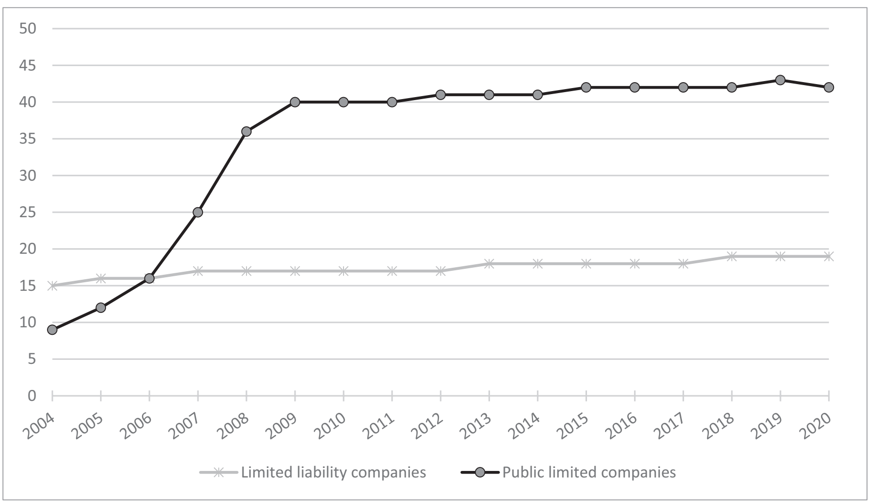

Figure 10.1 Proportion of women on the Boards of Public Limited Companies and Limited Liability Companies, Norway, 2004–2020.

Source: Statistics Norway

the grey and the black lines indicate that the quota legislation had no ripple effects from PLC boards to LTD boards.

One main reason for the effective implementation of gender quotas for corporate boards obviously was the tough sanctions imposed by the regulations. As shown, the Company Act responds to breaches of all its rules with identical sanctions, beginning with warnings and coercive fines and moving to forced dissolution as the final step. The Norwegian Register of Business Enterprises established to ensure compliance with the company legislation ensure that companies follow the gender-balance rule or comply with it after dialogue with the register. Occasionally, the business register has to enter into dialogues with companies about deviances from a gender-balanced board composition, which has led to correction of the matter.

A brief note on data

The section on the making of Norway's corporate-board gender-quota regulations is based on the author's earlier studies on the policy's adoption (Teigen, 2015), applying the process tracing method (George and Bennett, 2005). The analysis drew from all the relevant documents from the political process and media debate on the adoption of gender-balance regulations for corporate boards. The most important documents were (1) a consultation proposal on the revision of the Gender Equality Act from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs in 1999[4]; (2) a white paper from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, 'Proposition on Reforms to the Gender Equality Act (2000–2–01)'[5]; (3) a consultation proposal on gender representation in PLCs, state-limited companies, and state businesses and a proposal to change the Companies Act and other acts[6]; and (4) a white paper from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, 'Proposition on Reforms to Company Legislation on Gender Representation on Company Boards.'[7] Teigen (2002), Evenrud (2010), Engelstad (2012, 2015), and Sørensen (2011) studied the first stages of the political process in depth. Cvijanovic (2009) analyzed the media debate on the issue of gender quotas for corporate boards.

Studies on the introduction of policies to change the gender composition of corporate boards in several European countries have been a growing field in recent years. However, there is no updated, authoritative, comparative study on the adoption of corporate-quota policies. The mapping presented in this chapter thus was based mainly on several sources: the author's own recent updating on information about the situation in several of the countries, the author's own analysis from 2012 (Teigen, 2012); Seierstad et al. (2017); Hughes et al. (2017); and Piscopo and Muntean (2018).

The making of corporate board gender quotas in Norway

The corporate-quota regulations were innovative in part because they broke the long-established borders of state intervention in the autonomy of economic life. Moreover, they were innovative because the possibility that gender representation on corporate boards could be regulated had not been given much consideration until it suddenly appeared on the political agenda in connection with the revision of the Norwegian Gender Equality Act in 1999. The first record suggesting the legal possibility of gender quotas for corporate boards is found in a letter from the gender-equality ombud on preparing revisions of the Gender Equality Act (Teigen, 2015). Anne Lise Ryel, the gender-equality ombud, and Ingunn Yssen, the director of the Centre for Gender Equality, appear to have played central roles in launching the idea of legally regulating the gender composition of corporate boards (Sørensen, 2011). The revision was initiated and prepared by a minority-center government coalition consisting of the Liberal, Center, and Christian Democratic parties. While reviewing the entire Gender Equality Act, the government proposed expanding the scope of the section requiring that each gender make up at least 40% of members of publicly appointed boards, councils, and commissions. The proposed revision would include all company boards and the requirement that at least 25% of members of each gender.[8] This proposal, however, was withdrawn and not included in the proposed revision of the Gender Equality Act delivered to parliament in 2001.[9] The proposal met strong opposition, especially from industry and employer organizations (Teigen, 2002). The reason given for withdrawing the proposed regulations of corporate boards was a need for legal clarification.

Gender-balance regulations for corporate boards were presented to parliament in 2003 by a conservative-center government coalition[10] in 'Proposition to Parliament No. 97 (2002–2003).'[11] Some important changes had been made from the 1999 proposal. First, the 2003 proposal was included in company legislation, not the Gender Equality Act, as in 1999. Second, whereas the 1999 proposition covered all companies regardless of type or size, the new proposal limited gender-composition regulations to state-owned companies, intermunicipal companies, and PLCs. Third, the gender-balance requirement was increased from the original proposal of at least 25% of each of the genders to at least 40% of each gender. The new gender-balance rule was passed in parliament with broad political support from all parties except the Progress Party.

The gender-balance regulations carried strict sanctions, and the Norwegian Register of Business Enterprises was set to ensure compliance. The sanction system requires that a company that does not have a legally compliant board be subject to forced dissolution after several warnings, fines, and opportunities for correction. These sanctions follow the normal procedures for contraventions of company legislation but are unusually strong in contrast to the weak sanctions system generally applied to regulations in the Gender Equality Act (cf. Skjeie et al., 2017).[12]

The quota regulations immediately went into effect for state-owned and intermunicipal companies from January 1, 2004. The gender-balance rule for PLCs' boards, though, was formulated with the rather peculiar 'threat' provision that if the companies themselves were able to reach a 40/60% gender balance by July 2005, the legislation would not go into effect. Women's representation increased but did not reach the 40% target by 2005. Consequently, in December 2005, the government finalized its 2003 decision and enforced the gender-balance rule for newly established companies starting in 2006 and for all PLCs from 2008. The following section lays out the transfer of corporate quotas in Europe.

The persistent travel of corporate quotas

Norway's adoption of regulations on corporate quotas drew significant international attention. Norwegian politicians and experts traveled the world to discuss the corporate quotas, and the international press wrote extensively on their advantages and disadvantages (Teigen, 2015). In the years following Norway's adoption of corporate quotas, most, if not all, European countries have had heated debates on whether they should adopt such regulations, and quite a few have adopted similar regulations.

Significant variations, though, exist in the corporate-quota policies adopted. Table 10.1 shows the countries that have adopted corporate quotas. These countries diverge in their rules for the minimum and maximum gender distribution. Some have copied the Norwegian 40/60% principle

Table 10.1 Gender quotas for corporate boards by country, type of quota, year, company type, and sanction

Country	*Quota %*	*Adoption year*	*Implementation year*	*Company type*	*Sanctions*
Norway	40	2003	2008	All public limited companies (listed companies)	Stepwise process: (1) dialogue and warning; (2) company fine; (3) dissolution of the company
Spain	40	2007	2015	All listed companies and companies with 250 or more employees	Consequences for state subsidies and contracts
Iceland	40	2010	2013	Companies with 50 or more employees	No sanctions
France	40	2011	2014 (20%) 2017 (40%)	Companies with 500 or more employees or €50 million in revenue	No payment of fees to directors
Belgium	33	2011	2017–2018	All publicly listed companies	Empty-seat sanction; appointments invalid, and directors' benefits suspended until enough women are appointed

(*Continued*)

Country	*Quota %*	*Adoption year*	*Implementation year*	*Company type*	*Sanctions*
Italy	20–33	2011	2012 (20%); 2015 (33%) (expires in 2022)	All publicly listed companies	Stepwise process: (1) warning; (2) economic sanctions of the company; (3) removal of board members
Germany	30	2014	2016	All publicly listed companies and companies with 2000 or more employees; European companies (SE)	Empty-seat sanction; appointments invalid until enough women are appointed
Portugal	33	2017	2018 (20%) 2020 (33%)	All publicly listed companies	Empty-seat and economic sanctions
Austria	30	2017	2018/2022	All publicly listed companies	Empty-seat sanction

(Spain, Iceland, and France), while others have more modest requirements (Belgium, Italy, Germany, Portugal, and Austria). The countries also differ in their inclusion criteria. Some regulate gender balance according to which companies are included under the regulations, some according to company type (public limited and traded companies), some according to revenue and number of employees, and some according to all of these factors.

The main differences, though, lie in the sanctions system. The Norwegian Company Act applies identical sanctions for breaches of all rules, from warnings and punitive fines to forced dissolution. It is less clear what sanctions systems other countries have adopted and implemented. According to Gabalon and Gimenez (2017: 58), Spain applies no sanctions, so its corporate quotas are more recommendations. Iceland also does not impose punitive sanctions for non-compliance. France and Belgium have stricter sanctions systems, nullifying appointments and deducting directors' fees until gender-balance targets are reached. The Italian sanctions system gives warnings for non-compliance, followed by economic sanctions on the company and, finally, removal of board members if the target is not fulfilled. The German regulations hold that appointments are not valid until all the seats intended for women board members are filled (Kirsch, 2017: 219). Austria applies an 'empty-seat' sanction, keeping board seats open if not enough women are included. Portugal combines the empty-seat and economic sanctions for non-compliance with quota requirements.

The Danish and Dutch systems have also been characterized as corporate quotas (cf. Piscopo and Muntean, 2018), but the Danish system, in particular, cannot be said to impose quotas. Danish companies, not legislation, set the target thresholds (Table 10.2). The Danish regulations stipulate that companies that do not have a 40/60% gender distribution must set concrete,

Table 10.2 Gender balance regulation by country, type of requirement, year, company type, and sanction

Country	*Quota %*	*Adoption year*	*Implementation year*	*Company type*	*Sanction*
Denmark	Set targets	2012	2013	Companies with at least 156 million to 313 million DKR and 250 or more employees	No sanctions
Netherlands	30	2013 (expired 2016)	Immediate	Balance of at least €17.5 million and revenue of at least €35 million	No sanctions

Table 10.3 Gender balance in corporate governance codes by country, year, and type of recommendation

Country	*Adoption*	*Recommendation*
Finland	2010	Have at least one female board member
Luxembourg	2013	Must have representation of both genders
Ireland	2014	Recommends specific targets depending on board size
United Kingdom	2014	Recommends specific targets depending on board size
Sweden	2015	Strive for gender balance on boards

realistic, ambitious targets and develop policy to meet them. There is no sanctions system in place for non-fulfillment of companies' targets. Companies are free to set targets they find realistic and ambitious, which do not appear to meet the standards of a quota policy (Agustín et al., 2018). The Dutch system was set to expire in 2016 regardless of the success of the quota regulations. Compliance with the quotas was not enforced with sanctions (Kruisinga and Senden, 2017).

In addition to the spread of corporate-quota regulations, reform of corporate-governance codes stressing the importance of gender-balanced boards has increased sharply. Countries including Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden, and the United Kingdom have introduced or strengthened policies to improve the gender balance on corporate boards, mainly through including 'comply-or-explain' recommendations in national corporate social responsibility codes (Table 10.3). These policies differ from rather vague requirements to 'have at least one female board member' (Finland) or 'strive for gender balance on board' (Sweden) (Piscopo and Muntean, 2018).

The EU's own initiative to establish a gender-balance directive for corporate boards has also been part of the ongoing circulation of corporate-quota policies. The European Commission took an active role in the issue and proposed a directive to improve the gender balance among non-executive directors of listed companies. The directive was aimed at securing membership of at least 40% for the underrepresented gender on the boards of through public undertakings by 2018 and all publicly listed companies by 2020. The EU parliament passed the directive, but it did not get support from a majority in the EU Commission (Inderhaug, 2019; Skjeie et al., 2019).[13]

Discussion and conclusion

The past decade has seen a strong upsurge in the belief that it is possible to politically regulate gender balance on corporate boards and thereby further promote gender balance and gender equality in the business sector. The origin of corporate-quota regulations was Norway, from where corporate-quota policies, as well as softer versions, have circulated to a number of countries in Europe. Policy diffusion studies have been criticized for paying too little attention to what policies diffuse (Røvik, 2016). Indeed, the corporate-quota regulations that have circulated, differ importantly from one another. In this chapter, we have seen that corporate-quota policies have varied in their minimum and maximum standard for gender balance, the company types (registration and size) regulated, and the sanctions imposed for non-compliance.

This final section addresses three questions concerning the circulation of corporate quotas. First, the relevance of a regional learning or neighboring effect (cf. Dobbin et al., 2007) as a mechanism enabling policy diffusion through the circulation of corporate quotas. Second, Norway's importance as a source of the wider spread of corporate quotas. Third, a general understanding of the circulation of such an inherently controversial measure, particularly in light of the 'cost' of introducing it.

Policies to advance gender equality typically have circulated across the Nordic countries and contributed to what has been called a Nordic gender-equality model (Teigen and Skjeie, 2017). However, in the Nordic region, the similarities and circulation of gender-equality policies are easier to identify within policies on work–family balance than policies on gender balance in political and economic decision-making (Teigen and Skjeie, 2017). Neither Sweden nor Finland has adopted gender quotas for corporate boards, but Norway and Iceland have adopted quite similar corporate-quota schemes. The Danish scheme is categorized as corporate quotas by some (Piscopo and Muntean, 2017) but seen by others as merely symbolic arrangements with little effects on the gender balance of corporate boards (Agustín et al., 2018). Sweden began a political process parallel to the Norwegian one but has paused that process (Bohman et al., 2012; Heidenreich, 2012; Freidenvall, 2018). In Sweden, the possibility that corporate quotas could be introduced has, to some extent, functioned as a lasting threat in the debate and stimulated taking other actions, which have worked quite successfully. In fact, the rapid growth in women's representation on company boards in Sweden (Freidenvall, 2018: 392), which made gender-quota measures appear to be unnecessarily tough and controversial. In Finland, the question of adopting or enlarging the scope of legislation from the boards of state-owned companies to publicly listed companies remain. In both Finland and Sweden, strengthening gender recommendations in corporate-governance codes has been the preferred way to promote gender balance on corporate boards. Generally, the spread of corporate quotas has only moderately, if at all, been facilitated by a neighboring effect, as we cannot identify a Nordic model of corporate-quota policies. A central dynamic identified in the literature on policy diffusion emphasizing the importance of the geographic proximity of neighbor states (cf. Dobbin et al., 2007; Stone, 2012) thus seems to have little relevance to the circulation of corporate quotas.

Another question concerns whether Norway, as the first adopter and the source, may have fueled this international attention. It is believed that corporate quotas may have appeared to be an especially good idea precisely due to Norway's reputation as a leader in advancing gender equality. In a typical dynamic in the early phase of policy diffusion, a policy is introduced by a 'pioneer' state and then adopted by 'laggard' states (cf. Stone, 2012). Norway's successful gender-equality advancements have signaled that policies originating there are what is needed to lead gender equality in the right direction. Norway's 'fast-track' implementation of the requirement for at least 40% women's representation on corporate boards has contributed to the perception that such regulations can lead to success.

Spain, the second country to adopt corporate quotas, actively used the case of Norway in the reasoning for introducing corporate quotas (see Menendez and Gonzalez, 2012). Corporate quotas were part of a larger package of welfare-state reforms initiated with the change of government in 2004 when the Socialist Party came into power with Jose Luis Rodrigues Zapatero as Prime Minister (Menendez and Gonzalez, 2012). In this reform process, the Nordic/Scandinavian social-democratic welfare-state regime constituted a model for inspiration and an argument for gender equality. The Zapatero government's later ill faith in the reforms and gender-equality policies, however, contributed to delegitimizing the introduced policies (Gabalon and Gimenez, 2017).

Norway also played the role of a leading example in the case of Iceland. Its less-developed gender-equality policies compared to other Nordic countries played an important role in the restructuring of Icelandic politics and economy after the country was heavily hit by the financial crisis in 2009 (Teigen and Skjeie, 2017). Arguments for the importance of introducing corporate quotas referred to the financial collapse and the need to include more women in economic decision-making in order to counteract future economic problems (Styrkarsdottir et al., 2010). In the wake of Iceland's economic collapse, it was argued that the financial crisis was partly due to male dominance (the old-boys' network) and nepotism in economic and political decision-making (Styrkarsdottir et al., 2010). Such criticism seems to have paved the way for copying elements of other Nordic nations' gender-equality policies, the particularly adoption of a corporate-board-quota law.

Although the adoption of corporate quotas in Iceland appears to have been a response to the crisis, Spain did so before the financial crisis. Indeed, in the case of Spain, the delegitimization of the welfare-state reforms and corporate quotas may have been driven by the same financial crisis, which made it more difficult to argue for such reforms in a time of crisis. That said, the further circulation of corporate quotas in the aftermath of the financial crisis probably indicates that the economic crisis overall contributed to shedding a critical light on the main actors of corporate power, thereby paving the way for corporate quotas.

The final and main question in this chapter concerns why a homegrown, inherently controversial policy such as the corporate-quota policy has been widely and rapidly diffused to a number of countries. Norway's role as a pioneer in gender equality probably has been important, as argued. Policymakers' decisions are often based on limited information, and there is a general lack of certainty about which policies work and which do not. Taking inspiration from policies that seem to work for other countries, especially those recognized as successful in the matter at hand, therefore, appears attractive to many (cf. Dobbin et al., 2007). In addition, the view of corporate quotas as quite spectacular and innovative in breaking the borders of noninterference in businesses' property rights and autonomy probably contributed to the international attention to corporate quotas. News of the policy spread through many significant newspapers and international news- and business magazines and was disseminated by organizations such as the European Women's Lobby and key actors, such as Vivian Reding, vice president of the European Commission (2000–2014).

