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THE NORDIC COUNTRIES IN YEAR 2000:
A Vision of Self-reliance

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1. Nordic self-reliance: An Overview

One may ask: why all this talk about visions when ~~the Nordic~~ ^{countries} are functioning not too badly at all? Nobody ~~in~~ ^{real} his or her ~~right~~ ^{mind} can talk about a crisis in the Nordic countries anno 1985, except, perhaps, for the seemingly chronic unemployment rates for young people in Denmark. ^[1] Answer: because non-crisis may turn into crisis given the long-term trends of the total world system, not for the world as a whole, but for those who have benefitted most from the ^{now} system ^{being} challenged, the First world, and more particularly the First circle of Northwest European and North American countries. And the Nordic nations, all nine of them, are in that circle. Moreover, visions should be discussed when we are in relatively tranquil waters. When the going is rough there is no time to discuss visions; reactions will be more ritualistic, almost instinctive. Social change is the legitimate child of a crisis in which is injected a vision - but the gestation period takes time, not to mention the courtship period. Now is the time to start, not when the crisis is there, for all to see

To elaborate a vision some assumptions are needed, beyond the obvious that we want qualitatively better societies, quality of life and nature for the whole Nordic area, at the expense of no other part of the world (the addition being rather important, often that turns out to be the difference between right and left wing policies - the latter having more solidarity with countries, people, nature elsewhere). Of course we want this. But we also want some kind of security, some guarantee that our state of affairs can last. We want some basis that is relatively invulnerable, like a family building their house strong enough to withstand the shocks, insults from nature, perhaps not the shock that comes once a century but at least those that come once a decade. And this is precisely where self-reliance enters: make your society ^{strong} so that you are able to survive on your own resources in times of crises; act in times of non-crisis so that the crises are less likely to hit you!

Enough introduction. Here is the basic scheme of thought

	ECONOMIC relations	POLITICAL relations	MILITARY relations	CULTURAL relations
WORLD system	equitable exchange with all	more positive, non-provocative; less negative; sanctions	defensive	open to the whole world
NORDIC system	regional self-reliance	a Nordic parliament; executive; judiciary	a Nordic defense union non-aligned	Nordic cultural institutions
NATIONAL system	national self-reliance	more federal structures; democracy, direct, indirect	conventional; para-military; non-military	Much more surplus to culture
LOCAL system	local self-reliance	more local autonomy; direct relations	strong local basis	strong local basis

This is evidently the vision of a social scientist. Here are four social "systems", the whole world, the Nordic countries with nine nations, and the local level - which is not necessarily the same as the municipalities of today. Some may have to undergo fission in order to be local enough; others may undergo fusion -- in some cases borders will be redrawn. But all of that are processes going on all the time, anyhow.

In commenting on the Table let me say from the very beginning that nothing particularly dramatic is contained in the vision; nor is anything that dramatic, in my view, needed. These are only some proposals about how to relate these four social spaces to each other so that quality of human life stands a better chance within the social structure provided, and the social structure itself can withstand some of the shocks that may be in the cards, also for us. And in order to discuss that, as a very minimum one has to say something about the three major forms of power: exchange power in the realm of economics, coercive power in the realm of military relations, and then politics, the power to decide over power relations, idea power in the realm of culture, For let us make no bones about it: what we are talking about is power, the question is what kind of power. And the basic argument is this: the key to security is to have more power over ourselves, and the key to that is self-reliance.

I think the way to start is by commenting on the word "self-reliance". [2] It refers to a particular, but not peculiar, way of organizing economic relations, according to the following key principles:

- (1) If you want something, try first to produce on the basis of your own resources (meaning economic "factors"; nature, labor, capital, administration, research), in other words through production.
- (2) If these prove insufficient, but only then, try to get it through exchange, in return for something you have in excess.
- (3) In choosing your exchange partners try to observe the following principles:
 - that they are at about the same level of technical development,
 - that the exchange stimulates ^{both} your, and their, production capacity
 - that the spin-off effects (research, education etc) are about equal
 - that you do not become dependent on anyone, nor anyone on you
- (4) This reasoning applies not only for the national, but also for the local and regional levels
- (5) At all these levels, but particularly the local ones, see to it that production capacity for essentials, meaning what is needed to satisfy the basic needs of the population, is secured.

