

# THE NORDIC MODEL

## IN THE GLOBAL CIRCULATION OF IDEAS, 1970-2010

### Background

The recognition of new challenges in the twenty-first century, both global and local, has encouraged international attention to the Nordic countries as owners of a unique model applicable to a diverse range of issues, from moral hazards in neo-liberal economics to looming environmental threats. Attempts to study and adapt Nordic ideas reveal ongoing changes to the meaning of a “Nordic model” in the context of these new associations, but also necessitates an investigation of previous attempts to interpret and transfer Nordic models globally, as well as the processes and capacities of conceptual transformation.

### Theory & Method

The project undertakes a global conceptual history of the Nordic model(s), with a focus on the processes of circulation that altered or maintained the concept’s ideas and connotations. To achieve a broader appreciation of the Nordic model’s meanings in different contexts and at different times, the project compares its discussion and diffusion in three world regions—North America, Western Europe, and the Global South—over forty years. In tracking the spread of the Nordic model in two different language areas, French and English, the project takes an interest in the role of translation in conceptual construction and departs from an exclusive focus on metropolitan centers, thereby exploring the Nordic model’s circulation in previously unexplored linguistic and cultural spaces.

### Research Questions

- When did the concept of Nordic model(s) first emerge, and in what context(s)?
- How have the concepts’ uses and meanings been contested in three world regions—North America, Western Europe, and the Global South—and how have these changed over time?
- Why have Nordic model(s) generated this interest abroad from 1970 to 2010?

### Purpose

The project aims to envision and explore the Nordic model as a conceptual cluster defined by processes of circulation, investigating its emergence as a popular theoretical and heuristic idea, its changing historical definitions, and the impact of its translation and adaptation into other national and global contexts. We consequently examine the influence of the Nordic model’s construction, reformulation, and reification in social science for its global dissemination, as well as how ideational transmission in turn altered political spaces and required reimagining the Nordic model’s content and significance. The geographic and temporal scope of our project moreover encourages evaluations of the Nordic countries as contributing to and components of globalization, in which they produced distinct kinds of political and social institutions.

***“(...) Nordic capitalism has proved remarkably sustainable.”***

Pamphlet for the World Economic forum, 2011

***“(...) the Swedish model is neither Japanese nor American.”***

J. Servan-Schreiber, 1967

***“The core of politics is fault finding controversy, calling established truths into question. In this dynamic perspective the thesis of a Nordic Sonderweg, outside and within Norden, should be considered.”***

B. Stråth and Ø. Sørensen, 1997