Finally, corporate quotas are largely costless as they simply require companies to recruit board members of both genders while promising a quick fix to the persistent male dominance of the corporate world. Significant fascination with corporate quotas may derive from such pecuniary circumstances. Policies without consequences for public budgets generally appear attractive to politicians. Admittedly, a counter-discourse, in part, claims that having more women (read: less competent and experienced board members) negatively affects firm performance (c.f. Ahern and Dittmar, 2012). This argument, however, has been met by fierce resistance, arguing that having more women better utilizes the talent pool and is good for business. Corporate quotas thus offer a sharp contrast to other Nordic gender-equality policies, such as parental-leave schemes and state-subsidized childcare, which have heavy fiscal consequences—at least initially and in a narrow fiscal sense.

Notes

1 The Act Relating to Gender Equality, Ministry of Children and Equality, April 20, 2007, available at https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/the-act-relating-to-gender-equality-the-/id454568/ [accessed December 4, 2020]
2 Applying to cooperative companies comprising more than 1,000 members.

3 The following rules were formulated: (1) When there are two or three board members, both genders should be represented. (2) When there are four or five board members, both genders should be represented by at least two members. (3) When there are six to eight board members, both genders should be represented by at least three members. (4) When there are nine or more board members, each gender should make up at least 40% of the members. (5) Rules (1)–(4) also apply to the election of deputy members (Authors translation).
4 Consultation Proposal from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, 1999. (Høring: Forslag til endringer i likestillingsloven, Barne og familiedepartementet, 1999).
5 Proposition to Parliament 77 (2000–2001), Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. (Ot. prp. 77 (2000–2001)), available at http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/bld/dok/regpubl/otprp/20002001/otprp-nr-77-2000-2001-.html?id=123306 [accessed December 4, 2020]
6 Consultation Proposal from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, 2001. (Høring: Kjønnsrepresentasjon i styret i allmennaksjeselskaper, statsaksjeselskaper og statsforetak, m.v.–forslag til endringer i allmennaksjeloven og i enkelte andre lover, Barne-og familiedepartementet, 2001), available at http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumentarkiv/Regjeringen-Stoltenberg-I/bfd/Horinger/2001/Horing-kjonnsrepresentasjon-i-styrer.html?id=421560 [accessed December 4, 2020]
7 Proposition to Parliament 97 (2002–2003), Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. (Ot. prp. 97 (2002–2003)), available at http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/bld/dok/regpubl/otprp/20022003/otprp-nr-97-2002-2003-.html?id=127203 [accessed December 4, 2020]
8 Consultation Proposal from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, 1999 (Høring: Forslag til endringer i likestillingsloven, Barne og familiedepartementet, 1999).
9 Proposition to Parliament 77 (2000–2001), Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. (Ot. prp. 77 (2000–2001), available at https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/otprp-nr-77-2000-2001-/id123306/ [accessed December 4, 2020]
10 The conservative-center government coalition comprised of the Conservative, Liberal and Christian Democratic parties.
11 Proposition to parliament 97 (2002–2003), Ministry of Trade and Industry. (Ot. prp. nr 97 (2002–2003)), available at https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/otprp-nr-97-2002-2003-/id127203/ [accessed December 4, 2020]
12 In the consultation, the main argument from employer and industry organizations, in addition to assertions why gender-balance regulations should not be adopted, was that the sanction system was too strict. The government responded that there was no reason to apply other sanctions for this rule. See page 51 in Proposition to Parliament 97 (2002–2003).
13 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/gender_balance_decision_making/131011_women_men_leadership_en.pdf [accessed December 4, 2020]

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11 Beveridge or Bismarck? Choosing the Nordic model in British healthcare policy 1997–c.2015

Tom Hoctor

Introduction

Historical and social science literature has a long tradition of interest in the Nordic model and its permutations and developments (Logue, 1999; Einhorn and Logue, 2003; Scott, 2009). Necessarily, there has been a political dimension to this interest, both in Norden and outside it. The primary aim of this chapter is to consider interest in the Nordic countries among British policymakers in the field of healthcare from 1997 to 2010. British political interest in the Nordic model has historically been highest among social democrats and socialists; however, there is evidence that Nordic ideas appeal beyond their traditional centres, with novel (at least in British terms) ideas about the Scandinavian social systems taking hold from the late-1990s onwards.

This chapter will make two straightforward and related claims. First, that ideas about the Nordic model circulated in British political circles in the period 1997–2010, and second, that this Nordic model was a departure from the 'traditional' social democratic conception of Norden (Ryner, 2002, 2007; Andersson, 2009b, 2010). Instead, in this era, the Nordic model was more often associated with New Public Management policies. To substantiate this claim, I will use a policy diffusion model and data drawn from political speeches, think-tank pamphlets and the business and popular presses. It, therefore, fits into a growing qualitative literature on international policy diffusion (Starke, 2013).

Policy and institutional context

New Public Management and policy diffusion

This section will discuss the contemporary literature in the fields of New Public Management and policy diffusion and discuss how these concepts can be used to frame the transfer of policies between the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom.

An increasingly large literature has developed on policy diffusion in political and social science. The Nordic countries, especially Sweden, have long

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served as international policy models in a variety of contexts (Musial, 2000; Hilson and Newby, 2015). Marklund (2009) notes that by the 1930s Sweden had increasingly come to be seen as a 'social laboratory', and though interest in the Nordic countries in the United Kingdom as well as the rest of the Anglophone world has waxed and waned over time, there are commonalities in the characteristics assigned to the Nordic social systems.

In the 1950s and 1960s, interest in the Nordic countries was centred on their perceived conformity to social democratic principles. Sweden has a significant place in Anthony Crosland's ([1956] 1980) *The Future of Socialism* and a refutation of Sweden's utopian socialist status is the central argument of Perry Anderson's (1961a, 1961b) responses in *New Left Review*, the first of which is acerbically titled 'Mr Crosland's Dreamland' (Hale, 2009). Roland Huntford's (1971) *The New Totalitarians* added a conservative counterview to the idea of utopian Sweden (Hale, 2006). Despite their ethical disagreements, these authors were broadly in agreement about the social democratic character of Swedish society, and this rather unproblematised view has tended to extend to the other four Nordic countries, whether or not it is strictly historically accurate (Kettunen, 2012). What can be said is that the 'Nordic model' has circulated in British political discourse for a very significant period of time, usually in circles associated with the Labour Party and typically associated with arguments about gradualism (Aimer, 1985).

The 2000s, therefore, present a novel image of the Nordic model, which instead of association with solidaristic wage policies, collective bargaining and social welfare are associated with New Public Management (NPM). NPM policies have several key characteristics:

1. The introduction or extension of markets into public goods and spheres of social value (Self, 1993)
2. 'Structural devolution' (Christensen and Lægreid, 2007: 102), entailing the creation of new agencies and regulatory bodies, often outside direct democratic control
3. The possible privatisation of public service provision and/or funding (Krachler and Greer, 2015)

NPM policies have circulated in Western Europe since the 1970s and have been associated with wider reform trends under the gloss of 'globalisation' and 'neoliberalism' in the past 50 years (Ryner, 2002; Einhorn and Logue 2003; Brown, 2015).

Christensen, Lie and Lægreid (2007) note that marketising reform is often accompanied by the creation of myths and symbols. Political science scholars interested in the diffusion of policy across national borders also stress the importance of legitimacy to the adoption of a policy. Maggetti and Gilardi (2016: 87), for example, note that 'a policy model can be adopted because it is highly valued by peers, provides legitimacy to adopters or is widely accepted as an appropriate response to a given problem'. The use of

Nordic examples to accompany NPM reform under New Labour is a useful empirical example of the efficacy of symbols and their role in providing political legitimacy in the creation of public policy.

Moreover, it is clear that part of the reason for the adoption of a Nordic model by Labour reflects the requirement for 'ideological similarity' when selecting an appropriate policy model (Grossback et al., 2004: 522). Since the 1990s and throughout the period considered here, this 'ideological similarity' was clearly felt in both directions, since 'New Public Management reforms were implemented in most western countries, and Swedish health care politicians tended to look to Great Britain for inspiration when implementing them at home' (Blomgren and Sahlin, 2007: 163). In a sense, therefore, though British politicians were allegedly looking abroad at the Nordic countries to supply ideas about health reforms, politicians elsewhere were looking to Britain as a site of policy learning.

It is worth noting that very often in policy diffusion 'the weight of new information depends on prior beliefs' (Gilardi, 2010: 652). As will be demonstrated below, there was a common belief in the United Kingdom that there were ideological commonalities between reform trajectories in both regions and prior beliefs about the Nordic model, dating as far back as the 1960s, were clearly important to the willingness of UK politicians to look to the Nordic region for legitimacy. Though it exceeds the scope of this chapter, this process of mutual circulation is clearly worthy of further study.

A similar diffusion process was being undertaken by British critics of the National Health Service (NHS). Generally associated with the Conservative Party, these critics were often in agreement with elements of the marketisation aspects of the NPM reform trajectory but wished to see the United Kingdom's health system shift to an insurance-funded, rather than a taxation-funded model. The Nordic model was, therefore, not suitable for these purposes, and instead, these policymakers looked to the Social Health Insurance (SHI) systems of Central Europe for policy learning. As will be shown below, the strategies of critics of general taxation funded healthcare, though similar to those pursued by Labour, were different in important ways, even if they relied on similar legitimacy claims.

NHS reform from the late 1980s conforms to the general move away from corporatist steering mechanisms towards lobbying – a trend which is also evident in the Nordic countries (Rommetvedt, 2017). In its place, a system emerged based on looser affiliation between actors. Though this term is often used negatively, at least in Britain, here it will be used descriptively, in the sense in which Rommetvedt deploys it, to explain the replacement of institutionalised two-way relationships between government and non-governmental actors with more informal one-way relationships, in which governments are lobbied to advance single issue causes. For present purposes, the implications of the move away from corporatist management of the NHS can be considered quite narrowly, since the primary goal is to explain the behaviour of actors in the policy creation process.

One of the most significant innovations of the Thatcher-era was the role of think tanks as sources of public policy (Jackson, 2012). This was substantially retained under New Labour with the growth of social democratic counterparts to the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) and Adam Smith Institute (ASI) which had been active under the Thatcher and Major governments. Think tanks which influenced Labour policy included the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), Policy Network as well as centrist liberal organisations such as Civitas and the Social Market Foundation (SMF).

Think tanks provided Labour with new ideas and organised international connections. Policy Network, for example, has been chaired by Peter Mandelson, a key architect of the transformation to New Labour. Among its high-profile Nordic contributors is Helle Thorning-Schmidt, former Prime Minister of Denmark. Pär Nuder, a former Swedish Social Democratic Finance Minister, has contributed several publications to the IPPR (Nuder, 2002, 2012). There were also connections during this era between members of the Swedish Moderate Party and the free-market IEA. Johan Wennström, formerly of Timbro, a Stockholm-based free-market think tank, and later an adviser to the second Reinfeldt government, was a fellow at the IEA in 2005 (Wennström, 2005).

This institutional inheritance was a double-edged sword for Labour. Although think tanks conformed to the post-ideological, pragmatic focus of the Third Way project (Ball and Exley, 2010), in common with other elements of NPM, they were also less amenable to steering than traditional policy creation and implementation partners such as trade unions and professional associations (Christensen and Lægreid, 2002). New Labour's desire to maintain broad-based support, including among traditionally hostile groups like free-market think tanks and conservative newspapers, empowered these groups to mount challenges to Labour's articulations of the NHS and to provide alternative policy models. For this reason, although less influential than they had been under the previous Conservative governments, free-market articulations of healthcare policy, especially regarding SHI, remained influential and problematic for Labour politicians.

Healthcare policy in Norden, Germany and the United Kingdom

This chapter will cover a diverse range of national and regional policies. It is, therefore, worth sketching out the basic contours of the United Kingdom, Nordic and 'Bismarckian' healthcare systems while emphasising that the purpose of this paper is not to comment on the empirical merits of any of these systems, but, rather, to explore how they were presented by British political actors as cases for reform. It is, therefore, principally a study of the ways in which Nordic policy ideas were translated into the context of the United Kingdom.

The Nordic healthcare regimes have undergone significant change in the past 20–30 years. As noted above, each of them has been affected by reform processes, which were to greater or lesser degrees influenced by NPM, but in different ways in different periods. The Nordic countries are sometimes, though less often in the last two decades, classified as members of a 'reluctant reformer' group, of which some continental states are also considered a part (Christensen and Lægreid, 2002; Christensen et al., 2007; Bjurstrøm and Christensen, 2017). This has been reflected in healthcare with the five Nordic countries moving from different starting points at different speeds and in somewhat different directions. What unites them is their continued use of a general taxation funded-model (Lyttkens et al., 2016).

From a British perspective, the Nordic countries share underlying principles with the NHS but operate in a far more decentralised fashion and with a significantly greater emphasis on democratic participation (Magnussen and Martinussen, 2013). This decentralisation makes a comprehensive description of the Nordic healthcare systems difficult (Lyttkens et al., 2016), though it is nonetheless reasonable to speak of a Nordic model of healthcare (Martinussen and Magnussen, 2009; Magnussen and Martinussen, 2013; Lyttkens et al., 2016), and certainly the perception in the United Kingdom in the 2000s was that such a thing existed and was a meaningful source of policy learning. I will therefore sketch out the aspects of the Nordic healthcare systems which were most important from the perspective of British health policymakers.

As noted, the Nordic healthcare systems are particularly characterised by decentralisation and democratisation, partly as a result of their less coordinated development by comparison with the NHS. Moreover, the Nordic systems have tended to operate political, administrative and economic decentralisation (Byrkjeflot and Neby, 2008), with a much greater capacity for local raising of funds through taxation compared to Britain's centrally funded system as well as stronger local democratic oversight through local councils (Magnussen and Martinussen, 2013). They nonetheless underwent significant changes during the period under consideration (Christensen and Lægreid, 2002; Bjurstrøm and Christensen, 2017; Christensen et al., 2007).

For present purposes, three changes are of importance: processes of centralisation and decentralisation; purchasing and provision responsibilities and gatekeeping. Recent reform trajectories have tended to entail phases of de- and re-centralisation. The 2000s coincided with a period of centralisation, in which traditional county and municipal systems of provision were consolidated into larger regions in Denmark and Norway, with Sweden keeping its decentralised structure but allowing greater local experimentation than previously (Byrkjeflot and Neby, 2008).

Because of the tendency to decentralisation, there is significant variety in the extent to which markets and private provision were extended in Nordic healthcare both within and between nation states. Denmark has been the most reluctant to split purchasing and provision, with only very limited moves in this direction; Norway provided some secondary care through purchasing mechanisms in the 2000s, and Sweden's decentralised model meant that some counties had significant extension of market mechanisms and private provision, while others had virtually none (Magnussen and Martinussen, 2013). A further difference is in accessibility. In Denmark and Norway, General Practitioners (GPs) function as gatekeepers to the wider system, whereas in Finland any doctor can refer and in Sweden patients are able to self-refer (Olsen et al., 2016). Gatekeeping is also an accepted part of the structure of UK healthcare (Greenfield et al., 2016).

Despite these variations, for the purposes of this chapter, the Nordic systems will be considered part of a 'Beveridgian' type along with the NHS, while the Central European systems will be considered Bismarckian. The paradigmatic Bismarckian system, as the name suggests, is Germany. This is the system that was primarily used as a source of policy learning by those interested in SHI systems in UK politics. In common with most other Western European healthcare systems, the German healthcare system is based on mandatory health insurance with contributions raised from insurance fund members, employers and the state. In other respects, the Bismarckian and Beveridgian systems have converged significantly since the turn of the twenty-first century partly since both systems confronted similar challenges: expanding demand for care; aging populations; rising health complaints associated with poor lifestyles, etc. (Palier and Martin, 2008; Hinrichs, 2010; Palier, 2010).

The priority for Beveridgian systems in the 2000s was to rectify poor accessibility to specialist care through reforms to the GP gatekeeping system. Historically, this was a strength of the Bismarckian systems due to the relative ease of accessing a GP and a referral to a specialist. Conversely, cost containment became a priority for Bismarckian systems, which consolidated state authority over some aspects of the social insurance systems to ease budgetary pressures. Beveridgian systems, due to their tax-funded models (whether local, regional or central), have tended to perform better against cost-containment measures than insurance-based systems.

Historically, the NHS was thought of as a command-and-control structure although arguably this overstates the ability of the Ministry of Health to steer healthcare and understates the abilities of groups, especially the British Medical Council, to resist or subvert central steering mechanisms (Greener and Powell, 2008). UK healthcare reform has taken more than one direction since the beginning of the Thatcher era in 1979. The 1983 Griffiths Report suggested a direction for the NHS which was highly professionalised with doctors and healthcare professionals controlling the administrative aspects of the health service, much like the system which evolved in Scotland in the 2000s (Greer, 2004). This path was abandoned in 1987 with the introduction of the 'internal market' which was the first move towards NPM in British healthcare and introduced a purchaser-provider split, characterised by contracting between independent, but state-funded health authorities, GP fundholding groups and NHS hospital trusts (Greener, 2009).

The architecture of this system was complex with significant unevenness between the size and autonomy of different purchasers. Indeed, built into the system were significant pressures on larger health authorities to remain with current providers because of the risk that sudden withdrawal would cause them to go bust. These pressures did not affect smaller GP fundholding groups. Moreover, as there had been no increase in care supply and no differential pricing of services was permitted, there was always a route back into public ownership for bankrupt purchasers and providers, rendering the competitive elements of the internal market theoretical (Greener and Powell, 2008).

New Labour instituted a series of strategic health authorities which purchased care from Primary Care Trusts. These covered quite significant geographical areas, for example, the north-west of England, and are reminiscent of the basic division of Norwegian health provision into five regional health authorities. Even though during the New Labour era the British healthcare system most closely resembled that of Norway, this was not mirrored by a focus on the Norwegian healthcare system among policymakers. Rather, the Labour government viewed Sweden and Denmark as models, with free-market liberals focused on the Bismarckian systems, especially Germany.

