

Merle Wessel (Helsinki) über:

The Concept of the »Nordic Race« in German and Nordic Racial-Theoretical Research in the 1920s

Abstract:

The concept of the »Nordic race« has become especially prominent through its appearance in racial theory and practice in Nazi Germany. However, the concept of the »Nordic race« as an identity-establishing category has a much longer history. This article discusses the conceptualization of the »Nordic« in the context of racial-theoretical research in Germany and the Nordic countries in the 1920s. It argues that, although the research about race started from common grounds, the aspect of »Nordicness« constituted as the element which divided research traditions and made the »Nordic race« a component of identity making within different national contexts and political developments in Nordic countries and Germany in the 1920s and early 1930s.

Zusammenfassung:

Der Begriff der »Nordischen Rasse« ist besonders bekannt durch seine Verwendung in Deutschland zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus. Das Konzept der »Nordischen Rasse« weist aber eine weitaus längere Geschichte auf. Dieses Essay diskutiert die Konzeptualisierung von »Nordisch« im Kontext der rassentheoretischen Forschung in Deutschland und den Nordischen Ländern in den 1920er Jahren. Es wird argumentiert, dass, obwohl die Forschung auf einer gemeinsamen Basis fußt, das »Nordische« das trennende Element war. Die Idee des »Nordischen« diente als Identitätsstifter innerhalb der unterschiedlichen nationalen und politischen Entwicklungen in den Nordischen Ländern und Deutschland in den 1920er und frühen 1930er Jahren.

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Introduction

The mystification and exaltation of the »Nordic« and the »Nordic race« has a long tradition in the creation of identity and superiority. Already the romanticists of the early nineteenth century used the mystical North as their haven for enlightenment and salvation. Darwinism and the discovery of Mendel's laws provided, up to this point, the only artistic and philosophical concept of an elevated North with a science-oriented foundation. This led to the development of new scholarly disciplines, such as racial theory and racial biology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In this essay, I explore the use of the concept »Nordic race« in racial-theoretical research in Germany and the Nordic countries,¹ i.e. Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland, in the 1920s. My discussion will not focus on the concept of »race« but on the concept of the »Nordic«. The relevant question here is: How was the concept of the »Nordic« used as a method of identification and eventually also of superiority in racial theory? For this, I will firstly demarcate the concepts »race« and »Volk,« the latter in the sense of »population«. I will demonstrate that the separation of both concepts was fundamental in understanding the conceptualization of the »Nordic race«. This demarcation marked the separation of racial-theoretical from racial-biological research and finally from eugenics. However, the discussion also shows that a clear line between both concepts was not always easily drawn and that the interference of the concepts was common in the 1920s.

Secondly, I will discuss the use of the adjective »Nordic« as separated from »race.« I will show that the notion of »Nordic« was used as a method of identity making in young Nordic nations, such as Norway, to establish a nation's history, in this case detached from former links to Sweden. Furthermore, it was used as a stabilizer of identity in old but struggling nations like Sweden, Denmark, and Germany, and also in order to create the identity and superiority of different ethnical groups within one nation, as in the fight for obtaining superiority over Swedish Finns in Finland.

Thirdly, I argue that in Germany as well as in the Nordic countries the term »Nordic« was used to create a physiologically and psychologically superior identity not only compared to other nations but also to other ethnic groups within the nation. Othering was a common method. However, certain differences between the Nordic countries and also in comparison to Germany can be detected in the conceptualizations which must be identified as national specialty. This respectively resulted in an exclusion or inclusion of certain social groups in the national context.

The use of the concept »race« in the scientific as well as cultural and political context has been explored in previous research. The conceptualization of »race« in Germany has been discussed by, among others, Peter

¹ Although I am here and subsequently using the term »Nordic countries« repeatedly, it does not mean that the Nordic countries can be considered as a unity in the context of the topic. The differences between the Nordic countries were big and will be considered in the discussion where it seems fruitful. However, when similarities in the conceptualization were dominant, I will employ »Nordic countries« as a collective term for Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland.

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Weingart, Jürgen Kroll and Klaus Bayertz in *Rasse, Blut und Gene. Geschichte der Eugenik und Rassenhygiene in Deutschland* or in Marius Turda's article »Race, Science, and Eugenics in the Twentieth Century.«² However, the second part of the concept – the idea of the »Nordic« – has received less attention. In *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland 1920–1940*, Hans-Jürgen Lutzhöft discusses the conceptualization of the »Nordic« in the German context, not only in a scientific but primarily in a cultural and political context. Lutzhöft looks at the research of established racial theorists in Germany at that time, namely Fritz Lenz, Eugen Fischer, and Ernst Rüdin, but he focuses more profoundly on non-scientific agents like the writer Hans Günther. What seems particularly important in Lutzhöft's book is the conceptualization of the »Nordic« as an adjective and its discussion as being separated from the racial idea. This approach is continued and elaborated in this article.³

More recently, Jon Røyne Kyllingstad has published the article »Norwegian Physical Anthropology and the Idea of a Nordic Master Race« (2012) which was followed in 2014 by the book *Measuring the Master Race: Physical Anthropology in Norway: 1890–1945*. Here he focuses on the development of the physical and anthropological research in Norway between 1890 and 1930 and its transnational interaction. However, in this article he takes a broad perspective on the research itself and not on the conceptualization of »Nordic race« and the »Nordic,« particularly within the research community. An example for the problematization of the »Nordic« provides Rikke Andreassen's discussion of the New Nordic Kitchen and its relation to race science in the 1920s. She argues that the idealization of the Nordic region as pure, fresh, simple, and ethical through the New Nordic Kitchen movement can be similarly detected in the racial science of the early twentieth century.⁴

As much as it seems feasible, I will not elaborate on the development and organization of racial research in Germany and the Nordic countries. This discussion would exceed the capacity of this essay and previous research has already dealt with the appertaining debate. Peter Weingart, for example, provides a comprehensive description of racial scientific research in Germany in his article »Eugenik: Eine angewandte Wissenschaft. Utopien der Menschenzüchtung zwischen Wissenschaftsentwicklung und Politik.«⁵ Additional information can be found in publications by Paul Weindling and Sheila Faith Weiss.⁶ A more detailed discussion about the organization of racial scientific research in the Nordic countries is provided in publications by Gunnar Broberg and Mathias Tydén, Marjatta Hietala, or Alberto Spectorowski. It seems noteworthy, however, that these studies largely focus on Sweden and research regarding Denmark, Norway, and Finland is rather scarce.⁷

A comparison between Germany and the Nordic countries is opportune since the countries initially shared many similarities in the interest and conceptualization of the »Nordic race.« Moreover, there traditionally existed an

² Weingart, Kroll & Bayertz 2010, pp. 62–79.

