Rediscovering Nordic Cooperation

Editors

Anne Elizabeth Stie and Jarle Trondal

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Editorial

Introducing the Study of Nordic Cooperation

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Abstract
To rediscover Nordic cooperation this article develops a 'conceptual grammar' that provides general theoretical 'images' of cooperation that are systematically applied. Being supplementary analytical constructs, moreover, these images capture great variety and differentiation in Nordic cooperation. Next, this article provides a review of two sets of literature that are of particular relevance to this thematic issue. The first is a broader literature on European integration. The second is studies of Nordic cooperation. The article closes with an overview of the contributions to this thematic issue.

Keywords
differentiation; disintegration; integration; Nordic cooperation; Nordic Council; Nordic Council of Ministers

Issue
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1. Introduction

Situated in the North-Western corner of Europe, the five countries—Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland as well the autonomous regions of Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland Islands—make up 'Norden' or the Nordic countries. Yet, is 'Norden' more than a geographical area, more than a shared territorial landscape, or are Nordic states able to govern together? Do Nordic states share ways of cooperating through common politico-administrative institutions, networks and traditions? Is Nordic cooperation characterised by shared and pooled sovereignty and resources towards one 'common order,' or is it better portrayed as divergent and poorly coordinated set of institutions and resources (Trondal, 2020)? To what extent is Nordic cooperation a bi-product of and profoundly influenced by *exogenous* factors such as the European Union (EU), and to what extent is it shaped *endogenously* by distinct Nordic politico-administrative institutions and traditions (Olsen & Sverdrup, 1998)? This thematic issue aims to

rediscover Nordic cooperation as a laboratory for analysis as well as a region of politico-administrative cooperation. More precisely, we examine to what extent Nordic cooperation represents an integrated and independent 'common political order,' and the extent to which it represents an area of politico-administrative differentiation. Although 'Norden' is often recognized as sharing a common political, economic and administrative model with a fairly cohesive cultural identification among citizens, trust-based governance and a strong welfare-state tradition, Nordic *political cooperation* has largely remained secondary to both national and EU-level politics. Similarly, Nordic political science has focused relatively more on the politics of the Nordic states and the EU than on Nordic cooperation (Knutsen, 2017). Despite being largely pictured as withering (Olsen & Sverdrup, 1998), observations presented in this thematic issue suggests that Nordic cooperation is vibrant, yet partly overlapping with other regional politico-administrative networks, and also that it is characterised by politico-administrative *differentiation*.

Over the last decade, Europe has been hit by multiple crises that have tested the post-Cold War political order based on institutional multilateralism, rule of law and policy compromises (Dinan, Nugent, & Paterson, 2017; Graziano & Halpern, 2016; Riddervold, Trondal, & Newsome, 2020): the financial and migration crises, Brexit, democratic backsliding, climate change, Russia's annexation of Crimea, cyber-security threats, uncertainties about multilateralism and the future role of the US, the rise of China, and lately, the unpredictable unfolding and consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. With evermore turbulence in world affairs, there is a call for understanding the conditions for sustained political order (Ansell, Trondal, & Ogard, 2016; Boin, t' Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005; Fukuyama, 2016; Olsen, 2007). The significance of political order is often taken for granted during historical periods of stability. During periods of political unrest, however, existing political arrangements easily become subject to contestation and request for reform (Ansell & Trondal, 2017). Against this background, Olsen and Sverdrup (1998) observed a withering of Nordic cooperation—it was pictured as secondary to an ever more integrated EU. Reasons for this was different forms of affiliation to the EU among the Nordic countries (Olsen & Sverdrup, 1998), weak institutions to support Nordic cooperation (Sundelius & Wiklund, 1979), as well as the dynamics of European integration. For historical reasons too, the Nordic states have been sceptical of pooling sovereignty to the Nordic level and have also been tortoises in European integration. Previous studies have thus pictured Nordic countries as 'reluctant Europeans' (Miljan, 1977), 'reluctant Nordics' (Arter, 2008), 'awkward partners' (Stegmann McCallion & Brianson, 2018) or the 'other European Community' (Turner & Nordquist, 1982).

