

Reinterpretation of 'Norden' ("the North") and 'Europe' in terms of European integration process Oksana Shved

Since the end of the Cold War the international system has become multi-polar and complex as far as actors and subjects who wish to be involved in international co-operation need to act in several circles of internationalisation at the same time. The dynamics of migration and expatriation, the overlaps of geography and language and national identity, have made of it a bewildering territory that does not neatly correspond to any of the maps at our disposal: historical, geographical, regional, national, cultural, linguistic, or artistic.

The intensification of afore mentioned processes is deeply intertwined with the end of the Second World War. The grand idea of Europe envisioned by the founders of the European Economic Community entailed a wish to transcend parochialism and petty philistine nationalism as well as narrow-minded, territorial selfishness. This period marked a new era of integration and co-operation, which required a fresh perspective on continental relationships and lead to reinterpretation of well-established views on *Norden* and *Europe*. Another question nonetheless concerns the effects of European integration on identification. In which ways does European integration affect personal identity? There can be no simple answer to this but the question certainly needs being raised.

The deeper analysis of the *Norden/Europe* perceptions is connected with rather fashionable nowadays classification of states by region, by culture or by what Samuel Huntington calls 'civilization'. According to this view, the words used to define regional constellations are in fact more than words, for 'with words we create and share views of reality'¹. Individuals as well as societies use narratives for anchoring their identities in time and space. 'We' can exist and be somebody only through such stories, which define *who* we are, *what* we are and *where* we are².

Therefore, before the start of defining *Norden* and *Europe* itself, one need to address the question what a 'region' or a 'regional entity' actually is. In historiography, the answer to the first question is a matter of definition—basic units usually are local authority areas, provinces or national states, totals are larger areas of provinces, national states, continents or even the world.

In order to show a multitude of highly important cultural and historical interdependencies and similarities that intertwine Northern and European perceptions and affect their evolution within the European integration process, it is useful to use mental maps discourse. The idea of mental or cognitive map was introduced by the psychologist E. C. Tolman in 1948. Geographer R. Downs

and psychologist D. Stea further defined mental cartography as abstract concept used to refer to the mental models, or belief systems, that people use to perceive, contextualize, simplify, and make sense of otherwise complex problems.

The primary meaning of *Norden* has an archaic character. It seems to have been taken from-or at least inspired by-German and used in a general sense of areas lying in the indicated direction. Firstly the word “Norden” was taken into use in Danish and Swedish, and later in Norwegian, with the general meaning "areas to the north”. Only gradually, a fixation of these areas covered by the word developed, to the Scandinavian Peninsula and adjacent areas (Denmark, Finland) and culturally related areas in the North Atlantic (Iceland and the Faroe islands).

During the 20th century, further evolution of this term received a forceful boost through the institutionalization of Nordic cooperation, with organizations like the Nordic Council, the Nordic Council of Ministers, Nordic language cooperation, lots of Nordic networks both in the governmental and the private areas, the introduction of the passport-free Nordic zone, etc.

The key elements of mental constructions of *Norden* were gathered around the concepts of ‘uniqueness’, ‘oneness’, ‘brotherhood’, ‘Nordic unity’. Metaphors denoting intimacy and closeness were typically used to describe links between Scandinavian countries, for example “Nordic race”, or “tribe” were typical for interwar period, or kinship metaphors like “family”, “neighbours”, “brother peoples“ used in postwar time to imply that the Scandinavians had the same cultural, historical and linguistic lineage³. Consider its use in the Swedish national anthem: Du gamla, du fria, du fjällhöga nord (You ancient, you free, you mountain-high North) ending with: Ack, jag vill leva, jag vill dö i Norden! (Oh, I want to live, I want to die in *Norden*!).