1997–2010: from 'fragmentation' back to the market

1999–2000 the new NHS and the NHS plan

One of the core planks of Labour's electoral platform in 1997 was a pledge to increase investment in the NHS and reduce waiting times for access to treatment. This was presaged by a two-pronged analysis of its inheritance from the Thatcher and Major Governments. First, that the preceding period had seen serious underfunding of the NHS, and second, that Conservative attempts to implement NPM structures had created fragmentation within the system and worsened, rather than improved outcomes.

This critique of the Conservative-era was set out in *The New NHS* (Department of Health, 1997), a white paper focused on the 'fragmentation' which the internal market had allegedly introduced. This was contrasted with Labour's plan to introduce a program of 'integrated care'. Nonetheless, Labour retained the purchaser-provider split characteristic of the internal market, though in 1997 it was not envisaged that this would operate competitively or with private providers. Moreover, there was a strong emphasis on decentralisation, regionalism and collaboration, with the white paper repeatedly emphasising cooperation and partnership (Department of Health, 1997: secs. 3.16–3.21, 1.22, 1.3).

Alan Milburn replaced Frank Dobson as Health Secretary in 1999 and continued in the role until 2003. His stewardship of the NHS set the direction for Labour's health policy until it left office in 2010, beginning with

The NHS Plan (2000). Mirroring some elements of *The New NHS*, *The NHS Plan* was also critical of the internal market and was highly critical of the perceived 'lottery in provision' it had created. A general taxation-funded model was articulated as the best way to control this tendency for 'fragmentation' in markets. To support this, *The NHS Plan* (2000: 36) argued that tax-financed systems (e.g., British and Nordic) were the least socially regressive of the various options due to their interpersonal redistributive capacity. SHI systems (e.g., German and Dutch) were considered slightly more regressive, and private insurance systems (e.g., the US and Swiss), the most regressive. The NHS, and by implication the Nordic systems, was defended in terms of their progressive and equal character in contrast to the SHI systems used in continental Europe. Milburn (2000) deployed similar ideas in speeches.

However, criticism of the internal market in *The NHS Plan* is significantly more circumspect than in *The New NHS*. Although the former ostensibly offered a muscular critique of the Thatcher and Major records in healthcare, it is critical not of quasi-markets *per se*, instead arguing that the internal market was a 'false market'. *The NHS Plan* demonstrated a move back towards the logic of 'choice', although not competition, and it reflected ambiguity in New Labour's thinking about the relationship between 'equality' and 'choice' as political goals (see, e.g., Tony Blair's (1997) letter to Isaiah Berlin).

Around 2000, then, there was a notable shift in the approach to NPM structures in the UK government. In the period from 1997 to 1999, the reform trajectory moved away from markets in the health service and towards coordination and collaboration. From 2000, that emphasis reversed. This was also a period when ideas about the nature of healthcare reform which would later become strongly associated with the Nordic countries began to develop. Labour argued that its reforms would create a 'leaner and more focused centre' (Department of Health, 2000: 56); although not explicitly mentioned, this clearly echoed trends for the adoption of 'lean management' techniques in Swedish healthcare (*The Economist*, 2002).

2000–2003 return to the market

Models of Danish and Swedish healthcare appeared in government white papers for the first time in *Delivering the NHS Plan* (Department of Health, 2002). The white paper noted the charge that 'a tax funded national system of health care can never deliver choice for patients'. It continued: '[I]n Sweden and Denmark patients have access to information on waiting for treatment have the choice of an alternative provider' (Department of Health, 2002: 22). Despite fairly major structural differences between Swedish and Danish healthcare models, the innovation here was threefold. First, the patient was situated as a consumer within a system of potential choices and providers; second, this movement was presented as possible within a tax-funded healthcare system and third, Nordic healthcare models were deployed to legitimate the preceding claims.

The appearance of Nordic policy models in government white papers coincided with growing interest in the popular press as well as increased pressure to introduce 'choice' measures in the NHS. An article in *The Times* argued that the Danish and Swedish models of healthcare placed 'an enormous weight on empowering doctors and individual patients' despite their taxation funded systems (Hawkes, 2002). *The Guardian* and *Independent* also ran pieces praising aspects of the Nordic healthcare systems, especially the introduction of market (dis)incentives for providers to reduce common issues like 'bed blocking' (Charter, 2002a; Dean, 2002; Laurance, 2002).

The Conservative opposition also deployed Nordic examples, with Liam Fox, the Shadow Health Secretary, criticising Labour's reforms for 'borrowing the language of … Sweden … but not the substance' by not introducing a deeper purchaser-provider split in the NHS (Charter, 2002b). Free-market policymakers were arguing simultaneously for the intensification of market reforms along Swedish lines, including allowing NHS bodies to borrow commercially, as well as taking Germany's SHI system as a source of inspiration (Charter, 2002b; Ivens, 2002).

Free-market policy think tanks, especially the CPS, and the business press, particularly *The Economist*, focused on the expansion of market mechanisms, noting that Sweden had several for-profit providers operating hospitals and expounding measures which displayed striking similarities to those which had been introduced in Sweden (Blackwell, 2001; Blackwell and Kruger, 2002). Alongside this, there was significant discussion of the entrance of private providers into the NHS.

This discussion of private provision was often couched in terms of a 'Swedish model of healthcare' or the 'Stockholm model' of private care (Gillan, 2001; Waples, 2001; Wright and Crisp, 2002; *The Economist*, 2002). The Stockholm Model referred to a model of healthcare in which primary care was privatised though still publicly funded. This entailed the privatisation of several hospitals in Stockholm county and a system of 'payment by results', in which hospitals received money for the procedures performed. Articles were particularly focused on St. Göran's Hospital in Stockholm, and it was claimed that the use of private provision had decreased waiting times and improved the quality of care (*The Economist*, 2002). Notably, the Swedish ideological dividing line mirrored the British one, with the Moderates controlling Stockholm council and introducing privatisation measures which the Social Democratic-led national government opposed.

By 2003, the coordinates of New Labour's direction in healthcare policy and the political discourses around which it aimed to defend these were already relatively well established. Swedish and Danish healthcare had been widely cited in the press as models of taxation-funded care which could also satisfy concerns about patient choice. From the perspective of the Labour government, the use of Nordic models allowed it to argue in favour of patient choice and legitimate the potential for choice measures in a taxation funded system with reference to concrete healthcare systems in Sweden and Denmark.

Given that the major policy creation phase was effectively over by 2002, the difficulty from 2003 onwards was the need to defend the use of markets and the entrance of private company from two directions simultaneously. On the one hand, liberal critics argued that policy had not gone far enough towards introducing markets and private provision in healthcare. On the other hand, left-wing Labour MPs, members and trade unions argued against the introduction of markets and private providers of any sort. In the early 2000s, a discourse was already emerging which argued that New Labour's health reforms were not Swedish enough, with calls for the entrance of private firms and/or the abolition of taxation funded healthcare altogether. The dilemma facing Labour politicians is well encapsulated by this extract from Milburn's (2003) *Speech on Localism*:

> The Right – in the media and in politics – believe the game's up for services that are collectively funded and provided. In today's consumer world they argue that the only way to get services that are responsive to individual needs is through the market mechanism of patients paying for their treatment.
>
> It is easy to dismiss the Right's policies as the last twitch of the Thatcherite corpse. But if we fail to match high and sustained investment with real and radical reform it will be the Centre-Left's argument that public services can both be modern and fair, consumer-orientated, and collectively provided that will face extinction.

Milburn was proved prescient in that from 2003 onwards policy interventions from free-market policymakers adopted positions on healthcare reform which increasingly emphasised the marketisation and privatisation aspects of NPM. Indeed, government policy came under repeated attack from free-market groups hoping to undermine the principle of taxation-funded care. A series of papers published by CPS and two articles in *The Daily Telegraph*, a conservative newspaper, were considered sufficiently threatening as to warrant a response from John Reid, who took over the health brief in 2003 (Blackwell, 2001; Blackwell and Kruger, 2002; Brogan, 2003; Daley, 2003; Reid, 2003a).

2004–2010 defending the benefits of New Public Management

By 2004, the ideological portion of the reforming phase in New Labour's healthcare policy was effectively over, though this era saw the implementation of new systems as well as the controversial extension of privatisation and marketisation. In this period, private health care providers began to undertake some elective procedures in the NHS. Of note was the entrance of the Swedish for-profit healthcare provider Capio which began offering healthcare services as part of joint bids with British providers (as did comparable North American firms) (*The Economist*, 2004).

The entrance of private providers was often linked back to ideas about the Stockholm model but dovetailed with discussions that would become increasingly entrenched that imagined the role of the state as a funder and regulator rather than a provider of services. This was justified using arguments about the progressive nature of patient choice, whether this was realised in the public or private sector. John Reid, for example, argued that such measures empowered patients noting that: 'empowering patients is directly linked to the issues of inequity. Only if we empower all patients can we realistically aim for the goal of equity' (Reid, 2003b). The definition of equality used here is, therefore, strikingly similar to that deployed by New Public Management theorists since Reid argues that choice – 'underpinned by the resources, the information and power' – is the route to equality.

The presentation of Labour's healthcare measures as progressive and associated with Nordic models which began under Alan Milburn was most explicitly continued by Patricia Hewitt as Health Secretary (2005–2007). Hewitt made use of a Swedish Social Democratic slogan of the time 'proud, but not satisfied' (Hewitt, 2006). It is ironic that in Sweden this slogan was received as a sign of the Social Democrats' lack of ideas and a compelling future vision, which arguably contributed to their loss in the 2006 Swedish General Election (Andersson, 2009a). It is also interesting to note that while Hewitt was committed to competition and marketisation and associated this with Nordic healthcare models, the elements of reform which she most strongly associated with the Nordic countries were not competitive or marketising in nature.

By the mid-2000s, Labour wanted to imitate three chief aspects of the Nordic healthcare models: first, the use of GPs as gatekeepers to the wider system to reduce pressure on hospitals; second, the creation of 'activation' systems which would deal with chronic health conditions allowing people to re-enter the labour market and third, the expansion of community orientated care which reduced the length of hospital stays (Hewitt, 2005, 2007). While these are basically consistent with the goals of Nordic health policy in the mid-2000s, they do not necessarily entail any accompanying extension of markets or private provision.

Nordic localism and health insurance

From 2004 to 2010, there was a significant change in the focus of policy learning among UK policymakers. This era saw a growing interest in localism and decentralisation in Swedish and Danish healthcare. Though decentralisation was not necessarily associated primarily with marketisation reforms by UK policy thinkers, they were still often a key part of these discourses. Jenkins (2004), for example, viewed Nordic health systems as examples of localised systems with greater democratic oversight than the more centralised NHS.

Unlike more free-market-oriented authors, Jenkins was not primarily interested in localisation as a vehicle for NPM reforms, though he acknowledged the potential for this and the title of his report – *Big Bang Localism* – is a tribute to Margaret Thatcher's deregulation of the City of London. Rather, Jenkins saw the Nordic countries as models in which politics and public policy were democratically accountable with institutions at the local level which entrenched democratic forms of governance. The Nordic countries, he argued, had 'shown that even the smallest communities can run a successful and equitable welfare state' (Jenkins, 2004: 106). This he contrasted negatively with the centralising and managerial tendencies of British politics.

The rolling back of the central state did though tend to entail plans for the extension of the marketisation elements of New Public Management and fiscal retrenchment as a result of the 2008 financial crisis. This partly reflected a growing sense of purpose in the Conservative Party under the leadership of David Cameron. Increasingly, therefore, think-tank and media policy diffusion strategies were targeted at the Conservative Party leadership as well as towards New Labour.

Furness and Gough (2009) echo New Labour's discourse of a progressive Nordic model, contrasted with SHI systems which encounter redistributive limits. Their report, *From Feast to Famine*, saw Norway and Sweden as models in this respect. They were particularly impressed by decentralised healthcare funding models, arguing that local diversity, funded by locally raised taxes, was a potential model for solving perceived issues in the NHS. The report also argued that any adoption of a more localist, Nordic-style healthcare reform would entail the retreat of the state from mass service provision and its replacement with a range of private (including non-profit) provision. This would entail a total split between purchaser and provider and would, for this reason, mimic the structure of SHI in almost every respect save revenue raising.

The report does though draw a contrast with New Labour's discourse on the Nordic healthcare systems when it notes that:

> Evidence from Finland, Norway and Denmark shows that local control over health sector decision-making has led to increased disparities in services provided, and it has been those individuals from lower socio-economic groups who have been adversely affected.
>
> (Furness and Gough, 2009: 140)

New Labour had typically argued that the Nordic systems were successful in reconciling individual freedom with equality. Furness and Gough, perhaps more realistically, argue that policymakers are confronted by a political choice.

Bidgood's (2013) *Healthcare Systems: Sweden and Localism* made similar arguments to those found in *From Feast to Famine*. Bidgood was more concerned to argue for the compatibility of localism and markets in the Swedish system. Although pessimistic about the required culture shift in British politics required for the creation of greater localism, he was positive about the potential for the introduction of further New Public Management ideas by this means. Indeed, demonstrating the tendency for policy actors to be mutually influencing, many of the ideas cited in Bidgood's report, especially those about Capio and lean management, are from articles in *The Economist* and *The Guardian* cited above.

By 2013, then, the Nordic systems were no longer seen primarily as a means to defend general taxation-funded healthcare but as a model for a mixture of localism, competition and choice in a system in which private, not-for-profit and public providers competed for public funding. The presentation of Swedish policies as providing space for not-for-profit providers was characteristic of UK policy discussion in this era. It was also a feature of discussion of Swedish Free Schools (Conservatives.com, 2010), though in both cases this was a case of selective policy learning since not-for-profit health and education providers were notably weaker than public or private providers in Sweden (as they are in the United Kingdom) (Andersson, 2006; Wiborg, 2015).

Alongside this was a more empowered and active contingent arguing in favour of Bismarckian insurance-funded healthcare in the United Kingdom. A range of policy reports had put forward arguments in favour of health insurance throughout the New Labour era, but by the late 2000s also had the opportunity to put this to a rejuvenated Conservative Party. Gubb and Meller-Herbert's (2009) *Markets in Healthcare* restated the case for health insurance using the kind of market logics previously put forward by Blackwell (2001, 2004) and Blackwell and Kruger (2002). These thinkers typically drew on Hayekian ideas about the accountability of markets and sometimes also had positive things to say about the ability of the Nordic systems as well as continental healthcare to imitate markets:

> Possibly the most restrictive use of markets is in the NHS in England where the government largely controls the funding, provision, resource allocation and regulation of health care. The market, instead is 'mimicked' through a split between organisations that purchase care and those that provide it …. Interestingly, Nordic countries such as Sweden and Denmark have followed a similar path, although the major difference here is that funds are largely raised through local taxes and health care is the responsibility of local authorities.
>
> (Gubb and Meller-Herbert, 2009: 47)

Very similar arguments in favour of movement towards a Bismarckian healthcare model appeared in Kristian Niemetz's (2014) *Health Check* released through the IEA. This working paper set out a series of practical steps which would alter the current infrastructure of the NHS to make it more closely resemble a SHI system. This included provisions for hospitals to fail, payment by results and other ideas common to free-market arguments about healthcare, removing the functional difference between public and private providers.

Within these discourses, the NHS was contrasted negatively with European systems on a number of counts. Its corporate structure with an artificial quasi-market did not possess the democratic mandate of the Nordic countries; did not allow choice of purchaser, as in Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland and did not link customer and insurer directly through financial transfer as in the French system.

These pieces reflect the balance of discourse in British health policy in the 2000s. All influential positions argued in favour of marketisation whether through the introduction of NPM, including greater localism or through the introduction of (social) insurance. In both cases, 'choice' for the consumer was privileged over attempts to provide standardised outcomes, which later discourse, in contrast to New Labour politicians, even began to argue was impossible, whether on theoretical grounds (the nature of the market) or empirical ones (fiscal retrenchment).

Conclusion

Although New Labour's policy record was criticised after the 2008 global financial crisis, there is no questioning the party's political savvy. Developments and trends in healthcare policy in the period following the establishment of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition show that Labour was correct to be concerned about the potential for an organised group to emerge in health policymaking favouring a move towards a SHI system and/or far more extensive marketisation and privatisation of UK healthcare.

On the other hand, Labour's adoption of a Nordic model, heavily associated with New Public Management ideas, allowed free-market liberals associated with the Conservative Party to pick up where Labour had left off and had the additional consequence of establishing the Nordic model, which in British policy discourses was presented as highly marketising, as the leftmost option in political terms. This opened space for the articulation of more strident SHI options usually based on the German system, as well as localist discourses principally focusing on Sweden which argued for a further intensification of New Public Management in the health service.

Nonetheless, the reform trajectory in the United Kingdom closely approximates these two categories with an immediate shift away from competition and markets and an emphasis on collaboration and partnership upon Labour's assumption of office. This was gradually replaced by a turn back towards ideas more traditionally associated with NPM from 1999 onwards which would intensify in 2002 and 2003.

From the early 2000s onwards, British Labour politicians had adopted what could best be described as a defensive discourse which propagated particular ideas about a Nordic model in healthcare and its use of NPM principles. Their purpose was to persuade those in favour of greater marketisation and choice that this could be achieved within the framework of a general taxation-funded healthcare system. For this reason, the Nordic countries were the only available choice (other than the United Kingdom itself) for making these arguments.

The 'Nordic' components of New Labour's health programme taken together are an odd mixture of New Public Management, localising ideas and proposed changes to the process of GP referrals as well as elements that simply reflect system convergence in European health systems. Labour politicians themselves though were concerned to link their policies to precedent set by the taxation-funded Nordic countries as a defence against criticism from free-market liberals on the one hand and Labour's left on the other hand.

The (co-)creation and circulation of Nordic models in British healthcare in the late 1990s and 2000s represent something of a paradox. New Labour's utterances about the Nordic countries were relatively accurate and often based on specific policies, even where these policies were not necessarily consistent with Labour's agenda. For example, in the mid-2000s, Nordic policies demonstrated a collaborative turn where UK policymakers favoured competition. Labour did though tend to downplay those aspects of Nordic policies which did not fit their preconceived agenda while emphasising facets such as privatisation, marketisation, decentralisation, which were consistent with the policies they hoped to enact in Britain. In this process of translation, then, Nordic policies tended to be seen primarily in terms of their consistency with propositions about localism and marketisation. There was nonetheless a clear political preference for Nordic or Scandinavian models in British healthcare discourse, even where Nordic policies and ideas were presented as highly marketising.

