



The Nordic Studies website:
“Nordic Studies in the World”
Introduction to the Project
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1 Introduction

Centres for Nordic Studies are spread all around the world: in Europe, North-America, Asia and even in Africa. At the moment these centres don't have any organized cooperation and therefore they are not always aware of the research and teaching projects or any other activities going on in other centres. The University of Helsinki Centre for Nordic Studies (CENS) has launched a pilot project which aims to create a website which unites the expertise on this field of study spread all over the globe. The working title of the project is *Nordic Studies in the World*.

The website would function as a research network between Nordic Studies Centres and hopefully would strengthen the collaboration of people working with Nordic issues. Additionally, the website would be a unique source of information for institutions and organizations seeking for expertise in the Nordic countries: it could help them get in contact with scholars and professors, and provide them with useful information about Nordic countries. In other words, the popularization of science is one of the main ideas behind this project.

1.1 Main Target Groups

Our aim is to create a website which serves various audiences. This website is mainly designed for three target groups which are:

- Researchers and teachers
- Students
- The Media, companies, politicians, decision makers and the general public

First of all, the website is meant to serve centres for Nordic studies as well as other academic institutes and university departments dealing with Nordic issues. The main target group is composed of researchers, professors, coordinators and other persons working as experts in this field. For this group the website would offer information about, significant research and important research projects in the field, upcoming Nordic Studies seminars and current publications. The site also offers them a possibility to get in contact with other persons working in the field: this way experts all around the world have opportunity to create new research networks. In addition, the site could certainly come in use for researchers of other

fields of study and students seeking courses and suitable establishments to study Nordic issues.

Secondly, though the basis of the website is mostly academic, the site also serves people and institutions outside the academic scene. The kind of profound information about Nordic countries that the site provides could be helpful for the media, politicians, companies trading in Nordic countries or planning trade into them or simply any person interested in Nordic countries.

As the main idea of this project is to unite the academic expertise in the Nordic topics and to promote research on the field, only academic centres within or outside universities which have a specific emphasis on Nordic issues are included in the project. This also is the reason why The Finnish Cultural and Academic Institutes are elided.

1.2 Content of the Website

Briefly, in order to tighten Nordic Studies cooperation, this site gives an overview on what's going on in the Centres for Nordic Studies. Most of all, this site will be a forum for upcoming events such as seminars, intensive courses and colloquiums. It also offers a possibility to Nordic Studies Centres to present their latest publications, current research projects and so on.

What comes to presenting research, Nordic issues will be treated in two different ways: in traditional way, subject by subject (history, political science, languages, art, technology and so on), and from a multidisciplinary point of view. The priority is given to the latter. Such research questions as "Welfare state, a good state?", "Strong Nordic woman?" and "Nordic legalistic tradition" will be given a high priority and will function as a base for dividing the information on the website.

Experts on the Nordic study field will be listed on the website to help people find the kind of expertise they need for different projects, seminars and so on. To make this research of specialist easy, all the experts will be listed in accordance with their specialization e.g. politics, history, literature and so on. Special emphasis will be given to young researchers and their work. Apart from their names, specialization and contact details, the list will include abstracts or even complete texts of their most important studies. Other key texts and descriptions of other projects in the field of Nordic Studies will be added on the website as well. Brief introductions to such aspects as the Nordic identity or the Nordic model of

cooperation would help achieving a better understanding of the real essence of Norden.

To tighten cooperation between the Nordic studies experts, the site would also include a discussion corner, a platform for debates and discussions. In addition, literature references on the web site will be completed as soon as we get resources for the meticulous research work that it requires.

Furthermore, Centres for Nordic studies will be listed on the website. In order to help students to find courses on Nordic studies, the site gives descriptions of the courses organised by Nordic studies centres, and links to web pages that offer on-line courses on Nordic topics. Key texts, literature references and descriptions of Nordic study projects will be useful to students as well. In addition, abstracts of studies dealing with Nordic topics would certainly come in handy for researchers of other fields of study. For those who are seeking general information about Nordic countries the site offers useful links to other web sites dealing with more common Nordic topics.