What this means in practise is a soft type of economic relations, not the jungle type that is the consequence of own utility maximization using the ideology of "comparative advantages" as a guide (which may work between countries at the same level of development and then becomes similar to requirement no. 3 above - but leaving the other four criteria out of the picture). A basic point about self-reliance is that it builds self-reliance in the other side through equitable interdependence, and by securing the basis ^{supplies} what is needed for basic needs, _{crisis} at least in times of crisis. In the ^A setting self-reliance spells self-sufficiency, and is a condition for high level of power over ourselves, less vulnerable to the outside world, eg to blackmail. [3]

There is much politics in this. A basic idea is to build good relations through economics, like a good marriage where cooperation is on an equal basis, not assuming that "comparative advantages" makes it "logical" for the wife to spend the whole day in the kitchen and the husband the whole day in some office. Use your own resources and get the stimulation that entails; then exchange but with care -- and practise this at all levels of social organization.

Since people live at the local level it is at the local level this system, ultimately, has to be tested. And one basic aspect of the self-reliant economy would be its capacity to satisfy the basic needs for food, shelter, clothes, health, education, labor-saving devices, a minimum of comfort, at the local level. What this means in practise is very simple: that each part of the country has some agricultural and industrial capacity, in addition to health and education services. In other words, what is usually referred to as the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of economic activity should be very well mixed geographically, not sorted and allocated to different regions of the country, agraria, industria and servicia. One could even go one step further: beyond the local (or meso) level there is a micro level, the household, family or commune with its kitchen garden, its workshop and its own "services", ^{and} its own health and education facilities. But one should not require that of all households. Self-reliance at that level should be possible, facilitated; not obligatory.

So, the logic of the scheme becomes something like this. First, try to satisfy a given need/want through production at the local level, or even at the micro level. Then, if that does not work proceed to the national level through exchange with other local units within the nation, at the same level more or less, not breeding dependency patterns. Then, if that does not work either go abroad, ^{first} but [^] within the Nordic level. But who goes abroad - is it the municipality or the nation of that municipality? And where? It could, and should be the municipality itself that "shops around", through its own innovative foreign economic policy. But if many municipalities within a country have the same type of needs/wants, then the problem could also be handled at the national level -- or at both levels. In the first run this would extend the exchange pattern to the Nordic system; in the next run to the whole world, but retaining as much as possible of the local initiative.

It should be noted that in this vision nothing is said about private vs. public, capital vs. state, market vs. plan. The reason is that these are ^{not necessarily} the important distinctions. More important is using one's own resources first, getting the spin-off effects for oneself, and then generously generating them in others by offering exchange ~~of~~ products at approximately the same level of processing. Maybe one fruitful way of thinking would be in terms of locally based, small-scale capitalism on a market basis, coordinated through soft national and regional planning mechanisms. But no rigidity in such formulas would be necessary, or - indeed - advisable. Moreover, successive phases with changing emphasis may also be useful.

Another point to be noted is the absence of any priority to First, Second or Third circle countries in the world system outside the Nordic countries. It is certainly not considered wise to stop exchanging with First circle countries, because they have been "bad" (which they have) or because they are in "deep crisis" (which they will be). However, if the exchange is to be equitable it will almost have to be with countries at roughly the same level, and in the First circle that might point to Benelux, the British Isles with the exception of England herself, and to Canada - in other words to some kind of outer Nordic circle, the Greater Nordic system. Too much trade with the United States, or with England, France, Germany may easily lead to **dependency**-formation.

Outside the First circle the search would be for good trade partners according to the self-reliance formula, and they can be found in the Second, the Third and the Fourth worlds. However, to bring people more into the picture, and in order to retain local self-reliance, the trade-partners should ^{preferably} be local level economic organizations, private firms, collective cooperatives, public enterprises, not only trade ministries, big public and private corporations, etc.