³ Lutzhöft 1981, pp. 191ff.

⁴ Andreassen 2014, p. 438.

⁵ Weingart 1985, pp. 314–349.

⁶ Weindling 1985, pp. 303–318; Weiss 1986, pp. 33–46.

⁷ Broberg & Tydén 2005; Hietala 2005, pp. 195–258; Spectorowski 2004, pp. 84–106.

exchange of racial-theoretical research which finally resulted in different concepts due to different national and political developments. In her article »Schirmorganisation der Nordischen Bewegung. Der Nordische Ring und seine Repräsentanten in Norwegen,« the Norwegian historian Nicola Karcher examines how members of the German organization *Nordischer Ring* interacted with like-minded organizations in Norway.⁸ Her article focuses widely on the racist and national-socialist ideas and connections between Germany and Norway. However, here the aim is to get away from the racist contemplation of racial-biological research and to focus more on the racial ideas which, as I argue, were not necessarily connected to a destructive form of racism.

Conceptual history or the more explicit term of *Begriffsgeschichte* is here a starting point to analyze how words developed into concepts shaped by their national and cultural context. Reinhart Koselleck argues that the history of a concept can be measured by the experiential space and the horizon of expectations at a certain moment in time. He continues by stating that a word is transformed into a concept when the political and social connection of meaning and expectation enter the word. The concept unites the diversity of historical experiences and the summary of theoretical and practical connections. Concepts capture political and social contents, but their semantic function cannot only be derived from the political and social present or from previous meanings and structural possibilities.⁹ As Hans Erich Bödeker shows, the criterion of a word to be transformed into a concept is ambiguity. Ambiguity is a pre-condition so that a word can become a concept.¹⁰ The ambiguity of the concepts »Nordic,« »race,« and »Nordic race« were most vital in the racial-theoretical discourse of the Nordic countries and Germany in the 1920s. They were used in a great variety of contexts to understand the history of nations and societies and to provide a sense of future in conquering the on-going political and social problems of the future.

Racial-theoretical research boomed during the 1920s in Germany as well as in the Nordic countries when the first state-supported institutes for racial-theoretical research were established. Although racial theorists had organized themselves earlier, the state-supported institutionalization in Germany and in the Nordic countries expanded compared to previous years and to other countries with similar movements, for example, the United Kingdom. In 1922, *Statens Institut för Rasbiologi* was founded in Sweden. Its first leader was racial-theorist Herman Lundborg. The institute became the center of racial-theoretical and racial-biological research in Sweden. Lundborg claimed that the founding of the institute meant the establishment of a national supra-ideology.¹¹ The racial-theoretical institute in Norway *Institut för Arvelighetetsforskning*, led by the first female Norwegian professor Kristine Bonnevie, had already been established in 1916. In Denmark, the first institution of race science was *Den antropologiske Komite*, established in 1904. The members were predominantly scientists and

⁸ Karcher 2009; see also, Karcher 2012.

⁹ Koselleck 1979, pp. 25–34.

¹⁰ Bödeker 2002, p. 88.

¹¹ Spectorowski 2004, p. 92.

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medical professionals. Between 1907 and 1911 the committee published *Meddelelser om Danmarks Antropologi*, which was a large scale examination of individuals from rural Denmark.¹²

Also in Germany, an at least partly state-funded and partly industrial-funded institute which focused on human genetic research was founded in the 1920s. First demands were already raised in 1921 and led to the foundation of the *Kaiser Wilhelm Institut für Anthropologie, Menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik* in 1927. Leading advocates in racial-theoretical research were, for example, Wilhelm Schallmeyer, Eugen Fischer, and Fritz Lenz in Germany; Herman Lundborg and Nils von Hofsten in Sweden; Alfred Jon Mjøen and Kristine Bonnevie in Norway; Tage Kemp and Bodil Hjorth in Denmark; and Harry Federley and Ossian Schauman in Finland.

The Concepts of »Race« and »Population«

The German racial theorist Eugen Fischer argued in his book *Rasse und Rassenentstehung beim Menschen* that race was defined by hereditary, unchangeable physical, anatomical, physiological, and psychological characteristics. According to Fischer, the concept of »race« was in opposition to the concept of »Volk.«¹³ »Volk,« or the plural »Völker,« were people who were joined in a non-hereditary culture, expressed by common language, tradition, law, and religion. Fischer concluded that the concepts of »race« and »Volk« had to be seen separately, although in real life »race« and »Volk« were closely connected.¹⁴

A similar argumentation can also be found in the writings of Swedish racial theorist Herman Lundborg. In 1928, he argued in *Rassenkunde des Schwedischen Volkes* that »race« and »Volk« were distinct concepts: »It still is not generally known that ›Volk‹ and race constitute two different concepts.«¹⁵ In the same way as Fischer, Lundborg stated that »Volk« on the one hand was a group of people merged in a joined culture, language, morality, and historical development. On the other hand, »race« was a group of people with the same physical and psychological characteristics, passed down from generation to generation. Further, Lundborg continued that one »Volk« usually contained several races and that the same race could be found in all social classes and among several »Völker.« His example is the German »Volk« which involved the Nordic race among several other races. Yet, the Nordic race could also be traced, albeit in lesser quantity, among Romans, Slavs, and other »Völker.«¹⁶

¹² Andreassen 2014, p. 449.

¹³ The German term »Volk« (Swedish *folk*) is difficult to translate into English. I use it here in the sense of ›population‹ or ›people‹ within one nation. But since these terms are not precise translations that do not grasp the entirety of the concept neither in the German nor in the Nordic context, I will continue to use the German term »Volk« because this can be found in the German as well as in the Nordic literature.

¹⁴ Fischer 1927, pp. 11–12.