It is, therefore, relevant to question to what extent these policies were actually Nordic or European, and, despite the widespread and sometimes haphazard use of models taken from Scandinavia, what they added to British public policy debate. It is tempting to argue that the use of these models offered legitimacy to policy proposals, but as the so-called 'Norway model of Brexit' demonstrates, models can mystify as readily as they clarify. Moreover, there is very little evidence to suggest that Nordic or European actors, with the exception of some private healthcare firms such as Capio, were engaged in propagating these discourses in the United Kingdom. What emerges from the analysis is a policy learning process in the United Kingdom which is reliant on exemplars imported from elsewhere, but simultaneously closed, insular and concerned primarily with internal political debates rather than the substance of policies which are increasingly central to the policymaking process.

The UK policy learning process observed here, therefore, reflects a very British form of diffusion. Since 2010, the Conservatives have made virtually no use of foreign healthcare models, but, if anything, the process of deriving legitimacy from 'policy learning' has intensified. Perhaps the most obvious Nordic example of this is the adoption of Free Schools, based on a Swedish marketising reform from the early 1990s (Rönnberg, 2015). This has also been observable in debates about the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union with a whole host of possible models suggested, including Norway, Canada, Australia and various others.

This chapter has contributed to the literature examining policy diffusion and the circulation of Nordic models. The study of policy diffusion in the United Kingdom and the use of policy models is, in many respects, an urgent one since international policy models have been so central to a highly politically and economically controversial Brexit process. Moreover, from a Nordic perspective, it is notable that the Nordic model, in various guises, has now been taken up very widely as a policy model on the British Right and is increasingly less associated with the Labour Party, which would, historically at least, have seemed a more natural site of mutual policy diffusion.

This interest in Norden among Conservative politicians is a potential future avenue for research on the making and circulation of Nordic models. This chapter has adopted a qualitative approach to the question of policy diffusion, allowing for a more detailed assessment of the articulations of Nordic policy than a quantitative approach would have, but at the same time limiting the scope of material that could be covered. Future research on these questions, especially those taking up issues such as the 'Norway model of Brexit', may well wish to adopt quantitative or content analysis approaches to these questions to deal with the vast amount of literature which was produced on the subject, especially in the popular press, but also in think tanks, political speeches and by legal experts.

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12 From innovation to impact

Translating New Nordic Cuisine into a Nordic food model[1]

Silviya Svejenova, Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen and Haldor Byrkjeflot

Introduction

This chapter puts forward three approaches – localizing, transposing, and theorizing for universal application – through which New Nordic Cuisine (NNC), an innovation consisting of a novel culinary concept, a set of guiding principles, and related practices, has developed into a Nordic food model that has had an impact on Nordic food culture, international culinary renewal and development, and food policy. First, we highlight the novel ideas and critical milestones in the evolution of NNC that have paved the way to its renown. Second, we provide a brief overview of our theoretical approach, zooming in on core ideas in the organizational literature on translation, and the data that informs our analytical approach. Next, we present and illustrate the three approaches, as well as some connections between them. By way of conclusion, we discuss how an ecology of translation, formed by the energy and skill of translators and the power of traveling objects, such as the Nordic cuisine manifesto and movement, contribute to a Nordic food model in an ongoing development and with a wider impact.

The evolution of New Nordic Cuisine

At the outset of the twenty-first century, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) were enjoying strong recognition of their welfare systems, interior design, crime novels, and films, but little if any recognition of their food. Terms such as Nordic Food or Nordic Cuisine were non-existent and a Nordic model of food was hardly conceivable, whether culturally, socially, or politically. The national cuisines were primarily associated with specific local preparations, such as marinated herring, smoked salmon, or meatballs, and were considered old-fashioned, uniform, greasy, and heavy, 'created as they are for a hard-working rather poor population that for long periods of the year also had to cope with severe cold' (Tingstrøm, 2004; *own translation*). Danish culinary culture, for example, was described as 'uninspired, unenthused, and unhealthy' (Meyer,

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2017). The development and launch of a new regional culinary concept and movement –NNC – inspired a range of culinary, entrepreneurial, policy-making, and research initiatives that communicated and further developed these nascent ideas into practices (Byrkjeflot et al., 2013).

The restaurant Noma (named after *no*rdisk *ma*d, translation from the Danish for 'Nordic food'), founded by gastro-entrepreneur Claus Meyer and chef René Redzepi in 2003, was established with the ambition to 'rebuild' the Nordic cuisine, as Meyer (2006) explained in a chronicle in the Danish national daily newspaper *Politiken*:

> We formulated in Noma's first menu what we wanted: "With Noma, we want to offer a personal, Nordic gourmet cuisine, where typical cooking methods, Nordic ingredients and our common food cultural heritage are exposed to an innovative gastronomic way of thinking. In its extreme consequence, we see it as our challenge to contribute to a reconstruction of the Nordic cuisine, so that it embraces the North Atlantic, and with its taste and regional uniqueness lights up the world."
>
> (Meyer, 2006; *own translation*)

In the same chronicle, Meyer explained that the ambition was to draw 'on both traditional and non-traditional Nordic ingredients…. The wild ingredients from ancient ecosystems should have the most prominent place in our kitchen,' keeping certain purity and simplicity, and avoiding 'high-tech exaggeration.'

These ideas took further shape as NNC formally anchored its meaning in a manifesto. Meyer and Jan Krag Jacobsen, the latter a journalist and vice president of the Danish Academy of Gastronomy at the time, whom Meyer referred to as his 'wingman,' developed the draft of the Nordic Kitchen Manifesto (which would later be also referred to as the NNC Manifesto and the New Nordic Food Manifesto). A group of renowned chefs from the Nordic countries refined, elaborated, and signed the manifesto at the NNC Symposium in Copenhagen in 2004. The manifesto, which was partly inspired by the Dogme 95 movement and the manifesto in Danish film, proclaimed a new culinary movement that aimed '[t]o express the purity, freshness, simplicity, and ethics associated with the region,'[2] affirming its Nordic connotations, and placed the responsibility for unraveling and revealing these values with chefs. The term Nordic in the label of the newly born regional cuisine helped avoid references to the national cuisines it brought together, drawing instead on positive associations with the general Nordic model (Byrkjeflot et al., 2013). The ambition, according to Claus Meyer, was to place the Nordic region on 'the gastronomic world map. It belongs there together with Spain, Italy, and France' (Meyer, 2006).

NNC experienced a fast-paced diffusion and recognition, influenced by different factors and actors (Byrkjeflot et al., 2013; Sundbo et al., 2013), including – as noted above – a largely supportive and benevolent media (Leer, 2016). In culinary circles worldwide, the restaurant Noma became an exemplar of the movement and the new cuisine, receiving recognition as The World's Best Restaurant in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2014.[3] Another strong influence was Redzepi, Noma's coowner and head chef and the recognized leader of 'a culinary revolution that focused on time and place and celebrated the produce and cooking techniques of the Nordic region' (Porter, 2015: 44). In 2016, in the wake of Noma's success, Michelin's Nordic Guide awarded Denmark's first three-star designation to the Geranium restaurant and 30 stars to 20 other restaurants in Copenhagen (Ooi and Strandgaard Pedersen, 2017). Within a short period of time, and in the absence of formalized leadership, organization, and identity, which may have allowed for a more coordinated interaction by different players, the Nordic culinary movement was 'spreading at lightning speed at all levels,' 'like a benign virus' (Wolff, 2011), and was 'suddenly everywhere' (Signer, 2017).

Restaurants, cookbooks, new products, and culinary festivals in the region proliferated. While Copenhagen was the movement's epicenter and 'culinary trend-setter' (Allagui, 2010), Oslo, Stockholm, Helsinki, and Reykjavik also became important gastronomic destinations (Ooi and Strandgaard Pedersen, 2017), with some of the most celebrated restaurants located outside the capital cities, in remote locations. Importantly, not only did foodies start coming to Norden, but also the cuisine itself traveled, getting in closer contact with other culinary approaches, techniques, and ingredients. For example, Noma and its head chef Redzepi 'popped up' in London in relation to the Olympics (Forbes, 2012), Tulum in Mexico (Rao, 2016), Tokyo (Abend, 2015a; Warwick, 2015), and Sydney (Freed and Ruehl, 2015), while Claus Meyer opened a Nordic restaurant in New York's Grand Central Terminal (Mullen, 2014). NNC was also showcased at events, ranging from those offered by Nordic diplomacy to cultural events, such as Nordic Kitchen Party (2012) at the Cannes Film Festival (Rosser, 2015).

Beyond praise and recognition, however, NNC has been criticized for serving 'polemic on a plate' (Booth, 2015), being elitist, nationalistic, and ethnically excluding (Gravdal, 2008; Holm, 2011; Leer, 2016), as well as failing to include female chefs at its inception (Leer, 2019). Some have concluded that NNC 'is no more' and 'has run its course as a global food movement' (Booth, 2015). Its initiator, Meyer, affirmed that change has already happened and NNC is 'the new normal'; '[we] should just move on, talk less about the New Nordic Cuisine…. Not cling to it as a sort of successful brand to preserve for 200–300 years, having to find budgets' (Meyer, 2015). It has been suggested that Copenhagen-based chefs that have been associated with NNC 'are loosening their ties to the New Nordic pigeonhole' (Trimble, 2017) and 'applying that culinary knowledge and expertise to ethnic food' (Porter, 2015: 42). Noma's head chef, Redzepi, was quoted as objecting to claims that the New Nordic label had become more a marketing means than a meaningful signifier, stating: 'I don't have a problem with "Nordic," … [i]t's the only way to give a sense of place. But the "new" in front of "Nordic" should be erased, buried. I am so sick of that term' (Abend, 2015b). Redzepi closed the original Noma in 2017, relaunching Noma 2.0 with a new concept in 2018, 'on the premise of being in and of nature, physically and conceptually with a menu based around what he says are the three distinct Nordic seasons' (Porter, 2018: 55), thereby still emphasizing core Nordic principles like seasonality, nature, and simplicity.

Thus, chefs who had originated and promoted NNC have abandoned the label and sought to distinguish their own cuisine as something unique, which is characteristic of innovators when they are categorized together by audiences (Slavich et al., 2020). In the meantime, rather than vanishing, NNC ideas have transformed into a Nordic food model with wider impact. This translation from innovation to impact is important for the making and circulation of Nordic models, yet insufficiently understood. This chapter sheds light on three approaches to this translation. Below we outline our theoretical and empirical approach.

Theoretical framing and data

An important research stream in organization studies has focused on the circulation of ideas and models about management and organizing, seeking to explain the emergence of novelty in these processes. It has taken two main directions of analysis – diffusion and translation – each with their historical development and variants (Wæraas and Nielsen, 2016; Djelic, 2008), yet also with certain overlaps and connections. The primarily North American literature has investigated the *diffusion* of forms, concepts, and practices (e.g., Tolbert and Zucker, 1983; Fligstein, 1985, 1991; Baron et al., 1986; Meyer, 2002). Later studies have examined how what diffuses may change along the way (e.g., Ansari et al., 2010; Drori et al., 2014).

In particular, European institutional literature (e.g., Djelic, 1998; Mazza et al., 2005; Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson, 2006) and Scandinavian Institutionalism have focused on *translation* processes (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996) that are 'stubbornly material' and has argued that 'to set something in a new place is to construct it anew' (Czarniawska and Sevón, 2005: 8). As noted by Czarniawska and Joerges (1996: 47), 'the concept of translation is useful to the extent that it captures the coupling between arising contingencies and attempted control, created by actors in search for meaning.' This stream of research has argued that ideas spread successfully when they are linked to eminent societal norms and values, as well as to authoritative legitimizers (Røvik, 2002). The energy needed for ideas to travel comes from users or creators as 'willing political agents' (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996), as well as skillful and/or interested theorists (Strang and Meyer, 1993) who shape and reshape these ideas as they flow (Behrends et al., 2014; Røvik, 2016). These various users in the circulation of ideas 'energize an idea any time they translate it for their own or somebody else's use' (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996: 23). Further, they strategically reframe and locally ground them, especially when they collide with prevailing practices in the receiving context, as was shown with US diversity management adoption into Denmark (Boxenbaum, 2006).

Scholars have also captured the application of managerial practices across dissimilar fields through transposition (Boxenbaum and Battilana, 2005; Mazza et al., 2005). As Boxenbaum and Battilana (2005: 358) found, to 'become an innovation, a transposed managerial practice needs to be translated into a truly new form.' In other instances, they are universalized and claimed as 'panaceas' (Mazza et al., 2015; Örtenblad, 2015); that is, 'tools that work successfully in all kinds of organizations' (Røvik, 2002: 126). At times, they also involve 'politics of meaning' (Slavich et al., 2020); that is, negotiating meanings in the public domain. Despite significant research on translation, further investigation is needed on its dynamics, capturing different approaches to purposefully translating an innovation into a model with wider impact. Theoretically, we seek to enrich the organizational literature on translation, which has predominantly focused on the travel of management concepts and models, such as Total Quality Management (TQM), Balanced Scorecard, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), or diversity management (Røvik, 2002; Alvarez et al., 2005; Boxenbaum, 2006), with a focus on cultural concepts and models.

The circulation of concepts and models associated with cultural practices, such as food, has been a topic of interest for scholars in history and the humanities, yet originally focused mostly on the spread of culture from hegemonic nation states, such as the United States to the periphery (Stephan, 2005). Later interest has been directed toward studying cultural exchanges, in some cases employing rather loosely the concept of circulation (Gänger, 2017; Poole, 2020). Cultural spheres, such as food, are generally quite ambiguous in terms of practices, as they tend to be characterized by authenticity that is materially and emotionally anchored in the originating context. In order to understand such processes, we zoom in on ecologies of actors that circulate and disseminate ideas (e.g., Djelic, 2017; Westney and Piekkari, 2020) and not just those who edit them at adoption (Wedlin and Sahlin, 2017) and also the roles that different types of actors play in translating ideas (Spyridonidis et al., 2016). Doing so enables us to get further insights into processes of translation as proactively sought (Røvik, 2016).

In this chapter, we put forward some theoretical insights on translation by drawing on the case of NNC and its subsequent translations into a Nordic food model. NNC is a particularly informative case, as its ideas and practices have traveled widely since its creation in the context of a globally recognized general Nordic model of welfare state and society. Our understanding draws on a wide variety of sources, such as semi-structured interviews with gastro-experts (chefs, gastro-entrepreneurs, and restaurant owners) and influential figures (political advisors, food program directors, and food scientists) associated with NNC. We gathered data between 2010 and 2020. The first round of data collection was concerned with acquiring an understanding of the emergence and meaning of the NNC phenomenon and the role of Noma as an exemplar restaurant and a model for the ideas behind NNC, whereas the second round was directed toward understanding the model's circulation. A comprehensive Infomedia and Retriever search in Danish and Norwegian was supplemented by a search in English in Factiva to gain a deeper understanding of media depictions of the historical background, current situation, and circulation of NNC within and beyond the international culinary field. Sources in Spanish were gathered and analyzed to unravel the depiction of NNC's role in developing Bolivian cuisine (more on this below). Within the limited scope of this book chapter, we selectively highlight aspects of the collected and analyzed data to illustrate our argument on approaches to translation of NNC into a Nordic food model aimed at a wider impact. The rest of the collected data has been used as a background, shaping our overall longitudinal understanding of the trajectory of NNC.

Next, we delve into and define three approaches to translating NNC into a Nordic food model.

Approaches to translating New Nordic Cuisine for wider impact

Our study unraveled three distinctive approaches to translating NNC from an innovation to a model with wider impact, which we have labeled localizing, transposing, and theorizing for universal application. The first approach, *localizing*, is about elaborating and expanding the NNC ideas within the originating (Nordic) context through initiatives creating an impact on Nordic food culture. The second approach, *transposing*, involves adapting aspects of NNC and Nordic food culture to new contexts with distinctive and different challenges, with impact on culinary renewal and international development in the receiving context. The third approach is *theorizing for universal application*; that is, developing a template of universally applicable ideas and practices, drawing on NNC, Nordic food culture, as well as transpositions to other contexts, with impact on food policy. We briefly introduce and illustrate these three approaches below and suggest how they may contribute in different ways to the making of a Nordic food model. Table 12.1 provides a comparison of the three approaches to translation in terms of their focus and translation agents, objectified ideas that travel as well as their influence on and potential drawbacks for the development of a Nordic food model.

Table 12.1 Approaches to translating New Nordic Cuisine (NNC) into a Nordic food model

Approach Characteristics	*Localizing*	*Transposing*	*Theorizing for Universal Application*
Definition (example)	Expand Nordic specificity, translating the culinary innovation to Nordic food culture (e.g., Nordic Council of Ministers' Programs I, II)	Adapt selected aspects of NNC and Nordic food culture into a new context (e.g., Bolivian culinary movement and manifesto)	Create a template for application of Nordic culinary and food practices in global food policy (e.g., Nordic Council of Ministers' Solutions Menu)
Translation focus	Development of a Nordic food culture	Culinary and food culture renewal in non-Nordic contexts	Universal food policy solutions for any context
Translation agents	Chefs, bureaucrats, entrepreneurs, researchers, journalists	Entrepreneurs, chefs, journalists	Bureaucrats, policymakers, communication experts
Objectified ideas that travel	New Nordic Cuisine manifesto and movement Story of innovative and award-winning restaurant *Noma*	Manifesto of the Bolivian Culinary Movement (MIGA) Story of innovative and award-winning restaurant and socially oriented food school *Gusto*	Solutions menu: A Nordic Guide to Sustainable Food Policy Multiple stories connected to food policy, from NNC and Bolivian cuisine to food waste, etc.
Influence on the development of a Nordic food model	Sustain and elaborate Nordic distinctiveness as NNC develops into *Nordic food* and *Nordic food culture*	Extend NNC and Nordic food into a *Nordic model for culinary and social renewal*	Extend NNC and Nordic culinary renewal model to *Nordic food policy model*
Potential drawbacks	Lost scaling of impact due to refraining from 'Nordic food' label; keeping distance to big food industry	Critique of post-colonialism, domination. Potential loss of receiving context's authenticity	Critique of lost Nordic identity of the model as it is turned into a universal template

Localizing

Localization has been defined as 'the process by which practices and concepts are modified according to the specific conditions of the locale' (Drori et al., 2014: 17). In the context we study, it is about expanding the local (Nordic) meaning of NNC by translating it into Nordic food, Nordic diet, and Nordic food culture. In that, the high-end culinary innovation is translated into a wider food movement through energy provided by advisors and policymakers (Nordic Council of Ministers), entrepreneurs (initiators of various food projects), and researchers (for example, Nordic food lab, Nordic food diet). Viewing NNC as location-specific (that is, anchored in and having meaning in the Nordic region, as well as in the respective nation states), this approach to translation seeks to elaborate the distinctiveness of Nordic food from high-end to mass market. The ambition to 'democratize' the new culinary developments was there from the outset, as the following quote by the gastro-preneur Claus Meyer reveals:

> Such initiatives – regardless of the complex and strategic motives behind them – strengthen the diversity of providers and products and generate a wave of enthusiasm at all levels in the category. It causes consumers to seek insight and ultimately leads to the goods that come out of the effort becoming democratically accessible rather than small culinary works of art, reserved for a narrow gastronomic elite.
>
> (Meyer, 2006)

In 2005, a year after the New Nordic Kitchen manifesto was signed, it became the foundation of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Århus declaration and was elaborated into New Nordic Food Programme I (2007–2009) and Programme II (2010–2014). These programs provided direction and DKK 18.5 million in funding for initiatives in the period 2007–2014 in the context of Norden. Further, the concluding activities of the second program included a series of workshops with the theme #NORDICFOOD2024, envisioning a new horizon for Nordic food, which no longer used 'new' in the label and defined a ten-year horizon with possible future directions.

