

Preface

Is there a Nordic model for political communication? This is the question we pose in this anthology. It seems simple enough, but there are many answers. When we first invited our Nordic colleagues to this book project, we asked them to reflect on the changes that challenged the Nordic welfare states and their infrastructures for political dialogue and negotiations. We pointed to the technological shifts, the hybridisation of the media structures, and the fact that the Nordic countries had different experiences and handled crises differently in the recent past. While this book was in its final stages, a new crisis hit. During the global Covid-19 pandemic, both striking differences – such as differences in crisis management and crisis communication of the Nordic governments – and deep-seated similarities – such as the high trust level between governments and citizens – came to the fore. As the chapters of this book explore, if anything, the key to understanding Nordic political communication is to keep in mind both aspects: the systems are similar, but there are considerable differences between the countries in terms of history, cultures, languages, demography, and contemporary politics.

The aims of the book are threefold. First, we want to present an updated and broad picture of Nordic political communication. In this respect, this book updates and expands *Communicating Politics: Political Communication in the Nordic Countries*, edited by Jesper Strömbäck, Mark Blach-Ørsten, and Toril Aalberg in 2008, which brought a much-needed systematic comparative perspective to Nordic political communication. Second, we aim to go beyond the comparative media models perspective. The media models remain important, but at the same time, we seek to explore and disclose the dynamics that underlie the theoretical framework. In order to do so, this book expands the field by including new actors, themes, theories, and research questions in Nordic political communication.

The third objective is to show that both more comparative studies and more in-depth analyses are essential to understand the similarities and differences

between the Nordic countries. It is precisely the similarities and differences that create the conditions for Nordic politics and political communication. To the degree that there is a Nordic political communication model, it is flexible and pragmatic and takes both the similarities and the differences within the Nordic region into account. To unpack the fundamental elements of Nordic political communication, we challenged leading Nordic researchers to compare their research and insights. The ambition was to bring scholars from several Nordic countries together in each chapter – an effort that resulted in brand new collaborations we hope will inspire and facilitate Nordic cooperation in the future.

It has been a true pleasure and privilege to edit this anthology. Owing to many factors, it has been in process for a while, and there are many people to thank for the fact that the book is now available to you in different formats. First, the authors should be thanked for their contributions to the anthology. Without you, it would not be here. Many of the authors, including the editors, have never worked together before. They were asked to form authorships across borders and fields and have responded to the challenge with much enthusiasm and dedication. They have generously explored and shared knowledge in their special fields *and* met the challenge of comparing insights from the different Nordic countries that make up Nordic political communication research.

Further, we thank the POLKOM group and network and our home institutions for taking part in this effort. The group has its base at the Department of Media and Communication (IMK) at the University of Oslo and has been supported financially and administratively by this department. The POLKOM network includes scholars, many of whom authored chapters in this book, working with political communication in institutions all over Norway and the other Nordic countries. Thanks also to everyone who has commented and discussed drafts, conference papers, and ideas for chapters.

And finally, some key people and organisations have been crucial to the process of making this book. Some of them, the reviewers of the chapters, must be thanked anonymously – you know who you are. Thank you for devoting the time and effort to improve the book. Research and editorial assistant Anja Vranic at IMK has been invaluable in the process of finishing the book. She has assisted in the completion of all chapters – diligently, efficiently, and always helpful with any possible and impossible issue tied to the completion of every chapter. Our publisher, Nordicom, has taken all challenges and delays with an everlasting patience. Special thanks to Ingela Wadbring and Jonas Ohlsson who believed in the project; academic editor Johannes Bjerling who has read and commented on every chapter; technical editor Kristin Clay who has carefully edited them; and Mia Jonsson Lindell who is responsible for the marketing efforts.

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