¹⁵ »Es ist heute leider noch immer nicht allgemein bekannt, dass ›Volk‹ und ›Rasse‹ zwei verschiedene Begriffe darstellen,« Lundborg 1928, p. 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

However, the concept of »race« was not as clearly defined and unchallenged as it appeared in Lundborg's and Fischer's publications. Race science had developed from the mid-eighteenth century and continued its success until the end of the Second World War, as Rikke Andreassen argues. Race research in the mid-nineteenth century as well as the concept of »race« until the early twentieth century were considered to determine human history and culture. Then, race science was closely connected to the development of anthropology. In *Om Formen på Nordboernes Cranier* (1843), the Swedish anthropologist Anders Retzius defined a cranial or cephalic index, measures of the human skull, in order to define race and further the individual moral and mental capacity.¹⁷

Marius Turda argues that race, as biological definition of a group without fixed typology of qualitative differences, constituted the unity of procreation, preservation, and development. Furthermore, he states that Galton's hereditary theory, which not only served as theoretical background for eugenics but also for race theory, provided no clear definition of race. Galton understood race as group of individuals with similar physical and psychological characteristics passed down from one generation to another.¹⁸

In Germany there were many private clubs and communities that promoted racial concepts in connection to eugenic thinking. In the early twentieth century the so-called *Nordischer Ring/Deutscher Wider-Bund* was established. Additionally, *Bogenklub* and *Deutscher Bund für Volksaufartung und Erbkunde* were founded. Especially *Deutscher Bund*, open to all classes, had direct governmental influence. These clubs and communities were not professional but interacted with or often had scientific experts as members, such as the leading racial scientists Fritz Lenz, Eugen Fischer, and Alfred Grotjahn.¹⁹ Their aim was not to practice racial theory. They rather used racial theory as a method to discuss social problems of the time, such as poverty, criminality, or urbanization. The mixing up of the concepts »race« and »Volk« were typical in this context. Racial theory was used to provide options in order to increase the population quality.

In this context, Eugen Fischer argued that biological population policy meant the selection of biological heritage and racial care by the state. The nation state should rise up to the »völkisch« state. One's own race had to be experienced as particular »Volkstum«. He concluded that the experience of »Volkstum« was particularly strong in the middle class where the sense of »Heimat,« the consciousness of the tribe and the sensitivity towards race, was much more advanced than in other classes.²⁰ Fischer here interweaved the concepts of »race« and »population.« He identified race with the nation state, which, according to racial theory, should be seen as separate entities. Furthermore, he elevated the middle class as the preservers of the race. The middle class as a provider for social quality was a typical element of the population theory of the 1920s and 1930s. Racial theory did not recognize class as a special carrier of racial elements but argued, as seen before, that races were not bound to classes.

¹⁷ Andreassen 2014, p. 444.

¹⁸ Turda 2010, pp. 62–79.

¹⁹ Weiss 1990, pp. 9–10.

²⁰ Fischer 1933, pp. 5–9.

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The conceptual mixture was a typical phenomenon of the racial argumentation in the 1920s in Germany. Paul Weindling argues that researchers of the *Kaiser Wilhelm Institut für Anthropologie, Menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik* considered their role mainly as that of guides towards a biological improvement of the population. According to Weindling, a transformation of research took place in the 1920s. This means that applied science became more popular than pure science.²¹ Scientific research had to have a practical use. Hence racial theory was applied to the matter of population, although this contradicted its theoretical foundation.

However, the Norwegian pharmacist and racial theorist Jon Alfred Mjøen demanded not to mix up the concepts. He argued that national territory did not constitute race or species. He provided several examples for the appearance of various races within an individual national territory, for example, the ethnical minorities of *Sámi* and *Nordmænd* at the border between Sweden and Norway, the Basque and Castilians in Spain, or the Africans, Indians, and Chinese in the United States.²² Whether Mjøen really took an opposite position must be further examined. Firstly, he was highly questioned in his own research community in Norway. Especially during the later period of racial-biological research, he was criticized as racist and non-scientific by leading Norwegian race scientists like Kristine Bonnevie and Otto Lous Mohr. Secondly, Mjøen himself used racial theory in his book *Rasehygiene* (1914) repeatedly as a method and argument for population improvement. He argued that genetics and biological heritage provided the predisposition for social problems like alcoholism, tuberculosis, idiocy, epilepsy, and mental defects.²³

In the beginning of the development of racial theory in the late nineteenth century, the concepts of »race« and »population« were clearly distinguished. Leading racial theorists demanded that the focus should have been on human hereditary research. However, in the following decades and especially with the constant increase of social problems, a shift in the conceptualization took place. The Swedish racial biologist Herman Lundborg argued that especially the experience of the First World War had a decisive impact on the turn from racial theory to the more practically oriented racial biology. The experiences of the war opened up the authorities' eyes for the necessity of racial hygiene.²⁴ This shift can be observed both in Germany as well as in the Nordic countries; they followed similar trends. In particular, the establishment of state institutes for racial research in Germany and in Sweden, as well as in Norway, supported the turn of a science that had to become more practical and had to serve the function of an adviser and expert for the government. Mixing up the concepts of »race« and »Volk« and the later disappearance of »race« were not necessarily due to a scientific based turn but a practical necessity based on the state-dependent research environment which was established in Germany and the Nordic countries in the 1920s.²⁵

²¹ Weindling 1985, pp. 307–309.

²² Mjøen 1914, p. 70.

²³ Ibid., p. 50.

²⁴ Lundborg 1922, p. 1.

²⁵ Weingart 1985, p. 329.

What is Nordic? Who is Nordic? Where is »Norden«?