[Some of this exchange might take the form known today as "development assistance", but with three cautionary notes. Thus, the economics of self-reliance is already development assistance, since it is so basic needs oriented and aims at promoting self-reliant capabilities in the other party. Moreover, with the emphasis here on the local level it would more easily put people, not only national level experts in contact with each other. Organizations would send local level officers rather than top national bureaucrats. "Assistance" would be less of a question of what goes on between negotiating elites. And thirdly, and that is the basic point: reciprocity should be requested. A gift is an insult at best, at worst a very tricky way of creating a lasting dependence by cashing in, over time, on the gift as an investment. The rest is a question of imagination: what form should the reciprocity take! Technology against social services, for instance, with the Third world teaching us their patterns of mutual care?

So much for the economic aspect - more will be said in later sections. In a world where economics is given primacy by the (still) leading ideologies, and a crisis is seen basically in economic terms, one is forced to give a certain primacy to economic relations. But, following the table, military, cultural and political relations are just as important, and here there are also some institutional remarks to be made, some innovations - if not exactly epoch-making.

Some people might find it strange that military relations are discussed in that context at all. There is taboo against this type of discussion at the Nordic level, with the NATO members putting the blame on Finland (said not to be permitted by the Soviet Union) and Finland putting the blame on Norway-Denmark (said not to want any discussion of alternatives to the alliance). The Nordic Council shuns this theme, which is no reason for us to do the same. Visions should always be welcome - when they are politically ripe is another matter.

So, let us bring in the military relations. The way I see it by far the most sensible policy for the Nordic countries-as a whole-would be to combine non-alignment, preferably even strict neutrality, with a totally non-provocative, defensive defense organization, carried by a Nordic defense union. It would build on elements in Swedish and Finnish defense policies and would presuppose that Norway, Denmark and Iceland leave NATO, or that NATO changes character so that either some (among them the Nordic) or all members can adopt a strictly defensive doctrine. I see nothing in this that would be incompatible with the content of the Soviet-Finnish Treaty of 1948.⁽⁵⁾ Russia/Soviet Union has suffered such tremendous insults from the West (and from Dzhirghis Khan) that non-provocative neighbors probably will remain a psycho-political necessity for decades, even generations to come.

The defense, then, is organized with the mixture of conventional, para-military and nonmilitary components that would be deemed appropriate at each place. It would function as an occupation- rather than an invasion-defense, and be based on small, mobile, dispersed, autonomous and locally based units that cannot possibly constitute a threat to other countries, yet be effective in defending their own. Very important is the idea of a strong local basis for the defense effort, meaning that the defense can continue after a national capital has been conquered, or the top staff been captured.

This is not the place to go more into details; only one point should be emphasized. The word "union" in Nordic defense union can be interpreted in many ways. It stands for a joint effort, for a coordinated policy. Attack on one is attack on all. However, there should be a warning against any idea of long distance military assistance, at very short warning, in times of war or pre-war. Such logistic capabilities would also be what is needed for aggressive action, hence provocative. Consequently, intra-Nordic ^{of} prestocking heavy military matériel may be a good idea, including troops from other Nordic countries, and not only for joint maneuvers.⁽⁶⁾

From the military let us have a look at the Nordic organization of cultural relations. So much has already been done. There are countless joint Nordic initiatives all over in the fields of art and science, of all kinds. Is there really anything more to do? Perhaps not so much more at the Nordic level, but certainly nationally and locally.

I think it should be emphasized that there is a limit to how cooperative culture can be. Although there is no limit to deepening and extending Nordic cultural bureaucracy of all kinds, public and private, production of culture is ultimately an act carried out by individuals whose creative energies might suffer when having to cooperate in all kinds of directions. The great authors did not write their books in teams or networks; it is far from obvious that their masterpieces would have been better had they done so. Rather, the point must be to legitimize artistic ^{and research} activity as a perfectly normal and highly desirable way of life, to be combined with other pursuits much as it is done in the three cultured islands, Iceland, ^{Åland,} and the Færø archipelago. The point must be that a higher proportion of our total life budget can be dedicated to finding and giving meaning. And again, as people live at the local level this is where culture has to be built by making it easier for people to build cultural activity into their life cycles. Ultimately the consumption of culture also takes place at the individual level - that is where meaning is found.

