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Polish representations of Norden during the epistemic gateway of the 1970s and 1980s

Bakgrund/Frågeställning

Despite an ambivalent stance of the press, media and different publics towards the Nordic exceptionalism around the world, the attractiveness of the Nordic countries in Poland remains exceptionally high. It can be witnessed not only in the record-high labour migration of Poles to Norway in the last decade, but also in such phenomena as the unwavering interest of the young Poles to pursue Scandinavian Studies and in frequent mentioning of the Scandinavian/Nordic solutions whenever a progressive example of rational and meritocratic policy is needed in the public policy reforms and debates.

My contribution asserts that a particular knowledge regime about the progressive Nordic countries in Poland has a longer history, with the foundations laid in the 1970s and 1980s. The two decades offered relatively secure conditions for the narratives emerging under the Cold War reality and during this period the image of the Swedish middle way became a golden means signifying social progressiveness, political moderation and nonalignment as characteristic to the whole of Scandinavia.

In the paper I will analyse Polish publications on Norden from the 1970s and 1980s to illustrate the narratives that were characteristic for the knowledge regime functioning to the east of the Cold War divide. Despite prolific and voluminous literature published in Polish on the Nordic countries, these narratives are far less known than their Anglo-American counterparts.

The authors of the books written in Polish utilized the epistemic gateway of the 70s and 80s to produce (and reproduce) certain narratives that were results of the interplays between their epistemic sensitivity, habitus and the externally binding knowledge claims and frames. They created an assemblage of representations, symbols and worldviews concerning Norden that were anchored in their academic and educational experience. What is crucial is that these narratives on Norden were also constituted and mediated by authors having their academic and non-academic socialisation in the national culture that in Norden attracted a rather marginal attention.

By analysing the Polish narratives emerging in the 1970s and 80s, I will contribute to a better understanding of the current popularity of Norden in Poland and I will also fill the gap of the Nordic selfunderstanding in relation to its near abroad in the past.

Metod och Resultat

Konklusion