The conceptualization of »race« differed only slightly in Germany, the Nordic countries, and within the Nordic region. However, the second part of the concept, the notion of »Nordic,« demonstrated a much greater variety of ideas and approaches in Germany as well as in the context of the Nordic countries. »Nordic« was discussed regarding two main questions: Firstly, where can the »Nordic race« be detected geographically; and secondly, what are the characteristics of the »Nordic race?«

In his study *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland 1920–1940*, Hans-Jürgen Luthhöft provides a detailed discussion of the Nordic terminology in Germany in the 1920s. He argues that the term »Nordic« had been equated with the »Nordic race« by the German Nordic movements in the 1920s. The Nordic countries, i.e. Denmark, Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Finland, were commonly called Scandinavia according to Luthhöft. However, Scandinavia was also partly defined as Norway and Sweden being considered as the core area of the Nordic race. Furthermore, Luthhöft argues that the term »Northern Europe« was rarely used because it was rather a geographical description. It included also non-Nordic race areas like the Soviet Union. The term »Norden« was used by the German Nordic movement to describe the Germanic Norden.²⁶

In 1920s Germany the conceptualization of »Nordic« was not clear at all. A strict division could not be made, neither geographical nor racial. Norway and Sweden were widely recognized as the purest regions of the »Nordic race.« The German racial-interested writer Hans Günther published several non-scientific books, such as *Der Nordische Gedanke unter den Deutschen* (1925) and *Adel und Rasse* (1926). Still, he argued that, although Sweden and Norway had a racially high predisposition, the countries were neither politically, militarily, nor culturally in a leading position. The Swedish and Norwegian populations might still be Nordic but probably degenerated ones.²⁷ In the view of Günther and other German racial theorists, the superiority of the »Nordic race« in the Nordic countries seemed to be a concept of the past. The elements of the »Nordic race« in the German area were regarded as being more successful and pure than in its original geographical area. The German racial theorists, even if still very interested in the Nordic region, were more and more convinced that the »Nordic race« in Germany was nowadays much purer than in the Nordic countries. The increased focus on national borders and the direction of research interests towards nations were not only a German phenomenon but could also be observed in the Nordic countries themselves in various conceptualizations of the »Nordic race.«

Rikke Andreassen argues that the Danish racial construction was quite similar to the overall Western conceptualization.²⁸ However, two elements can be found in Danish racial construction which seemed to be more dominant in Denmark than in the other Nordic countries or Germany, namely the conceptualization of »Nordic whiteness« and the anthropologists' search for the »Danish race,« set in contrast to the »Nordic race«. »Nordic

²⁶ Luthhöft 1981, p. 191.

²⁷ Luthhöft 1981, pp. 198–202.

²⁸ Andreassen 2014, p. 439.

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whiteness«, which must be considered, according to Andreassen, as a social construction, was established as a combination of physical, behavioral, and geographical elements in the Nordic area around 1900. As Andreassen has shown, class and class mobility were important markers for the concept of »Nordic whiteness.« In this context, »Nordicness« itself carried a high value, Andreassen argues. She states that the Nordic region was associated with purity, freshness, simplicity, and a wild and unspoiled nature.²⁹ Andreassen's discussion of »Nordic whiteness« is, however, a rather unclear and constructed one. She relates »Nordic whiteness« primarily to the New Nordic Kitchen movement and describes it as a method of comforting middle and upper class white individuals in a globalized and multicultural world which denies ethnical minorities access to the New Nordic Kitchen, the last haven of white people. This approach itself might be strongly questioned. However, she also relates the concept of »Nordic whiteness« without further examination to the search for the Danish race in the early twentieth century. This connection is certainly difficult to draw, since Danish and other Nordic racial theorists did not use the concept of »whiteness« in their conceptualizations. Skin color was described as »light« or »darker,« but in the context of European races and the »Nordic race« not as »white.« »Nordic whiteness« is a concept that should not be related as easily as by Andreassen to the racial theory of the early twentieth century.

The main agent in the search for the »Danish race« was the Danish racial theorist Søren Hansen. His research based on the hypothesis that rural areas in Denmark were populated by the most authentic and pure Danes. Hansen conducted several studies about the hair and eye color of the Danish population, but he had to conclude that the Danish rural population was a racial mixture rather than purely blond and blue eyed.³⁰ Hansen connected his surprising findings with the conclusion that the purer Nordic people had moved to the cities to find greater economic success. Class mobilization was for Hansen a sign of superiority of the Nordic race. Their superiority could not only be found in their physical appearance but also in their higher initiative to take risks and to be engaged in class mobilization.³¹

Hansen's conclusion about the physical and mental superiority of the Nordic race was not unique. It can also be found in racial theories of the German Fritz Lenz. Lenz had argued that the Nordic race was disposed of the highest intelligence and an excellent character. The main characteristics were great will power, precaution, self-control, high organizational skills, the wish for power and for the shaping of societies, Lenz concluded.³² »I do not think it is exaggerated to say that the Nordic race leads mankind with regard to mental abilities. [...] The Nordic race owes its leading position not only to its high mental abilities but also and not less to its great

²⁹ Ibid., p. 439.

³⁰ Andreassen 2014, p. 446.

³¹ Ibid., p. 446.

³² Baur, Fischer & Lenz 1931, pp. 547–550.

personality.«³³ The superiority of the Nordic race was widely accepted by German scientists, as Sheila Faith Weiss argues.³⁴ The same applies for most parts of the Western world in the early twentieth century, including the Nordic countries, as Jon Røyne Kyllingstad has shown.³⁵

In Sweden, the director of the *Statens Institut för Rasbiologi*, Herman Lundborg, created the system of the »Kernel Area of the Nordic Race in Northern Europe« to demonstrate the origin and spread of the Nordic race in its main area. The system was not racist but neutrally formulated. It problematized the division of racial factors and races in the area. Lundborg established nine different factors based on physical measures. The more factors that appeared in an individual area, the more »Nordic« this area and its inhabitants could be considered. The least Nordic area of the Kernel Area featured one to two factors and was marked as the »Outer or Wider Nordic Race Area« in Eastern Finland, Estonia, and Northern Germany. The second circle had three to four factors and was identified especially in Northern Norway, the Swedish-speaking areas of Finland, Eastern Latvia, and Denmark. The third, so-called »Pronounced Nordic Race Area« with the appearance of five to six factors was the fjord settlement of Norway, lower Lapland, Skåne, and Western Finland. These areas also excelled in a great racial mixture, Lundborg stated. The purest area of the Nordic race, the »Kernel Area of the Nordic Race,« featured the highest appearance of seven to nine factors and was characterized by Lundborg as the most »Nordic.« This area included Sweden, Norway, and Iceland, but also Northern Schleswig, parts of the Netherlands, and the area around Hanover in Germany.³⁶

Although this was a racial concept, it was not a racist one. Lundborg did not claim the purity or superiority of areas with a higher population of the »Nordic race.« On the contrary, he repeatedly argued that, although the Scandinavian region might show cultural and linguistic similarities, there was certainly no anthropological unity and it showed a strong mixture of races.³⁷ In the racial-theoretical research of the Nordic countries a claim for Nordic identity or community cannot be detected. The Nordic region as a whole was only addressed in order to demonstrate the appearance of races altogether within the national borders. The researchers did not aim to construct a Nordic identity. They instead used the concept of »Nordic race« to support and construct a national identity.