This thematic issue paints a picture of differentiated Nordic administrative cooperation between central administrative institutions. It showcases how Nordic cooperation is vibrant and largely facilitated by agency-to-agency cooperation and only weakly coupled to the Nordic Council (NC) and the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). Nordic-level institutions arguably do not possess requisite administrative capacities to co-opt national administrative institutions (Trondal, 2020). Moreover, Strang (2016), Hyde-Price (2018), Olesen and Strang (2016) and Kettunen, Lundberg, Österberg, and Petersen (2016) also observe that there is a 'Nordic renaissance' attached to the praise of the Nordic (welfare) model as well as Nordic collaboration in security and defence policy (see also Wæver, 1992). On the other hand, cooperation in the traditional formats of the NC and NCM in policy areas such as social and welfare policy, law, arts and culture, remain weak. Nordic cooperation thus faces dilemmas of integration, fragmentation and differentiation. It is therefore timely to take stock of Nordic cooperation.

To aid the discussion, three conceptual images are developed as analytical guides: Image 1 suggests that

Nordic cooperation is characterized as one common political order; Image 2 suggests that Nordic cooperation is largely absent, and that politics of the region is largely driven by non-cooperating states; Image 3 finally advocates that Nordic cooperation is characterized by differentiated integration in which different parts of the region, and different institutions therein, cooperate to different extents, at different times and at different speeds in different policy domains.

These conceptual images differ on the extent to which politico-administrative orders are 'common' (Trondal, 2020). However, an 'order' does not suggest political institutions that are perfectly integrated, coordinated and impeccably independent. They are often imperfectly so. The notion of common political order suggests a fairly independent, integrated and influential set of institutions that allocate 'authority, power, information, responsibility, and accountability' (J. P. Olsen, 2016, p. 3). A common political order, however, is conceptually different from processes of integration (see Riddervold et al., 2020). The meaning of the term 'integration' varies across theoretical perspectives in the literature (Wiener, Börzel, & Risse, 2019). Overall, we choose a general definition of integration suggested by James G. March (1999, p. 134) who sees integration as the imagination of "a world consisting of a set of parts. At the least, integration is gauged by some measure of the density, intensity, and character of relations among the elements of that set." Subsequently, he suggests three parameters for integration: consistency among the parts, interdependence among the parts, and structural connectedness among the parts. On this basis, disintegration would imply a lower degree of density and intensity of the consistency, interdependence and structural connectedness among these parts.

2. Conceptual Images of Nordic Cooperation

This section develops a 'conceptual grammar' that provides three fairly general images of cooperation. Being supplementary analytical constructs, these images capture variation in Nordic cooperation. Each article in this thematic issue moreover offers causal mechanisms to explain such variation.

First, Image 1 proposes that Nordic cooperation is characterised by deep integration into one common political order. This scenario suggests some kind of deep integration of states, institutions and policies. The empirical test would be political institutions at the Nordic level—notably NC and NCM—that are integrated, coordinated and independent of the politics of member-states. Generally, crises tend to trigger integration of states and/or administrative bodies to address common challenges (Riddervold et al., 2020). Crisis may entail a fundamental questioning of pre-existing governance arrangements and 'long-cherished beliefs' in existing institutional systems (Lodge & Wegrich, 2012). Crisis may produce critical junctures that generate 'windows of opportuni-

ty' for significant policy change (Kingdon, 1984) and novel organizational solutions (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). Crisis may thus spur the emergence of entirely new policies or institutional arrangements. Recent examples include the rise of EU financial surveillance agencies and the structuring of an EU banking union in the aftermath of the financial crisis, the emergent European energy union in the aftermath of energy and climate crises (Trondal & Bauer, 2017). An organization theory approach might account for deep administrative integration across states. Integrating central administrations of states are first conditioned by vertical specialization of administrative bodies in general, and the creation of agencies subordinated to ministerial departments in particular. Hence, loose coupling of organizations in general increases the sum of organisational sub-units that might subsequently interact. Decentralised agencies are shown to govern on arm's length distance from political control and therefore possess requisite administrative autonomy to collaborate with agencies in other government systems—and thus 'go Nordic' (Egeberg & Trondal, 2018). Secondly, these horizontal administrative networks are likely to be verticalized and absorbed by international bureaucracies if the latter possess requisite administrative capacities to pull administrative bodies into its own orbit.

By contrast, Image 2 suggests that Nordic cooperation is weak, disintegrated, hollowed-out and characterised by separate policy agendas driven by non-cooperating states and administrative bodies (Olsen & Sverdrup, 1998). The empirical test would be political institutions at Nordic level—notably NC and NCM—that are poorly coordinated and largely dependent on the politics of member-states. Following an organisational theory approach, weak Nordic cooperation might result from how Nordic cooperation is (dis)organised (Egeberg & Trondal, 2018). Deep forms of association among states would require requisite joint organisational platforms to develop and survive. By contrast, a lack of common politico-administrative institutions among Nordic states—notably a weak NC and NCM—would lead to weak integration of politics and policies.

