



# Rhetorics of Nordic Democracy

Edited by  
Jussi Kurunmäki and Johan Strang

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# Rhetorics of Nordic Democracy

Edited by Jussi Kurunmäki & Johan Strang

Finnish Literature Society • Helsinki





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# Acknowledgements

This book has come a long way. In the early 2000s, when we conducted the joint project on the democratisation and welfare state in Finland and Sweden (funded by the Kone foundation), we noticed that it was, actually, quite difficult to write about Nordic democracy in general terms, if we wanted to be faithful to our methodological view that political concepts, not least democracy, gain their specific meanings in their particular contexts of use. It seemed to us that Nordic democracy could mean almost any positively evaluated thing associated with the Nordic countries and, at the same time, it meant almost nothing, precisely because it was used for so many things. Moreover, we also noticed that what had been discussed in terms of Nordic democracy was usually dealt with as a sum of societal practises and the functioning of political institutions in the Nordic countries, rather than as a question whether there was a particular *Nordic* understanding, or meaning, of democracy. What we wanted to do was to get away from such ‘consequentialism’ and get into an analysis of the way in which these concepts have been used.

Luckily, we were not alone with such an ambition. Nobert Götz and Peter Hallberg immediately shared our concern and helped us to formulate the framework of the enterprise that has now resulted in this book. We were also happy to be able to recruit people who had the special knowledge on topics that we thought were crucial to the task at hands and who, most importantly, shared our overall perspective on the history of politics. Thank you, dear friends, for your enduring interest and patience!

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Stockholm and Bergen, 15 October, 2010

Jussi Kurunmäki & Johan Strang

## Introduction: ‘Nordic Democracy’ in a World of Tensions

Even the most universalistically oriented philosophical or theoretical accounts of democracy often discuss a number of paradigmatic cases. We are accustomed to learn that, while the Athenian democracy is the ancient birthplace, democracy has had a number of places and cultural contexts that have provided a range of different democratic models, perhaps also equally applicable in other places and times. There is French revolutionary democracy, the direct democracy of the Swiss cantons, American democracy as famously described by Tocqueville, and British parliamentarism. During the Cold War, the West and the East were coordinates of competing conceptions of democracy. Today, democracy is often discussed in terms of the challenges that globalisation and multiculturalism pose to it, the bottom line being that ‘democracy’ has become a general identity marker of the West. Much has been written about socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of democratic regimes as well as their institutional settings. By contrast, not much is known about the political manoeuvres and speech acts by which ‘democracy’ has been tied to particular regions and cultures in concrete historical situations. This book is about such manoeuvres. It explores a series of efforts to rhetorically produce and reproduce a particular Nordic version of democracy as an exemplary model.

In this book the conceptualisation of democracy in the Nordic countries is examined by focusing on the uses of the particular term ‘Nordic democracy’. In other words, we study the different meanings that different historical actors have given to it in various circumstances. Our aim is to point out the specific debates and contexts in which the notion ‘Nordic democracy’ has been taken in use. We are particularly focused on rhetorical re-descriptions of the past, i.e. on the ways in which historical actors describe the past in a new manner, for example by redefining certain key concepts in order for them to serve certain particular political aims.<sup>2</sup> We regard this focus on rhetoric

1 Norbert Götz significantly contributed to the making of this chapter by discussing its several draft versions. His role was also important in the framing of the whole project. We wish to express our gratitude for his generosity.

2 See Skinner, Quentin (1996) *Reason and rhetoric in the philosophy of Hobbes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 139–145; Skinner, Quentin (2002) *Visions of Politics. Volume I: Regarding Method*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 153, 182–187.



as compatible to the main ideas of conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*), according to which the meaning of a concept is always potentially contested and likely to change when it is used in different contexts by actors with diverging political intentions.<sup>3</sup> The aim of this book is not to judge whether there actually exists a particular Nordic democratic tradition or a special Nordic form of democracy that could be said to characterise the histories and traditions of all the five different Nordic countries.<sup>4</sup> We are interested in the instrumentality and political function of the claim that there is such a thing as Nordic democracy.