At the first stage of the project the Nordic Studies website would be only in English but after this first stage we are planning to further develop the web site. First of all, in addition to the English version, at least versions in Nordic languages will be added. We are also hoping to adjust interactivity on the web pages. For example recruiting services could be extremely useful for both teachers looking for work as well as Nordic studies centres seeking for lecturers for their courses. In addition, other instances needing experts in the field might very well be interested in this service.

2 Creation of the Product

The project will proceed in three phases. At the first stage of the project, launched in the beginning of February 2004, the initial preparations of the web project were done. Within three months we have been able to contact other European Centres for Nordic Studies, get some feed-back from them, discuss possible funding opportunities with different parties, draw up the content of the site and design its layout and user interface. At the end of stage one, we are hoping to get more comments and improvement proposals from the Centres for Nordic Studies in order to further develop this website so it could better correspond to the needs in the field.

The Centres for Nordic Studies as well as the other institutes and university departments dealing with Nordic topics have been brought together for

this project using different methods. First of all, Finnish Cultural and Academic institutes all over Europe have been a great help in our task. They have informed us about centres in their respective countries. Secondly, the Council for Finnish Studies at Universities abroad UKAN in the Centre for International Mobility CIMO has delivered us a list of Finnish departments all over the world. With a help of these two, we have been able to complete our list of the centres that was created on the basis of our own research through Internet.

During the second stage of this project, we will produce the first version of the website. This means that at this stage we will provide all the contents and build the actual web service. This first version will only be in English and it will be built in a way that it won't require updating on a daily basis. The improvement proposals we have got from other centres will obviously be taken into consideration in the production.

The second object of this stage is to market the product for the Nordic Studies Centres and for the potential partners, and create an organization which is in charge of updating and further developing of this site. In order to proceed to the third stage of this project we have to create demand for our product.

At the third stage of this project, our goal is to create the complete version of the website. Obviously, this is not to say that there won't be any developments in the future and that there won't be any need for updating. On the contrary, this version will also include all the sections which require constant updating and further developments. In other words, we will need a person responsible of the maintenance of this site. Therefore, before entering this stage, the funding of the site has to be organised.

2.1 Results of our First Enquiry

So far we have contacted 51 different departments and institutes working in the field of Nordic Studies. Some of those centres are specialized in Nordic Studies, others in teaching Finnish language and culture. So far only the most significant centres in European Nordic Studies scene have been able to reply us thus far; however, the results are promising. All of these centres are ready to participate in this project and are willing to give us all the information we need. It seems that centres have been wishing for this kind of cooperation for some time and therefore this website will really prove useful for these centres. It seems that since the Nordic studies specialists are usually hard to find, the list of Nordic Studies experts we are preparing is particularly needed in all centres that organize seminars,

meetings and courses in Nordic topics. Even such institutions as UKAN have expressed their interest toward this kind of function of the site.

Nordic Studies in following universities have already shown their sincere interest towards the project: Berlin, Caen, Freiburg, Genoa, Gent, Greifswald, Groningen, Hamburg, London, Mainz and Sorbonne.

2.2 Potential Partners

At the moment we are looking for partners for this project. We have had a very promising and encouraging meeting with Kristian Slotte and Heidi Kuusi from Ministry of Education in Finland where we received useful advice about funding opportunities for this kind of project. We believe that potential partners could be The Nordic Council of Ministers, The Swedish Institute, The Norwegian Institute, Nifin (Nordic Institute in Finland) and certain private foundations.

We also consider taking along sponsors to cover a part of the running expenses of the web site. These advertisers would of course be carefully chosen: only companies offering useful services to research communities will be accepted. For example a potential advertiser for us could be *ResearchResearch.com* and their print Medias like *Research Nordic* specialized in finding funding for all kinds of research projects.

2.3 Models

The administration of this website is still an open question as it depends on negotiations with our partners. So far we have been working with three types of models for running and funding the website. At the moment we think that the partnership model would definitively be the best one for this project.

The partnership model would mean development and establishment of a partnership with an outside party. In other words, the updating and developmental responsibilities would remain in CENS but the major part of funding would come from the outside, from Nordic Council of Ministers, for example. Other Centres for Nordic Studies would participate in funding with an annual fee which would allow them to publish on the website all their current events, news and so on, and get access to "the Working titles" section and have the right to comment the debate directly. Of course, this fee would also allow them to gain more publicity

because not only their current events, work and contact details would be published on the site but also their logo would appear on the bottom of every single page (see figure 5, the Layout).