Following the 2006–2014 initiatives in its Programmes I and II, in 2016 the Nordic Council of Ministers presented a more focused programme, which sought to 'democratise good food' (New Focus Areas for New Nordic Food, 2016). It prioritized three areas: food in the public sector, a Nordic food award, and food and tourism and anticipated that 'there will be efforts to highlight New Nordic Food as a policy tool in other areas' (ibid., 2016). In referring to public sector food, there is a clear ambition to develop a 'model':

> The project 'Nordic food in the public sector' examines how a Nordic model for public sector meals can be developed and integrated across borders and across sectors. This year the project is being run by the Copenhagen House of Food and the Swedish National Food Agency in partnership with organisations and stakeholders in public sector food from across the Nordic Region.
>
> (ibid., 2016)

Other initiatives sought to expand the set of meanings associated with Nordic food through research. One of them was the Nordic Food Lab, a non-profit, open-source organization established in 2008 on the initiative of Meyer and Redzepi to 'combine scientific and humanistic approaches with culinary techniques from around the world to explore the edible potential of the Nordic region' (Nordic Food Lab, 2020: 5). The lab counted on support from independent foundations, private businesses, and government sources. In 2014, it became part of Department of Food Science at University of Copenhagen (KU) and was closed down as a self-governing lab although its activities continued as part of the KU's Future Consumer Lab. A 2010 blog post by the Nordic Food Lab informs about a collaboration with 'Nordgen, the amazing bank of genetic material, to evaluate the gastronomic potential of bygone varieties of Scandinavian produce' (Nordic Food Lab, 2020: 10). Another blog post from 2011 gives a glimpse of another role of the lab that of disseminating the NNC ideas: 'The Nordic Food Lab was honored to be invited to an EU Parliament session on innovation… to introduce the concepts of the NNC, and hopefully disseminate the inspiration we find in the Scandinavian culinary momentum' (ibid.: 11). A later article by two of the lab's members affirms: '[we] are committed to Nordic cooking not primarily because of its value as a cultural export, but because of its value as an exploration of our own identity… in an increasingly globalized world culture' (ibid.: 266). This reveals the interest in influencing not only Nordic food but also food culture and identity in the region.

These initiatives have broadened the impact of NNC by developing novel ideas and understandings related to Nordic food and Nordic food culture:

> The focus in recent years on New Nordic Food has brought about meaningful and significant changes in food culture in a number of the Nordic countries. The trend also underlines some of our basic values: sustainability, creativity, quality and purity.
>
> (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2014)

Overall, localizing allows sustaining and elaborating the Nordic distinctiveness in relation to food, paving the way for ideas of Nordic food and Nordic food culture. However, it could be argued that some potential for scaling up impact has been lost, as the main actors involved in these translations have refrained from involving big industry interests in order to create and enforce a 'Nordic food' label and standard for mass markets.

Transposing

Transposition is about applying a practice from one field into another, which involves adaptation and possibilities for further innovation (Boxenbaum and Battilana, 2005). However, as Meyer (2014: 81) affirmed, 'meaningful items cannot be transported "wholesale" from one cultural context to another … they have to pass through a powerful filter of local cultural and structural constraints to also gain legitimacy in their new local context,' resonating with it. An example of the transposing approach is Claus Meyer and the NGO IBIS' export and adaptation of ideas and practices from the Nordic culinary field; that is, rich welfare states seeking to develop Nordic food culture and identity, to a highly dissimilar context of Bolivia, one of the poorest countries in the world, seeking to create a sense of pride through cuisine and recognition as a culinary destination. These efforts were not intended to expand NNC to Bolivia, but rather to enable the development of own, locally embedded cuisine there, resonating with the local needs of a socially conscious culinary model.

In August 2010, Meyer established the Melting Pot Foundation as a 'not-for-profit with the mission of spreading social uplift through the culinary arts and traditions.'[4] When we interviewed Claus Meyer in the winter of 2010, he explained that he had been exploring whether the model could travel if one replaced the word 'Nordic' with any other (regional, national, etc.) location. While different sites were considered with both transferability potential and social purpose in mind, Bolivia was chosen because, among other possible reasons (for example, it had been a priority country for Danish development aid since 1994, with an Embassy opened in La Paz in 1995) on the grounds of its biodiversity:

> If you have access to a large diversity of products, unknown to foodies, then you have a strong chance of coming up with something that could have global interest. Bolivia may have the most interesting and unexplored biodiversity in the world.
>
> (Meyer, in Stocker, 2013)

In that it constituted an opportunity for wider impact: *If we succeed, this will mean more to the Bolivian nation than Noma and new Nordic cuisine has meant to anyone* (Meyer, in Stocker, 2013).

The Bolivian project was initiated in collaboration with La Paz local authorities and Oxfam IBIS (Smedegaard Jensen, 2011) and support from Danida, Denmark's development cooperation, which is an area of activity under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (Udenrigsministeriet DANIDA, 2013). This project involved the creation of the gourmet Restaurant *Gustu* (inaugurated on April 4, 2013), Cafeterias and Schools Manq'a, and Gustu Training Center. The Gustu School sought to train young underprivileged Bolivians in the areas of kitchen and bakery.[5]

The First Bolivian Gastronomic Meeting took place on October 12, 2012, through a Symposium entitled 'Tejiendo el Movimiento Gastronómico Boliviano' (Weaving the Bolivian Gastronomic Movement) and involved discussions of MIGA, the Manifiesto del Movimiento Gastronómico Boliviano (its manifesto). Both Meyer and Jan Krag Jacobsen participated with presentations and Gustu provided the food for the event. Further local resonance was sought in collaboration with core local actors, such as 'chefs, academics, farmers, and community leaders to collaborate on a new cuisine to celebrate the country's possibilities' (Meyer, 2017). The team of translators also included the Danish chef Kamilla Seidler, who had experience with NNC and exposure to New Spanish Cuisine through an apprenticeship at the restaurant of leading Basque chef Andoni Aduriz. Aduriz and another Venezuelan-Italian chef Michelangelo Cestari, a close collaborator of Seidler from their time with Aduriz, were tasked with creating a leading Gustu restaurant and a culinary school for underprivileged youth.

Gustu was expected to become the new cuisine's leading exemplar, similar to the role played by Noma, whereas the culinary school was an addition to the NNC model, an innovation that fitted the context, to fulfill the social purpose of the project and ensure culinary talent for the new Bolivian cuisine. As Seidler explained in Price (2016),

> Bolivia right now is like a very young version of the New Nordic movement. Young people who studied abroad are coming back and opening restaurants. We're seeing a very fast-growing middle class, which is where the restaurant boom becomes a reality.
>
> (Price, 2016)

Seidler recollected that the purpose of the Bolivian initiative was 'to start a pride about their food culture and their food to raise tourism and thus the economy in the country' (Hartmann Eskesen, 2017). Gustu earned recognition as best restaurant and Seidler as Best Female Chef in Latin America (Price, 2016), but perhaps more importantly, for her efforts to connect with the local context, she was given the unofficial name *The Dane of the Andes*.

As Cestari noted (León, 2014; authors' translation), 'The restaurant is the tip of the iceberg of a series of projects that seek to generate a whole model of commitment with society.' In a 2017 article entitled *Food for All Manifesto*, Meyer elaborated on the importance of 'incorporating community control in our organisational structures, with the eventual outcome being complete community control of the project.' He further clarified that,

> In La Paz [Bolivia], though, we remain on site as an available resource and – since we reserve certain rights as a funding agent and founding father – we are in the final stages of successfully transferring the Gustu restaurant to Bolivian leadership.

The translation approach in Bolivia extends NNC and Nordic food into a Nordic model for culinary renewal, which also has an impact on international development. A potential limitation of such an approach to translation could be criticism of post-colonialism or domination as well as potential loss of the receiving context's authenticity. However, as also related above, the entrepreneurs involved in the translation have sought to secure local sensitivity as well as ways of transferring the leadership of these culinary initiatives back to local hands.

Theorizing for universal application

Theorizing is about 'generalizing a translation so that it can diffuse within the organizational field' (Boxenbaum and Battilana, 2005: 356). It is a 'discursive process by which concrete forms or practices are turned into types' (Meyer, 2014: 80). Theorizing may also be necessary in order to make transition from formulation to social movement to institutional imperative (Strang and Meyer, 1993). Theorizing could involve creating 'panaceas' with general appeal, independent of context (Røvik, 2002; Mazza and Strandgaard Pedersen, 2015; Örtenblad, 2015) through a quasi-object, such as a label or a manual (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996). An example of theorizing is The Nordic Council of Ministers' (NCM) ambition to 'package' NNC's and Nordic food's principles and practices to enable their wider adoption, across contexts and in relation to different global challenges. In this case, what is 'exported' is a set of policy ideas as a *Nordic Model of Sustainable Food Innovation*, which seeks to involve a wider range of players across a variety of contexts through a 'Solutions Menu' (Halloran et al., 2018). As explained by Mads Frederik Fischer-Møller, Senior adviser, Nordic Council of Ministers (interview, 2017): '[T]hat's also about packaging this, being better to tell this story, being better to show this as part of a food policy tool case that others can take inspiration from … as Nordic model on sustainable food innovation.'

The Nordic Council of Ministers has systematically supported the development of NNC (Byrkjeflot et al., 2013) and further pursued the circulation of Nordic food ideas, opening up new contexts of application through its programs, providing resources for these extensions, and legitimizing these efforts at the level of regional policymaking. It has also embarked on packaging of ideas and related policies, given the growing international interest in replicating the 'model.' The following quote depicts this approach:

> [P]eople are looking at the Nordic region, … combining their view of the Nordic region as sustainable, then they see the Nordic food revolution, then they think "there must be some policies behind it"… What they see is a blueprint of a policy, but actually is there one policy behind, is there ten policies behind? What's actually behind this? … We can then give an outline on all the policies that have enabled the Nordic region to go from a developing country culinary-wise to a developed country culinary-wise. And that's a project we are undertaking these years and then finishing in 2019.
>
> (Interview with Mads Frederik Fischer-Møller, August 2017)

As the NCM's senior advisor acknowledged:

> "Nordic" as a label is not necessarily that interesting within the Nordic region but it's very, very interesting outside of the Nordic region, so

> that's why we are focusing on networks between the actors that have internalized the principles… outside we say, "the Nordics!" and we are financing a food festival in New York called the "Nordics".
>
> (Interview with Mads Frederik Fischer-Møller, August 2017)

The Nordic Council of Ministers employs a number of mechanisms in pursuing more visibility for the Nordic food ideas, some of which involve resourceful use of connections and opportunities.

> … it was very, very fashionable in policy to think about "what are then the next businesses? Where are the next business opportunities?" and try to see "what can be the next?" and then … we decided, "okay, food and creative industries". Sometimes … it's also a matter of funding. If there is somebody doing a program on creative industries and we could say food and creative industries and then fund part of our project with that. We've believed in food and creative industries, but we also liked to double our funding so that's one way of doing it. Then food and public diplomacy … was a core idea by Claus Meyer and he has been critical of the way food business operators, but also governments, were using, or not using, food to communicate the values of the Nordic region. So it was just an idea exactly on this, we need to be better to use food as a means of communicating our values when we are representing the Nordic region internationally or just when the Danish minister is having a meeting, the topics of the meeting should be communicated through "what's on the plate".
>
> (Interview with Mads Frederik Fischer-Møller, August 2017)

Overall, theorizing for universal application involves a high level of abstraction to ensure sufficient generality of the principles advanced (Strang and Meyer, 1993). This higher level of abstraction may lead to removal of certain Nordic specificities to enable a wider appeal.

Developing Nordic cuisine and food into a template for wider impact, independent of the context in which it is applied, could raise concerns about loss of authenticity. For example, Evans and Astrup Pedersen (2015) from the Nordic Food Lab have cautioned that 'any cuisine which gains an audience outside of its birthplace' is destined to become 'essentialized, tokenized even, emptied of its historical context, rendered internally consistent and packaged neatly for foreign consumption,' which comes with 'precocious exporting.' Yet, while such concerns are valid and need to be accounted for in processes of translation, they refer to the cuisine itself rather than to an overall food model that 'packages' a wider set of ideas and practices, particularly those involving food policies, that, despite being conceived in Norden and with Nordic values, can have wider appeal. Hence, while theorizing for universal application is the approach that can potentially have the widest impact due to its abstraction, it needs the other two translation approaches – localizing and transposing – to support the authenticity and social consciousness of the Nordic food model. Below, we briefly discuss this connectedness between approaches.

Developing a Nordic food model across translation approaches

Each of the three approaches discussed in the previous section, along with NNC itself and the overall Nordic model, contributes in different ways, by providing different value, to the shaping of a Nordic food model (see Figure 12.1). NNC, with its creativity and innovation, and its ongoing interest for external, non-Nordic audiences, provides visibility for a Nordic food model. The localization gives it a wider local grounding and is a source of (Nordic-based) authenticity. The transposition shows how Nordic culinary ideas can travel to and have an impact in a context that is distinctively different from the originating one, yet resonates with NNC's core ideas of a locality-based culinary renewal. It adds versatility to the Nordic food ideas and to the model in which these ideas are encapsulated. The theorization reveals how localized and transposed ideas can become of relevance to policymaking and have a potential global impact if abstracted and packaged together by skillful translators, thereby contributing universality to the model. In addition, Figure 12.1 suggests that the overall Nordic model is also relevant for the shaping of a Nordic food model, providing it with legitimacy, as well as with some of its foundational values.

Neither NNC nor the overall Nordic model or any of these three approaches alone are sufficient for transforming an elite cuisine into a food model with wider impact. Rather, the making of such a model needs these

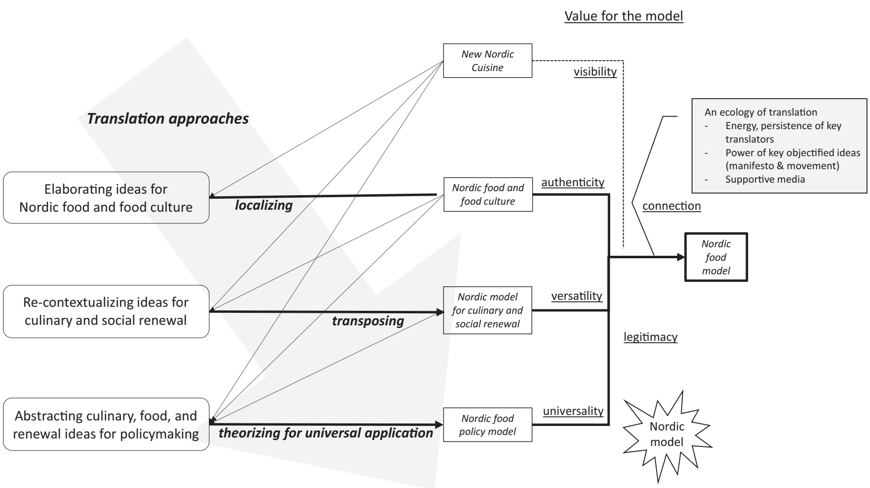

Figure 12.1 Developing a Nordic food model across translation approaches.

and possibly other approaches to connect and operate in a distributed way across contexts and audiences through an ecology of translation 'of continuously interacting translators, translations, and idea variants' (Wedlin and Sahlin 2017; Nielsen et al., 2021: 5). These translations make it possible to bring together the different innovations and make them visible as a Nordic food model, thereby extending the impact of the original culinary, food, and food policy ideas. In addition, each of these approaches tends to bring further innovation through their local translation, as revealed in the case of transposition (Boxenbaum and Battilana, 2005).

In particular, the ecology of translation (Wedlin and Sahlin, 2017; Nielsen et al., 2021) that supports the traveling of these ideas involves three key elements. The first is *committed translators*, such as gastronomic entrepreneurs like Claus Meyer, or bureaucrat entrepreneurs, such as those from the Nordic Council of Ministers, whose energy and creativity sustain and continuously generate new instances of Nordic culinary, food, and policy translations. In that way, they ensure an ongoing stream of translation attempts that keep the ideas in motion and thus keeps them current, associated with continuously relevant concerns. The second is *powerful artifacts* – key objectified ideas – such as the Nordic cuisine manifesto and Nordic food movement that are used to give meaning and legitimate the translations. They continuously appear in the background in all three approaches and are continuously invoked across translation attempts: as an ideology to guide food practices locally, as a tool to emulate in the renewal of the Bolivian cuisine, and even as element of support in food policy. Further, *highly visible exemplars*, such as Noma and Gusto, provide concrete practices to emulate and powerful stories that travel but also to make the impact of Nordic food ideas highly visible, especially as such exemplars attract strong international media attention. Last, while the objectified idea of a Nordic food movement is diffuse and not easily visible, it gives energy to translation by pointing out that it is a movement and not a model.

