



# Green States in a Dirty World: 1975 and the Performance of Nordic Green Modern

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Following the 2015 United Nations (UN) agreement on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the five Nordic prime ministers began to promote their own visions of sustainable progress based on “Nordic knowledge and experiences” in May 2017.<sup>1</sup> For the launch of this initiative, called *Nordic Solutions to Global Challenges*, the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) invited journalists and stakeholders on a boat trip, providing an exquisite tasting menu of Nordic cuisine with clear nods to home-grown sustainability and of Nordic sustainable lifestyle more broadly. The initiative was merely the latest example of joint Nordic attempts to present the region and its institutionalized framework for transnational collaboration as a

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problem-solving model, pushing international solutions and close cooperation as a leitmotif in the Nordic countries' broader characterization as successful, sustainable, and socially just manifestations of capitalist modernity.

Whilst the (self-)perception and image of the Scandinavian<sup>2</sup> countries as "harbingers of progress"<sup>3</sup> was tied to the social democratic welfare states' concept of the so-called middle way between capitalism and socialism throughout both the Cold War and the twentieth century more generally,<sup>4</sup> today this Nordic projection of modernity has expanded to encompass a range of other attributes, of which environmental and climate policies are a significant part.<sup>5</sup> Events such as Sweden's hosting of the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm and former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland leading the World Commission on Environment and Development, which popularized the term sustainable development in 1987, have decisively contributed to political, societal, and academic perceptions of the Nordic countries as environmental pioneers.<sup>6</sup>

In more recent years, however, historians have increasingly challenged and unpacked such brands,<sup>7</sup> while sociologists of modernity have long emphasized that the individual nation states are subject to the same broad trends as one another despite protestations of national difference.<sup>8</sup> With regard to such attempts at nuancing the Nordic states as enthusiastic examples of modernity and progress, this chapter uses perspectives from the sociology of media and environmental and international history to critically unpack the role of environmental reform in the projection of Nordic values and ideals. It analyses how the reconfiguration of a social democratic Nordic model<sup>9</sup> into a Nordic environmental model was performed to both domestic and international audiences. This allowed for the creation of an image of a green modernity, one that not only incorporated environmental protection into welfare but made environmental protection itself the catalyst for technological innovation, political progressiveness, and economic growth.

Such self-image was and still is propagated at international media events, most prominently conferences which provide an international stage for the performance of green leadership. As a decisive initial moment in this ongoing performance, we unpack the 1975 Nordic Council (NC) conference for international organizations in Europe, held at Frostavallen in Sweden. Strategically entitled *A Regional Approach—A World Wide Responsibility*, it is here used as a case to discuss the emergence of Nordic

green performance. We argue that it is to be seen as the progenitor of the Nordic Solutions to Global Challenges and similar campaigns in contemporary politics which have come to define Nordic cooperation on the world stage in the present, such as the Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings.

Of particular interest is how the Nordics used the conference to place brand their region, and how it was framed by press coverage. The 1975 conference is thus analysed as a form of instrumental value construction with clear diplomatic and political goals which sought to disseminate Nordic environmental ideas and solutions to global challenges, while at the same time legitimizing Nordic claims to leadership and progressiveness. Since the conference was organized by the NC and thus embedded in institutionalized Nordic cooperation, it provides a clear example of the communication of a unified Nordic environmental modernity to the world.<sup>10</sup>

Building on archival material and publications from the Nordic institutions, and media coverage,<sup>11</sup> the view of the Nordic states as engaged in transnational dialogue within a broader international context also helps to challenge some of the methodological nationalism which can dominate discussions of the Nordics.<sup>12</sup> Previous research has tended to ignore the fact that, following the identification of domestic and international environmental problems in the 1960s, the Nordic countries jointly set out to construct, as we argue, a transnational green Nordic modernity motivated by economic interests and social modernization as much as by traditional conservationist attitudes and pressing material concerns such as transboundary air pollution.<sup>13</sup> The 1975 conference provided a framework within which the Nordic countries could construct a green regional identity by performing the core character of a Nordic green modernity, building on international cooperation and progressive solutions in terms of policies and technologies.

Shedding light on this key period of the 1970s is crucial to a contextualized understanding of the positioning of the Nordics in contemporary global environmental debates, and by extension their claims to leadership with seemingly progressive articulations of modernity both at home and abroad.<sup>14</sup> The growth in Nordic environmental branding at regional and global level helped to conceal and diminish domestic frictions not only over environmental policy, but also over the inherent contradictions of environmental and welfare state policies still present in the 2020s. By way of context, we focus firstly on the construction of images and imaginaries

of Nordic modernity, before turning to the staging of the 1975 conference itself. We then look at how the events of the conference constituted an intentional performance of a green modernity, and in the final section consider its legacy in contemporary Nordic climate messaging.