In Finland, for example, the discussion about the »Nordic race« was primarily based in the Swedish-speaking community. In 1924, the Finnish Academy of Science conducted an anthropological research project led by Yrjö Kajava about the population in the Finnish provinces. As Marjatta Hietala argues, the interest in racial qualities

³³ »Ich glaube nicht, dass es übertrieben ist, wenn man sagt, daß die nordische Rasse hinsichtlich der geistigen Begabung an der Spitze der Menschheit marschiert. [...] Die nordische Rasse verdankt ihre führende Stellung im Übrigen nicht nur ihrer hohen Verstandesbegabung, sondern nicht minder auch ihren Charaktereigenschaften,« Baur, Fischer & Lenz 1931, p. 547.

³⁴ Weiss 1986, p. 45.

³⁵ Kyllingstad 2012, p. 46.

³⁶ Lundborg 1926, pp. 170–171.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

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rose early in Finland.³⁸ This was probably connected to the emergence of national feelings, a phenomenon which could also be witnessed in the other young nations of the Nordic region, namely Norway. However, the eugenicist and physician Harry Federley saw the domination of the Nordic race as a distinct element in Finland. Swedish-speaking Finns were also responsible for introducing Nordic ideas to the Swedish-speaking community and using the concept of superiority to distinguish the Swedish-speaking people from the Finnish-speaking population. The Finnish racial science and conceptualization were firmly based on the transnational exchange with Swedish and German intellectuals, so that a vast majority of research literature was published in German and Swedish, yet rarely in Finnish.³⁹ Already in 1855, the Swedish journalist August Sohlman argued that two nationalities existed in Finland. He equated nationalities with races. This mixture of concepts was later contested by the racial theorists of the 1920s. Nevertheless, Sohlman continued that the two nationalities consisted, on the one hand, of the educated upper class of Swedish origin, and, on the other hand, of the uneducated Finnish lower classes. Finnish was from Sohlman's point of view not a language of civilization. Without the Swedish leadership no political, cultural, or social development would take place in Finland.⁴⁰ The superiority of the Swedish or Swedish-speaking people was traced back to their imagined roots in Sweden and likewise to the main area of the »Nordic race,« which made them superior to the Finnish-speaking population whose origins were strongly questioned and unclear in that period, as Aira Kemiläinen points out.⁴¹

In Norway, research about the »Nordic race« was influenced by two main factors: the emergence of nationalism, and the idea of Norway as the core area of the »Nordic race.« This phenomenon was already recognized by Herman Lundborg in his study *The Racial Characters of the Swedish Nation*, published in 1926.⁴² However, Norway was also one of the few countries where the concept of the »Nordic race« and especially its superiority was challenged by members of the research community, in particular by the research couple Alette and Kristian Schreiner. In his article *Norwegian Physical Anthropology and the Idea of a Nordic Master Race*, Jon Røyne Kyllingstad shows that the idea of Norway being the core area of the »Nordic race« was especially vital in the development of Norwegian anthropological research and the Norwegian conceptualization of the »Nordic race.« Furthermore, he argues that Norwegian racial research was marked by interdisciplinary cooperation between archaeologists, linguists, and historians. As a small country without significant national tradition, the national history was constructed after the independence from Sweden in 1905. Historians, folklorists, and philologists focused on the rural society and an adoption of the concept of the Germanic or »Nordic race,« Kyllingstad argues.⁴³

³⁸ Hietala 2005, p. 199.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 200–201.

⁴⁰ Kemiläinen 1998, p. 100.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 85.

⁴² Lundborg 1926, p. 2.

⁴³ Kyllingstad 2012, pp. 46–47.

Of particular importance in Norwegian racial and anthropological research was the rejection of the idea that the Sami were the original inhabitants of Northern Europe and Norway, added by the claim that members of the »Nordic race« had a much longer tradition in Norway. Two of the most prominent anthropologists in Norway, Andreas M. Hansen and Carl Oscar Eugen Arbo, agreed on the idea that the Sami people immigrated only in the Middle Ages to Northern Norway, thus standing in contrast to the »Nordic race« which could be traced back to pre-historic times. This claim was based on skull measures, being a prominent method of racial identification in racial scientific research at that time. Hansen and Arbo argued that the long skull of the Nordic race had already been detected in the remains of a warrior race which conquered Europe in the Iron Age.⁴⁴ The concept of the »Nordic race« and its origin in Norway was crucial for constructing the national identity of the young independent state. The lack of a Norwegian national history led to a construction of a tradition based on the concept of »Nordic race« to create a community and identification. Based on racial ideas, the concept was used to mark the Norwegian people as superior and appoint its origins within the newly constructed national borders by excluding other inhabitants of the national territory, such as the Sami.

Although the interest in racial research, especially concerning the »Nordic race,« was extensive in Norway, it was particularly shaped by close contact with Germany. The Norwegian researcher Halfdan Bryn, for instance, had connections with Germany. In the 1920s, he visited European anthropological institutions resulting in his book *Der Nordische Mensch* (1929). Therein he constructed a new theory of evolution and racial characteristics of the »Nordic race.« In the late 1920s, a clear opposition established itself against the notion of superiority. The researcher couple Alette and Kristian Schreiner developed a critical stance against the concept of superiority of the »Nordic race.«⁴⁵ Alette Schreiner gained international attention with her anthropological study of 316 Norwegian women. Her husband Kristian was one of the few leading anthropologists in Norway.⁴⁶ After previously being rather indifferent to the question about the Nordic »master race,« the Schreiners argued in the late 1920s that the notion of racial superiority, particularly that of the Nordic race being the most superior of all, was an outdated concept of the past. The new research results could not prove any of the previously mentioned claims.⁴⁷

This critical shift away from the idea of racial superiority, which was very strongly pronounced in Norway, can also be detected in the other Nordic countries in the late 1920s and early 1930s. It was quite different from the development in Germany. With the rise of National Socialist ideas and the establishment of the National Socialist government during the late 1920s and early 1930s, Germany developed an increased interest in racial ideas as a form of demarcation within the nation and in opposition to others. Whether this shift of formerly very similar ideas in the Nordic countries and in Germany can only be traced back to the different political developments in

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 48–50.

