5 Tracing the Nordic model

French creations, Swedish appropriations, and Nordic articulations¹

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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

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 (Hector, 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 Väckjö. '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, Bibliothèque 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: Arbetarrörelsens 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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