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In the 2012 annual Nordicom yearbook (*Nordicom Årsrapport 2012*) the management outlines some of the future challenges for the organization. In particular, they mention that the organization is facing a generational handover and that the securement of the organization's rooting on national levels is pivotal.

The management's considerations in this publication surely concern the handover of specific competences and knowledge by those running the organization and its services on a daily basis; and they certainly reflect substantial issues relating to our national governments' varying contributions to the financing of the organization. Nevertheless, I will argue that a generational and national perspective on the organization is both unavoidable and eye-opening when addressing its significance, as seen from an individual researcher's 'user perspective'.

My personal perspective on Nordicom and NordMedia is in many ways biased by the fact that, on the one hand, I belong to what might be termed the 'third generation' of Nordic media researchers. This means that I belong to those who have *not* been personally involved in the formation and establishment of Nordicom and the Nordic conferences. But as I've gotten a substantial part of my educational training and motivation for becoming a media scholar from professors from the formative first and supportive second generations, Nordicom and NordMedia have been almost natural elements in my academic life from day one. This also implies that I've been privileged to have senior colleagues who for historical reasons were quite engaged in and knowledgeable about the aims, activities and organizational challenges of Nordicom. As a research community, we might be facing our own generational handover of the engagement in Nordicom and our Nordic network.

On the other hand, I have to stress that my perspective is also biased by the fact that I'm rooted in a Danish research environment, where many of us have our origins in the Humanities (literature, Nordic literature and language). I'm also rooted in a national context where the financial and institutional engagement in Nordicom, for several reasons, has been more modest than in the other Nordic countries.

Altogether, this brings in a whole series of both biases and blind spots that influence my opinion on the significance of Nordicom and NordMedia.

The Crown Jewels of Nordicom

I still remember when I was introduced to – at that time quite strange and abstract – terms like: "circulation", "penetration", "subscription", "distribution" and "admission".

For me, these were names that belonged to a remote province in Sweden; a province where the valid currency seemed to be numbers, charts and tables that were not easily

exchanged with narratives, metaphors and genres, which were the dominant currency where I came from.

What I did not know at that time – but have later come to acknowledge and appreciate – is that these strange terms are the names of gems in what must today be considered important elements among the crown jewels in the work of Nordicom.

Since the establishment of Nordicom in 1972, one of the cornerstones in its activities has been the documentation of both the developments of media and the research that takes place in the Nordic countries. In this way, early on Nordicom assumed an important role in the formation of media studies as a field of research.

On the one hand, the documentation supports researchers in building up knowledge within our field – and on the other hand it provides our politicians with knowledge about media. Thus, this part of Nordicom's work has supported the general awareness of media and communication studies as an autonomous field of research. And the ideal of providing independent and reliable data on aspects such as subscription, penetration, etc., for the use and benefit of not only our media businesses but also politicians and researchers is part of the legacy from the founding fathers and mothers of our Nordic network – but is nevertheless still viable.

Crown jewels are defined as “[featuring] some combination of precious materials, artistic merit and symbolic and historical value” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regalia>).

In many ways one can say that simply providing comparative statistical descriptive data on media developments in the form of data on ownership, distribution, consumption and economy across nations is a demonstration in itself of great artistic merit, as Nordicom sometimes collates and compares data that are not always directly comparable – for good or for bad. This exercise also has wider historical and symbolic value. One could say that by providing this type of knowledge, Nordicom has acted as a conveyor of central ideas about both the role and the content of research.

This part of Nordicom's activities has been and still is among the most vital – particularly from a Danish perspective, as we here have benefitted from a strong tradition of using quantitative approaches to media within the Swedish research community.

Crown jewels are accumulations of treasures collected over many years of tradition. As such, a collection of crown jewels also reveals shifting trends and developments. Seen in this light, the work of documentation also reveals historical qualitative changes in the role of Nordicom – perhaps towards a more prominent and active role?

First, in the mid-1990s Nordicom started servicing the research community with a new type of data. It was at this time they started to collate data from different national sources, thus creating the very useful comparative statistics on media developments in the Nordic region. The journal *Nordic Media Trends* – as well as publications and the comparative statistics on the website – are key outcomes of this work.

In the same period Nordicom undertook a significant and active role in the securement of providing both more and better knowledge on media and children on a global scale. This happened through the organization's active involvement in the establishment of *The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children Youth and Media*.

The second type of change can be traced to the launch of the regular newsletters *Nordic Media Policy*, *European Media Policy* and the latest *On the International Agenda*. These initiatives reflect important changes in our field of research, and are therefore also evidence of how Nordicom has acted as a highly responsive organization – and

has continuously been willing and able to adjust its role, simply by using some of the new options offered by digital media that allow for more frequent monitoring services. These newsletters document ongoing political processes – and are as such a new way of offering documentation. This is a service that supports an increasing demand for an international dimension in our research – in an extremely dynamic field.

Both in my research and as a teacher I've found statistics provided by Nordicom and the exchanges at our Nordic conferences to be extremely useful. The comparative statistics are good tools for establishing a more sensitive approach to our field. They expose a set of shared characteristics with regard to both media structure and media use, but they also reveal a whole set of internal differences among our countries. Thus, they provide an interesting double perspective on media that brings about a more nuanced and contextualized understanding of media developments in our region.

Meanwhile, the data on Nordic developments do not stand alone but are often placed in an international context. For me, personally, this has been extremely useful as it has given me a better understanding of how our Nordic region in many respects comprises a specific case on the global scene. In this way, I do believe that the work of Nordicom contributes to strengthening our presence and contribution in our international research community.

Meeting Diversity and Sensitivity

My first participation in a Nordic conference was in 1991. This was a true eye-opener. Firstly, because it was my first meeting with what was actually a joint academic community with both important professional and social dimensions; but it was also the first time I faced the diversity of research traditions in our Nordic research community.

It is my impression that at that time the differences were more marked than what we see today. So, as a third generation, I'm convinced that the Nordic conferences have influenced my generation's approach to research. Today, I recognize the value of approaches in research that are different from my own key competencies, and this insight has undoubtedly been shaped in our Nordic context.

In 1991, most of the key notes and paper presentations at the conference were in Scandinavian languages. Meanwhile, our field has been subject to a strong internationalization that could lead one to conclude that our Nordic conferences are no longer necessary for us. But for me they have become more useful than ever, as they provide me with different and in some respects more sensitive feedback on my work than what is mostly offered by colleagues from the rest of the globe. Having both a Nordic and a wider international perspective in our research is more necessary now than ever.

