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NORWAY

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DENMARK



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STOCKHOLM

COPENHAGEN

FINLAND

HELSINKI

Conference on
«Estonia AND the Nordic Countries
– Estonia AS a Nordic Country?»
August 23, 2016, Tallinn

«What is Norden:
Shaping of the
Nordic identity»

What is Norden?



- - ‘Norden’ is short for ‘the Nordic countries’. The concept of **Norden** replaced the term ‘**Scandinavia**’ *during the inter-war period* after Finland and Iceland gained independence. **Norden** is a historical region comprising what is today Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and their associated territories Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and the Åland Islands.
 - Although **Estonia** historically has been under both Danish and Swedish rule and also share close language- and cultural ties with Finland, the country would not – as of today anyway – be defined as part of ‘Norden’. In the 1930s a Baltic-Scandinavian Union was envisaged. A future Baltic-Nordic unity can be imagined, but for that maybe another term than ‘Norden’ has to be invented?
 - The adjective ‘*nordisk*’ (Nordic) was used by the political leaders of the five countries concerned at a conference in Copenhagen in 1939, to demonstrate the unity of their countries on the outbreak of war (Hilson 2008)

What is identity?



- Identity in the social sciences can be understood as **personal** self-affiliation and self-understanding as a member of a group or entity

National or Nordic identity?

- The five Nordic countries have taken **different developmental roads** dependent upon natural resources, socio-economic structures, and national political and cultural history. (Only Sweden and Denmark have a history of unbroken national and political independence).
- “The nation-states are the configurations through which the common Nordic identity manifests itself” (Østergaard 2002);
- “‘Nordic identity’ reveals itself only through the nation-states” (Østergaard, 1997)
- Nordic identity can probably primarily be perceived as consisting of the individual national-political identities: Danish, Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian and Icelandic (Tønnesen 1993).

Developing a *Nordic* identity?

Nordic identity can imply that **citizens** in the Nordic region subjectively feel affiliation to Norden, but also that **nations**, or rather their representatives (e.g. **governments**) identify their country as member of Norden

- Nordic identity-building and the political idea of a common Nordic ‘Scandinavia’ first appeared in student and literary circles **in the 1830s**, and **Scandinavianism**, or a Pan-Scandinavian political movement, emerged and was active in the mid-19th century, but collapsed;
- But: Since **late 19th century and early 20th century**: Inter-Scandinavian/Nordic collaboration of labour movements and professional organizations (e.g. lawyers; educationalists; economists) ; women’s movements; government statistical offices; parliamentarians; ministers;
- **Interwar-period**: ‘Norden’ as a concept; establishment of non-governmental *Norden* associations (*Foreningene Norden*) since 1919; increased cooperation at governmental level;
- **After 2nd World War**: establishment of Nordic political institutions and examples of common policies;
- An internationally unique, modern expression or symbol of **collective political** Nordic identity is the construction of a common embassy complex for the 5 nations in Berlin after the re-unification of Germany in **1990**.

Which factors have been conducive to the development of a Nordic identity?

- A number of **common features** contribute to explain inter-Nordic similarities conducive to construction of a Nordic identity at both societal and political levels:
 - all five Nordic countries are **small** states;
 - all are relatively **homogenous** in terms of ethnicity and religion (but historical minorities, e.g. Inuits; Sami people, and new minorities);
 - all have been dominated by the **Lutheran** version of Christianity since the 16th century; State churches were established;
 - historical role of the **peasants** as carriers of freedom and equality;
 - relatively long tradition of political **democracy**, high political participation; active civil society;
 - relatively strong emphasis on social **equality**; strength of egalitarianism;
 - since the 1930s: political cultures favouring **peaceful** solutions to political and social conflicts.

Since the 1930s: The Nordic countries as seen from the outside (and inside):

- «Sweden: The middle way»
(Marquis Childs, 1936)
- «The politics of compromise»
(Dankwart A. Rustow, 1955)
- «Scandinavian Democracy»
(J.A.Lauwerys, ed., 1958)
- «Consensual democracies?»
(Neil C.M. Elder, 1983)
- «Nordic Democracy»
(Erik Allardt et al., eds, 1981)
- «The Scandinavian Model»
(Robert Erikson, et.al., eds, 1987)



The birth of a “Nordic model”

“The very understanding of the Nordic countries as highly developed welfare states has become an integrated element in the national identities. It has also contributed to the idea of Norden’s unique position in the international context” (Christiansen & Markkola 2006)

- It was not until the 1960s that the term “**welfare state**” started to be used in political discourse, and associated with positive connotations
- It was not until the 1980s that the concept of a **Scandinavian** or a **Nordic model** became a household word
- The term “Nordic model” was coined and has survived in spite of different lines in foreign policy and national security since 1949 (NATO membership vs. neutrality) and European integration (EU-membership vs. non-membership); and in spite of differences in domestic policies
- *One model - with five exceptions? (And we can also observe references to “the Swedish model”, “the Danish model”, “the Norwegian model”, etc, in national political discourses)*

Building blocks of the Nordic model and Nordic identity

- (1) **The welfare state:**
characteristics of welfare institutions and policies
+
- (2) **Democracy:**
actual forms of governance
+
- (3) **Nordic cooperation:**
institutionalized inter-Nordic cooperation

(1) The welfare state:

..is about equalizing life chances!