Having a closer look on *Norden* in historic perspective, one should admit that in Antique times the North was perceived as the motherland of uncivilized barbarians, the shelter of the “other”. Consequently, the South as a bulwark of culture tried to defend itself from the wild North. This idea was relevant until the Romanticism. Re-evaluation of the North was connected with the emergence of the nordism in the beginning of XVII century⁴. The foundations of new perception of the North were laid by Olof Rudbeck, a professor of Uppsala University, in his four-volume work *Atlantica*, which did much to attach the new northern attribute to Sweden. As Rudbeck’s goal ‘was to prove the political and moral superiority and the superior civilization of the North in general and of Sweden in particular’, he devised a new creation story which located Paradise in the North. Sweden was thus depicted in terms of a *vagina gentium*, or cradle of humanity. The

North was also provided with connotations of a true centre in the context of Europe-making – in the other words, the North was Europeanized. The Rudbeckian *Norden* had the function of legitimating the power of the ruling dynasty and was therefore political in essence.

The idea of Nordic identity - political idea of a common North first emerged in student and literary circles in the 1830's, providing occasion for the emptying of a by no means modest number of punchbowls and the singing of innumerable songs, some of which are even remembered to this day. It was at one such gathering in 1842 that the poet-politician Carl Ploug dashed off the words of the unofficial national anthem of Scandinavia, "Länge var Nordens herlige stamme" ("Long was *Norden*'s magnificent stem"), containing such memorable turns of phrase as the following:

"Long was the North's magnificent stem divided in three languishing shoots; the might once able to master the world did pork from foreigners' tables chew.

Once more the divided now intertwines, in time to come to be as one.

Then shall the free and mighty North lead to victory its peoples' cause!"⁵

The northern stereotype of own moral privilege, although rooted in glorious times of Sweden's dominance on international arena during XVII century, remains until now as a strong baseline for regional cooperation and mental exception of Scandinavian countries from the rest of Europe. Another ideological trend, which contributed to re-evaluation of *Norden* was scandinavism. By representing a complex cultural phenomenon scandinavism highlighted the differences between *Europe* and *Norden*.

The Nordic countries have a lot in common, and throughout centuries the Nordic countries have slowly been constructed in a way that makes them look like each other and in many ways be different from the other countries in Europe and the rest of the world. The common history and to a certain degree the common language and common cultural heritage are also part of the foundation of the Nordic identity, and thus the Nordic co-operation. One may find transformed scandinavism in these processes. In recent years, the co-operation has especially been focused on environment and sustainable development, integration, removal of border limitations in the North, technological development and research. In this connection, we can for example mention Øresund region, which is an example of such a co-operation across country borders.

In a wider international context the European identity of the Northern European countries is of special interest. Traditional belonging to European or Western civilization didn't obligatory mean self euro-identification by the Northern Europeans.

For instance, in the first half of the XX century *Europe* was a foreign land to majority of the Scandinavians. They used expression "nede I Europa" – "there in *Europe*" to mark events that took place on the continent. The rise of fascist regimes in Italy, Germany and Spain, disability of the great powers to stand against their expansion, in Scandinavian view, proved gradual degradation of *Europe* towards barbarianism. Thus the continent became the synonym of risky and dangerous.

In contemporary usage the meaning of *Europe* is mainly connected with the EU. This view became dominant after the Second World War. Correspondingly, the primary meaning of "European" in contemporary political usage is "supporter of the European Union", "committed European", "dedicated European". On the contrary to other European states to whom *European* meant more democratic, more modern, just, open – a sort of distilled essence of the best contemporary European practice, to the Scandinavians - *Europe* embodied 'four C's' – conservatism, capitalism, Catholicism and colonialism⁶.

At the deeper level, *Norden* represented a model of the enlightened, anti-militaristic society that was superior to the old *Europe*. Being "Nordic" meant being part of Europe, but being a little better off than the rest. In being more peaceful than Europe and in having more social and global solidarity. Thus Nordic identity itself was shaped and dependent for its identity on Europe remaining divided, highly armed and marked by certain level of tension.

The failures of the Nordic states to build regional co-operation schemes in economical and defense spheres during 1940-1960-s showed the gloomy reality instead of illusions to blow the second wind into the mighty of the Kalmar Union^{*}. In these circumstances the Scandinavians were forced to find mutual understanding with the European continent, although having a reputation of 'reluctant Europeans'.