This volume will show that the rhetorical figure ‘Nordic democracy’ was in the first place a product of the age of totalitarianism and the Cold War. It was used as an identity marker in ‘a world of tensions’.<sup>5</sup> It was launched in the 1930s and used as an antidote against both ideological and geopolitical threats, which, naturally, often have been quite difficult to separate from each other. It has been used in order to demarcate Scandinavia and the Nordic countries as an island of democratic order and peaceful compromise in contrast to totalitarian and militaristic ideologies and regimes. However, the geopolitical considerations do not alone suffice to explain the emergence of this particular rhetoric and its identity-building role in the Nordic countries. More correct is to claim that the rhetoric of ‘Nordic democracy’ emerged as a result of the interplay between geopolitics and domestic political developments in the Nordic countries – the class compromises, the coalitions between the Social Democrats and the Agrarians, and the Social Democrats’ turn from class-based rhetoric to a political language that increasingly drew on the concept of nation during the 1930s. It is no coincidence that the same mix of values that is characteristic of ‘Nordic democracy’ is also associated with the notion of the ‘Nordic welfare state’ (or the ‘Nordic model’). Yet, while ‘Nordic democracy’ addresses an ideological level of political culture and political identity, the ‘Nordic welfare state’ is more likely to trigger a discussion of institutional solutions. Somewhat paradoxically therefore,

- 3 For an early programmatic outline of conceptual history, see Koselleck, Reinhart (1972) ‘Einleitung’. In Otto Brunner, Werner Conze & Reinhart Koselleck (eds) *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 1, Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, XIII–XXVII; see also Koselleck, Reinhart (2002) *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 20–37. For a history of the concept of democracy in general, in particular in a German context, see Maier, Christian et al. (1972) ‘Demokratie’. In Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck 1972, 821–899. On similarities between and compatible characters of a conceptual history analysis and rhetorical analysis, see Palonen, Kari (1999) ‘Rhetorical and Temporal Perspectives on Conceptual Change’. *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought*, Vol. 3, 41–59; see also Skinner 2002, 175–187.
- 4 As Pauli Kettunen notes, ‘Nordic democracy’, ‘Nordic model’ as well as ‘Nordic society’ all refer to five separate national institutions despite the attribute ‘Nordic’. Kettunen, Pauli (2005) ‘The Power of International Comparison – A Perspective on the Making and Challenging of the Nordic Welfare State’. In Niels Finn Christiansen, Klaus Petersen, Nils Edling, Per Haave (eds) *The Nordic Model of Welfare – a Historical Reappraisal*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 52.
- 5 This phrase is borrowed from: McKeon, Richard & Rokkan, Stein (eds) (1951) *Democracy in a World of Tensions. A Symposium prepared by UNESCO*. Paris: UNESCO.

the 'Nordic welfare state' gained much attention abroad, while 'Nordic democracy', despite frequent attempts of international promotion, remained a domestic or intra-Nordic concept with little international resonance.<sup>6</sup> But without the idea of Nordic democracy the Nordic welfare states would look quite different from what they have become. This book will provide an important means of acknowledging the ideological and geopolitical context in which the 'Nordic welfare state' was conceptualised and canonised, a context that is often overlooked in studies preoccupied with domestic policy measures. It will also show the ways in which 'Nordic democracy' was used to provide the welfare politics with cultural and historical legitimacy and foundations.

\* \* \*

The structure of the book is the following: In this introductory chapter, we will present the literature in which the very expression 'Nordic democracy' has been explicitly highlighted, i.e. a number of publications which can be taken as cornerstones in the promotion of the idea of Nordic democracy from the mid-1930s to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The first chapter thus aims at giving an analysis of its own while adding to it some remarks concerning the findings of the more in-depth investigations of this volume.

The case studies start off in the context of the crisis of democracy in the 1930s and 1940s. In the second chapter JUSSI KURUNMÄKI focuses on the first wave of the rhetoric of Nordic democracy in Sweden and Finland, which is analysed against the background of a changed geopolitical situation in Europe and as a part of political struggles concerning the concept of democracy. The chapter recapitulates with a discussion on national aspects of the rhetoric of Nordic democracy and the significance of this rhetoric for the general acceptability of democracy in the middle of the thirties. In the third chapter JOHAN STRANG widens the political and historical anchorage of the rhetoric of Nordic democracy by adding a philosophical one to it. Strang relates the emergent use of 'Nordic democracy' in the 1930s and 1940s to the theoretical defence of democracy that a number of central Scandinavian