The executive group of this organization would be chosen by major partners and CENS. This executive group would then have the right to choose the employees working in this project. Future developments of the website would also be discussed in executive group meetings. The real advantage of this model is that it doesn't require constant meetings with all the participants: executive group meetings twice a year would probably be sufficient. This way Nordic Studies Centres wouldn't have excessive travelling expenses and also the development of this website would be easier and quicker. In a nutshell, this model would guarantee this tool for co-operation and expertise promoting for Nordic Studies Centres with moderate costs.

Another solution could be creating an association for Nordic Studies. This association could co-ordinate money-raising and running the web site in general (updating, further development etc.). On the other hand, the responsibility of funding and updating could also be given to the consortium of institutes that will invest in the project.

2.4 This Website Compared to Other Similar Websites

There are plenty of all kinds of websites on the Internet, even those which are dealing with Nordic issues or the Nordic countries in general. However, The Nordic Studies in the World website is a unique feature because it unites research and education on Nordic topics and has a special emphasis on multidisciplinary topics and popularization of science.

Some examples of other similar websites: **Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study**, the SASS link. The website of SASS (SASSlink: <http://www.byu.edu/sasslink/>) is mostly focused on serve academic audiences and, most of all, members of the SASS. It's a network between scholars that offers a minimum of general information on Nordic issues. As we are aiming to offer information about the Nordic Study field and its current issues, we hope to get our website mentioned in the SASSlink. This way our website would gain more visibility and the valuable information that our website offers could be in the use of SASS members and supporters.

Nordenedu.net is a portal to higher education and study opportunities in the Nordic countries. It contains basic information about the Nordic countries and their respective higher education systems. This site could be linked in the Nordic Studies website because it gives good information about educational opportunities. Although our site will give information about these opportunities as well, contents of these sites isn't overlapping. The Nordic Studies in the World website will give information about education and courses concerning Nordic countries, whereas nordenedu.net concentrates on educational opportunities in Nordic countries in general.

3 Structure of the Website

Obviously, finalizing the structure of this site requires discussions with the Centres for Nordic Studies and our other partners. We propose that the content of the site could be composed under eight main titles: News and Events, Research, Studying, Experts, Key Concepts, Discourse, Centres for Nordic Studies and Links. The structure of this website is figured in page 7 (Figure 1).

3.1 News and Events

As the main idea of this website is to give an overview on what's going on in this field of study, the index page of this section "News and Events" will also be a starting page, the main page, for the whole site. This page summons the latest news in the field of Nordic Studies. For example, current publications of different Centres will be mentioned on this page. Recent, important papers will also have their platform in this section. This is of course also the place where upcoming seminars and other events will be announced. In brief, the content of this section depends on what is happening in the field at a given moment.

3.2 Research

The title "Research" will include a brief introduction of the Nordic Studies field and its research questions. However, this section of the portal is mainly meant to serve researchers in the field of Nordic Studies and that's why only little general information about the field will be offered. Above all, this section will give information about current research projects and significant studies made in the

field. Some key texts, literature references and abstracts will be added to this section as well. In addition, practical information concerning scholarship and funding opportunities as well as exchange programmes for researchers will be gathered under this title. Subsections to this section will be: "About Nordic Studies", "Research Projects", "Seminars", "Publications", "Funding and Scholarships" and "Exchange Programs for Researchers".

3.3 Studying

The title "Studying" will be constructed to serve the needs of students looking for courses in Nordic Studies. It offers useful information about Nordic Studies studying opportunities by answering such questions as where and how to study the Nordic phenomena. In addition to offering descriptions of on-line courses arranged by Nordic Studies Centres, this section offers access to certain courses. The main titles of this section will be: "Studying Nordic Studies", "Courses" and "Exchange Programs".

3.4 Experts

As the title "Experts" indicates, this section would include the list of experts with their contact details and brief introductions to their work. The purpose of this section is to help Centres for Nordic Studies and other organizations to find the kind of expertise they need either for their research projects or their seminars, courses and other events. Experts will be listed according to their specialization e.g. history, politics, linguistics etc. The reason why this is a section on its own, and not a part of e.g. research section for example, is that the same experts might be wanted for both research and lecturing purposes.