### IMAGES AND IMAGINARIES OF NORDIC MODERNITY

Despite different domestic industries and paces of economic development, historical research portrays the Scandinavian experience of modernity as a transnational and co-evolving process of broadly similar welfare states throughout the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> Following increasing societal and political attention to the disastrous environmental side-effects of economic growth since the late 1960s, pressure to respond to these environmental concerns, burgeoning globalization, and an energy crisis which threatened to paralyse the industrial engine of the welfare state provoked a crisis of legitimacy for Nordic modernity as a distinct project. This led to an ideological reformulation of welfare away from high growth rates and increasing consumption and towards environmental protection and immaterial values.<sup>16</sup> Characterized by a more general disenchantment with the politics of high modernity, this shift would in 1996 be reframed by Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson in terms of the green people's home (*det gröna folkhemmet*),<sup>17</sup> ecological rather than political modernization as a leitmotif.

This view is of particular interest because it shows the flexibility of the modernization narrative whereby all politics, rather than merely social democratic politics, occur within a reflexive awareness of modernization as a teleology. According to the historian Kazimierz Musiał, the “image of progressive Scandinavia as a figure of discourse and a figure of thought”<sup>18</sup> was attractive as a model by which “to demonstrate moral superiority in a world torn apart between economic, political and ideological extremes.”<sup>19</sup> Building on this constructivist approach, historian Jenny Andersson has furthermore suggested that the Nordic model(s) function as a guiding template in global conversations on how a better world might be possible.<sup>20</sup> In this regard the spread of ecological modernization and green market capitalism throughout the world situates the Nordics as typifying this template, helping to engineer a set of norms about the forms ecological modernization might take.<sup>21</sup>

While scholars have started to critically question this reconciliation of sustainability and continued growth in practical politics,<sup>22</sup> it is equally important to analyse the construction of this Nordic idea of green

progressiveness, its performance, and reproduction. Reproduction of green modernity must be seen within the context of extant discourses of the Nordic countries, especially Sweden, as emblematic of forward-looking post-war societies. From an international perspective, Sweden is often identified as a paradigmatic example of environmental modernity, with the political scientist Robyn Eckersley identifying it as an archetypal green state which has been able to integrate sustainability into the project of the high modern state.<sup>23</sup> As a consequence, discourses of modernization in Sweden have been hard to separate from notions of sustainability and movements towards an optimal state of modernity.<sup>24</sup> Indeed the performance of modernity has, as the geographer Allan Pred argued, always played a significant role in the projection of Nordic power around the world, interwoven with international expectations about the particular qualities of the Nordic countries.<sup>25</sup>

Such performance of Nordicness and proactive branding of the Nordic states in an economically profitable and positive way takes place within the post-political “global market of ideas.”<sup>26</sup> In this open market, practices of nation branding “[involve] a two-way dialogue between national imaginings and foreign images of the nation,” between internal visions and external perceptions.<sup>27</sup> Yet where scholars tend to distinguish between branding as a strategic action of the late twentieth century on the one hand, and public and cultural diplomacy during the Cold War on the other, Nordic actors of the early 1970s used both terms synonymously.<sup>28</sup> This hints at an interconnection between sincere emotional ties and values, and the promotion and selling of governmental policies as part of a broadly embodied practice that cannot merely be dismissed as governmental propaganda. Instead, these discourses themselves not only were and are used as legitimizing processes for certain engagement at domestic and international levels, but also evolve in relation to cultural, diplomatic, and trade dynamics.<sup>29</sup>

Similar to the shared experience of the welfare state societies, the Nordic experience of environmental awareness, in terms of early focus on nature protection and the later emergence of modern environmentalism from the 1960s, became integral to attempts to articulate a distinctive region.<sup>30</sup> Nordic experience(s) of environmental modernity can thus be characterized as a form of transnational practice which seeks both to manufacture consent about the legitimacy of the *Nordic way* at home and to project environmental leadership on the European and global stage.

