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Standards and Norms of Scandinavian Studies.  
An Attempt at Determining a Position

Scholarly practice requires moving beyond the canon, and therefore standards are constantly being revised. Since the total of 18 departments of Scandinavian Studies (*Skandinavistik*) in German speaking countries differ quite noticeably, it is even harder to pinpoint a common ground for this discipline. It could even be questioned whether *Skandinavistik* is supposed to be considered one of the philologies. Its historical roots lie with the *Germanistik*, which comprises linguistics, medieval studies and literary studies. But only few Scandinavian departments today include linguistics, and the greater part is mostly focused on literary studies.

The discipline of Scandinavian studies differs from *Germanistik* in two aspects: It is concerned not only with language and literature, but has been a cultural studies even before the cultural turn. Besides, it usually takes a comparatist viewpoint. While Danish, Norwegian and Swedish are standard, countries such as Iceland, Greenland, Finland, the Faroe Islands or the culture of the Sami are not necessarily included in all Scandinavian departments. Consequently, only Danish, Norwegian and Swedish language competence can be regarded as a norm within Scandinavian studies. Which countries and cultures Scandinavian studies researches

changes with the standards in theory. E.g. the inclusion of Greenland only resulted from concepts of postcolonialism.

In comparison to its modest size, the theoretical advancement of Scandinavian studies is quite remarkable. Since there is a pluralism of advanced methods and theories, the diversity is multiplied again. But there is also a standard that can be derived from this diversity: the presentation and application of theories has to be plausible and comprehensible. Although it encourages diversity, Scandinavian studies is too small to tolerate hermetic or esoteric concepts. As for its subjects, usually not only literature in a narrow sense is being studied, but cultural phenomena on a broader range.

With the exceptions of the knowledge of specific regions and cultures as well as their languages, most of the standards of Scandinavian literary studies are similar to that of other literary studies. An attempt to explicate these standards in detail faces three problems: 1) Competences, like the knowledge of a certain canon, are gradable. It can be disputed what should be considered 'fundamental knowledge'. Especially a small discipline like Scandinavian studies calls for a certain amount of universality, which can stand in the way of in-depth knowledge. 2) Standards of theory and method change dynamically throughout time. 3) To fix a set of standards and norms would not only require some form of authorization, but might also hinder the potential for innovation. Ideally, all research positions its own standards, on which subsequent researchers can take their bearings.

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