Finally, in line with contemporary studies of differentiation in EU studies, Image 3 suggests that Nordic cooperation is characterised by differentiated integration in which different parts of the region, and different institutions therein, integrate to different extents, at different times, and at different speeds in different policy domains (Leruth, Gänzle, & Trondal, 2019). This conceptual image is compatible with a historical-institutional approach, in which Nordic cooperation muddle through via processes of institutional and policy path-dependencies: Policy processes are thus contingent on and locked in by pre-existing institutional formats, and therefore profoundly stable, sustainable and robust (Pierson, 2000, 2004). Institutions create elements of robustness, and concepts such as historical inefficiency and path-dependence suggest that the match between environments and institutional solutions is not automat-

ic and precise (March & Olsen, 1998). Faced with crises, new governing arrangements are thus likely to be extrapolated from and mediated by pre-established institutional frameworks (Skowronek, 1982). Differentiated Nordic cooperation is fashioned by the diverse set of organisational solutions among Nordic administrative bodies, interest groups, regional administrations, and so on (Jacobsson, Lægreid, & Pedersen, 2004).

3. European Integration and Nordic Cooperation: Review of the Literature

We see two sets of literature that are of particular relevance to this thematic issue. The first is a broader literature on European integration and the second is studies of Nordic cooperation.

3.1. Studies in European Integration

Contemporary advances in EU studies have occurred in the aftermath of EU polycrisis that was triggered with outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008. Multiple crises have led scholars to ask if the EU integration process is brought to a halt or experiences disintegration, or if forms of differentiation is emergent. Crisis, disintegration and differentiation have faced 'grand-theories' of European integration such as neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism with conceptual and explanatory problems, while mid-range theories such as neo-institutionalisms have fared comparatively better. However, most discussions of theoretical rehabilitation in the literature has privileged grand theories (e.g., Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Schimmelfennig & Winzen, 2019). One reason might be that big theoretical ideas may explain general trends more adequately than mid-range theories. One comprehensive attempt to 'explain' crisis and European *dis*integration is Vollaard (2014), written in the context of the Euro-crisis. Vollaard suggests that studies of differentiated (dis)integration "only explain why some member-states do not join all integrative steps, and not whether the EU could become less integrated" (Vollaard, 2014, p. 1143). Following Vollaard (2018), integration is seen as multifaceted processes that co-exist with disintegrative ones (see below). Focusing, inter alia, on the so-called 'migration crisis,' Webber (2019) further expanded on a second comprehensive theoretical contribution—post-functionalism—arguing that Hooghe and Marks' (2019) approach is best equipped to understand the consequences of the crisis on European integration, as post-functionalism argues that "[m]ass politicization and the growth of identity politics are likely to create 'downward pressure on the level and scope of integration"' (Hooghe & Marks as cited in Webber, 2019, p. 8). Recent studies provide rich empirical probes of how the EU has responded to crisis, whilst some few studies also aim to theoretically explain mechanisms of how the EU tackle crisis, e.g., through disintegration (Vollaard, 2018), or concep-

tually assess effects of crisis on the European political order, for example by pushing the EU towards differentiation and segmentation (e.g., Bátora & Fossum, 2019). Both Vollaard (2018) and Bátora and Fossum (2019) suggests that the EU has muddled through crises, either by member-states balancing different choices of exit, voice and loyalty (Vollaard, 2018), or institutionally through lock-in mechanisms influenced by pre-existing segmented institutional arrangements (Bátora & Fossum, 2019). Thus, contemporary theorizing of (dis)integration and differentiation in Europe combines explanations based on collective actors' cost-benefit calculations—such as promotion of equality of opportunity among EU members (Jones, 2018)—and institutionalist explanations focusing on how crises are channelled through and mediated by pre-existing institutional frames and resources (e.g., Bátora & Fossum, 2019).

Brexit revoked differentiated integration as a promising focus in EU studies. Common to this literature is that crisis is seen as a catalyst both of increased European differentiation and increased scholarly attention to the phenomenon. Following Bátora and Fossum (2019), a symposium in *Journal of Common Market Studies* by Leruth et al. (2019) argued that differentiation is a persistent and embedded phenomenon in the EU. Differentiation is furthermore driven by mechanisms of supply and demand: Those on the demand side consist of national governments that do not wish to follow the integrationist path taken by the inner core of the EU, while the supply side consists of pro-integrationist governments that accept the demands to move away from uniformity. Differentiation, arguably, covers processes under which a member-state withdraws from participation in the process of European integration (full exit; Leruth et al., 2019), or component parts of member-states withdraws (partial exit), leading to processes of differentiated disintegration (Vollaard, 2018, p. 233). Similar tendencies are likely in sub-regional cooperation, such as Nordic cooperation.