6 Robert A. Dahl's works on democracy may be an exception in this regard. We discuss his view of democracy in the Nordic countries later in this chapter. However, for example, David Held makes no notion of Nordic democracy. Instead, the Swedish system is shortly discussed in terms of 'broad corporatist arrangements' and 'tripartite relations'. See Held, David (1996) *Models of Democracy. Second Edition*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 230. In Arend Lijphart's well-known classification, the main categories are 'the Westminster model of democracy' and 'the consensual model of democracy'. In this typology, Sweden and Norway are placed in-between the majority and consensual models, and Denmark, Finland and Iceland in the group of consensual systems. See Lijphart, Arend (1984) *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 215–222. In his theory of state formation and nation-building, Stein Rokkan often discussed the Scandinavian counties as forming a separate category. Nevertheless, he did not make any notion of 'Nordic democracy'. See Peter Flora with Stein Kuhnle and Derek Urwin (eds) (1999) *State Formation, Nation-Building, and Mass Politics in Europe: The Theory of Stein Rokkan. Based on his collected works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, passim.

intellectuals and philosophers committed themselves to during the crisis of democracy, arguing that ultimately the defence often relied upon cultural arguments, and thus these intellectuals contributed to and utilised the rhetoric of Nordic democracy.

In chapter four, CARL MARKLUND turns the attention from how the idea of Nordic democracy was shaped in the Nordic countries to an outside perspective by examining the interest shown by American scholars and politicians for the Nordic experiment in the 1930s. Seen from the perspective of the American crisis of democracy, Marklund argues, the Nordic countries, and in particular Sweden, were viewed not so much as exceptional in their commitment to political democracy but, rather, in their practice of ‘industrial democracy’ and ‘economic democracy’. Now, if the Second World War figured behind some of the discussions on crisis analysed by Strang and Marklund, chapter five is very much centred upon the wartime rhetoric of Nordic democracy. In this chapter, JAN HECKER-STAMPEHL looks at how the Nordic Associations (*Föreningarna Norden*) built their rhetoric to a considerable degree on references made to the Nordic tradition of freedom and democracy in order to keep up the Nordic democratic morale during the Second World War. ‘Nordic democracy’ served both as a moral bulwark against the foreign threats but also as a basis on which the post-war cooperation between the countries could be built.

The book will then proceed with three chapters that probe deeper into the historical dimensions of ‘Nordic democracy’. In chapter six JEPPE NEVERS looks at how the Danish socialists in the period from the late nineteenth century until the 1930s overcame their disinclination and gradually embraced democracy and turned it into one of their favourite key concepts. In chapter seven, RUTH HEMSTAD analyses how the failure of nineteenth century Scandinavianism was repressed or selectively remembered when the labour movement launched the ideas of ‘labour Scandinavianism’ and ‘Nordic democracy’ during the 1930s. Hemstad also pays attention to the narrative of Nordic cooperation as pictured in the main literature of Nordic democracy, showing, for example, how the union conflict between Sweden and Norway in 1905 has been overlooked. Turning again our attention to an outside perspective, PETER STADIUS shows in chapter eight how the Nordic countries already at the turn of the nineteenth century were portrayed in Spain as a democratic heaven, but also as something of a modernistic threat. His analysis also pays attention to the role that the equal voting rights that were granted for women in Finland in 1906 played in the formation of the image of democratic culture in the North.

Chapter nine takes an insight into political language during an era that has been referred to in support of the idea that there is a specific Nordic – or Swedish – tradition of democracy. In his examination of the radical rhetoric of the Swedish Age of Liberty (1719–1792) PETER HALLBERG shows how history was consciously reinterpreted in ways which served particular political purposes in the context of the struggle over the estate privileges between the Nobility and the non-Noble estates. Hallberg points out that, while it remains true that ‘Nordic democracy’ was not used in the material analysed in the chapter, there was nevertheless a notion of a particular

'democratic spirit' in the reformist rhetoric that was closely connected to values like transparency, popular participation, and above all to liberty as non-domination, which were regarded as basing on an ancient tradition that was unique to the Nordic countries.