⁴⁵ Kyllingstad 2012, p. 53.

⁴⁶ Lundborg 1926, p. 3.

⁴⁷ Kyllingstad 2012, p. 55.

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the countries or also to cultural and social developments cannot be analyzed in detail here. However, it can be stated that the late 1920s and early 1930s meant a change in racial-theoretical research which resulted, on the one hand, in the rejection or at least questioning of the concept of the Nordic »master race« in the Nordic countries and, on the other hand, in a greater emphasis of the superior »Nordic race« as a method of creating identity in Germany.

The Nordic Race and the Others

The description of the »Nordic race« as distinct from other races involved two different aspects, namely external and internal factors. External factors like the portrayal of the physical appearance were similar in German and Nordic research. The Norwegian Jon Alfred Mjøen described the physical characteristics of members of the »Nordic race« with reference to their tall statures and long faces. The noses were long and narrow, he argued, and the male members had a full beard. The eye color was usually blue or light brown and the hair was blond or light brown, Mjøen stated.⁴⁸ The description by Fritz Lenz, Eugen Fischer and Erwin Baur was quite similar. They described the members of the »Nordic race« as tall (men about 1.73m high) with long arms and legs, a long skull, and a long, slim face. The hair was soft, mostly blond or red, and the eye color was light, blue to grey. They concluded that the skin tone was light and sensitive towards sun.⁴⁹

However, more important than the physical appearance was the internal or mental predisposition. German and Nordic researchers discussed the mental disposition of the pure »Nordic race« in the context of superiority and the effects of mixing the »Nordic race« with other races. Marius Turda argues that the German racial theorist Fritz Lenz was interested in the spiritual but not in the physical dispositions.⁵⁰ Also, Peter Weingart, Jürgen Kroll and Kurt Bayertz argue that Alfred Ploetz, a German racial researcher and the founder of the organization *Ring Norden*, ascribed different hierarchical and cultural value to races. The West-Aryans, part of the »Nordic race,« were the leaders of the world, he argued. Ploetz aimed to prove the mental superiority of the »Nordic race« by comparing rates of literacy. He argued that only 0.39 per cent of the Swedish population, being dominated by the »Nordic race,« could neither read nor write. In contrast, Hungary, a country with a low appearance of the »Nordic race,« accounted for an illiteracy rate of 50.8 per cent, he wrote.⁵¹

German racial research considered the internal or mental constitution to be the main factor to define the »Nordic race« as superior to other races. In their book *Menschliche Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*, Baur, Fischer and Lenz provided a detailed description of the historical achievements of the »Nordic race,« demonstrating its longstanding superiority over every other race. They argued that members of the »Nordic race« created the

⁴⁸ Mjøen 1922, p. 89.

⁴⁹ Baur, Lenz & Fischer 1931, p. 151.

⁵⁰ Turda 2010, p. 67.

⁵¹ Weingart, Kroll & Bayertz 1988, p. 92.

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Germanic or Aryan language and founded the Germanic empire, i.e. the German Kaiserreich in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, they claimed that members of the »Nordic race« were those to trigger the Renaissance and the Reformation because both took place only in countries which were dominated by the »Nordic race.« Baur, Fischer and Lenz stated that the greatest intellectual and scientific success in their days originated in North-Western Europe which showed a domination of the »Nordic race.« By contrast, the population of Southern Europe could not reach the intellectual qualities of Northern Europe. They concluded that the countries of North-Western Europe with few exceptions must be considered the most valuable due to the high concentration of the »Nordic race« in these areas.⁵²

Baur, Fischer and Lenz claimed further that the superiority of the »Nordic race« over other races was mainly based on mental abilities. Other races, for example the East-Baltic, the Mediterranean, or the Alpine, were not recognized as a threat. The peaceful co-existence of different races was not a problem. The main concern which arose was the conglomeration of other races with the »Nordic race« and its effects on the abilities of the »Nordic race,« encompassing larger, societal effects. Baur, Fischer and Lenz argued that race conglomeration was altogether very fertile and that the »wild races,« mainly races from the colonial areas, were not more dominant than the cultivated races. However, the offspring of racial mixture showed certain disadvantages, they stated. To give an example, they named the offspring of Sami and Nordic parents who did not only show a greater predisposition for diseases like tuberculosis, but also for mental disharmony.

Another phenomenon which results from bastardization is the appearance of physical defects. Mullatos seemed to be less resilient against diseases and infections than their parental races. Also the Scandinavian-Lapps-mixed breeds seem to be more prone to infections (tuberculosis) than their original races.⁵³

Baur, Fischer and Lenz argued that the mental constitutions of two different races were not always compatible since their mixing could lead to antisocial tendencies, although they concluded that antisocial tendencies were not always purely genetical but also influenced by the social environment.⁵⁴

The superiority of the »Nordic race« in German racial research was mainly based on the assumed higher mental abilities in contrast to other races. The main concern was a degradation of the »Nordic race« through the mixture with other races. Fischer, for example, was a supporter of racial inbreeding to preserve racial purity.⁵⁵ However, the social and mental superiority of the »Nordic race« was also contested in Germany. In the early 1920s, the racial hygienist Wilhelm Schallmeyer questioned the general superiority of the »Nordic race« and emphasized the

⁵² Baur, Fischer & Lenz 1931, pp. 540–546.

⁵³ »Eine andere Erscheinung als Folge der Bastardierung ist das Vorkommen konstitueller Schädigung. Mulatten scheinen gegen allerlei Krankheiten und Schädigungen weniger widerstandsfähig als ihre beiden Elternrassen. Auch Skandinavien-Lappen-Mischlinge scheinen gegen Krankheiten (Tuberkulose) anfälliger als ihre Stammrassen,« Baur, Fischer & Lenz 1931, p. 140.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 138–140.

⁵⁵ Weindling 1985, p. 304.

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importance of education and social enlightenment for the population to reduce social problems, which became widely recognized as useful methods in the late 1920s and 1930s.⁵⁶

Nevertheless, the mental superiority of the »Nordic race« and the mixture of races were not only a topic in the German research community but were also discussed in the Nordic countries. Yet, the mixture of different races was not principally rejected as a threat, and racial purity wasn't being emphasized as strongly as in Germany. The research discussion in Sweden distinguished itself by two special aspects from the other Nordic countries and Germany, namely the debate about the benefits of racial mixture and the introduction of class as a category within the racial discourse.