3.5 Key Concepts

The meaning of this section is to give an overview on critical questions in Nordic Studies in order to develop debate around these subjects. All these questions require multidisciplinary research. Some further reading in form of articles and literature references will be given for readers who want to deepen their understanding of these themes.

The multidisciplinary research questions are as follows: "Nature: sphere of authenticity", "Nordic Lutheranism: the good life is a life of conformity", "Strong Nordic Woman?", "Linguistic Preconditions in Inter-Nordic communication", "Peasant State: Myth and Reality of Freeborn Peasant and His Community", "Concepts of Borders between East and West, and North and South", "Local Government and Citizenship", "Education and Citizenship: comprehensive education, public libraries, information technology, more and less exclusive elites", "Everybody at Work: Principle that Holds Society in the Nordic Countries Together", "Welfare State: good state", "Minorities and Citizenship", "Nordic Legalistic Tradition", "Principle of Public Access to Official Records", "Nordic Co-operation and Interdependencies", "Concept of Norden: history of consolidating and dissolving factors, security systems, interdependencies, European Mega-Region, Nordic citizenship".

3.6 Discourse

This section will have a double function. First of all, it will be an open platform for debates and discussions concerning Nordic phenomenon. Here issues related to Nordic society, culture, identity etc. will be put under the microscope. The idea is to develop debate on Norden and Europe. Secondly, this will be a place where researchers may publish their working papers, and offer them to be read and commented by other researchers. The Working titles section will be preserved for only subscribers which means that it'll be put behind an access code.

3.7 Centres for Nordic Studies

In this section of these web pages The Centres for Nordic Studies will be listed country by country. Their contact details along with links to their web sites will be added on the list.

3.8 Links

Different, useful links will be gathered in this section. The links will be listed under the titles: "General Information about Nordic Countries", "Studying" and "Research".