The closing chapters will then examine how the historical and cultural dimensions attached to 'Nordic democracy' were used in the Cold War context during the latter half of the twentieth century. In chapter ten PETRI KOIKKALAINEN analyses how Finnish politicians and intellectuals tried to navigate in a polarised world by making effective use of Finland's Nordic democratic heritage. 'Nordic democracy' signified not only a neutral island between the blocks, but also a third way between capitalism and socialism. This brings Koikkalainen to the so-called convergence-theories, popular in Finland during the 1960s, according to which the opposing ideologies of communism and capitalism would slowly become de-ideologised and eventually converge into each other. In chapter eleven, NORBERT GÖTZ considers the role that the democratic self-image of Nordic countries had in the discussions on the practise of sending parliamentary representatives to the General Assembly of the United Nations.<sup>7</sup> He shows how this practise was seen, mostly by the Nordics themselves, not only as a characteristic, historically and culturally anchored feature of the Nordic democracies, but also as a model for other countries to follow. However, his analysis also shows that the very figure 'Nordic democracy' was used quite occasionally in the researched material. When explicit in use, 'Nordic democracy' was most often involved in critical situations of political or diplomatic crisis.

\* \* \*

'After the Nazi takeover, the Nordic democracy [*det nordiske folkestyre*] has discovered what it is like to have a Dictatorship as a neighbour.' This is how the Danish social democratic intellectual Hartvig Frisch opened his book *Pest over Europa – Bolschevisme, Fascisme og Nazisme* (Plague over Europe – Bolshevism, Fascism and Nazism) (1933).<sup>8</sup> According to Frisch, it was time for the Nordics to show that there is strength in the Nordic democracy (*det nordiske Demokrati*). For him, the political democracy and parliamentarism created by the Nordic peasants was the foundation on which the labour movement had been able to build a 'social democracy'.<sup>9</sup>

This link between the legacy of peasant freedom, existing parliamentary institutions, and the current social democratic agenda of the labour movement in the context of the rise of totalitarianism was also characteristic of the most notable event in the promotion of the concept of 'Nordic democracy':

7 See e.g. Götz, Norbert (2008) "'Blue-eyed Angels'" at the League of Nations: The Genevese Construction of Norden'. In Norbert Götz and Heidi Haggrén (eds) *Regional Cooperation and International Organizations: The Nordic Model in Transnational Alignment*. London: Routledge, 25–46.

8 Frisch, Hartvig (1933) *Pest over Europa – Bolschevisme, Fascisme og Nazisme*. Copenhagen: Henrik Koppels Forlag, 5.

9 Frisch 1933, 9 (emphasis in original).



the celebration of the ‘Day of Nordic Democracy’ in Malmö in August 1935 by the Swedish Social Democratic Youth and the Socialist Youth International.<sup>10</sup> Although our findings indicate that the rhetoric of ‘Nordic democracy’ was not exclusively an invention of the Social Democrats’ party headquarters, as discussed by KURUNMÄKI in chapter two, there is no doubt that there was a clear intention to make ‘Nordic democracy’ a party brand.<sup>11</sup> Per Albin Hansson, the Swedish Prime Minister and leader of the Labour Party (the Social Democrats) boldly argued that Norden should become a mighty agitator against dictatorship and a model for other countries.<sup>12</sup> The rhetoric of Nordic democracy was more than just a principled statement against totalitarianisms, for it was also a tool by which the Social Democrats established themselves as a party that was a respectful bearer of national and Nordic cultural and historical heritage. The promotion of ‘Nordic democracy’ can be seen as one of the rhetorical ‘moves’<sup>13</sup> by which social democracy de-radicalised its own societal vision while simultaneously aiming at improving the prevailing bourgeois conception of democracy by adding an egalitarian societal and economic dimension to it.

These re-profiling efforts of the Social Democrats gained positive attention abroad. The single most important person from outside *Norden* to promote the idea of Nordic democracy was the American journalist Marquis W. Childs. To be sure, Childs picked up the very formula ‘Nordic democracy’ only once, in an article in which he claimed having found ‘evidence of the underlying vitality of this “Northern democracy”’ in Sweden.<sup>14</sup> However, in the 1930s he published a series of works presenting a highly favourable picture of Scandinavian political and social life, including the condition of democracy in the North. The foundation was laid in Childs’ 1934 booklet *Sweden: Where Capitalism Is Controlled*, which was a eulogy of the virtuous consequences of consumer cooperatives, social democratic reform policy and planned economy.<sup>15</sup> The book *Sweden: The Middle Way* was published

10 Four speeches held on the occasion by leading social democratic politicians from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden (H. P. Hansen, Väinö Tanner, Johan Nygaardsvold, and Per Albin Hansson) were published in *Fyra tal om Nordisk Demokrati* (1935). Stockholm: Frihets förlag.