The Swedish racial biologist Nils von Hofsten argued in *Ärftlighetslära* (1919) that the mixture of higher and lower races could have positive effects on the overall constitution of the race. He referred to the mix of »Neger« and »Mulathen.« He stated that »Mulathen« were more intelligent than »Neger,« but that both suffered from physical disadvantages. Still, the mixture of both races showed positive results, he claimed. Furthermore, he argued that the Slavic people, for example, who are nowadays considered as a single race, were originally a mixture of a lot of different races.⁵⁷ In opposition to Fischer, von Hofsten voted positively for marriages between races and recognized racial purity as a danger instead. He argued that experiments showed that marriages within closed relations led to defects and illnesses, even in healthy families.⁵⁸ Von Hofsten took here the opposition to Fischer's emphasis of racial purity to overcome genetic, physical, and finally also social problems. Although, he surely did not suggest the mixture of inferior races, »Mulathen« for instance, with the »Nordic race,« he saw certain advantages for the overall constitution of both, the lower and higher, by a careful mixture. This might be based on the fact that racial diversity in the Nordic countries or only in Sweden was not considered to be as high as in Germany which is why a mixture did not appear to be as dangerous and dissimilar as, for example, in Germany.

In Sweden, the different races within the country were also discussed. In the book *Rasfrågor i Modern Belysning* (1919), edited and published by the director of *Statens Institut för Rasbiologi*, Herman Lundborg, the different races – Finnish, Lappish, Jewish, and an unclearly defined group of travelers – were presented. The perception of the races was very different. Finnish was considered as a race of its own without any kind of evaluation.⁵⁹ The Lappish people or Sami were claimed to be physically weaker and generally inferior to the Swedish people.⁶⁰ Also, the travelers were considered as poor, and their high fertility was recognized as a problem. However, since the 1830s and since the first attempts to cultivate them, not only in Sweden but all over Europe, slow improvement could have been observed by schooling the children and putting the parents to work. Still, the

⁵⁶ Friedlander 1995, p. 10.

⁵⁷ von Hofsten 1919, p. 483.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 484.

⁵⁹ Lundborg 1919, p. 29.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 46.

overall result was that travelers relapsed into their old habits.⁶¹ The Swedish Jewish population was evaluated positively in Lundborg's book. This constituted a strong contrast to the German perception which already in the 1920s showed anti-Semitic tendencies.⁶² Lundborg argued that the Jewish community in Sweden had been present since the seventeenth century. Although the differences, especially in language and legislation, were huge in the beginning, in those days Jews were represented in every Swedish party and class. The differences between Swedes and Jews were thus rather small.⁶³

Lundborg did not only discuss the different races in Swedish society but introduced also class as a category in racial research. He argued that no differences in the size of skulls, the most significant characteristic of the category »race« could be recognized among the respective social classes. However, the body height showed great differences. In general, workers were the smallest of all, and inhabitants of industrial cities were also the smallest in the country. Lundborg considered both environmental and racial influences responsible for this development.⁶⁴ The perception of industrial centers as racially dangerous differed strongly from the Danish point of view. As discussed earlier, Danish researchers perceived industrial societies as racially more advanced because they showed a greater class mobilization which was recognized as a characteristic of higher races.⁶⁵ In this matter, Sweden appears to have followed more the German trend with the romanticization of the agricultural past and the Nordic peasant life.⁶⁶ Sheila Faith Weiss argues that the introduction of class in the racial discourse was also a phenomenon which could be observed in German racial research in the 1920s. She claims that the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* rejected Aryan ideology and was mainly concerned with class until 1933.⁶⁷ However, this cannot be seen as a general trend in German research, and, as Henry Friedlander has shown, the German research community was rather divided into pro-racial and contra-racial enthusiasts.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, racial cross breeding and its possible social problems were also a topic in the Norwegian racial research. Alfred Jon Mjøen, influenced by racial thinking, took probably the most critical view on cross-racial breeding and followed here more the German trends than the Swedish ones. He discussed cross-breeding with regard to the example of mixing Sami with Norwegians. Mjøen argued that, although not every cross-breeding was disharmonic, the overall results were negative. Cross-breeds revealed changes in the bone structure, an extinction of their sexual instinct, and higher youth mortality.

Observations and measurements taken amongst the Lapps in Northern Norway necessitate a distinction being made between harmonious and disharmonious crossing. I found for example cases of crossing

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 73–74.

⁶² Weindling 1985, p. 317.

⁶³ Lundborg 1919, pp. 64–69.

⁶⁴ Lundborg 1928, pp. 118–119.

⁶⁵ Andreassen 2014, p. 446.

⁶⁶ Weingart 1985, p. 320.

⁶⁷ Weiss 1990, p. 9.

⁶⁸ Friedlander 1995, p. 10.

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between the Nordic race and Lapps (in Ljusnedalen), in which the half-breeds were superior as regards stature to both of the progenitors and as regards mental powers to the Lapps with whom they were living.⁶⁹

Mjøen drew his conclusion from animal experiments but was convinced that they could be transferred to humans without problems.⁷⁰ He followed Fischer's argumentation that racial cross-breeds were in higher risk of being infected by tuberculosis. However, Mjøen took the argumentation a step further and argued that social problems, like criminality, can most certainly be traced back to cross-breeding, which was a hypothesis of Fischer as well.⁷¹

In Finland, the conceptualization of the »Nordic race« and being »Nordic« differed very much from the other Nordic countries and Germany. Neither the suppression of an ethnical minority, like in Norway, nor a social class, like in Sweden, was relevant to create »the others.« Rather, it was the minority of the Swedish-speaking population who used »Nordicness« as a concept to obtain their leadership and superiority over the Finnish-speakers who constituted the majority of the Finnish population. The Swedish-speaking physician and co-founder of the health organization *Folkhälsan* Ossian Schauman argued that all origins of culture, legislation, and administration in Finland were Swedish. The Swedish culture was considerably older than the Finnish. Fifty to sixty years ago all governmental positions were Swedish. However, the Finnish-speakers pushed more intensely towards a higher status by, for example, having better school education in Finnish, and thereby strengthened the Finnish educated classes. Schauman, on the other hand, invoked that the Swedish minority had to be protected from the Finnish majority because Swedish land should remain in Swedish hands.⁷²