International conferences and summits, too, create long tails in the places they occur. For instance, the 1972 Stockholm conference forms an international semiotic in its own right. As media events, such conferences not only allow for subtle propaganda and persuasion in the form of “place branding” the stage on which they are performed,<sup>31</sup> but they also articulate, transfer, and display a region such as the Nordics as a “mediated concept.”<sup>32</sup> Crucially, performance and mediation do not relate to human activity only, but equally to the performativity of socio-technological constructions of modern imaginaries.<sup>33</sup>

Focusing on the performative dimension of diplomacy, Naoko Shimazu has argued that conferences can be seen as theatrical performances imbued with symbolic meaning which draw attention to a certain issue or area.<sup>34</sup> This theatrical lens on the 1975 conference as a staged international media event allows us to analyse the Nordic countries’ joint performance and dissemination of a green message, and the place branding of their region as a location where one “handle[s] the earth, which has fed us and fostered us, with reverence and care,” as Ragnhildur Helgadóttir, President of the NC, framed it in her closing speech to the attendees.<sup>35</sup>

### STAGING REGIONAL SOLUTIONS AND GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The 1975 conference at Frostavallen was by no means the first international event with a unified Nordic face. Expo ‘70, held in Osaka, Japan, had already seen the Nordic countries provide a joint pavilion dedicated to the *Protection of the Environment during Increased Industrialization*.<sup>36</sup> The 1975 conference, however, was different in several regards. Firstly, it was organized by the NC and thus built not only on institutionalized Nordic cooperation but also on shared Nordic ideals and ideas. Furthermore, the conference was explicitly recognized as a “PR event” and “enlightenment conference”<sup>37</sup> for international organizations, which had the aim of promoting Nordic policies and stressing the Nordic region’s value for the international community.<sup>38</sup>

When the conference took place, the environment had already been part of institutionalized Nordic cooperation for several years. Parallel to the creation of domestic environmental institutions in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the interparliamentary NC had created a liaison committee on environmental issues, which in 1973 became a committee of senior

officials following the 1971 creation of the NCM.<sup>39</sup> This institutionalized cooperation provided the backbone of the Nordics' engagement within emerging environmental politics at international level—and has continued to shape Nordic environmental cooperation in the decades since.<sup>40</sup>

While institutionalized Nordic cooperation primarily provided a forum for coordination of Nordic interests and engagements within international politics, the NC also functioned as an independent actor. Every two or three years it organized a conference for international organizations in Europe to disseminate information about the Nordic region, highlight Nordic cooperation, and press key policy areas which the Nordics at that point in time “consider[ed] [to be] of international importance.”<sup>41</sup> As such, these conferences greatly contributed to the external image of the Nordic region. At the same time, the conferences allowed the Nordic countries to position their own institutional cooperation as on par with other international organizations such as the European Communities (EC). As a result, the participants of the 1975 Nordic conference on environmental pollution and policies included delegates from the European Court of Justice, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization, and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, as well as the EC itself and non-governmental organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund.<sup>42</sup>

By the mid-1970s, environmental policies had not only been established and diversified, spanning from air and water pollution over environmental education to waste and noise, but also increasingly found their way into international treaties such as the 1974 Nordic Environmental Protection Convention (NEPC). Providing an extensive, legally binding framework for the prevention of transboundary pollution by introducing the principles of non-discrimination, equal rights of access, and information obligation, the four continental Nordic states created what they called a “globally unique” environmental convention.<sup>43</sup> A central motive was, however, to provide solutions to domestic acidification caused by European sulphur dioxide emissions beyond the borders of the Nordics.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, officials in the Nordic environmental ministries and agencies were cooperating closely on a Nordic Plan to Protect Conservation Areas and Biotopes, and the NC was discussing the role of the occupational environment with the Nordic trade unions, seeking improvement to both environmental conditions and general well-being.<sup>45</sup>

In the eyes of the NC's Presidium, all these regional solutions deserved wider international attention as examples of international environmental

cooperation—an agenda where the regional approach recognized its global responsibility. On the one hand, it stressed the responsibility of single nations in the fight against environmental pollution, which due to its global character affected and affects different societies disproportionately. On the other hand, it displayed and positioned the Nordic countries as environmentally progressive, with policy solutions of relevance for the international community. By profiling such work as one of the most important issues within Nordic cooperation, the Nordics attempted to provide solutions to the complex task of international environmental governance. This had the added benefit of legitimizing the region as an international actor which the international community had to recognize and learn from.