11 There were other occasions that were named ‘the Day of Nordic Democracy’ after the festival in Malmö, of which one was held in Turku, Finland, in 1938. See Majander, Mikko (2004) *Pohjoismaa vai kansandemokratia? Sosiaalidemokratit, kommunistit ja Suomen kansainvälinen asema 1944–51*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 56–57. Moreover, the Nordic Cooperation Committee of the Labour Movement granted, in 1939, the Nordic social democratic youth organisations the right to decide which events could be called ‘the Day of Nordic Democracy’. See Wahlbäck, Krister and Blidberg, Kersti (1986) *Samråd i kristid: Protokoll från den Nordiska Arbetarrörelsens Samarbetskommitté 1932–1946*. Stockholm: Kungl. Samfundet för utgivandet av handskrifter rörande Skandinaviens historia, 188.

12 *Fyra tal om nordisk demokrati* 1935, 5, 11.

13 On rhetorical moves in argument, see Skinner 2002, 115.

14 Childs, Marquis W. (1937/38) ‘Sweden Revisited’. *Yale Review* N.S. 27/1, 30–44, at 35. It should be noted that ‘Northern’ was a common translation to English of the Scandinavian term ‘nordisk’ in the 1930s.

15 Childs, Marquis W. (1934) *Sweden: Where Capitalism Is Controlled*. New York: The John Day Company.

in 1936 and portrayed the Swedish labour movement as willing and able to compromise and to make gradual reforms, rendering the political culture of the country immune to the extremes of fascism, communism, and liberal capitalism. Childs credited the Social Democrats for having strengthened the basis on which democratic government rested in the country.<sup>16</sup> Two years later, he spelled out the message even further in the book *This Is Democracy: Collective Bargaining in Scandinavia*.<sup>17</sup> As the straightforward title suggests, there was an evident model-building intention behind it, although, as MARKLUND shows in this volume, the exemplary character of these countries dealt more with 'industrial democracy' than with 'political democracy'.

Childs was by no means the only person outside of the Nordic countries to acknowledge and promote the new orientation of the Scandinavian labour movement. A favourable presentation of Swedish (and to some extent Scandinavian) politics can also be found, for example, in the volume *Democratic Sweden*, produced by The New Fabian Research Bureau in 1938. The book was aimed at a British labour audience and it pictured Swedish politics in bright light, despite pointing out its class character. Although there was clearly sympathy for a revolutionary change in this account, the book described Sweden as a country in which the prospects of peaceful transition to socialism were favourable.<sup>18</sup> It was stated, by quoting P. A. Hansson, that 'Socialism and Bourgeois Democracy in the Northern countries of Europe have never come into hopeless opposition to each other; the Bourgeois democrats have not allowed themselves to be driven by fear of socialism from their democratic ideal and the Social Democrats have not, for fear of contamination, fled from bourgeois democracy. Instead the former were able to unite on the solution of the democratic tasks which are common to them'.<sup>19</sup>

The social democratic compromise politics as well as inherited cultural conditions were credited also in Ernest Darwin Simon's book *The Smaller Democracies* (1939), in which the British liberal politician discussed the 'Scandinavian achievement'. According to him, the Scandinavian countries were the only countries in Europe which became steadily more democratic and more prosperous after the World War. The social democratic governments had shown good leadership, moderation and good sense.<sup>20</sup> Simon also pointed out the recent good shape of Scandinavian democracy

16 Childs, Marquis W. (1936) *Sweden: The Middle Way*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 119, 164-165.

17 Childs, Marquis W. (1938) *This Is Democracy: Collective Bargaining in Scandinavia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

18 Greaves, H. R. G. and C. P. Mayhew (1938) 'Constitution'. In Cole, Margaret and Charles Smith (eds) *Democratic Sweden: A Volume of Studies prepared by Members of the New Fabian Research Bureau*. London: Routledge, 25.