Vollaard (2018) argues that differentiated disintegration requires original conceptualisations and theory-building. Arguably, mid-range theories would allow for more careful causal probes as well as the possibility of explaining the details of events more adequately than grand theories. Mid-range theories such as institutional theories have been generally used to explain how exogenous chocks are adopted and biased endogenously by rules and routines (March & Olsen, 1989). Applied to understand how the EU adapts to crisis, institutional segmentation of the EU has similarly been shown to foster differentiated crisis sensitivity and crisis management within different policy areas and institutions. Consequently, crisis in one policy area does not easily spill over to other policy areas, thus not reverberating across the entire system. Put generally, 'bad' solutions may be implemented in parts of organizations or political orders without 'ruining it all' (Ansell & Trondal, 2017). Similar ideas led Genschel and Jachtenfuchs (2018) to

argue that processes of (dis)integration may unfold differently in different policy areas, notably in policies of core-state powers—through capacity-building—and policies of market integration—through (re-)regulation. Similarly, Falkner (2016) argued in a special issue of *Journal of European Integration* that crisis pressure has been unequally distributed between nine policy areas and the effects have been mediated by EU's decision-making 'modes' and layered on top of existing elements. Falkner (2016, p. 229) shows that no policy area experienced integration 'failures' and a re-nationalisation of competences and capacities. In short, poly-crisis contributed to 'an even greater role to the EU,' partly due to spill-over by stealth (Mény, 2014). The latter observation led Mény (2014) to argue that crisis has contributed to a possible 'federalism of executives,' with a shift of power towards executive institutions, albeit segmented across different policy sub-systems (Bátora & Fossum, 2019).

The above discussion thus suggests a call for eclecticism in theory and methods as well as for mid-range theorizing. One such contribution is Leruth et al. (2019), exploring differentiated disintegration from multiple theoretical angles, focusing on how this process affected different policy areas, norms and institutions of the EU. However, differentiation is not merely understood as yet another form of or response to crisis. The process of European integration is abundant with examples of fundamental crises, such as the ones triggered by the failure of the European Defence Community in 1954, the empty chair crisis of 1965–1966 or the 'euro-sclerosis' of 1970, to name but three. Yet, the full disintegration of the Union has never happened, and according to Vollaard (2018, p. 259) is not likely to happen any time soon.

3.2. Studies in Nordic Cooperation

The end of the Cold War triggered substantial soul-searching in Nordic region (Olesen & Strang, 2016; Strang, 2016). When the Nordics ended up choosing different forms of affiliation to the EU—Sweden and Finland joining Denmark in the EU, and Norway and Iceland remaining as members of the European Economic Area—observers assumed that Nordic cooperation would erode, reducing it to a less attractive sub-arena for the then newly accessed EU members (Olsen & Sverdrup, 1998). However, whereas one strand of literature viewed European integration as a threat to further Nordic cooperation (and to national sovereignty), the other was pragmatic and saw possibilities for differentiated Nordic cooperation inside the EU. This section discusses two areas of scholarship on Nordic cooperation: Transnational administration and networks and security and defence cooperation.

3.2.1. Transnational Administration and Networks

Whereas European integration has been pursued largely by European elites in a top-down way, Nordic coop-

eration has had a distinctive bottom-up dimension characterised by informal networking and coordination among national administrations and stakeholders (Andrén, 1967; Götz & Haggrén, 2009; Olsen & Sverdrup, 1998; Strang, 2016, p. 8; Sundelius & Wiklund, 1979). This involves informal collaboration among national bureaucrats to coordinate policy positions, seeking inspiration and learning, exchange of contacts, discussing EU regulations, providing help in single cases, and pooling resources and competences (Kettunen et al., 2016; Lægreid & Rykkja, 2020; Olsen & Sverdrup, 1998; Sundelius & Wiklund, 1979). This 'transnational bureaucracy' (Sundelius & Wiklund, 1979) of inter-connected ministries and agencies is pictured as part of a development towards a common Nordic administrative space (Lægreid & Rykkja, 2020). However, unlike EU institutions and in particular the European Commission's ability to set the policy agenda for member governments (cf. Bauer & Trondal, 2015; Egeberg & Trondal, 2018), the inter-parliamentary NC and the intergovernmental NCM are much less able to mobilise a common Nordic agenda and to enforce implementation of it. Instead, Nordic cooperation mainly takes place in loosely coupled administrative networks, which sometimes run via and often outside the NC and the NCM. Another characteristic of these networks is that they have primarily emerged and been maintained sector-wise. This has made inter-sectoral Nordic coordination challenging, rendering package-deals across policy domains few. On the other hand, this might also make Nordic cooperation more resilient; if cooperation in one policy domain falters or breaks down, this does not easily lead to breakdown in other policy sectors.