### FROSTAVALLEN AND THE PERFORMANCE OF GREEN NORDIC MODERNITY

These aspirations to present a superior green modernity of high living standards paired with environmental protection also built on the linkage of the desire to reduce environmental degradation with extant images of the Nordic region. By 1971 the Nordics had not only already established a certain exceptionalism or a “special position” in global politics, but their “Scandinavian lifestyle” had become what contemporaries called a globally highly valued “brand,”<sup>46</sup> defined by high standards of living, education, and social security, all synonymous with the social democratic welfare state and society.<sup>47</sup> Such an external acknowledgement fed back into Nordic self-perception as something distinct and special.<sup>48</sup> Nordic parliamentarians and ministers accordingly promoted a self-image that bestowed on the Nordics and their cooperative governance a great level of international importance and reputation. This was not just about nation states, but a model of regional excellence whose politics would have positive implications on the evolving international environmental frameworks that the fight against environmental pollution required.<sup>49</sup> This meant that there could exist a simplified externally communicated Nordic modernity, with the Nordic countries as environmental pioneers, alongside more complex and divergent modernities within the respective states whereby they could pursue different forms of politics and techno-industrial solutions internally.

At the conference, this environmental modernity was performed by means of time, place, and content, which connected experience with

political messages. Firstly, the timing of the conference was chosen very carefully. It was organized from 4 to 6 June, coinciding with the International Day of the Environment on 5 June that symbolically had been agreed at the Stockholm Conference a few years before.<sup>50</sup> In doing so, the NC intentionally positioned the 1975 conference as a continuation of the landmark Stockholm event. As such it not only included official dinners organized by the Swedish government and the NC respectively, but at least one press conference in which, among others, the Secretary General of the Benelux Consultative Interparliamentary Council, Marcel Hondequin, participated as an example of extra-Nordic dialogue.<sup>51</sup>

Secondly, the location of the conference in Skåne in southern Sweden was a deliberate choice, as it “illustrate[d] the issues that were discussed with practical examples.”<sup>52</sup> This meant that delegates and reporters found themselves in the bucolic surroundings of Frostavallen which, with its beech woodlands, lakes, and flora, typified the landscapes singled out for protection in the new Nordic Plan to Protect Conservation Areas and Biotopes. When presenting this Nordic plan to the participants, then Norwegian Environment Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland repeated an articulation of modernity that did not measure welfare and high living standards in economic growth rates only, but by the “assets which nature and our living environment represent for human well-being, health and happiness.”<sup>53</sup> According to Brundtland, modernity no longer meant standards of living in material terms, but “quality of life” instead.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, the location typified the most severe environmental pollution in southern Scandinavia. Southern Sweden, as well as southern Norway, suffered from transboundary air pollution originating in Europe’s industrial areas, meaning that Frostavallen’s environs were also of political importance for the message of the NEPC, bringing home the transboundary impacts which some governments still challenged.<sup>55</sup>

Finally, the site was close to technological solutions that promised to combine welfare and environmentalism and to realize a green modernity through endless energy production from nuclear fission. By 1975 Sweden was the only Nordic country with operating commercial nuclear power plants, local reactor Barsebäck I being the fourth operating reactor nationally. One and a half years after the energy crisis, nuclear power was seen as the energy source of the future, a seemingly limitless supply of power that also reduced dependency on oil imports. In addition, nuclear energy promised an end to the sulphur and nitrogen compounds and fly ash from oil and coal power stations that acidified Scandinavian lands and lakes.<sup>56</sup>

On the final day of the conference, participants thus left nature behind for a peek behind the curtain of technological modernity.<sup>57</sup> The visit to Barsebäck's boiling water reactor that delegates were treated to was an illustration of practical problem-solving, that is to say not merely an aspiration but an embodied green modernity, which delegates could experience beyond the speeches and press packs. Closing off the nominally informational part of the conference with a trip to Barsebäck was therefore a tactical performance of modernity, which according to Helgadóttir proved that "the mind of man has succeeded in taking advantage of the atomic energy for human well-being."<sup>58</sup> That the same nuclear power station, located 20 km from the Danish capital on the Swedish side of the Øresund, had become an issue of conflict between Denmark and Sweden, however, remained an internal Nordic discussion.<sup>59</sup>

The images absorbed and disseminated by participants and the Nordic press alike at Frostavallen portrayed Nordic environmental responsibility as an example to the international community and "environmental protection a trade article" to be exported to the world.<sup>60</sup> Such coverage also helped to reframe the realpolitik of the NEPC into a "model" for international environmental governance.<sup>61</sup> Hondequin acknowledged that this "Nordic initiative [would] have an effect on the world,"<sup>62</sup> and admitted that "everyone would like to have such a convention as the Nordics now have."<sup>63</sup> Michel Carpentier, then director of the European Environment and Consumer Protection Service, opined that "there [was] still a long way to go before a convention could be achieved [within the EC]" and that such a convention "would hardly be as comprehensive as the Nordic one."<sup>64</sup> Such external acknowledgements of the progressive Nordic region not only reinforced images of the Nordic countries as environmental pioneers and far-sighted strategists, but they also reinforced their own imaginings of a certain Nordic environmental exceptionalism, of a region that as one Danish newspaper wrote was "in many regards far ahead of others."<sup>65</sup>