19 Greaves and Mayhew 1938, 24-25. The quotation was fetched from the speech Hansson had given on Nordic democracy in Copenhagen in 1935. See Hansson, P. Albin (1935) *Demokrati*. Stockholm: Tidens Förlag, 219-220.

20 Simon, Ernest Darwin (1939) *The Smaller Democracies*. London: Victor Gollancz, 174-175.

by emphasising its *longue durée*. Thus, he held that ‘[p]eace and security and a tradition of local independence have certainly contributed much to laying the foundations of Scandinavian democracy’.<sup>21</sup>

The social democratic middle way position was received in progressive quarters as compatible with the intentions of the ‘American way’ as it was understood in the New Deal period.<sup>22</sup> Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish economist and social scientist, who at the time was in the United States writing his *An American Dilemma* which gave him international reputation, contributed to this opinion building by presenting the case of successful defence of democracy in the Nordic countries in two articles published in the progressive American journal *Survey Graphic* in 1939. Myrdal explained to the Americans that the Nordic countries were too small to maintain an external defence which would make them safe in a military sense, and that the only way they could defend democracy was by making the population immune to communist and Nazi propaganda. This, in turn, was something that the social democratic governments of the Nordic countries had accomplished through a skilful economic and social policy that ‘delivered the goods’, Myrdal argued.<sup>23</sup>

Myrdal was to some extent drawing on another Swedish scholar whose name was also to become internationally known. The political scientist Herbert Tingsten, the foremost specialist on political ideologies in Sweden and known outside his home country due to a path-breaking study on political behaviour,<sup>24</sup> had in 1938 published an article, titled plainly ‘Nordisk demokrati’, that can be regarded as the first explicit scholarly contribution to the rhetoric of Nordic democracy. As JAN HECKER-STAMPEHL shows in this volume, Tingsten argued that the reason why it was meaningful to speak about Nordic democracy was that there was a Nordic community that shared the same democratic values, which had their origin in the heritage of rule of law and primordial Scandinavianism. According to Tingsten, the Nordic countries formed the finest example of how a successful democratic order was possible to achieve and sustain. In other words, these countries witnessed of the efficiency and adaptability of a democratic system.<sup>25</sup> As a matter of fact, Tingsten was recycling the idea he had formulated in his *Demokratins seger och kris* (Democracy’s Victory and Crisis) in 1933, according to which the crisis of democracy was a consequence of the decline of shared values.<sup>26</sup>

21 Simon 1939, 184–185.

22 Ruth, Arne (1984) ‘The Second New Nation: The Mythology of Modern Sweden’. *Daedalus*, Vol. 113, No. 2, 53–96, at 56.

23 Myrdal, Gunnar (1939) *Maintaining Democracy in Sweden, I. With Dictators as Neighbors, II. The Defences of Democracy*. A Bonnier reprint from *Survey Graphic – Magazine of Social Interpretation*, May–June, 4.

24 Tingsten, Herbert (1937) *Political Behaviour – Studies in Election Statistics*. London: P. S. King & Son.

25 Tingsten, Herbert (1938) ‘Nordisk demokrati’. *Nordens kalender*, Vol. 9, 41–50.

26 Tingsten, Herbert (1933) *Demokratins seger och kris. Vår egen tids historia 1880–1930*. Utgiven av Yngve Lorents. Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 22, 60–61.



Democracy is today a concept that is overwhelmingly positively evaluated almost everywhere. A lot has been written about socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of democratic regimes as well as their institutional settings. By contrast, not much is known about the political manoeuvres and speech acts by which 'democracy' has been tied to particular regions and cultures in concrete historical situations.

This book discusses a series of efforts to rhetorically produce a particular Nordic version of democracy. It shows that the rhetorical figure 'Nordic democracy' was a product of the age of totalitarianism and the Cold War. It explores the ways in which 'Nordic democracy' was used, mainly by the social democrats, to provide the welfare politics with cultural and historical legitimacy and foundations. Thus, it also acknowledges the ideological and geopolitical context in which the 'Nordic welfare state' was conceptualised and canonised.

The contributors of the book are specialists on Nordic politics and history, who share a particular interest in political rhetoric and conceptual history.



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