The surge of European integration has oriented Nordic cooperation towards the EU and challenged attention towards Nordic integration (Etzold, 2020; Olesen & Strang, 2016; cf. Strang, 2016). It has become difficult for Nordic governments to discuss Nordic cooperation outside the context of European institutions. Nordic administrative networks are therefore overly EU-focused. Olsen and Sverdrup (1998) suggested that European integration would hollow out Nordic cooperation. Not only would EU membership be time-consuming and resource demanding by moving attention away from the Nordic agenda and weaken attentiveness towards Nordic institutions and cooperation. Moreover, the EU might also be equally or more attractive to governments. This thematic issue, however, suggests that Nordic administrative cooperation in sectoral, transnational networks are 'alive and kicking' driven by agency-to-agency networks (Lægreid & Rykkja, 2020). Such networks are partly Europeanised by being tightly coupled to EU institutions and policy processes (i.e., in the Commission and EU agencies). Nordic administration cooperation is thus as a gateway to EU arenas, and those involved would experience agenda-overlap. For instance, the Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate operates both in Nordic and EU agency networks but contact with the Commission are primarily channelled via EU agencies and Nordic associations (Andersen, 2016). A recent study of the Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection shows that there is significant overlap between the Nordic and EU administrative networks (A. L. Olsen, 2016).

These studies suggest that national regulatory agencies 'go Nordic' but 'EU too' to discuss common challenges and EU regulations, and they coordinate common positions at the Nordic level prior to EU meetings. Exchange of experiences and information contributes to policy coordination among Nordic agencies, but also to a division of labour among them. Similarly, Nordic cooperation are observed between statistical agencies in the Nordic countries (Teigen & Trondal, 2015), Nordic water systems and energy agencies (Andersen, 2016), civil protection agencies (A. L. Olsen, 2016) and agencies in the pharmaceutical sector (Vestlund, 2015). Similarly, the Financial Supervisory Agency of Norway and the Norwegian Directorate of Health use Nordic cooperation as a gateway to the EU (Isaksen, 2012; Søetorp, 2012). Nordic cooperation is seen as useful, as a collegial arena for learning, coordination and early warning on forthcoming EU directives. Nordic and EU decision-making processes consequently overlap, largely caused by the dynamic regulatory activity of the EU.

Most contributions to this thematic issue observe that Nordic cooperation is *differentiated* and (unsurprisingly) neither sufficiently deep nor influential to render the Nordic region an independent political order. However, unlike Olsen and Sverdrup's (1998) observation of Nordic *dis*integration two decades ago, Nordic cooperation has seemingly not altogether decreased even if the status and influence of Nordic-level institutions is modest (Olesen & Strang, 2016; cf. Strang, 2016). Whereas the NC and the NCM at their best "contributed to a Nordification of political discourses and to the promotion of inter-Nordic exchange of ideas among governments and civil servants" (Olesen & Strang, 2016, p. 29), they have limited policy scope (mainly covering social and welfare issues, culture and art), formal authority and administrative capacities. However, this does not leave Nordic cooperation obsolete. Rather, it is (still) channelled through informal and flexible administrative platforms, such as transnational administrative networks among Nordic administrative bodies (cf. Lægreid & Rykkja, 2020; Time & Veggeland, 2020). Moreover, Nordic EU member-states also cooperate in EU policy making processes. For instance, Schulz and Henökl (2020) show that in EU financial and budgetary policy, Nordic member-states have successfully collaborated in coalition-building in the 'Hanseatic League' and the 'Frugal Four.' However, these network arrangements are flexible, informal, issue-specific and non-committing in nature and without involving Nordic-level institutions. Nordic cooperation thus remains politically and de jure intergovernmental and largely building on administrative networks.