### NORDIC GREEN MODERN AS STRATEGIC MESSAGING

Since the 1975 conference was staged, green imagery has become an intrinsic part of international political engagement generally, as well as of Nordic inward and outward legitimization. The dual message of regional solutions and global responsibility of 1975 continues to structure the contemporary messaging of Nordic green modernity at global events,

resulting from the dynamic interplay between domestic, regional, and international levels. The debates and negotiations surrounding climate change in particular, which have succeeded the environment more broadly as the centre of attention since the 1990s, provide a platform for a renewed instrumentalization of this joint Nordic green modernity.

At the COP24 meeting in Katowice in Poland in 2018, for instance, the information desk of the joint Nordic pavilion was dominated by a one-way road sign with the words *The Nordic Way*, whilst a cargo bike with the same slogan alongside physically embodied the green Nordic lifestyle. In the pavilion, posters communicated Nordic visions of a sustainable future; pictures showed natural landscapes in soft colours with wind turbines on the horizon as the engines of the green transition. Such Nordic visions and solutions aimed at encouraging visitors to both *Think Nordic!* and use the Swenglish neologism #talanordic.<sup>66</sup>

This contemporary image of the Nordic region as a progressive, far-sighted strategist offering political and technological solutions to the world was equally prominent at COP25 in Madrid, where the Nordic pavilion used the tagline *Action to Inspire! Inspire to Act!* The slogan tied older messages of the 1970s Nordic environmental leadership that emphasized the inspiring value of Nordic cooperation to current youth climate activism, as personified by Greta Thunberg, whose anti-government activism had been co-opted into the Nordic global brand.<sup>67</sup> The Nordic countries can thus be said to recognize and create challenges on the global stage which then allow them to bring model solutions and roadmaps at international level, internalizing the concerns of climate activism into the acceptable processes of international governance.

The importance of these messaging strategies stretches far beyond the projection of sustainability, however. Sustaining modernity as a project and the continuation of liberal capitalism as its driver relies on the continued co-option of challenges to its hegemony. By viewing the Nordic performance of green modernity as an ongoing medial happening, taking place in physical and medial space, it helps us to better understand how the intrinsic conflicts of contemporary global politics, too, can be solved within the macro-narrative of modernist progress, and how its supposed ability to overcome regional differences in an international context is alive and well in times of political atomization and the decline of the dominant party model. The Nordic experience of environmental messaging is therefore instructive for our general understandings of modernity as narrative, requiring constant reinvention and re-assessment. At the Glasgow COP26

meeting in 2021, Nordic green modernity was once again on show, not just as a climate solution but as a laboratory of a shared global future.<sup>68</sup> Whilst the core messages of the 1970s remain, the contemporary appetite for positive visions has also seen the Nordics embrace green modernity as a technological export to turbocharge the green transition abroad and continued economic growth at home.

## CONCLUSION

While contemporary Nordic engagement in promoting environmental and climate policies to the international community is legitimized by their long history of cooperation stretching back far further,<sup>69</sup> the leitmotif initially promoted at the 1975 Frostavallen conference was, we argue, foundational to their positioning today. Not only was it an international event organized through institutionalized Nordic cooperation with the aim of promoting Nordic solutions on environmental problems to the wider world, but a material embodiment of this Nordic articulation of modernity's imaginaries. As such it represents an active performance of Nordic policy solutions, staged in a surrounding that appeared to embody the reconciliation of environmental protection and nature conservation with seemingly endless energy sources for the future development of the welfare state, or a green modernity.

By using the Frostavallen conference as a case study for media events, we have analysed how the Nordic countries performed a Nordic environmental model for both domestic and international audiences, by means of place, time, and content. With this performance of a green modernity, the Nordics place branded their region as environmentally far-sighted, reinforcing an image of the Nordic region as distinct and exceptional but temporally so, rather than being an unrealistic dream. The 1975 conference provided a framework within which the Nordic countries could construct a shared regional identity, creating progressive solutions in terms of policies and technologies, which could then be modelled by others in the future. Ultimately, this performance had clear diplomatic and political goals in disseminating Nordic environmental ideas and solutions to global challenges but was equally based on the legitimization of Nordic claims to leadership and progressiveness.