A condition for this are more resources ^{for} culture. What, indeed, should be the whole purpose of amassing all these riches if we could not by now put aside more for production-distribution-consumption cycles of all kinds of culture? Very much is being done, but cultural budgets are also being reduced as if we had already done too much. Any kind of intrinsically pleasant and edifying symbolic activity should be encouraged, at the local, national and Nordic levels (Nordic TV channels are so obvious that they simply have to come). But this should also be done with a view to exchange with the rest of the world, encouraging interest in non-European cultures. Openness to the whole world, in other words. Including religions. Houses of culture, book cafes; small universities in many or most municipalities - not more utopian than the corresponding idea for

Let us then turn to politics. Politics is not merely power, it is power over power, "meta-power". Should power be exercised through ideas (culture), through money, using planning and/or

the market (economy) or through threats and ultimately the use of force (military)? Any decision taken is politics, whether openly arrived at or not, consciously arrived at or more the result of structures at work. In the Nordic setting it may look as if the instrument of politics is money, the money in the market and/or the money in the public budgets. But there is more idea power than what meets the naked eye - built into the Nordic social cosmology as explored in the preceding chapter. And there is also much more coercive power-that can be used against dissidents of various kinds, an example being the use of rather naked state power in the confrontation over ancient same land in Alta-Kautokeino- than usually admitted. It is only below the political surface.

The argument can be made, and certainly has been made in political history, that at least basic decisions should be arrived at openly and deliberately; openly for everybody concerned at least to know what happens, deliberately because it is undignified for human beings with their faculties to be drifting like leaves in a stream - exposed to structures and processes, willy-nilly. It should be noted that this is not the same as democracy. But it goes far towards being a precondition for democracy: there is a process of decision-making that can be watched by the citizens. Democracy, however, goes one important step further: not only watching, but participation in the decision-making! And that for two clear reasons sharing of responsibility in decisions affecting oneself, and human and social development as consequence of the challenge of participation.

I think the argument can be made that democracy presupposes a high level of local autonomy. The reason is simple: the local level permits mutual visibility, people know where they stand, direct democracy is feasible even if not institutionalized, it exists in embryonic form. And yet, if under such conditions there is no local autonomy but steering from remote centers, then the discrepancy

between the popular will and what actually happens simply becomes too great. Credibility is strained. But that autonomy has to have an economic basis, which is exactly what local self-reliance is about. And it must include the freedom to relate to the local level elsewhere.

But the consequence of this type of thinking - trivial in federal countries like Switzerland and even the Federal Republic of Germany - would be a federal rather than unitary state structure. The number of layers will depend on the size of the country. There will probably have to be a two chamber system in the national assembly, one representing individuals and one representing the local levels. In the latter those local levels can also cultivate, with ease, the direct contacts inside the country - the ball passing straight between them. It does not have to lose energy bouncing up and down to and from the national level. In short, Norway and Finland, Denmark and Sweden as federations rather than unitary states.

At the Nordic level I see no reason why one should not be working for replications of the state-carrying institutions at the national level: a legislative, executive and judiciary. They should not have too much to say and ^{to} do, too often, but not too little either. Maybe more than the Nordic institutions today, less than the corresponding institutions for the European Community. [B] With a strong emphasis on the local level there should be no fear that too much power is delegated upwards till it disappears and never comes back to the people again. However, direct elections to a Nordic parliament and televised debates would be meaningful, if not exactly sensational. A Nordic court for human rights issues might also be a good idea, maybe a Nordic ombudsman. But the Nordic system should not aim at becoming a Bundes-staat. A Staates-bund is enough.