Even if they were granted [rights for self-government], it is clear to the Swedish population that laws cannot offer the Swedish an unailing protection against pressure from the Finnish majority, unless the Swedish themselves possess the will to live and are ready to make sacrifices in order to create an innate power, which under all circumstances constitutes the most unailing defense of a people.⁷³

Aira Kemiläinen argues that, at the end of the nineteenth century, the feeling of insecurity increased among the Swedish-speakers in Finland. Especially during the nineteenth century, Finnish-speakers developed a higher awareness of their own culture, detached from the Swedish-speakers, by developing their own art, literature, and music, alongside a widespread implementation of Finnish education. According to Kemiläinen, this led to a pro-Swedish movement during the turn of the century in which parts of the Swedish-speaking upper class and farmers joined forces to form a separate Swedish nation on Finnish grounds.⁷⁴ In this context, the entire struggle of the Swedish-speakers in Finland cannot be discussed; however, the idea of the superiority of the »Nordic race« and of

⁶⁹ Mjøen 1922, pp. 36–37.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 36.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 88.

⁷² Schaumann 1921, pp. 90–91.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 90.

⁷⁴ Kemiläinen 1998, pp. 133–134.

»being Nordic« was one of the main identity-establishing notions for Swedish speakers, such as for the physicians Harry Federley and Ossian Schauman. This idea constituted the foundation of their claims concerning the superiority of the Swedish-speakers in Finland and their demand for remaining in power. In their eyes, the Finns, who did not belong to a clearly defined race and surely were not part of the »Nordic race,« would never be able to lead a civilized country. The help of the superior Swedish-speakers was indispensable to avoid the degeneration and dissolution of the civilized society in Finland.

In summation, racial research in Germany and the Nordic countries was mainly concerned with the »Nordic race« in relation to other races and the mixture of races. However, there is no distinct national or overarching agreement on the effects of cross-breeding. The perception was more than diverse with national particularities. Although the idea is contested by some studies, Germany showed a stronger bias toward racial purity. In Sweden, racial crossings were not generally considered as dangerous; positive effects were also recognized. With Mjøen, Norway showed a very strong racial and even racist tendency. Still, he was an outsider in the Norwegian research community so that his research might not be considered as representative for Norway in general. Nevertheless, it can be stated that in Germany and the Nordic countries, races and racial hierarchies were used to explain and solve physical, mental, and social problems. It was widely uncontested, sometimes more explicitly, sometimes less, that the »Nordic race« stood at the top of the racial hierarchy. National, economic, and social success was based on the constitution of the »Nordic race« within the country, so that the protection of the »Nordic race« was the main concern of racial theorists in Germany as well as in the Nordic countries.

Conclusion

»Nordic race« was an important concept in racial science in the Nordic countries and Germany in the 1920s. The concept of »race« as well as the concept of »Nordic« constituted, both as separate and joint concepts, a foundation for the creation of identity in the national context. Furthermore, at a later stage they were used as a practical method for solving social problems. Although the early researchers in the Nordic countries as well as in Germany aimed for a strong separation of the concepts of »race« and »Volk,« especially after the First World War and the economic crisis, which in turn resulted in severe social problems and national identity crises, a higher degree of intermingling the concepts could be observed in the discussed countries. The scientists abandoned their own demand for separation and drifted more and more into the use of racial theory in applied scientific racial biology, thus providing the basis for eugenic practice.

However, although certain similarities in the conceptualization of »Nordic,« »race,« and »Nordic race« must be recognized between Germany and the Nordic countries, the differences must also be acknowledged. Racial theory and research in Germany and in the four Nordic countries were similar, especially due to the interaction of their agents. However, they were first of all shaped by national diversity. It would go too far to speak of a Nordic or Nordic-German racial theory because it would underestimate the influence of the national discourses on racial research. As I have shown, »Nordic race« was not used to create a Nordic identity but a national identity in the

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various Nordic countries as well as in Germany. The intermingling of the concepts of »race« and »Volk« is an intensely debated point in this matter. As I pointed out earlier, particularly the young Nordic nations Finland and Norway used the concept of a »Nordic race« to create their respective national tradition and identity by, for instance, positioning Norway as the core area of the »Nordic race.«

The similar can be applied to Finland. The Swedish-speaking minority used the idea of the superiority of the »Nordic race« in order to establish and manifest their own superiority over the Finnish majority. In doing so, they defended their leading cultural, political, and economic position, which seemed to be endangered after the Finnish independence. Denmark used the concept of a »Nordic race« to define a »Danish race« to strengthen the national character and separate itself from the other Nordic countries. In Sweden, the national identity was probably least based on the »Nordic race« as an identity-marker. The Swedish national identity seemed to be particularly strong and confident in comparison with the other Nordic countries. Leading Swedish racial scientists, like Herman Lundborg, questioned quite early the superiority of the »Nordic race« and the idea of a Nordic region inhabited by a pure »Nordic race.« Critics like him did not entirely reject the idea of the superiority of the »Nordic race,« but earlier than the other countries they linked the concepts to class and social problems.

Germany and the Nordic countries shared the same foundation of racial theory, but they applied it in different ways. In Germany, »Nordic race« was used as a concept to create a national identity. However, the focus on the superiority of the »Nordic race« seemed to be much stronger and uncontested than in the various Nordic countries. Although leading scientists like Wilhelm Schallmeyer expressed indeed doubts about racial superiority, these lines of argumentation did not succeed. Especially the political development of the 1930s silenced this discussion entirely.

In closing, the concept of the »Nordic race« as being special and set apart from other races was used and supported in Nordic as well as in German racial theory in the 1920s. The research can be traced back to a joined foundation which developed differently in the national contexts. In particular, the use of »Nordic race« as a creator of national identity surmounted the early demands of scientists for the separation of »race« and »Volk.« In Germany and in the Nordic countries, both concepts overlapped strongly in the 1920s. The term »Nordic« was used to create national identity as well as superiority. The aim was not to detect a border-crossing »Nordic« region but to claim »Nordic« as a national concept. This can be noticed both in the Nordic countries and in Germany. However, the notion of the »Nordic race« was not an overarching German-Nordic concept. Although it followed similar trends and developments, the process of its more precise formation took place on the national level. After all, »Nordic« was more or less the same term that was used in different ways and that testified to a joint identity of Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland.

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