The third is *the supportive media* that ensures attention to the different aspects of the model, connects them, and gives sense to the diverse and disperse ideas. As the communication manager of the New Nordic Food Program II, Lindfors (2015: 14) acknowledged in the program's final report: 'New Nordic Food has created a strong network of Nordic and international food journalists and bloggers. This is supported by communication cooperation with Nordic Council of Ministers, national food actors, and the media.' Overall, '[w]hat the New Nordic movement is trying to export is not a single cuisine, but an all-encompassing philosophy of food' (Morris, 2020).

Concluding remarks

At the outset of this chapter, we asked how a new culinary innovation became a Nordic food model in the process of its translation, 'reshaping the food world' (Morris, 2020). What we outlined and illustrated in response to this question were three distinctive approaches to how NNC was translated and, in that, contributed to the shaping of a Nordic food model with wider impact in relation to food culture, culinary renewal, international development, and food policy. These approaches are by no means exhaustive of the complex diffusion and translation dynamics of NNC. Other approaches to translation may be unraveled – and are worthy of further exploration – for example, in contexts translating NNC from a regional-level culinary concept to national food models (such as Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish) that also involve agriculture and the food industry.

Further, an account of the translation of NNC and its evolution into a global culinary trend (e.g., Moskin, 2011; Petruzelli and Savino, 2014; Khaire, 2017) and a food model cannot be complete without accounting for the role played by an increasingly visible and popular general Nordic Model. Although this Nordic Model is still mainly associated with labor and welfare, in the period that NNC developed (2004–2018), it continued expanding its meaning in a range of cultural contexts, such as design, literature, TV, fashion, or lifestyle (illustrated, for example, by a variety of exhibitions and media publications referring to 'Nordic cool'). This was also a period when the Nordic Council of Ministers established programs for regional branding; the Nordic countries developed their own programs of nation branding when they were ranked as top achievers in different indexes and presented as supermodels in international meetings and media (World Economic Forum, 2011; The Economist, 2013). Einar Risvik (2015: 9), the chairman of the working group New Nordic Food II, connected the 'innovation force' of the food sector and food culture to the future of the overall Nordic welfare model:

> The complete value chain for food is already the biggest value-creating sector in all Nordic countries, and with an increasing turnover, the number of employees will help to secure a strong contribution to the welfare of the countries. The consequence is that we need to see our food sector and our food culture as a major innovation force, worth maintaining in order to afford the future of the Nordic welfare model.

Our study suggests that the general Nordic model not only provides a source of initial values and meaning to the specific (culinary) innovation, as well as legitimacy to it and to the Nordic food model, but also gets enriched and reinvigorated by this culinary innovation, as the latter expands and consolidates into a Nordic food model in translation.

Of course, one may question whether the popularity of a Nordic food model, along with other specific Nordic models, is just a passing fashion or has a staying power. It could be argued that as long as the Nordic economies are doing well and are seen as examples of a more equal and progressive kind of capitalism, the interest in other aspects of the Nordic countries, such as their cultural models, will prevail. The positive connotations associated with the term *Nordic*; the still-active gastro-entrepreneur Claus Meyer and the still visible Noma as an exemplar of cutting-edge innovation in Nordic culinary practice; and the sustained promotion by the Nordic Council of Ministers are all clearly important for sustaining NNC's trajectory from innovation to impact. Rather than a coordinated strategic effort, however, it is the distributed and rather loose efforts by these diverse actors involved in translating NNC as a flexible concept on their own terms and imprinting different meanings on it that have shaped it as a Nordic food model, sometimes driving it in different directions. This chapter is an open invitation for further investigation into the role of ecologies of translation in transforming innovative ideas into impactful models.

Notes

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13 The creation of a regional brand

Scandinavian Design

Mads Mordhorst

Introduction

How are narratives of the Nordic Model constructed, circulated, and with what impact? This chapter addresses these questions by examining ‘Scandinavian Design’ using Sweden and Denmark with IKEA and Danish Modern specifically as representative of this design concept. It follows two circulation processes. The first is the narrative constructions of the model between ‘the outer non Nordic world’ – mainly the United States – and the Nordic region. The second process is how they were recirculated in and among these two Nordic nations.

I argue that ‘Scandinavian Design’ as a concept did not originate in the Nordic states but was ‘invented’ in the United States. It was constructed and filled with meaning that to a greater extent addressed target groups and ideas in North America rather than the Nordic region itself (Marklund and Petersen, 2013). When the concept was imported to the Nordic countries afterward, it was circulated and transformed through new symbolic meanings linked to the individual national Nordic narratives and was then returned or re-exported as brands with new meanings. This is thus a process of co-production where symbolic values of the nations are linked to design products and manufactures and add value to both the nation and producers. For example, IKEA is organically linked to the values of Sweden.

Contrary to the narratives of the Nordic model, then, which claim a common Nordic unity and identity, the national narratives were not created in harmony but often in contrast to each other as part of the individual nation-building processes going back to the nineteenth century. In Denmark, it is linked to ideas like small-scale production, anti-industrialization, process, and craft (Mordhorst, 2014). In Sweden, on the other hand, it is linked to price, and industrial and large-scale production.

The chapter combines a narrative approach with a branding perspective. A brand is created through images and narratives that differentiate one from one’s competitors, with the effect of making the product attractive in the eyes of the consumer or target groups (American Marketing Organization, 2015). In the branding literature there is a tendency to conflate the strategic

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marketing efforts of branding and the brand. In praxis most brands do not emerge as the result of strategic branding efforts but as unintended side effects. It is logical to perceive nations as brands, but their brand images have not been created through branding campaigns; they are an outcome of centuries of nation-building processes (Mordhorst, 2019). One example is the nineteenth-century national romantic construction of the Viking, which today has transformed into an icon that is often used to brand Nordic countries, as well as products from the region. In contrast to Hansen (2010), who has analyzed the processes as strategic co-branding between Danish design and the Danish nation, this chapter claims that the concepts of 'Scandinavian-' and 'Democratic Design' mainly emerge as unintended effects in the circulation and then become brands that in the long run have positive outcomes for companies and the nation. This can be analyzed through the circulation of narratives. Narratives fill out the brand with semiotic signs and connotations, but as with the distinction between brands and branding, there can be a difference between the sender of the narrative and the performative effects the narratives take on when they are received and circulated.

I have chosen chairs as the analytical objects and exhibitions as the central contextual framing of the narratives. Chairs are seen as the icons of furniture design and have played a key role in the Scandinavian modern design tradition (Dybdahl, 2017: 28; Olesen, 2018: 12). I have more explicitly chosen a Danish and a Swedish chair, both of which are framed as 'iconic' due to their long histories and statuses in exhibitions in Denmark and Sweden today. The chairs are the Danish Wegner 'Model 503' or 'The Round Chair,' later dubbed by the Americans as 'The Chair' from 1949 (Dickson, 2017: 80) and the Swedish IKEA chair 'Poem' from 1976, renamed to the more Swedish sounding 'Pöeng' in 1992 (Budds, 2016).

The analytical research fields are exhibitions and museums. These are sites where the chairs are transformed from furniture to exhibits and linked to broader cultural contexts. Exhibitions are combinations of exhibits, the exhibition texts, the design of the exhibition, and the museum housing the exhibition. In combination, this creates the 'material exhibition.' But exhibitions are also sites where different stakeholders and networks contribute to the exhibitions with their own interpretations. You have the senders like curators, designers, craftsmen, their industries, museums, and exhibition halls. You also have the receivers like visitors, tourists, and consumers, and finally, you have the communicators such as design experts and lifestyle magazine reviewers. All take part in creating, transforming, and circulating the narratives with different purposes. Concepts like 'Nordic,' 'Scandinavian Design,' and 'Democratic Design' are thus abstractions, which get their meaning through ongoing circulations and exchanges between different contexts and shareholders.

This chapter follows this process in four different exhibitions. In order to track the origin for the idea of Scandinavian Design, I begin with the World's fairs held in the United States from Philadelphia in 1876 to New York in 1939. After that I turn to the exhibition 'Design in Scandinavia' that traveled around North America between 1954 and 1957. I then shift to two contemporary exhibitions in Denmark and Sweden. The first is 'The Danish Chair – An international affair,' which opened as a permanent exhibition at the 'Design Museum Danmark' in the fall of 2016. The other is the IKEA museum in Sweden, which opened in the summer of 2016. The analytical focus in the reading of these exhibitions is to see how the narratives that were created in the United States are reconstructed and 'nationalized' today in Sweden and Denmark.

The focus is thus on the narrative construction of the concepts and does not claim to be a contribution to the design history of Scandinavia but relies on others' research. The Danish historian Per H. Hansen has extensively analyzed the Danish furniture industry in Denmark and how it strategically has been branded and narrated in Denmark as well as in the United States (Hansen, 2010; Hansen, 2018). Jeff Werner has done the same from a Swedish perspective (Werner, 2008). The Norwegian art historian Ingeborg Glambek has analyzed Nordic design from an external perspective but with a more national and European perspective (Galmbek, 1997).

Scandinavian Design

The Norwegian art historian Kjetil Fallan has made a distinction between Scandinavian Design as an actor's category, where it describes how actors in different cultural and historical contexts ascribe meaning to concepts, and Scandinavian design as an analytical category, being a concept that describes a specific empirical phenomenon (Fallan, 2012: 2). This chapter follows the first understanding, focusing on the concept of Scandinavian Design as socially constructed.

From the 1950s onward, Scandinavian Design has been a brand that has been profitable for Scandinavian companies in branches like fashion, furniture, architecture, and interior design. In the last decades, it has also been used as co-branding new branches like the New Nordic Cuisine, and Nordic welfare services. Checking Wikipedia – a source that might be problematic to use in regard to facts, but a good source if you try to trace a public narrative – you can read:

> **Scandinavian design** is a design movement characterized by simplicity, minimalism and functionality that emerged in the 1950s in the five Nordic countries of- Finland, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Denmark… The ideological background was the emergence of a particular Scandinavian form of social democracy in the 1950s…. Many emphasize the democratic design ideals that were a central theme of the movement and are reflected in the rhetoric surrounding contemporary Scandinavian and international design.
>
> (Wikipedia, 2017)

Wikipedia thus places the concept in time and space. It has its origins in the Nordic countries and the time is the 1950s, and a 'from below' perspective is indicated when Scandinavian Design is characterized as an active social movement. This transforms the concept from a geographical and regional indicator to semiotic signifier for common values like simplicity, minimalism, and functionality, and the concepts of 'democracy' and 'democratic design.' It is these more diffuse and slippery concepts of values which are in the center of analysis in particularly how 'democratic' emerges as a connotation for Scandinavian design and transforms it into a concept of its own by becoming 'Democratic Design.'

North America: the origin of Scandinavian democratic design

Americans were the drivers in establishing Scandinavian Design and associating it with democracy. It was a process dating back to the late nineteenth century and culminated in the 1950s with the exhibition 'Design in Scandinavia.' Before the WW II, the development was centered on Sweden, alongside a broader narrative of the authentic and exotic north. After the war, Scandinavian Design became more associated with Denmark and a democratic vision building on general concepts and similarity between the United States and Scandinavia rather than on difference.

Sweden as the exotic north

From the late nineteenth century, Sweden was more active than any of the other Nordic countries in promoting their national art and design in the United States. A vehicle for advancing this was the World's fairs – Philadelphia 1876, Minneapolis 1887, Chicago 1893, St Louis 1904, San Francisco 1915, Chicago 1993, and New York 1939 – where Sweden was represented with national pavilions including special exhibitions of art, design, and craft. None of the other Nordic countries had a similar representation.

The Swedish art historian Jeff Werner has thoroughly analyzed the art and craft exhibitions at the World's fairs from a Swedish perspective (Werner, 2008). I will focus on how the exhibitions were received and reviewed in the US media and how through this Sweden became the incarnation of Scandinavian images and values.

A recurrent theme in the reviews is the making of Sweden as exotic and authentic. At the first World's fairs, this was done through national-romantic narratives portraying Sweden as a historically traditional rural society celebrating the peasants and peasant life (Norton, 1877: 87). In later exhibitions, this authenticity was supplemented with narratives of the north as having a specific climate, light, and race that differentiated the Swedes and the region from others. As a reviewer of the World's fair exhibition in Chicago 1893 wrote in the *Evening Post*:

> As we move further north among the nations of Europe the art become fresher, brighter and perhaps more original. Something of the northern winds and lights, blue skies and waters, clear atmospheres comes to us,

> and we begin to feel that far from the madding crowd of Paris there may be a new race with a new art.

To emphasize this unique and exotic character the review concluded: ‘The only hope for the northern painting lies in remaining northern painting and nothing else. Cosmopolitanism would utterly ruin it’ (Werner, 2008: 105). The national concept of Sweden is thus translated into the broader categories of ‘northern’ (climate) and ‘race’ as a positive and unique brand. Nordicness as a racial category became a trope in subsequent years so much so that Nordic connoted the blond race (Lunde, 2012), often with the use of the romantic conceptions of the Vikings. In a review from the fair in St Louis, 1904 you could read:

> It is as if the Swedes could not restrain themselves, and had been under a sort of necessity of filling the art cup to the very brim until it should run over. A sort of violence and fury impel them; common language will not suffice; they want to shout and hurrah; they want to cover leagues of canvas; they want to invent pigments more brilliant than any ever existed. All this is truly northern; truly Scandinavian, and a little barbaric; but is it tremendous! Ponderous! Grand!
>
> (Werner, 2008: 113)

Swedes are not just Swedes then; they incarnated the wild Vikings and were thus ‘truly’ northern and Scandinavian and able to express those values in their art and design. The use of the Viking mythology was useful in bridging past and present and the regional global.

The images served as brand driver and as such were excellent in prompting Swedish art and design. In 1927, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (MoMA) held for the first time ever in the United States a one-country exhibition of industrial art. At the opening of the exhibition, the museum’s president Robert W. de Forest elaborated on how Sweden was both a monarchy and a democracy and that this is ‘notable in the character of its exhibits, and in their installation. It is democratic in that the objects displayed, beautiful as many of them are, are as rule not costly but are appropriate even to humble homes’ (Werner, 2008: 255). The same narrative was to be found in the exhibition catalog’s introduction: ‘The quality of this decorativeness derives partly from the deeply rooted democratic tradition in Northern peasant work of simple masses.’ (Werner, 2008: 256). The introduction was written by the main curator at the museum, Joseph Brick, and links Sweden and the rest of the Nordic region to the concept of democracy connoted with affordability, humble homes and to the masses. The exhibition was a success and continued as a traveling exhibition throughout the United States and Canada.

Sweden strategically used this successful outcome as part of marketing their own fair, The Stockholm Exhibition 1930, where the architecture of the pavilions was modern and functionalistic, just as the exhibited Swedish furniture branded Sweden as a modern society and Swedish design as 'Swedish Modern' (Glambek, 1997: 80ff). An additional marketing tactic was to invite 14 selected American journalists for free to the exhibition and an excursion around Sweden. This again created positive articles in the American media. One of the invited journalists was Marquis Child who in 1936 published *Sweden: The Middle Way* (see also Chapter 4 by Carl Marklund and Chapter 5 by Andreas Hellenes), which was perhaps the most influential contribution to the positive image of Sweden and Scandinavia, particularly his comments on the cooperative movement and housing policies, in the United States (Child, 1936).

That these elements for a part of the American public had become linked with the concept of Swedish Design became evident when Sweden, as a part of the preparation to the World's fair in New York, 1939, surveyed Americans on their perception of Sweden. When asked what they associated with 'modern' and 'Sweden,' a majority answered modern furniture, cooperative societies, and housing policy. This fitted the theme of the fair, which celebrated the 150 years anniversary of America and had the theme 'Building the World of Tomorrow.' The world of tomorrow was illustrated by the central part of the exhibition, the utopian city 'Democracity' (Glambek, 1997: 108). There was in other words an almost perfect fit between the New York fair and Sweden as incarnating Nordic and Scandinavian values as modern and democratic.

Jeff Werner has shown that the concepts of 'Middle Way' and 'Middle Class' merged with the concept of Swedish Modern during the 1930s, and that this was central to the export success for Swedish Modern in that decade:

> Swedish design could in the interwar time benefit from being rewritten to a middle way between reactionary conservatism and radical modernism. The design was at the same time narrated into a discourse on social welfare and beautiful everyday goods for all.
>
> (Werner, 2008: 3)

Scandinavian design as democratic hominess

Positive images of Sweden as a model society and utopia were changed by WW II, however, particularly due to Swedish politics of neutrality during the war that in the United States was seen as acquiescence to Germany. This created an opening in the US design market for Danish Design. The Danes saw an opportunity to take over the former Swedish position and tried to persuade MoMA to host an exhibition on Danish modern furniture along the lines of the earlier Swedish Exhibition in 1927. Danish Design did get attention in America in the postwar period; there was an interest in Wegner and his chair design which, in 1950, was praised in a full page review in the magazine *Interiors*, and it was after this that it got the name

'The Chair' (Olesen, 2018: 330). Despite this emerging fascination, however, MoMA's answer to the Danes was that it was not interested in an exhibition that only focused on Danish design, but perhaps a broader one that had Scandinavia as its theme would have greater appeal. The Danes were annoyed by the suggestion of a common Scandinavian exhibition. They were interested in promoting their own products and found that they could easily fill out an exhibition themselves. MoMA, on the other hand, pursued the idea of a common Scandinavian exhibition, and its director of Industrial Design, Edgar Kaufmann Jr., went on a tour in 1948 to Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland to investigate the possibilities for such an exhibition. Kaufmann was thrilled by the design, but in the end, he did not find that there was enough quality for an exhibition at this time.

In Scandinavia, MoMA's and Kaufmann's pressure spiked an idea of a cooperation between the Nordic countries. If the Americans had an idea of a common Scandinavian design style and tradition, then why not address this and start exporting it (Glambek, 1997: 118)? By the end of 1951, a plan emerged at a meeting in Copenhagen with participation of the national associations of craft, applied art, and design from Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. The idea was to join forces and establish a traveling exhibition that would tour through North America. This objective was endorsed by other influential people in America such as the editor for the interior design magazine *House Beautiful*, Elizabeth Gorden, who pushed for a Scandinavian design exhibition in America (Guldberg, 2011), and during the 1950s, the terms Scandinavian Modern/Scandinavian Design subsequently replaced the national connotations as the central concept (Werner, 2008: 344).

