“Democracy includes the opportunity to know full personal freedom, security and welfare. Those who enjoy privileges need to understand that liberty is not diminished if it is shared by everyone”

Einar Gerhardsen 1947

Prime Minister Norway 1945-65

NORDIC WELFARE, COOPERATION & GREEN GROWTH

SCOTLAND, INDEPENDENCE AND THE NORDICS

Look north, Scotland

Lesley Riddoch

A future as a populous and accessible part of the Nordic region could be transformational

Is Scotland really a long-lost bit of Scandinavia? Geologically speaking it is – Scotland was once part of the Nordic landmass (albeit several million years ago). Genetically speaking, island Scots have more Norse DNA than any other Britons. Culturally speaking, Norse occupation left Scotland with Viking place names and a Presbyterian share of the Lutheran distaste for pomp, bling, display and status.

But England had its own brush with Viking occupation. Trade also linked Scotland to Holland and France. The empire saw wealthy Scots trade tobacco, sugar and slaves across the world. Last century, Irish migrants piled in from the west and the rule of law stretched up from the south. The Scots are a mongrel nation and (usually) proud of it. So why have SNP strategists suggested Scotland could "join the Nordic circle of nations" if there's a yes vote in the forthcoming independence referendum?

Are the Nordic nations sought out just because they are "family", or because they've become the smartest, healthiest and most successful country cousins for miles around?

Scotland, like Norway, has important oil, gas, hydro and fish reserves. Scotland, like Sweden, has emerged from half a century of solid Labour voting. Parts of Scotland, like Finland, are struggling with a legacy of bad diet; and Scotland, like Denmark, has fully embraced wind and marine energy.

But Scotland, like tiny Iceland (and the mighty United States), was brought to the edge of bankruptcy by its banks. The bailout from Westminster torched Alex Salmond's first attempts to forge links between Scotland, Iceland, Norway and Ireland in the "Arc of Prosperity". So this time round the solid, dependable, mainland nations of Scandinavia are in the SNP's sights.

The late Labour MP Peter Shore observed in the 1990s that John Smith might not be the ideal UK leader because he was "too Nordic to understand southern greed". Since then voting patterns seem to have proved him right. Just like their Nordic neighbours, Scots have created a social democratic consensus in which only the national question creates unusually deeply divided opinion.

Scotland has always had a dual identity. Since the Treaty of Union in 1707, its formal position within the UK has defined it as a relatively remote, small, infertile, leftward-leaning, homogenous, northern nation. But looked at differently, Scotland is the most accessible, second most populous, fertile, ethnically diverse and southern part of the Nordic region. Which reality would you rather inhabit?

There are, however, many points of divergence. Scotland industrialised earlier and harder than the Nordics, retained feudal land tenure, failed to embrace co-ops and social enterprise, and is governed by massive "local" authorities.

The Nordic nations are characterised by relatively tiny but powerful municipal councils; high income tax to equalise opportunity with comparatively low business taxes; "flat" organisational structures with little hierarchy; social contracts where unions are involved in everyday management decisions; relatively cheap land prices; strong connections with nature, with weekends spent in wooden cottages, not shopping malls; greater gender equality; high levels of investment in research and human capital; almost no private education; and universal, affordable kindergarten with a school starting age of six, not four.

Currently Scotland can tick only a couple of these boxes – but that's precisely why comparison with the nations of the north could be so transformational. If the Nordics are willing to tolerate a limping understudy, the Scottish government could apply for the equivalent of observer status tomorrow.

Already the first policy modelled on a Nordic neighbour has rumbled its way through Holyrood. I was a member of the Scottish government's prisons commission which recommended the Finnish community payback model after a fact-finding trip to Helsinki.

Since 2009, a thinktank I co-founded, Nordic Horizons, has held seven packed meetings in the Scottish parliament on the applicability of Nordic models. Labour and SNP MSPs have attended in almost equal numbers.

So the ball is rolling. Joining the Nordics would give Scotland the same almost impossible catch-up challenge that now faces Greece, Italy and Portugal in the eurozone. But it is precisely the kind of challenge Scotland needs.

Lesley Riddoch is a member of the North Atlantic Research Group

Greenland
Iceland
Norwegian Sea
FAROE ISLANDS
Sápmi
Finland
Norway
Åland Islands
Shetland Islands
Sweden
North Atlantic Ocean
Orkney Is.
Western Isles (Hebrides)
Est.
Latvia
Scotland
North Sea
Baltic Sea
Lith.
Denmark
N. Ireland
Russia
Man
Ireland
Poland
Wales
England
Netherlands
Germany
Belgium
France
Lux.
Czech Rep.

UK ELECTION RESULTS IN SCOTLAND

1979

2010

1997

.....AND THE OVERALL PICTURE IN 2010

EMPOWERMENT (1)

ENERGY

Wick 1900

Hammerfest 1900

SELF RELIANT HAMMERFEST

HAMMERFEST

ENERGIHUSET

HUSBANKEN

….AND TODAY

HAMMERFEST STROM

Hammerfest

LOVING THE COLD

AND WICK ?

SCOTTISH "LOCAL" COUNCILS

STATUS QUO & EUROPEAN AVERAGE

EMPOWERMENT (2)
DEMOCRACY

- Community council budget £400.
- Council election --38% turnout Scotland
  -- 32% England 80% Nordic av
- 1/2071 Scots stand for election. (1/81 Norway)
- Why?
- 1814 Norway 45% got vote
- 1832 Britain 5% got vote

DISEMPOWERMENT (3)
HOUSING

GLASGOW

OSLO

BUT MIND THE BACK

Edinburgh

Copenhagen

EMPOWERMENT (4)
CHILDREN

KINDERGARTEN -- SCOTLAND

THE NORDIC WELFAIRYTALE

- High equality
- Between rich and poor
- Between men and women
- Incomes
- Employment
- Earnings

WOMEN IN WORK – KIDS IN KINDERGARTEN

Childcare costs

£1400 **2 toddlers full time Edinburgh**

£500 **Copenhagen**

Women working

65% **women work in Britain (2010)**

74.4% **women work in Denmark**

(Men 79% & 76% respectively.)

Result

One million women "missing" fm UK w/force.
Resolution Foundation

"If Norway was to reduce female workforce participation to the OECD average, the country would lose ….**as much wealth as the entire oil sector and the Oil Fund provide.**

Sigbjorn Johnsen, Norwegian finance minister

- Goal is to maximise the realization of human capital for all
- Almost all public policies are directed towards increasing work
- Welfare model not only about securing a safety net or providing insurance and compensation, but also social investments
- Welfare services attractive for the affluent and affordable for all –increasing social solidarity and increasing support for welfare services.

LIFE SATISFACTION

TRUST IN OTHERS

Independent
mindedness

SKALANES -- **ICELAND**

ZO·ON
berghaus

INDEPENDENT PEOPLE

NORDIC HORIZONS -- FACING THE FUTURE?

www.nordichorizons.org