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Special relationships: images of Nordic neighbours at 20th century Winter Olympics

Bakgrund/Frågeställning

As space, nation and regionality continues to constitute central concepts for the understanding of Nordic identity today, political discussions on imagined geography demands to be informed not only by a historiography of political events, but also by a deeper understanding for cultural and emotional history. Within my project, I am therefore inspired to provide new perspectives on how the 20<sup>th</sup> century Nordics imagined their neighbouring Nordic countries, by analysing media narratives of neighbours at the Olympic Winter Games.

As media events, modern Olympic games stand at the crossroads between emotional history, cultural history and the history of imagined geographies. Within the Olympic media universe, geography is presented as a world of nations, where athletes compete for their country, against those competing for foreign ones. Through the games thus, imaginings of space become visible through the media's cultural and emotional sense-making.

Furthermore, Winter games are of a particular relevance to studies of Norden culturally. From the 1930's onward, these games have gathered widespread attention from audiences in Finland, Norway and Sweden, who have continuously desired and expected victories in various disciplines, since winter sports have been conceived of as integral to national identity in all three countries. Simultaneously however, certain winter sports were also constructed as parts of a regional Nordic identity, meaning that tensions arose between concepts of region and nation. My diachronic analysis of how Nordic media represented Nordic neighbouring countries will thus provide new perspectives on how different forms of geographic categorisations interplay, and what the distinct regionality of Norden meant to its inhabitants.

At this conference, I am particularly interested in sports media's representation of emotional relationships between Sweden, Norway and Finland at the games as neighbours. Winter Olympic imaginings of a collective Nordic identity have already been investigated during previous stages of my project, but this particular conference paper aims to contrast and compare this imagined collectivity with notions of imagined relationships between separate nation states as signifying "nordicity". The paper will thus connect markedly to academic fields such as emotional history, sports history and media history.

Metod och Resultat

Konklusion