And then the world level; the First circle of North-Western Europe and North America, the Second circle of Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean countries, the Third Circle consisting of the rest, with the challenge from the outer Third circle, the Fourth world of East and Southeast Asia. What should be the general guideline for joint Nordic foreign policy, so to speak?

Again, not that different from today, particularly not that different from the foreign policy of ~~the~~ most autonomous Nordic country, Sweden. There is already considerable coordination at the level of the UN. I think the point of departure is power analysis and to turn that gift from history, that we do not ~~have~~ the capacity to attack anybody - except, historically, ourselves - into a true blessing. One implication is not to ^{military} provoke through policies of deterrence that may be interpreted as preparations for attack. Another implication is a ^{defensive} strong policy of defense, with all that implies for NATO membership for the three alliance members. Still one more implication would be a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the big neighbor to the East, the Soviet Union - not too different from the Finnish-Soviet treaty of 1948 - but with two important additional points. The treaty should be symmetrical, explicitly making it an obligation for any Nordic country to defend itself and the rest of the Nordic system against an attack not on but from any power. And, implicit in what has been just said, have a corresponding treaty with the other superpower, and other countries for that matter.

Idea power: I would say, do not evangelize, let people come and judge for themselves. They may decide our history and geographical context were different; they may also decide that the result is not that fantastic, for instance in terms of human development (however impressive the social development, relative to many other countries).

Exchange power: I would say, trade according to the principles of self-reliance, not according to moral principles of whether the partner is good or bad, democratic or not. If it is our general experience that economic sanctions are not very helpful in bringing countries into the fold of well-behaving countries, then maybe one should abstain from that moral luxury. Maybe the satisfaction of basic needs and rights, including democracy, is better promoted by rewarding countries (through trade and exchange in general) for the good things they do than punishing them for the bad.

A look at the table, but this time read horizontally in terms of social spaces, rather than vertically in terms of social sectors ^{now} may [^] be useful as a quick summary.

The centerpiece is actually not the Nordic level, but the local space. ^[8] capable of satisfying the basic material needs through new energy conversion technologies (solar, wind, geo- and aqua-thermic, waves, biomass) and intensive new types of agriculture. The local space has a high level of autonomy, including the possibility of establishing ties to any other local community in the world, of having its own domestic and foreign policy, so to speak, provided it does not impede the self-reliance of others (is not economically, politically, militarily, culturally, [^]aggressive, in other words).

But people are not condemned to live at the local level, or at the same local level. They are, of course, free to move wherever they want. Although the general vision is that the largest cities will decrease and the local levels increase in (relative) size - also depending on ^{general} the demographic development - there will be cities, with a higher level of cultural life. They will still be attractive. People should be able to spin life-lines, even life-cycles through a number of local levels, near and distant from the origin, according to their inclinations. Society should be flexible. But ultimately there has to be a guarantee for maintaining one's physical life; I see that guarantee in the capacity of the local level to supply life necessities. And this is also the only place where nature can be really protected because any abuse hits the abuser, through depletion and (toxic) pollution.

There are enormous problems of equality and equity between the local levels, to be handled at the national, federal level and at the Nordic level. There has to be a Nordic capital somewhere, maybe rotating between those two remarkable islands, Farø and Åland - models of the future, with autonomy and rich external relations. ^[9] Our logistic capacity is more than sufficient to overcome island locations. The smallness of the islands would keep the Nordic bureaucracy small, the question is whether it would keep the islands beautiful - But the symbolism is important, with no big country or capital-imposing itself. On no condition a Nordic super-state!

At that point I choose to stop. The vision is there, sufficiently precise to identify a host of problems. Just to mention some:

- does the local level really have that carrying capacity? (probably yes, but only with some new, environmentally wiser, technologies)
- will the national bureaucracies want to devolve, to decentralize, thereby giving up much of their own power? (probably not, but then the model might be to strengthen the local level rather than weakening the national level - the example of the district high schools in Norway is a good one, the universities are still there).
- will this not lead to a Nordic egotism, so nordic-centered that the people will forget the rest of the world? (probably not. Sometimes that might be an advantage for the rest of the world, however. But the vision is not that different from the present arrangement, and at present Nordic people do radiate outwards in all possible ways, even militarily in UN peacekeeping operations).
- will the rest of the world really be inspired by this? (probably yes, because in the background a historical situation similar to their own, that of being overrun by other countries and by events; and because the methods, self-reliance including the local level, can be practised everywhere if the political will is present).