This shows a duality in Nordic environmental messaging as both altruistic problem-solving and a means of exerting power and maintaining legitimacy in the face of domestic and international pressures, all whilst

apparently reconciling economic growth and environmental protection. Yet in contrast to a uniformly social democratic Nordic identity, this green messaging of modernity stemmed from the interplay between domestic, regional, and international levels, and was anchored firmly in Nordic cooperation and external conceptions of the Nordic region. As an identity equally shaped by national and international developments, expectations, and narratives, and serving political interests of varying character, a Nordic idea and performance of green modernity existed not instead of a Danish, Norwegian or Swedish one, but in addition to it.

Moreover, we can see how some of the broader narratives of ecological management and of the pristine Nordic states embodied at the Frostavallen conference bleed into other areas of domestic politics. Careful cooperation and management of the Nordic body politic feeds into other conceptions of the Nordic space and harks back to the dreamscapes of Nordic high modernism in which people, environments, and states were integrated into the same project. As such, Nordic Green Modern also offers a counter-narrative to decline and disintegration by offering a vision of a Nordic project shorn of its political complexity on the global stage.

## NOTES

1. *Nordic Solutions to Global Challenges: An Initiative by the Nordic Prime Ministers* (Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers, 2017).
2. We refer to Scandinavia when considering Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, and to the Nordic region when also considering Finland and Iceland.
3. Kazimierz Musiał, *Roots of the Scandinavian Model: Images of Progress in the Era of Modernisation* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2000), 9.
4. The term “middle way” was coined by Marquis Childs in 1936; Marquis W. Childs, *Sweden: The Middle Way* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936).
5. Truels Stende, *Omverdenens syn på de nordiske landene* (Copenhagen: Nordisk ministerråd, 2018).
6. For example, Peder Anker, *The Power of the Periphery: How Norway Became an Environmental Pioneer for the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
7. For example, Eirinn Larsen, Sigrun Marie Moss and Inger Skjelsbæk, eds., *Gender Equality and Nation Branding in the Nordic Region* (London: Routledge, 2021).

8. See, for example, Zygmunt Bauman's work on globalization, modernity and the nation state; Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 55–76.
9. For a recent discussion of the Nordic models and their dissemination, see, for example, the contributions in Haldor Byrkjeflot, Lars Mjøset, Mads Mordhorst and Klaus Petersen, eds., *The Making and Circulation of Nordic Models, Ideas and Images* (London: Routledge, 2022).
10. The intergovernmental Nordic Council was established in 1952. Together with the 1971 Nordic Council of Ministers, it constitutes institutional Nordic cooperation.
11. Unfortunately, we could not trace the conference in English newspapers and magazines, which might be due either to the lack of reports or to the limitations of OCR and research in digitized material.
12. For methodological nationalism as a research critique, see Ulrich Beck, "The Cosmopolitan Condition: Why Methodological Nationalism Fails", *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 27, no. 7 (2007), 286–290.
13. For a detailed historical analysis of transboundary air pollution, its science and international politics, see Rachel Emma Rothschild, *Poisonous Skies: Acid Rain and the Globalization of Pollution* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019).
14. On the rhetoric of Nordicness, see Jani Marjanen, Johan Strang and Mary Hilson, eds., *Contesting Nordicness: From Scandinavianism to the Nordic Brand* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022).
15. For example, Niels Finn Christensen and Klaus Petersen, "Preface", *Scandinavian Journal of History*, vol. 26, no. 6 (2001), 153–156; Pauli Kettunen, "The Transnational Construction of National Challenges: The Ambiguous Nordic Model of Welfare and Competitiveness", *Beyond Welfare State Models: Transnational Historical Perspectives on Social Policy*, eds. Pauli Kettunen and Klaus Petersen (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011), 16–40.
16. For discussions in the Nordic countries, see, for example, Jonas Anshelm, *Socialdemokraterna och miljöfrågan: En studie av framstegstankens paradoxer* (Stockholm: Symposion Bibliotek, 1995), 14–36; Melina Antonia Buns, *Green Internationalists: Nordic Environmental Cooperation, 1967–1988* (Oslo: University of Oslo, 2020), 47–68. For the international discussion on the "problems of modern society", see, for example, Matthias Schmelzer, "The Crisis Before the Crisis: The 'Problems of Modern Society' and the OECD, 1968–1974", *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, vol. 19, no. 6 (2012), 999–1020.
17. Jonas Anshelm, "Det gröna folkhemmet—Striden om den ekologiska moderniseringen av Sverige", *Naturen som brytpunkt: Om miljöfrågans mystifieringar, konflikter och motsägelser*, ed. Johan Hedrén (Stockholm/