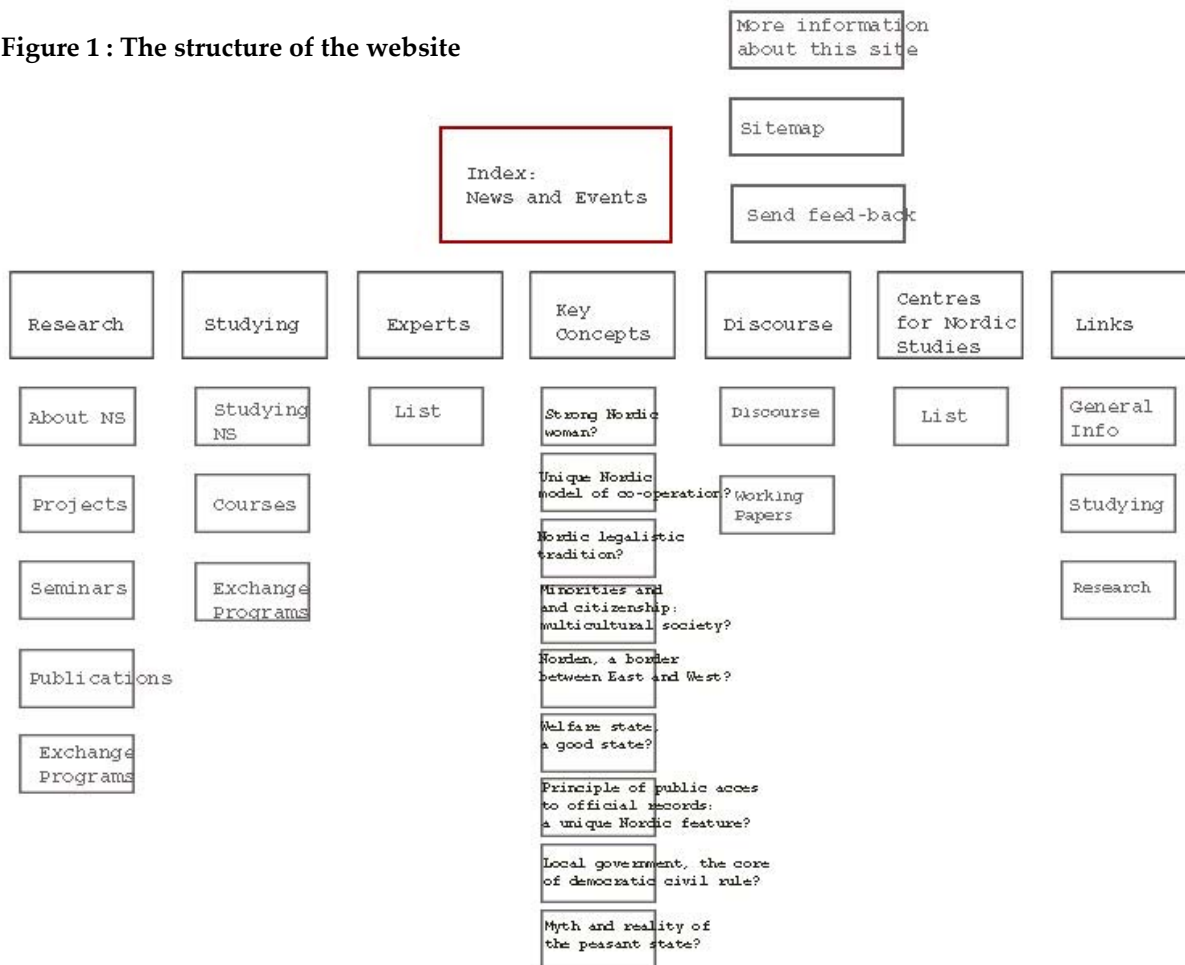
3.9 Other sections

In addition to the eight main sections, the site will contain three smaller sections which will give some useful information about this website. First of all, "More information about this site" -section explains the raison d'être of this site: why this site is in the web and why we need it. It clarifies how the structure behind this site is organized and who are participating in it. It also includes all the practical information about joining this community of Nordic Studies Centres which is entitled to publish their latest news, events and happenings on this site.

Secondly, the section "sitemap", as the title indicates, includes a map of this site. This map will be organized in form of table of contents and the titles serve as a link to the page mentioned.

Thirdly, the last section called "feed-back" will include a contact form which enables all the users of this site to give feed back about this site, either to the executive group of the site or to the webmaster.

Figure 1 : The structure of the website



4 User Interface and Navigation

The user interface of this website is planned to be as user friendly as possible. Our aim is that every user would understand where to find the information s/he needs on the first glimpse and finally find it without getting lost in navigation. The navigation itself will be extremely simple and the navigation chains will not lead deep down in the structure of this site.

Every single page contains a number of common features that are designed to facilitate the navigation. All the main sections (News and Events, Research, Studying, Key Concepts, Discourse, Centres for Nordic Studies and Links) will be set on a similar menu bar on top of every page (See figure 2). The orange background of the text link shows which section is currently active. Every page also contains a separate link to the main page of this site, which is, at the same time, the index page of the section "News and Events". In addition, each of the pages has a similar information box on the right side of the text body. This box has links to three different sections that give important information about this site and the navigation in it, and enables users to contact people working in this project.

Figure 2 : Common features on each page



All the sections, except for the News and Events section, will have a sidebar in addition to the main menu bar. This sidebar will include the main titles inside the section, in other words the titles of the subsections. The first title is the one whose content is already open when entering to this section. The others function as links to the subsections. A red dot on the left side of the title marks the currently open section.

Figure 3 : Sidebar



If the subsections need further subsections, links to these sections will be placed in the text field either within the text or as a separate text link list on the left side of the text field. The content of these further subsections is limited to one webpage in order to prevent the structure of this site from getting heavy and complicated.

The "News and Events" section will not have any specific subsections for the simple reason that this section hasn't got any permanent content: current news and events are changing constantly. In this section all the titles (The names of events, seminars and so on) with a short, two lines introduction to the theme will be placed in the text field. These titles will also function as text links to the actual page where the description of the given event. At the News and Events section, which serves also as the main page of this site, the actual place of subsection's titles is occupied by a "welcome-box". This box contains a brief introduction about this site by answering such basic questions as "What is this site all about?" In the end of the introductory text there is a text link to the actual "more information about this site" which explains the functioning of this site in great detail.

Figure 4 : Links on the section News and Events



5 Layout

The layout is designed for 1024x768 resolution, but even so users with screens fixed for 800x600 resolution will have all the content on their screens and there won't be any sideways scrolling. The graphic is also designed in the way that the load-time, also with modem-connection, will be relatively short.