Since 1950s the Northern European countries, namely Denmark and Norway, intensify their contacts with the Six in order to achieve full membership in the Common Market. Scandinavian politicians described *EU* as a "building" – as a "room" or a "house" or a "fortress", raising interest among common voters about the inhabitants of this "house", the purpose of the "building"

and etc. When the *EU* was to be seen in organic terms as a “person”, it could be said that European cooperation was “born” after World War II, that it “matured” through the institutionalization of the EEC, and that it was now coming of age”. Or alternatively, one might talk about the *EU* as “sclerotic”, or point out that its “brain” was too small and its “body” too large, or even that it was “dead”. The most common metaphor was, however, that of the *EU* as a “vehicle” moving towards a destination, typically a “train” moving along a “track”. The train was passing “station” and it was important to “get on” before it left, or at least to get out of the way before “the train runs us over.” Like *EU* train had a “timetable” and the day of the referendum was the day of departure⁷.

The public discussion on Europe was the most significant during the referendum campaigns of 1972 in Norway and Denmark. Retrospective view on mental constructions of *Europe* in speeches, political slogans, manifestos shows the differences between euro enthusiasts and euro skeptics. Euro enthusiasts put *Europe* in line with technical progress, innovations, high living standards, new working places. Whereas euro skeptics insisted that to become *European* mean to become related with eurocrats, “Brussels octopus” and “gnomes of Zurich”, confirming ideas about the *EU* as yet another bureaucratic monster clumsily imposing common standards in ill advised attempt to create a rational, centrally organized society.

While the Nordic states for centuries were a part of a common pan-European culture, nevertheless they perceived Scandinavian culture as distinct; this view was strengthened in the first half of the 20th century, and has shaped the early Nordic opinion on European integration, which was further re-evaluated. The process of further re-identification of Europe by the Scandinavians was considerably softened by globalization tendencies. Nowadays it has a compromise character. Regarding the Northern Europe, representing a complex fusion of interpretative horizons, of past and present elements, the new outlook, which even implies a re-writing of history, has led to a pronounced interest in the Baltic Sea region. Thus for the north-eastern European states this includes not only integration into Europe but also incorporation into newer geographical and geopolitical concepts of the so-called New North as well as the sub-region of the Baltic Sea States. It seems that there is no *magnum opus* on Baltic cooperation and that *Baltic Sea Region* still waits its Fernand Braudel, that is a historian able to depict the *longue dure´e* of this European region.

¹ K. Hacker, "Political Linguistic Discourse Analysis", in M.E. Stuckey (ed.), *The Theory and Practice of Political Communication research*.-New York: New York Press, 1996.- p. 33.

² E. Ringmar, "Identity, Interest and Action. A Cultural Evolution of Sweden's Intervention in the Thirty Years War".- Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996.- pp. 75-8.

³ Ringmar E. *Re-Imagining Sweden: The Rhetorical Battle Over EU Membership* // *Scandinavian Journal of History*.- 2001.-Vol. 23.-p. 50

⁴ Henningsen B. *Die schwedische Konstruktion einer nordischen Identität durch Olof Rudbeck*.-Berlin.- S. 9, 36.

⁵ Holmberg A. *On the Practicability of Scandinavism: Mid-nineteenth century Debate and Aspirations* // *Scandinavian Journal of History*.-1984.-Vol. 9.-№ 3.-pp. 171-182;

⁶ Østergård U. *Entre deux mers. Comparing the Mediterranean and Baltic Sea* // Schymik C., Henze V., Hille J. (eds.) *Go North! Baltic Sea Region Studies: Past-Present-Future*.-Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag., 2006.-p. 15

* The Kalmar Union was a series of personal unions (1397–1524) that united the three kingdoms of Denmark, Norway (with Iceland) and Sweden (including Finland) under a single monarch.

⁷ Ringmar E. *Re-Imagining Sweden: The Rhetorical Battle Over EU Membership*// *Scandinavian Journal of History*.- 2001.-Vol. 23.-p. 52-53