- Stenhag: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion, 2002), 34–61. Recent research has also highlighted the 1990s as a period of identity formation; Andreas Mørkved Hellenes, Haakon A. Ikonomidou, Carl Marklund and Ada Nissen, “‘Nordic Nineties’: Norwegian and Swedish self-understanding in the face of globalization”, *Culture Unbound*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2021), 1–15, and the other contributions in this special issue.
18. Musiał, *Scandinavian Model*, 10.
  19. Musiał, *Scandinavian Model*, 11.
  20. Jenny Andersson, “Nordic Nostalgia and Nordic Light: The Swedish Model as Utopia 1930–2007”, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2009), 229–245.
  21. On ecological modernization, for example, Arthur P.J. Mol, David A. Sonnenfeld and Gert Spaargaren, eds., *The Ecological Modernisation Reader: Environmental Reform in Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2009).
  22. Joachim Peter Tilsted et al., “Accounting Matters: Revisiting Claims of Decoupling and Genuine Green Growth in Nordic Countries”, *Ecological Economics*, vol. 187 (2021).
  23. Robyn Eckersley, *The Green State: Rethinking Democracy and Sovereignty* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004).
  24. Dominic Hinde, *Our Common, Contested Future: The Rhetorics of Modern Environment in Sweden* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2015); Martin Wiklund, *I det modernas landskap: Historisk orientering och kritiska berättelser om det moderna Sverige mellan 1960 och 1990* (Stockholm: Symposion, 2006).
  25. Allan Pred, *Recognising European Modernities: A Montage of the Present* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995).
  26. Carl Marklund, “The Nordic Model on the Global Market of Ideas: The Welfare State as Scandinavia’s Best Brand”, *Geopolitics*, vol. 22, no. 3 (2017), 623–639.
  27. Louis Clerc and Nikolas Glover, “Representing the Small States of Northern Europe: Between Imagined and Imaged Communities,” *Histories of Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding in the Nordic and Baltic Countries: Representing the Periphery*, eds. Louis Clerc, Nikolas Glover and Paul Jordan (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 6. See, for example, also, Carl Marklund and Klaus Petersen, “Return to Sender: American Images of the Nordic Welfare States and Nordic Welfare State Branding”, *European Journal of Scandinavian Studies*, vol. 43, no. 2 (2013), 245–257.
  28. Clerc and Glover, “Representing the Small States of Northern Europe”; *16. Nordiska rådet 1971, 19:e sessionen, København* (Stockholm: Nordiska rådet, 1971), 170.
  29. Clerc and Glover, “Representing the Small States of Northern Europe”, 17.

30. On the emergence of environmentalism, see, for example, David Larsson Heidenblad, *Den gröna vändningen: En ny kunskaps historia om miljöfrågornas genombrott under efterkrigstiden* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2021); Andrew Jamison, Ron Eyerman and Jacqueline Crame, *The Making of the New Environmental Consciousness: A Comparative Study of the Environmental Movements in Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990); Tuomas Räsänen, “Converging Environmental Knowledge: Re-evaluating the Birth of Modern Environmentalism in Finland”, *Environment and History*, vol. 18, no. 2 (2012), 159–181.
31. Jonas Harvard and Peter Stadius, “Conclusion: Mediating the Nordic Brand—History Recycled”, *Communicating the North: Media Structure and Images in the Making of the Nordic Region*, eds. Jonas Harvard and Peter Stadius, 3rd ed. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 329.
32. Harvard and Stadius, “Conclusion: Mediating the Nordic Brand—History Recycled”, 320.
33. On the importance of technological performance for the formation of social imaginaries, see Sheila Jasanoff, “Future Imperfect: Science, Technology, and the Imaginations of Modernity”, *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power*, eds. Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 1–33.
34. Naoko Shimazu, “Diplomacy as Theatre: Staging the Bandung Conference of 1955”, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 48, no. 1 (2014), 225–252.
35. Helgadóttir referred in particular to Sweden given its hospitality; *A Regional Approach: A World Wide Responsibility. VI. Conference organized for international organizations in Europe. Frostavallen, Höör, Sweden, 4–6 June 1975* (Stockholm: Nordic Council, 1975), 57.
36. Nikolas Glover, “Unity Exposed: The Scandinavian Pavilions at the World Exhibitions in 1967 and 1970”, *Communicating the North: Media Structures and Images in the Making of the Nordic Region*, eds. Jonas Harvard and Peter Stadius, 3rd ed. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 219–239.
37. Literally *upplysningskonferens*, Peter Martinsson, “Krav från nordiska länderna vid Höör-konferensen: Stoppa alla miljöförstöring”, *Arbetet Västsvenska*, 5 June 1975. This and all other translations are our own.
38. The description of the conference as a PR-event can be found in contemporaneous newspaper articles, for example, “Vad ska Nordiska Rådet göra på Frostavallen, Ingela Björck?”, *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Kvällsposten*, 4 June 1975; “Nordiska ‘PR-dagar’ i Skåne om miljövärd”, *Ystads Allehanda*, 5 June 1975.
39. Melina Antonia Buns, “The Emergence of Nordic Environmental Cooperation, 1967–1974”, *nordics.info*, 7 April 2021, <https://nordics>.