But that is the vision, the goal - what about the processes?

The process can only be carried by all those movements that have come as a response to the crisis, a crisis that may be alleviated by conjunctural cycles but is so intimately tied to the rise of the Second and Third circles that it will not go away. Each movement makes its concrete contribution. The best contribution is not on paper, but simply ^{by} doing it. Realizing at the local level a high degree of self-reliance, practising own foreign relations, including ^{even some} development assistance in the Third world, gaining experience, and governmental. Gradually it all reaches the national level - as, indeed, it has done. The process is already there. Much more important than governmental recognition is what all these movements are already doing.

But some political dedication to visions of this type must come, in the form of official Nordic declarations, at least of intent. What could be better than Kalmar 1997, six hundred years after the union that failed, negotiated by 17 Swedish, Danish and Norwegian gentlemen, but only signed by the Swedes? Or, Karlstad 1993 for the very urgent question of ^{common} Nordic defense - as distant from the collapse of the 1949 negotiations as they were from the successful 1905 talks permitting a peaceful dissolution of the Norway-Sweden union? Or - both, making the 1990s a decade of transition!

- (1) The often quoted figure is around 25%.
 - (2) For one relatively extensive treatment of the theory and practice of self-reliance, see Galtung, O'Brien, Preiswerk, Self-Reliance, A Strategy for Development, Bogle-L'Ouverture, London, 1980.
 - (3) For a general theory of power in this direction, see Johan Galtung, The True Worlds, Free Press, New York, 1980, ch. 2.4.
 - (4) One person trying to break the barrier is a delegate from the Faroe islands, Mr Erlendur Patursson at Kirkjubøur.
 - (5) For one exploration of this see Johan Galtung, There Are Alternatives! Spokesman, Nottingham, 1985, section 5.3. That book in general, and ch. 5 in particular, gives the rationale for the type of alternative security policy that is suggested here.
 - (6) For one analysis of the Nordic strategic situation, see Nils Petter Gleditsch, "Rovgriske ørne stirrer mot Norden", forsvar, 13-14/1984, pp. 27-31.
 - (7) In a general theory of associative peace-building (The True Worlds, p. 101, originally developed in Galtung and Lodgaard, eds., Co-operation in Europe, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, 1970, Part I) six factors are seen as essential for cooperative relations to be peace-productive:
equity - rather high among Nordic countries
entropy, interaction in all directions - extremely high
symbiosis, mutual usefulness - also very high
broad scope, widening agendas for interaction - extremely high
large domain, more than two parties, not too many - satisfied
superstructure - not very strong (the Nordic Council)
- The basic point is simply this: precisely because the first five factors operate so well the sixth is less necessary. The European Community is also high on entropy, symbiosis and scope but has considerably problems with equity and domain, particularly with 12 members. Much more superstructure may be needed to compensate for these structural shortcomings.
- (8) Actually, the best vision I know of is found in Peter Hall, ed., Europe 2000, London 1977, the section "One day in Europe 2000" (from the chapter "From ideology to utopia")- pp. 257-63.
 - (9) These islands are also models in the sense that this is what as many as possible of our municipalities, or more broadly, "local level units" should be like. It is interesting to note that islands seem to be particularly fruitful as raw material - think of Bornholm in Denmark, and Gotland and Öland in Sweden! It might also be added that Åland is now considering a major Nordic peace center.
 - (10) One of them being, I have to add, a forefather of the present author, Gaute Eirikssønn Galtung.
 - (11) A point made by the present author in a speech ("Karlstad 1905, Karlstad 1949, Karlstad 19--?") on the occasion of the Karlstad 400 years celebration, hosted by the municipal council June 1984.