3.2.2. Security and Defence Cooperation

Notwithstanding Nordic cooperation happening mostly outside the common institutional framework of the NC and NCM, we are witnessing renewed push for Nordic cooperation in certain policy domains, such in security and defence (e.g., Forsberg, 2013; Hyde-Price, 2018, p. 436; Olesen & Strang, 2016; Strang, 2016). During the Cold War, security and defence policy was not a viable candidate for Nordic cooperation. After unsuccessful attempt to launch a Scandinavian Defence Union in 1948–1949, Denmark, Norway and Iceland joined NATO, Sweden remained unaligned, and Finland balanced its relationship with the USSR through the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance. To retain this delicate Nordic balance, security and defence policy never entered the agendas of the NC and NCM. However, even as the end of the Cold War invited Nordic states to redefine their international alignments, divergent historical experiences in security and defence policy has made joint efforts to integrate this policy domain at Nordic level difficult. Shared initiatives have therefore been addressed outside the institutional framework of the NC and NCM (Bengtsson, 2020). Even if some joint progress has been achieved, deep institutional or policy integration in security and defence is hampered by the Nordic states' past foreign policy choices and identities, especially their different relations to the US and NATO, but also their different affiliations with the EU. Institutional and policy 'stickiness' in security and defence is confirmed by Haugevik and Sending (2020) who show how the Nordic states 'choose' to commit to old strategies where they have foreign policy instruments and resources.

4. Overview of the Thematic Issue

Tobias Etzold (2020) provides an overview of the aspiration for policy relevance of the NCM. This institution underwent an incremental process of change and some modest transformation since the 1990s. However, there has never been a major overhaul of structures and contents owing to considerable inertia. The most recent modernisation process aiming at more political relevance and flexibility has been ambitious but whether it has been a success has remained unclear so far. Weaknesses and limits of the cooperation in the NCM are obvious, i.e., no majority voting or 'opting-out' system, a lack in supranational structures and policies and no common immigration, foreign, security and EU policies. Nonetheless, the organisation has at least some relevance and meaning for the Nordic countries and the potential to promote and facilitate cooperation in policy areas in which common interests exist such as environment, climate, research and social affairs. Therefore, rather than constituting a common political order of its own, Nordic cooperation as it is conducted within the NCM is best characterised by *differentiated integration*,

fostering cooperation and coordination of policies where possible and desired.

Per Lægreid and Lise Rykkja (2020) studies Nordic administrative cooperation on policy design and administrative reform measures. Their article examines whether Nordic administrative collaboration is still 'alive and kicking,' or whether it has been marginalised by increased integration into Europe and strong international reform trajectories. They analyse the scope and intensity of Nordic administrative collaboration based on the perceptions of civil servants in the Norwegian central government. Also, the implications of Nordic collaboration for policy design and reform measures are addressed. The main observation is that Nordic administrative collaboration can best be described as *differentiated integration*. The broad scope of Nordic administrative collaboration varies significantly with internal structural features. Nordic collaboration is seen to have an effect on policy design more than on specific administrative reform means and measures, but structural features matter too.

Next, Kjerstin Kjøndal (2020) offers a study on Nordic cooperation within the nuclear safety sector. Despite low level of Nordic cooperation as a consequence of EU integration, this article argues that longstanding Nordic networks grounded in professions and state administration may prove to be robust toward external changes. She analyses Nordic cooperation between the national radiation protection and nuclear safety authorities in Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland by mapping behavioural perceptions of agency staff. The study finds that Nordic cooperation is *differentiated* between the highly integrated field of radiation protection and emergency preparedness and characterised by low level of integrated in nuclear security and safeguards. To account for variation the article probes the influence of path-dependency and policy portfolio.

Sarah Kilpeläinen (2020) examines Nordic cooperation in renewable electricity policy in Finland and Sweden. The article evaluates the policy mixes in Finland and Sweden with a special focus on bottlenecks and development needs and explore the viewpoints of stakeholders from these two countries regarding potential and bottlenecks for developing Nordic energy cooperation. The study thus examines renewable electricity policy development in Finland and Sweden against the backdrop of facilitating and accelerating the Nordic energy transition.

Martin Time and Frode Veggeland (2020) examine the management of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in the Nordic countries. Guided by assumptions derived from institutional theory, the study compares how AMR has affected the administrative systems and cooperative framework within and between the Nordic countries. The article observes that adapting to AMR management in the Nordics is only to a limited extent affected by international influence. Compatible with the image of *differentiated integration*, adaptation takes place through incremental change within existing structures for disease

prevention and control and follows traditional ways of organising political and administrative systems.