These Nordic countries had different opinions on the content and framing of the exhibition. The Swedish delegation focused on the commercial perspective in a common exhibition, while the Danish delegation emphasized 'the importance of showing the differences in the design cultures of the Nordic countries' (Guldberg, 2011: 48). Nevertheless, agreement was achieved and 'Design in Scandinavia' (Remlov, 1954) opened with over 700 exhibits. Subsidized by the Nordic governments, the exhibition traveled from 1954 to 1957 to 24 cities around the United States and Canada and was visited by 658.264 people (Guldberg, 2011). The impetus behind the exhibition was to boost the export of the individual national design branches under the umbrella of Scandinavian Design, but this was just a part of the strategy. All four countries supplemented it with cultural events, marketing campaigns, promotions for national goods, and propaganda for their nations and ways of living.

'Design in Scandinavia' contributed to filling out the concept of Scandinavian Design as democratic. In the exhibition catalogue, Scandinavian Design was narrated as an expression of the core of Scandinavian history, values, and identity, while differences resulting for example from the long tradition of warfare between the Nordic nations, as well as the image of the wild Viking, were toned down (Remlov, 1954: 11–20). American reviews of

'Design in Scandinavia' were positive. In a narrative perspective, it had a plot that stressed a familiarity between America and Scandinavia on the level of fundamental values, and at the same time, it made the Scandinavian Design goods expressions of those values more ideal and authentic. A review in the *New York Times* found that the high quality of Scandinavian Design was rooted in history, and the 'inspiration for their design is based on centuries of high standards of living' which is what one can see in the 'sophistication and high degree of culture that characterize the best of Scandinavia's craftsmen and architects' (Hansen, 2018: 263). The lifestyle magazine *House Beautiful*'s review argued: 'Why are the home furnishings so well designed, and so full of meaning to us? Because they are so well designed and so meaningful for the Scandinavians themselves.' And to stress the link and the natural connection of meaningfulness between Scandinavia and the United States, the review stressed that this was because 'we are both deeply democratic people. Home is their centre – and people are the centre of their homes. Their design is human and warm. Therefore, it is natural, national, and universal.' (Glambek, 1997: 128)

There was also a narrative link to the political climate in the 1950s where the discourse on the international scale, framed by the Cold War and anti-communism, built on a dichotomy between the good democratic West and the totalitarian East. This was not the only way that democracy as a concept was filled out, as Hansen sums up the reviews of 'Design in Scandinavia':

> It is clear that the discussions and reviews in the American journals and newspapers for the most parts were based on a contraposition, between the rationalized USA and the Scandinavian countries, where the good craftsmanship, and focus on quality, function, simplicity and durability still were valuable elements.
>
> (Hansen, 2010: 88)

The design had elements that made it easy to create a narrative that bridged tradition and uniqueness with a focus on elements like wood being the dominant material and craftsmanship with modernity, rationalization, and simplicity. In the American narrative on Scandinavian Design, there is an implicit critic of American society and of 'corporate and industrial America.' In contrast to Scandinavia, this corporate America is unable to produce democratic, warm, honest, and human design. Further, it could be argued that the journals and newspapers that talked so favorably about Scandinavian Design mainly attracted upper-middle class academics and liberals living in cities on the East- and West Coast. They could thus use the narrative of Scandinavian Design as a democratic showcase to signify Scandinavia as an alternative democratic society.

If we compare the narrative of Scandinavian Design in the 1950s and the Cold War with the narrative of Swedish Modern in the 1930s in the aftermath of the Great Depression, a change has taken place. The class references and focus on the masses and affordability in the latter had been replaced by a narrative that focused more on the common history, craftsmanship, and aesthetic metaphors. 'Sweden the Middle way' had become 'Scandinavia the Third way,' a less political but still a very positive and idealistic narrative (Werner, 2008: 365). Instead of Scandinavian as once linked to the Swedish narrative, it had become an independent category. Seen as narrative the new Scandinavian story fitted better with the Danish national narrative than with the Swedish. This contributes to explain why Danish Modern replaced Swedish Modern in the American market.

From a branding perspective 'Design in Scandinavia' was a success that reached beyond the immediate commercial profits. What was launched as marketing and export campaigns for a specific industry ended up as a narrative of modern Scandinavia and Scandinavian values as an ideal model for the good life. To what degree this had any background in the reality of the Scandinavian countries at that time was not important for either the Scandinavian or the American audience. One reason why the exhibition became so successful was that Scandinavians did not need to construct, circulate, and market the narrative. It was constructed and narrated by Americans themselves and used as a positive magic mirror for national identity purposes. In this way, differences in style, design, and competition among the Scandinavian countries were placed in the shadow of the Pan-Scandinavian narrative.

Democratic design in Denmark: art, craft, and small scale

In 2016 'The Danish Chair – An international affair' opened as a permanent exhibition at the Design Museum Denmark (Olesen, 2018). The exhibition underlines the notion of Danish Design being linked to chairs, and indeed, Danish chairs have been well represented in the museum. For years, the Design Museum had the nickname 'The Chair Museum.'

Historically this has its background in the fact that the museum played an active role in the creation and dissemination of the narrative of modern Danish furniture design. The museum has as part of its purpose to promote and brand the Danish design industry. From 1939 to 1966, the Design Museum hosted the annual 'Exhibitions of hand-made furniture by members of the cabinet-makers guild of Copenhagen.' As Head of Research at the museum Lars Dybal expresses it:

> Throughout the epoch [1927–69] the Design Museum Denmark was the central stage for the taste and status for the cabinet-makers' annual exhibition… With a glance the audience or the reviewer of the press could get an overview of the results of the current trends between the furniture designing architects with their ambitious aesthetic energies and the joiner with their high work ethic and professional skills.
>
> (Dybdal, 2017: 61)

Even though the industry or designers have not been active in the creation of the 'The Danish Chair' exhibition, the Design Museum still sees itself as a part of the design network and has the promotion of Danish Design as a part of its purpose (Olesen, 2018).

The introduction to the exhibition is shown in a separate room and as with the rest of the exhibition it is minimalistic. The second part of the short introduction text starts with:

> In 1949, in Design Museum Danmark, the furniture designer, Hans J. Wegner presented the chair, which American journalists were to dub 'the chair.' It became the symbol of a giant Danish export adventure and a national brand known as Danish Design.

'The chair' is placed right next to the text in an unassembled version, which allows visitors to see every part of it. Hence, 'The Chair' is placed as the nexus of the exhibition and thus becomes its icon, and it is also the first chair mentioned and described in the book that serves as the exhibition catalog (Olesen, 2018: 10–11).

The main exhibition consists of the display of 110 chairs. Each chair has an individual display case and is presented more as art works than as furniture or as cultural-historical exhibits. However, text and information about the chairs can be found in posters, which can be pulled out off the side of the display cases.

A kind of contextualization is presented at the end of both sides of the exhibition hall where a video loop can be seen. Most of the time it shows cabinetmakers working on the chairs almost as if they are artisans working on an artwork, making it visible that the chairs are handcrafted. Other video clip parts show designers drafting the chairs.

In the main exhibition hall, 'The Chair' is placed in the center of the exhibition. When you pull out the poster, nearly half of it is devoted to a picture of John F. Kennedy sitting in 'The Chair.' The text explains that:

> The Chair became a symbol of Western democracy, because it was used in the first televised election debate in the United States between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon in 1960.

The picture of Kennedy sitting in 'The Chair' has been used extensively in the marketing of Danish Design. The semiotic link between the Danish chair, Kennedy, and democracy is a powerful cocktail. It was used as part of a narrative of a democracy represented by Kennedy and the growing upper-middle class in the United States, wherein Nixon represented the undemocratic villain (Figure 13.1).

In Denmark, the link between intellectualism, democracy, and 'The Chair' is still active. For example, do the Danish Prime Minister receive prominent guests in a room furnished with 'The Chair.' Consequently,

Figure 13.1 Photo of 'The Chair.'
Source: Wegner 1949 'The Chair' © Designmuseum Denmark.

Clinton, Bush, and Obama, among others, have all sat in 'The Chair' when visiting Denmark.

The Kennedy narrative is itself a development of the larger story of why Danish modern furniture is perceived as democratic. This is a national Danish narrative that is linked to Danish history, and it was developed before the international breakthrough of Scandinavian- and Danish Design in the 1950s. This narrative is represented in the video loops in the exhibition with the carpenters and designers. As Per H. Hansen has argued, it emerged in the interwar years when a network of designers and cabinetmakers joined together in creating a new design style (Hansen, 2018). They had to distinguish themselves from the international design styles like the Bauhaus and functionalism on one side, and traditional Danish furniture on the other. In other words, Danish Design represented a compromise between national history, international outlook, and traditional and new design. With regard to the traditional parts, the designers focused on 'natural' materials like wood and leather and emphasized the role of craftsmanship in the production. The new democratic furniture was handmade all the way through and used the design to build on values like simplicity, honesty, and timelessness. Perhaps as one of the most important elements, they were created in a 'democratic' process between the cabinetmaker and the designer, who were the heroes of the narrative.

This very much resonated with the broader Danish national narrative that had been at the center of the Danish nation-building process since the last half of the nineteenth century, building on the loss of Norway and Schleswig-Holstein. It was one that focused on smallness, historical roots, bottom-up processes, and anti-industrialism (Mordhorst, 2014). These were the values that filled out the concept of democracy in the Danish narrative (Figure 13.2).

As part of the narrative, those values had a negative counterpart that served as the villain – industrial production. Specifically, Bauhaus designers used 'unnatural' materials like plastic and metal, and unlike the Danish focus on craftsmanship and production in small workshops, you had large-scale production: 'Wegner's design offered a new modernist alternative to cold, rational modernism from Bauhaus. With its craft tradition, sensuous qualities and organic and more humanistic expression Danish Modern…softened the sharp, objective, cool modernism that Bauhaus represented' (Exhibition text Design Museum Danmark, Bauhaus 100 year, 2018).

As in most narratives, there are inconsistencies in the Danish Design narrative. One is that the high price did not fit with the idea of equality in an

Figure 13.2 Photo of 'exhibition hall.'
Source: 'The Danish Chair – An international affair' © Designmuseum Denmark.

economic sense. Most of the furniture was – and is – expensive and luxurious. For example, the cheapest version of ‘The Chair’ costs 4.700 USD. That makes it rather unlikely for ordinary Danish citizens to furnish their homes with ‘Danish Democratic Design.’ The price also distinguishes the Danish version of democratic from the Swedish present version of democratic design, which is exhibited at the IKEA Museum.

Democratic design in Sweden: IKEA

In June 2016, the ‘IKEA Museum’ (IKEA, 2016) opened in Älmhult, Sweden, a small village and birthplace of IKEA founder Ingvar Kamprad. The museum is situated in the same building which housed the first IKEA store that opened in 1958. The exhibition is divided into three themes: ‘Our Roots,’ ‘Our Story,’ and ‘Your Stories.’

The design and style are strikingly different from the Design Museum in Copenhagen. It displays the ‘IKEA style’ and signals that it addresses ordinary people with ordinary materials. These are typical for IKEA: for example, many of the display cases and exhibition floors are made of chipboard and plywood. But as is often the case with IKEA, the exhibitions are thought through in all details. Instead of placing the furniture as artworks, most of them are, just as in IKEA warehouses, made up as room interiors, and by this the lived life in the homes of families becomes the object of the IKEA museum.

The first part of the exhibition ‘Our Roots’ takes place on the ground floor. The narrative and plot expressed is very explicit. It is Sweden’s development from a poor and undeveloped nation to a modern social democratic welfare state, with IKEA being a driver in this transformation. The introductory text with the title ‘Our Roots’ starts with the sentence:

> At first poor and undeveloped, then, starting from the 1930s a country determined to become a modern egalitarian society. Two very different periods that in their own ways shaped the IKEA we know today.

The first part of the period is described as a hard time: ‘living in Sweden was a struggle, constantly battling hunger and poverty.’ The values of solidarity, entrepreneurship, and austerity are stressed in the texts: ‘they saved and scrimped, patched and mended. Nothing went to waste. Everything that could be reused got a new life. Only those who were thrifty and inventive succeeded.’

These were the values and virtues that helped to transform Sweden from a poor agricultural country to a modern industrial society, which is the heading of another text: ‘How would Sweden become a better country to live in? The Social Democratic government of the 1930s had a plan: It was time to sweep away “Dirty Sweden” with rationally constructed housing, improved hygiene and enlightened citizens. It was time to build

“The People’s home.”’ These homes would be furnished with IKEA, thus linking the materialization of the Swedish welfare society’s values with IKEA through this narrative.

This is a typical Swedish narrative (Rodell, 2014), where the industrialization of Sweden is the driver. The villain is old poor agricultural Sweden which kept the Swedish people in poverty. The heroes are a unity of the Social Democrats and ‘genius entrepreneurs’ like Ingvar Kamprad, who used his entrepreneurial skills for the Swedish nation. The receiver is the Swedish people, and what made it into the everyday life of reality is IKEA and their democratically designed furniture.

The concept of democratic design is elaborated in the next part of the exhibition ‘Our Story.’ While ‘Our Roots’ was placed on the ground floor, ‘Our Story’ is placed on the brighter first floor of the old warehouse. On the ceiling, there is a moving band with posters of hundreds of the most famous pieces of IKEA furniture from different times. Below the photo of the furniture, there is a short description in nearly the same format as the price tag you would see in the stores, with bold letters for the name and the price highlighted. So in contrast to the Danish narrative and exhibition, the rolling band reminds visitors that the furniture is not ‘timeless’ but an expression of its time; it provides association to an assembly line in an industrial plant, and the price tag shows that IKEA furniture is cheap because it is mass-produced.

The displayed interiors are typical for the different decades of IKEA’s history. Some are even glued to the ceiling, perhaps as a gimmick. In contrast to ‘Our Roots,’ this part of the exhibition uses humor as a part of the exhibition language, reminding the visitor that IKEA is also about fun and play.

One example of this is ‘Our Icons’ consisting of four items. One display case looks empty at first glance, but then the spectator can see a small exhibit: ‘The Allen key’ that is used to assemble IKEA furniture. So instead of placing one of their iconic pieces of furniture, they place a small tool. This is followed by the text: ‘The Allen key is a democratic little invention. It doesn’t care if you’re all thumbs or a master carpenter. All it asks of you is a little hand power and a few minutes of your time. The pay-off is your very own, self-bassembled pieces of IKEA furniture at a self-assembled price.’ The Allen key is thus made democratic because it makes the consumer a co-producer, which saves money for the consumer. This is again in sharp contrast to the Danish narrative, where the producers were craftspeople who through an artesian process made the furniture democratic.

The display case besides the Allen key has the title ‘Hip hip hooray!’ and exhibits a small model of the armchair Poäng that, according to the text, was designed to last a lifetime and now celebrates its 40th anniversary. Poäng is exhibited at different places in the exhibition, where different aspects of its success are highlighted. At the poster on the moving band, it is the low price of 55 USD – meaning that you can buy 85 Poäng chairs for the same price as one ‘The Chair’ (Figure 13.3).

Figure 13.3 Photo of 'Poäng.'
Source: Poäng © Inter IKEA Systems B.V.

The link between the IKEA version of democratic design and affordability is also a key issue in the largest exhibition text in 'Our Story' placed in the center of the hall and entitled *Democratic Design*. The text says: 'Well designed, functional, good quality, sustainably sourced and manufactured, and truly affordable. Five elements working together in the same product. This is democratic design.'

At this spot, museum guides on a bookable tour relay a short narrative about the IKEA version of how democratic design entered into IKEA as a core value: 'Ingvar Kamprad had been at the furniture fair in Milan, and seen the Scandinavian furniture. He came back frustrated and said 'Everybody can design a beautiful sofa to 50,000 Kroner [5,800 USD], but to make a well-designed sofa of good quality to the tenths of that price that is what makes it democratic' (Figure 13.4).

This is the closest you can come to a critique of the Danish version of democratic design without mentioning Denmark explicitly, and in this way stressing that democratic furniture should be affordable for most people in a society in order to be democratic.

Today it is a central element in the IKEA brand that all the furniture has Swedish names, but just like the blue- and yellow-colored logo and

Figure 13.4 Photo of democratic design.
Source: IKEAs visual image of 'democratic design' © Inter IKEA Systems B.V.

warehouses, this is a later invention because up until 1984, IKEA's colors were ironically red and white like the colors in the Danish flag (Kristofferson, 2014). Paradoxically this is a part of IKEA's internationalization and globalization that produced the national Swedish narrative around IKEA. The more global IKEA has become, the focus on 'national' and Swedish has become stronger on their brand and brand narrative, and as a part of this the focus on democratic design.

From Wegner to IKEA

We thus have two national narratives as to what constitutes 'Democratic Design' that on key issues contradict each other (Table 13.1):

The question is how can two narratives that in so many parts exclude each other be brought together in a united concept as Scandinavian democratic Design?

The Danish version of democratic design was, despite its price, an export success in the 1950s and 1960s, but in the 1970s, it began to decline. There are different explanations for this. First, the Danish modern design had not been able to renew itself. It was after all not 'timeless' and it fell out of fashion (Hansen, 2010). Other causes included the pop-cultural movement of the 1960s and 1970s that changed the idea of modernity and furniture design. Together with the economic crises in the 1970s, this further put pressure on

Table 13.1 Danish and Swedish versions of democratic design

	Design Museum *Danish democratic design* *1930–1970*	*IKEA Museum* *Swedish democratic design* *1970 and onwards*
Example	'The Chair' Price: 30,000 DDK	Poäng Price: 425 DDK
Production	Small scale and craft in cooperation between designers and joiners	IKEA, industrial large-scale production
Keywords why democratic	• Craftsmanship • Quality • Honest material • Eternal design	• Price • Quantity (cheap) • Environmentally responsible

high-end furniture, and it became increasingly difficult for the narrative to unify the price level with the concepts of democracy and equality.