STATENESS!

- Strong role for state/local government
- Emphasis on service provision
- Redistribution; progressive and relatively high taxation

UNIVERSALISM!

- Universal population coverage

EQUALITY!

- Limited poverty
- Egalitarian income distribution
- Gender equality

(2) Democracy

FORMS OF GOVERNANCE: CONSENSUAL!

- Electoral system: Proportional Representation
- Tradition of coalition governments; minority governments; opposition parties given a role; consensual style of decision-making;
- Tripartite relations: government-trade unions-employers' associations; Peaceful solutions to social and political conflicts;
- Participation of civil society organizations in politics;
- Broad political compromises on major reforms (taxes; pensions; social security; environment; energy; transport, etc)

(3) Nordic political cooperation

(examples; milestones)

- Nordic Social Political Meetings of politicians and senior civil servants since 1919;
- Nordic social statistics since 1946;
- Nordic Council since 1952;
- Nordic Council of Ministers since 1971;
- Development towards a common Nordic social citizenship: Nordic passport union (1952;1958); common labour market (1954) and convention of social security (Nordic Social Security Treaty - 1955)

Projected decline or persistence of «The Nordic Model»?

THE ECONOMIST (2006)

*„It is widely thought that the Nordic countries have found some magic way of combining high taxes and lavish welfare systems with fast growth and low unemployment...
...Yet, the belief in a special Nordic model, or „third way“, will crumble further in 2007“*

THE ECONOMIST (2013)



Still a «Nordic model»?

And source of Nordic identity?

- Stable democracies, continuous welfare reforms, but the model is fairly robust, because:
 - it has proved its *viability*
 - there exists a politically strong *normative commitment*
 - there exist *self-reinforcing effects* of institutions
 - there is a high level of *consensus* among main actors
 - there exists high level of citizen *trust* in institutions
- The „model“ is a basis for Nordic identity

Towards a Baltic-Scandinavian-Nordic Union and a Nordic-Baltic identity?

Kazys Pakštas : „Baltoskandijos konfederacija“ (1930s)

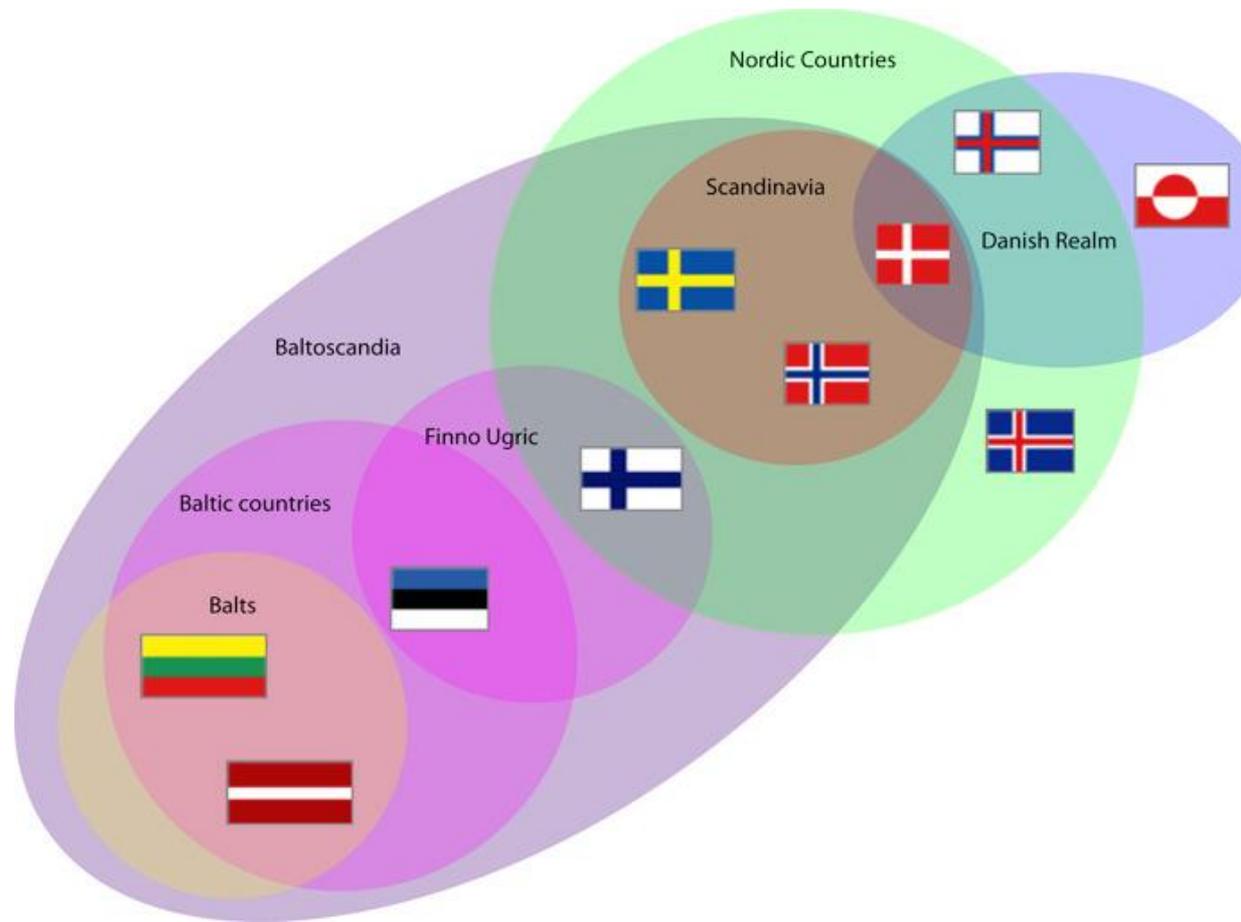
An idea to create a confederation of small states cherishing their languages, culture and traditions