Reini Schrama, Dorte Sindbjerg Martinsen, and Ellen Mastenbroek (2020) offer an analysis of the Nordic dimension of European administrative networks. Integration and policy-making in the EU are often assumed to challenge Nordic cooperation as a separate 'common order.' Increasing interdependencies in the EU have forced EU member states to collaborate and share sovereignty in an increasing number of policy areas. This article studies the co-existence of Nordic cooperation with European integration, by taking a network approach. It analyses the extent to which Nordic members of European administrative networks 'go Nordic' to solve problems or exchange advice, information and best practices. The data suggests that Nordic cooperation in the EU and EEA is best characterised by *differentiated integration*. Nordic states tend to form a separate community for problem solving and exchanging best practices, advice and information in health and social policy networks, but less so a network related to the internal market.

Next, Daniel Schulz and Thomas Henökl (2020) examine new alliances in Europe and ask if the New Hanseatic League revive Nordic political cooperation. As Brexit removes the Nordic countries' most powerful ally from the EU, the article asks what this imply for their approach to European affairs? The literature on small states within the EU suggests that they can counterbalance limited bargaining capacities by entering two types of alliances: strategic partnerships with bigger states such as the UK, and institutionalised cooperation on a regional basis. Against this backdrop, the article analyses whether the Brexit referendum has revitalised Nordic cooperation by significantly raising the costs of non-cooperation for Nordic governments. The article analyses Nordic strategies of coalition building on EU financial and budgetary policy, specifically looking at attempts to reform Europe's Economic and Monetary Union and proposals to strengthen the EU's fiscal powers. The study finds that Nordic governments have successfully collaborated on these issues in the context of new alliances such as the 'New Hanseatic League' or the 'Frugal Four.' Yet, their coalition-building strategies rely on relatively loose and issue-specific alliances rather than an institutionalisation of Nordic political cooperation, implying that this revival of Nordic political cooperation hardly involves the institutions of 'official' Nordic cooperation. The article argues that this reflects lasting differences among the Nordics' approach to the EU as well as electorates' scepticism about supranational institution-building, implying that 'reluctant Europeans' are often also 'reluctant Scandinavians.'

Benjamin Leruth, Jarle Trondal, and Stefan Gänzle (2020) compare party positions on differentiated European integration in the Nordic countries. The article argues that the Nordic countries constitute a viable laboratory for the study of differentiated European

Integration. Even though Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden share some common characteristics, they have opted for different relationships with the EU. Essentially, this variation is reflected in Nordic parties' positioning vis-à-vis European integration in general and differentiation of European integration in particular. The study examines similarities and differences between parties belonging to the same ideological family, and the extent of transnational party cooperation in the Nordic countries. Broadly speaking, party families can be distinguished along traditional (e.g., agrarian, Christian democratic, conservative and social democratic) and modern (e.g., socialist left, green and populist radical right) ideological orientations. Compatible with the image of *differentiated integration*, the study shows that although institutionalised party cooperation mostly reflects divisions between party families, such institutionalisation does not include a common vision for European integration. It is concluded that the low level of partisan Nordic integration is primarily caused by domestic-level factors, such as intra-party divisions, government participation and public opinion.

Rikard Bengtsson (2020) offers a study of Nordic security and defence cooperation and policy *differentiation*. A decade ago, Nordic cooperation on security and defence matters gained momentum, after having been largely absent from the map of Nordic cooperation during the Cold War. This article analyses developments along three dimensions of Nordic cooperation—military defence, civil security and political cooperation. Three observations are highlighted: First, the three dimensions are intimately related against the background of a common Nordic conceptualisation of security; second, there is simultaneously variation in significant respects (such as driving forces, scope, and degree of institutionalisation); and third, Nordic security and defence cooperation has developed in the context of European and transatlantic security dynamics and cooperation.

Following the previous article, Kristin Haugevik and Ole Jacob Sending (2020) offer a study of *differentiation* in the foreign policy repertoires of the Nordic countries. Nordic government representatives frequently broadcast their ambition to do more together on the international stage. They also share a number of basic traits as foreign policy actors, including a steadfast and explicit commitment to the safeguarding of the 'rules-based international order.' Why, then, do we not see more organised Nordic foreign policy collaboration—for example in the form of a joint 'grand strategy' on core foreign policy issues, in relation to great powers and in international organisations? The study draws on Charles Tilly's concept of repertoires to highlight how the bundles of policy instruments that states develop over time takes on an identity-defining quality. The Nordics states, the article observes, have invested in and become attached to their foreign policy choices and differences. Reflecting policy differentiation, this observation makes it unlikely that we will see a 'common order' among

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the Nordic states in the foreign policy domain in the near future.