Into this void, a renewed version of the Swedish/Scandinavian narrative from the interwar years on democratic Scandinavian design made a comeback, now with the Swedish furniture company IKEA as its central player. Sweden had regained its positive connotation as representative of a middle way, balancing social welfare with capitalism. This fitted the IKEA narrative on democratic design perfectly.

Until the decline of Danish Design in the 1970s, IKEA focused on the domestic market. But in this decade, the company also began to internationalize, rapidly expanding and becoming an ongoing success. There was still a demand for 'Scandinavian Design,' and the IKEA narrative and price was more in line with the time, had a broader target audience, and perhaps was more in touch with the development of the general Scandinavian brand. The narrative's correlation of the Swedish welfare state and Sweden and IKEA is one of the best examples in the world of successful co-branding between nation and company.

What happens if you make the counterfactual thought experiment and ask: could IKEA have been Danish? Denmark was in the 1950s and 1960s the frontrunner with regard to Scandinavian design, so why did IKEA not emerge in Denmark? If we look at the narratives, they are in contrast to each other at most of the key points, not just on the price issue but also on the values. The Danish narrative values 'small' and 'handcraft' while it devalues 'big' and 'industry' as evil and antidemocratic. This is in contrast to the Swedish narrative. In this perception, handcraft and small-scale production are elements that belong to the poor and negative past that Sweden was able to liberate itself from through the industrial revolution that resulted in IKEA and other large corporations like Volvo and Ericsson and made Sweden a rich welfare society. With this in mind, it would be unlikely that a company like IKEA could have emerged in Denmark because it would not have the legitimacy to brand itself as representative of Danish and democratic values. The national narratives are performative and have become moral and cultural institutions. In this function, the narratives legitimize what is seen as 'good,' 'national,' and 'democratic' business and what is illegitimate and un-national business.

Are there 'counter cases' that falsify my argument, like a Danish 'IKEA' or a Swedish 'Wegner'? A Danish counterpart to IKEA could be the Danish furniture company 'FDB-Møbler'/Coop Furniture. It was established in 1942 as a part of the Cooperative Consumer Society in Denmark, with the purpose of producing design furniture at an affordable price for the (middle class) people (Hansen, 2014). FDB-Møbler became a huge success in the postwar decades. Their best-selling chairs were mass produced to over 800,000 copies. But despite the demand for their high-end Danish design, they were not able to transform their national success into an export success and from the middle of the 1960s a decline started in the home market. Ironically, they closed production down in 1969 – the same year as IKEA began their international expansion by opening their first store outside of Sweden in Denmark. There are different reasons for the decline of FDB, but one of the main ones is that they did not succeed in exporting their brand because it was too linked to the national Danish cooperative narrative.

Likewise, you could argue that the Swedish furniture architect Bruno Mathsson is comparable to Wegner in Denmark. In some aspects, this is true. Mathsson became internationally famous and some of his chairs were bought by MoMA both as museum exhibits and as a part of the interior design of the museum. But he differs from the Danish architects in two aspects. First, his chairs did not become a commercial export success to the United States and second, he was not narrated as part of a national movement either in America (Werner, 2008: 350–351), as had happened in Wegner's case, or in Sweden where Mathsson was portrayed as a 'genius entrepreneur' (Rodell, 2014) in line with the Swedish national narrative (Mathsson, 2019). The counter cases, therefore, serve as verification of difference in the national circulation of design narratives rather than as falsification of the influence of the national narratives.

The design case study shows a process where the Nordic and Scandinavian stories are constructed outside the region and then circulated in the region and returned. While these processes can be said to have produced a brand, it would be misleading to see this as the result of branding or co-branding. Instead, they are the side effects of complex interactions. It also shows that the external construction is dominated by narratives on harmony and positive images while the internal Nordic circulation in contrast shows competition and strife between the national cultures. This has also been the historical pattern, wherein the Nordic states and nations have been created in a process where the neighboring countries have been the negative mirror and villain. This has created a region with similarities but also differences. Following this, it is difficult to see how a Nordic model could emerge among the Nordic countries themselves. As a broad brand frame, the Nordic and Scandinavia works well because they values and narratives that are produced outside the region, that has been picked up in the Nordic countries and re-exported. This has become the Nordic brand model used brands like Nordic Lifestyle, New Nordic Cuisine, Nordic Noir, Nordic Greentech, and so on, which then again have contributed to a positive reputation of the North.

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14 Conclusion and perspectives

Haldor Byrkjeflot, Mads Mordhorst and Klaus Petersen

The Nordic model is an ambiguous concept. It changes, it flows, and it emerges in new fields with new carriers and purposes. This insight is almost as old as research on the Nordic model, but in this volume, we have made the ambiguity our point of departure and integrated it as part of our approach. We sketch out this approach in Chapters 1 (Introduction) and 2. Here we stress how the idea of a Nordic model is not only a matter of balancing similarities and differences between the Nordic nation states, as is most often the case in previous research, but also a matter of studying the influence of external factors, and to link the domestic, Nordic, and international levels. While the 'Nordic model' thus for the most part has been used in the singular, our empirical studies in this volume have demonstrated it is a rather plastic and pluralistic concept.

In order to better understand the processes behind the transformation and developments of the Nordic models, we have throughout the book focused on the empirical *circulation*, *translation*, and *diffusion* of the models – and associated concepts like the Swedish- and Scandinavian models. This transnational perspective allows us to grasp how the model has been conceptualized, traveled, and changed over time and place and how it has entered into various spheres through different networks and actors with different semantics. The chapters in this book analyze different dimensions and layers of the model, showing that the routes and ways of how the model travel and circulate are non-linear, sometimes even paradoxical, and random. However, from a bird's-eye view, the empirical richness of the individual chapters allows us to point out some patterns and trajectories in the circulation-routes of the 'Nordic model.'

Our *transnational* perspective makes it visible that the Nordic model has, over time, become a globalized concept as well as a globalizing concept. It has become an integrated part of global discourses and surfaces a variety of places and with different directions of circulation. This clearly questioned the image of a one-way diffusion of ideas originating exclusively in the Nordic region. The chapters in this book demonstrate that the Nordic model(s) do not always emerge in the Nordic region or have the Nordic region as a part of the intended target audience.

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Several chapters analyze how Nordic models were strategically constructed and used by networks and stakeholders outside the Nordic region. In France, the Swedish model was mobilized in the aftermath of the student rebellion in 1966, in a way the Swedish social democrats first rejected, as an expression of the model (Chapter 5). In a similar way, the idea of 'Scandinavian Design' (Chapter 13) emerged in postwar North America. A more contemporary example is the use of references to the Nordic model in British healthcare policy over the last decades (Chapter 11), as part of a New Public Management agenda promoting privatization and marketization, in contrast to the historical Nordic traditions and experiences.

However, the routes of travel include more than a spatial and geographical perspective. The models also move between different spheres and diffuse into new fields and sectors. Mjøset (Chapter 3) discusses how the idea of a Nordic model traveled between the political and academic spheres and changed in this process. Other chapters discuss how the model has diffused to the cultural sphere (Chapter 13) and how the Nordic model is strategically mobilized as template and brand in the creation of the New Nordic Cuisine (Chapter 12).

Within academia, we find a diversity of ways to research the Nordic model, from ambitions for synthetic concepts to more social constructivist approaches. In politics, the search for the model is more of the normative kind – models may be ranked and compared, used as a benchmark or as justification for reforms or political programs. This includes also negative use, where reference to a model point out policies that are to be avoided (see, e.g., Chapter 4). As the models travel between the different spheres, they are translated or innovated by new actors and adapted to new purposes. When the ombudsman institution was imported into North America in the 1960s, it happened in a way rather ignorant of Nordic experiences (see Chapter 8). At first, the Nordic origin was regarded as a positive feature. However, as the first attempts of adoption failed, US promoters of the ombudsman changed to a strategy of domesticating, i.e., getting rid of all references to its origin and instead emphasized the cultural fit with American values. We find similar ways of domestication and translation taking place in the case of the Norwegian model of board quotas (Chapter 10). When this model was lifted to the EU-level, its source of origin was largely hidden (Inderhaug, 2018).

In these domestication and translation processes, we see a very diverse set of actors involved, such as international organizations, media, ranking and rating agencies, and not the least policy entrepreneurs, activist networks, and epistemic communities. Arguably, networks tend to become more complex over time with the growing importance of social media, global policy exchange, and new arenas for exchange between experts and policymakers. The expanded circulation of policy ideas imported from the Nordics reported in Chapter 9 on prostitution regulation or in Chapter 7 on development aid reflects the existence of such ecosystems of policy professionals and activists.

In some cases, we find rivalry between the Nordic countries about being acknowledged as the source for the ideas that are exported as 'Nordic.' In most cases, Sweden appears as the dominant point of reference (see Chapters 4–6). In the case of the board quota model (discussed in Chapter 10), it travels as a Norwegian model. The prostitution regulation model (discussed in Chapter 9), however, has been imported into five countries as a Nordic model although it is also only Norway, Sweden, and Iceland among the Nordics that have put into effect that model. In this way, we find examples where Nordic and national branding ambitions clash as well as examples where they go hand in hand and mutually reinforce each other (Chapter 13). However, from a national branding perspective, branding agents and public diplomats wanting to control the spread of the models are confronted with an impossible task since it is rather international activist and policy networks who may take control and choose the labels and models that serve their cause best.

In the field of culture, the Nordic model is framed as an aesthetic category, integrating elements such as landscape, light style, and historical narratives in definition, as often seen in the successful use of it in art, crime fiction, TV-series, and lifestyle products. These aesthetics elements are in the commercial sector often translated into brand images and utilized, as a means for profit, such as when it was used to create and renew Scandinavian Design (Chapter 13) or when high-profiled Nordic chefs wrote the manifest for the New Nordic Cuisine (Chapter 12). The use of the Nordic model as brand is, however, not limited to the commercial sector. Several contributions in the book exemplify how the Nordic model has been used as a brand for exporting political ideas and models. Chapter 4 analyses how diplomats use the Swedish and Nordic welfare models as a brand for promoting Swedish interests. Chapter 9 points out how Swedish and Norwegian political legislation was transformed into an international brand by feminist NGO organizations through the framing of it as the Nordic Model of prostitution regulation. Again, we see how the models are circulated and translated through actor networks representing different interests and purposes.

Held together, the historical case studies in the book indicate changes in the use of the Nordic model over time. Models such as the 'Nordic model of Prostitution Regulation' and the 'New Nordic Cuisine' are recent phenomena, while other models have lost in traction. Some models are sticky and have long lives, whereas other models are short-lived fitting only a specific moment in time. From the interwar period up to the 1980s, 'welfare,' 'Sweden,' 'progressive,' and 'social democratic' were often seen as the core of the model (see especially Chapters 2–6). This seem to have changed somewhat over the last few decades where some of the good old virtues have lost traction, and as pointed out in Chapters 4 and 11, the Nordic model(s) became more contested. This paved the way for new understandings of the Nordic model (as discussed above), at the same time as the classical images continued to carry some weight (see Chapter 2 on the duality of the Nordic model).

When we started this book project five years ago, it was under the impression that the Nordic models were gaining in attraction. The Nordics were dominating international rankings as the happiest, least unequal, most gender friendly countries (Stende, 2017). As argued by Kangas (2000), looking behind the Rawlsian 'veil of ignorance,' allows us to choose the country in which we want to live but without knowing the particular socioeconomic circumstances in which we will be living, the Nordic model would, indeed, be a rational choice. These impressions were backed by international attention. In 2013, *The Economist* declared the Nordic model as 'the next supermodel,' and prior to this, the 'Nordic way' was on the formal agenda of the 2011 Davos meeting (World Economic Forum, 2011). At a 2016 state dinner, President Obama proclaimed that the world would be in a better place if it followed the 'Nordic way' (The White House, 2016). Even in the cultural and lifestyle spheres, the Nordic model and 'Nordicness' were in vogue and high demand in areas such as Nordic living and lifestyle (Hygge), Nordic Noir, and New Nordic Cuisine.

Even though this was just a few years ago, the world has changed in rather remarkable ways. In 2016, the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union and shortly after Donald Trump was elected president in the United States. Populism is flourishing also in Europe, challenging the traditional way of doing politics. New movements such as Black Live Matters and MeToo have emerged on the scene and challenged established social and cultural orders. In 2015–2016, Europe experienced a refugee crisis, and in 2020–2021, the world is in the middle of the COVID-19 global pandemic. These are events that will shatter and shape the world around us in the coming decades – and they will also affect the Nordic model(s) and the international circulation of the model(s).

We do not claim to be able to predict the future in any detail. Far from that. However, we believe that the historical approach and the empirical case studies offered in this book can also serve as a framework for understanding more recent developments and changes. What is needed in a period with dramatic social and political change is historical sensitivity and an open analytical framework. Understanding the changing normative chartings of the 'Nordic model' – its dualities – for example, allows us to better understand the changing use of 'the Nordic model' in recent US political debates.

With the election of Donald Trump, the use of the Nordic model in US political rhetoric changed. Obama's positive narrative of countries 'who punch above their weight' and 'the Nordic way' (White House, 2016) stands in sharp contrast to Trump's rhetoric of the Nordic Countries as dystopian pictures of violent and dysfunctional socialist states. At a rally in 2017, Trump said 'look at what happened last night in Sweden,' falsely implying that there had been a terror attack due to Swedish asylum politics (Chang, 2019). Likewise, The Trump White House published a report, 'The Opportunity Costs of Socialism' in 2018 (Council of Economic Advisors, 2018), framing the Nordic countries as cases demonstrating that socialism leads to reduced living standards. In a similar vein, Fox News host Trish Regan characterized Denmark as a failed socialist state in line with Venezuela. However, this was not the only image of the Nordic model circulating in US political discourse. The progressive Democrat Bernie Sanders presented the Nordic model as a utopian model for the future of the United States during the primaries, where he used it as part of his program for 'democratic socialism.' As socialist ideas, in various forms, seem to gain some popularity especially among younger cohorts in the United States and elsewhere, protagonists and antagonists will revisit historical experiences such as the Nordic experience, and this might well trigger also renewed interest in the historical heritage within the Nordic region. As we demonstrate in the book, these dystopian/utopian stereotypes have been a recurrent figure in American political discourse since the 1930s (see especially Chapters 2 and 4). Renewed debate serves as a rich reservoir also for contemporary observers and public actors and, like history, often repeats itself.

Other kinds of circulation and diffusion of the Nordic model have emerged because of Brexit. The Scottish Government, being against Brexit, saw the Nordic region as a way for Scotland to dissociate itself from England in a post-Brexit time. In a 2017 report titled 'All points north,' the Scottish government launched the idea of a 'New North' including Scotland in the Nordic region due to the historical and political bonds between Scotland and the Nordics. Some have even argued that Scotland should leave the United Kingdom and seek to become members of the Nordic Council (Tømmerbakke, 2020).

In the Nordic region, the 2015 refugee crises and the 2020–2021 COVID-19 pandemic brought the regional cohesion into question. Both events have led to a reactivation of border control and even closed borders. Historically, open borders and the Passport Union between the Nordic countries have symbolized the unity of the region. However, as the caravans of refugees from Syria came to the national borders, the Nordic nations took very different precautions (Brochmann, 2017). Denmark, bordering to continental Europe, reacted with anti-immigrant policies and closing of borders to prevent refugees from entering the country. Internationally, this led to accusations of inhumane behavior, and Denmark faced the largest negative media storm since the 2005 Cartoon crisis (Mordhorst, 2016). Sweden took the almost opposite route, as its government perceived the situation as a humanitarian crisis and consequently saw it as Sweden's national duty to help the asylum-seekers.

Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic challenged the image of Nordic unity. Sharing the same basic goal of securing public health and sheltering the population from downturns in the economy, the Nordic countries show divergent responses to the pandemic, both in terms of strictness and the extent to which decisions have been delegated to agencies and the regional and local level. Here, Sweden is the odd country out, scoring significantly lower on strictness and higher on level of delegation. Sweden has avoided, to a large degree, the draconic lockdowns of schools, workplaces, and shops, which we find in the other Nordic countries. Also, the effects of the crisis differ in significant ways with Sweden's much higher death rate, which have led the other Nordic countries to temporarily closing borders to Sweden in order to avoid 'import infection.' This, along with disagreements among experts, has provoked tensions within the Nordic region and confusion in international media over what the 'Nordic model' signifies. The dominant image is Sweden as a highly problematic model, while the other Nordic countries are doing rather well.

As we demonstrate in the book, such internal Nordic divergence is nothing fundamentally new. However, it is hard not to see that the highly diverse reactions to such external threats might challenge the basic idea of a Nordic model. It has been argued that part of problems for Nordic cooperation and coordination lately relates to an overemphasis on the promotion of Norden as a brand rather than the earlier emphasis on dialogue and everyday cooperation (Strang, 2016). We find growing tensions around the use of the Nordic model as regional identity versus using it as brand. Illustrative in this respect is the heated debate around a SAS (Scandinavian Airline System)'s TV-commercial 'What is truly Scandinavian?' in February 2020, just before the Covid-19 crisis took off (SAS, 2020). The message in the controversial commercial is that things and traditions we claim to be of Scandinavian origin are rather international phenomena that Scandinavians brought back from their journeys across the world and then improved and re-exported as 'Scandinavian.' The commercial initiated a 'shitstorm' within the Nordic region where many found it disrespectful to Nordic heritage and history. 'What is truly Scandinavian?' thus initiated two processes of circulation: One as brand-image for SAS, and another as a part of an internal Scandinavian discussion of values and identity.

The changes we have seen in the world order in the last few years have thus far not led to a discontinuation or decline in the circulation and diffusion of 'Nordic models.' The models have been incorporated in new discourses, in processes where some of the already known layers of meanings have been reactivated, and new elements added. The ambiguity of the Nordic model, which makes it impossible to define once and for all, at the same time makes it a concept highly suitable for adaptions and survival. The pandemic, climate crisis, the quest for a more green economy, digitalization and artificial intelligence, increasing inequality (global and national), and the challenges of transnational governance are just a few of the major societal challenges that will change the world and the Nordic model. Clearly, it will not be the same as today, as the model of today, differs in significant ways from 30, 50, or 70 years earlier. Consequently, rather than asking what is the future of the Nordic model, it might be better to ask what is the future Nordic model?

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