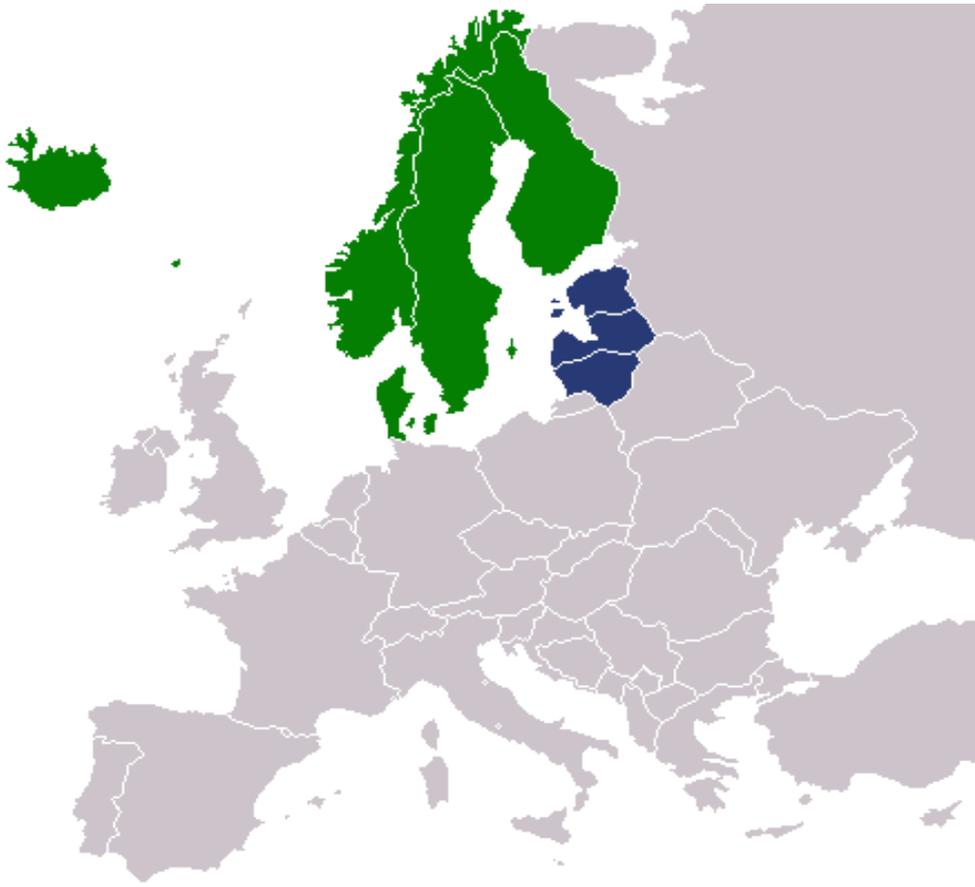
Nordic-Baltic Conferences 1935-38

- * Nordic-Baltic parliamentary cooperation since 1989
- * Nordic-Baltic Eight Group (NB 8) cooperation since 1992
- * NB 6 – collaboration in the EU

But – can the core component of current Nordic identity – the Nordic welfare model – become the basis for a common Nordic-Baltic identity?

OR must such a broader, common identity be built on other components?





**Tänu
tähelepanu
eest**