All the content of this site will be in a box on grey background placed in the centre of the screen. This box has 1 px red borders. The upper side of the box is the logo area. *The Nordic Studies in the World* logo is written on white in a red background. The partners' and sponsors' logos have their own area on the bottom of the content box.

The main menu bar will be placed below the logo area, and the side bar will be placed on the left side of the box. The text field will be in the centre of the box. Even though all the titles and links are red, for reasons of readability, the body type will be in dark grey. The font family will be Arial for two reasons: it's easy to read and safe in the web. The body text will be placed on a white background. To give some life to this white and red composition, a flower illustration will be placed in the right corner of the box behind the text.

Figure 5 : Layout of the index page



Figure 6 : Layout of other sections than index



6 About Updating

As our aim is that this site will be consulted by people working in the field of Nordic Studies, if not a daily basis then at least once a week, it will offer, most of all, up to date information about what's going on in this field of studies. It is extremely important that the news this site gives is really on the edge of what is happening at the moment. That is to say that updating must be done regularly, on daily basis, in order to keep this site up to date and useful. Consequently, the project will need an employee who is in charge of finding the latest news, keeping contact with the Nordic Studies Centres that participate in this project and, finally, updating this website.

However, even if it is crucial for some of the sections to be updated regularly, there are also sections whose content will not become out of date. In spite of the fact that the content might stay unchanged, the information on these sections will need revising from time to time and new information e.g. new research findings must be added. These sections might also need further development which requires time and such expertise that we will not have in the first stage of this project. It is also important that all the links, addresses for Nordic Studies Centres and other major, basic information are checked from time to time and kept functional and up to date.

To help updating and further development of this site some precautions will be taken. First of all, the graphic (colours, emplacements of elements etc.) will be easy to change because all the graphic elements will be defined in a css -file. Secondly, all the titles, links etc. (except the title "Nordic Studies in the World") will be text elements, not pictures, which enables quick changes. Thirdly, we are planning a publishing system to facilitate updating and above all, adding comments to the Discourse section.

6.1 Sections that Require Constant Updating

Obviously, the section which needs updating more than the others is the News and Events section. For reasons of reliability, usability and credibility all the information in this section must be up to date. At this point, it has probably become clear that this is the most important section of this site in many ways. For students and the people working in the field of Nordic Studies this is the place to find all the latest developments in the field as well as the upcoming events in which they might want to participate. For the Centres for Nordic Studies it is the place where they can promote their latest work and their seminars and other get-togethers

and that way gain more visibility. For all the other users of this site, researchers in other fields of studies, politicians, Medias and even for incidental visitors, this page will assumingly be their first touch with Nordic Studies world. Therefore our major preoccupation will be keeping this section highly representative of the field and obviously up to date. This will be the world's window to the field of Nordic Studies.

Updating and even, in some cases, editing are also needed in the Discourse section. As this section is meant to be an open forum for academic discourse around crucial questions in Nordic societies, cultures, and politics and so on, it will need a person to start and develop these debates and to find either suitable writers for comments or convenient ready-made texts. All the Nordic Studies Centres which participate in this project will have the right to argument these texts directly and therefore they will have their own access code to this section. The same access code will give them a possibility to add their working papers on the site and comment each others papers. However, all comments from the outside must pass by a moderator who checks that they are pertinent.

The Research section includes some subsections that have to be revised quite often as well. These are, of course, the sections "Research Projects", "Seminars" and "Publications". In other words, descriptions of latest projects, seminars and publications must be added as they come along. The content of these subsections is obviously overlapping with the content of News and Events section, but as only a limited number of features may be published at that section at a time, these sections, as a matter of fact, complete the News and Events section. In other words, these are the places where the news and events can still be found after they have given place for even more recent happenings.

6.2 Sections that Require Further Developing

It is rather obvious that all of the sections will need further developing at some point. The list of experts and of the Nordic Studies Centres can be completed pretty easily and seminars, courses, exchange programs etc. can be added and modified when it is required. However, some of the sections will need further developing which in return demands expertise and knowledge about Nordic Studies field and its actors. This applies to the Key concepts section. It requires a real expert of this field to write about critical questions in the field and to complete those texts with literature references, articles and other texts.