[info/show/artikel/the-emergence-of-nordic-environmental-cooperation-1967-1974/](#) (Accessed 29 September 2021).

40. For a detailed analysis of Nordic environmental cooperation at international level, see Buns, *Green Internationalists*.
41. *A Regional Approach*, 11.
42. *A Regional Approach*, 9–10.
43. *Nordisk Kontakt 11/75* (Stockholm: Nordiska rådet, 1975), 704.
44. On the convention, see Melina Antonia Buns, “Making a model: the 1974 Nordic Environmental Protection Convention and Nordic attempts form international environmental law”, *Scandinavian Journal of History* (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2022.2069151>.
45. *A Regional Approach*, 36–37.
46. The original term used in 1971 was *varumärke*; *Nordiska rådet 1971*, 170. On Nordic exceptionalism, cf. e.g. also Christopher S. Browning, “Branding Nordicity: Models, Identity and the Decline of Exceptionalism”, *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 42, no. 1 (2007), 27–51.
47. *Nordiska rådet 1973, 21:e sessionen, 1:a samlingen, Oslo* (Stockholm: Nordiska rådet, 1973), 121.
48. *Nordiska rådet 1973, 1:a samlingen*, 121.
49. *Nordiska rådet 1970, 18:e sessionen, Reykjavik* (Stockholm: Nordiska rådet, 1970), 135.
50. Nordisk Råd Presidiesekretariat (NRPS), Internasjonal konferanse 1975, folder 158.900 (1974–1976), 2708.01/F, 11/8, Swedish National Archive.
51. “Internationell konferens om världsomfattande miljöfrågor”, *Mellersta Skåne*, 5 June 1975.
52. NRPS, Internasjonal konferanse 1975.
53. *A Regional Approach*, 21.
54. *A Regional Approach*, 21.
55. *A Regional Approach*, 55.
56. *A Regional Approach*, 43, 46.
57. *Nordisk Kontakt 9/75* (Stockholm: Nordiska rådet, 1975), 571; *Nordisk Kontakt 11/75*, 704.
58. *A Regional Approach*, 57.
59. On Barsebäck, see Arne Kaijser and Jan-Henrik Meyer, “The World’s Worst Located Power Plant: Danish and Swedish Cross-Border Perspectives and the Barsebäck Nuclear Power Plant,” *Journal for the History of Environment and Society*, vol. 3 (2018), 71–105.
60. Claes Sturm, “Miljövärden en exportvara”, *Dagens Nyheter*, 5 June 1975.
61. E.g. “Nordiska ‘PR-dagar’”.
62. Ib Bjørnbak, “Det nordiske miljøansvar—et eksempel for andre,” *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 7–8 June 1975.

63. Ingela Björck, “Nordiska miljömodell: Smutsgranna kan åtalas”, *Sydsvenska dagbladet snällposten*, 5 June 1974.
64. “Norden vil ikke være Europas søppelkasse”, *Aftenposten*, 5 June 1975.
65. Bjørnbak, “Det nordiske miljøansvar”.
66. “COP24—The UN Climate Negotiations in Katowice”, Nordic Co-operation, <https://www.norden.org/en/cop-24> (Accessed 27 January 2022).
67. Bjørnbak, “Det nordiske miljøansvar”; “Climate Action and Youth”, Nordic Co-operation, 2 December 2019, <https://www.norden.org/en/event/climate-action-and-youth-0> (Accessed 28 January 2022).
68. “10 Nordic highlights from COP26”, Nordic Co-operation, 16 December 2021, <https://www.norden.org/en/news/10-nordic-highlights-cop26> (Accessed 27 January 2022).
69. *Programme for Nordic Co-operation on the Environment and Climate 2019–2024* (Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers, 2018).

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