The thematic issue closes with a conceptual epilogue by Jarle Trondal (2020) on public administration and the study of political order. The article makes a plea for public administration scholarship in the study of political order. The article outlines a conceptual framework on political order and offers empirical illustrations on Nordic cooperation. Political order consists, it is argued, of a relatively stable arrangement of institutions that are fairly formalised and institutionalised. A common political order, moreover, entails that relevant institutions: (i) are fairly independent of pre-existing institutions; (ii) are relatively integrated and internally cohesive; and (iii) are reasonably able to influence governance processes within other institutions. Reflecting empirical observations made in this thematic issue, the article suggests that Nordic-level institutions are less able to act integrated and independently of member-state governments as well as wielding significant influence on policy processes within member-state governments and administrations.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

The Nordic Council of Ministers: Aspirations for More Political Relevance

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Abstract
Due to changing circumstances and new challenges, the Nordic Council of Ministers underwent an incremental process of change and some modest transformation since the 1990s. However, there has never been a major overhaul of structures and contents owing to considerable inertia. The most recent modernisation process, aiming at more political relevance and flexibility, has been ambitious but whether it has been a success remains unclear thus far. Weaknesses and limits in cooperation in the Nordic Council of Ministers are obvious, i.e., no majority voting or 'opting-out' system, a lack in supra-national structures and policies and no common immigration, foreign, security and EU policies. Nonetheless, the organisation has at least some relevance and meaning for the Nordic countries and the potential to promote and facilitate cooperation in policy areas in which common interests exist, such as environment, climate, research and social affairs. Therefore, rather than constituting a common political order of its own, Nordic cooperation, as it is conducted within the Nordic Council of Ministers, is best characterized by differentiated integration, promoting full integration only to a limited extent but respecting integration to different extents and speeds by fostering cooperation and coordination of certain policies where possible and desired.

1. Introduction

Since their inauguration, the main institutions of Nordic cooperation—the intergovernmental Nordic Council of Ministers and the inter-parliamentary Nordic Council—have persistently had to react to new challenges and external changes. This meant adapting to new circumstances in order to maintain or, in the optimum case, to increase their political relevance and impact. This was highlighted in the period after the end of the Cold War and around the EU accession of Sweden and Finland in 1995 and to a lesser extent after the EU wider enlargement in 2004. In response to new circumstances and major internal and external challenges—for example East–West tensions, security, migration, Brexit and the crisis of the welfare state—a new ambitious reform process in the Nordic Council of Ministers was

launched in 2014. Addressing intra-Nordic cooperation, the most important ambitions entailed a more political approach to cooperation, the inclusion of new policy areas, more flexible institutional structures and various new structures. Considering the increasingly more important external dimension of Nordic cooperation, undertaking new steps towards a closer Nordic EU cooperation and greater internationalization were also part of the ambition.

However, it still has to be examined whether and, if so, to what extent, the most recent reforms and related institutional changes have been effective and have contributed to making the Nordic Council of Ministers stronger, more influential, politically relevant and flexible. Several indicators speak for this, others do not as will be elaborated in this article. The Nordic Council of Ministers still lacks any supranational elements and

competences in key areas of politics (i.e., foreign affairs, security and immigration). Furthermore, a real common Nordic EU-policy in which the Nordic Council of Ministers would play a significant role still does not exist.

The article first provides a brief overview of the Nordic Council of Minister's development, functions, structures and relevance within the wider context of Nordic cooperation as well as an account of changes and institutional reforms within the Nordic Council of Ministers since the 1990s. The article's main objectives are to take stock and to examine the most recent changes in the structures and working modes of the Nordic Council of Ministers since 2014 and their implications for the organisation's political relevance and impact. For this purpose, a thorough content analysis of policy documents by the Nordic Council of Ministers and national governments as well as academic literature has been conducted. Relevant statements and indications for and/or against the organisation's adaptability and political relevance have been derived from these texts and analysed. While paying attention primarily to the Nordic Council of Ministers, occasional references to the Nordic Council are also made where appropriate and relevant for the analysis since both organisations are closely interlinked. Reform efforts in one body often have repercussions for the other.

2. The Nordic Council of Ministers: Development, Functions and Structures

Nordic cooperation was institutionalized over the course of several decades. While cooperation has taken place before on a loose basis, the inter-parliamentary Nordic Council was established in 1952 as a first important step in efforts to shape a permanent institutional foundation. However, the body came into existence without any international treaty basis. Its inauguration was only endorsed by the national parliaments (Laursen & Olesen, 1998, p. 24). Only when the 'Nordic Cooperation Treaty'/'Helsinki agreement' was signed in 1962, was Nordic cooperation provided with at least some sort of legal framework. The Treaty's adoption was "a milestone in Nordic cooperation" (Wendt, 1981, p. 39). Despite its general and non-obligatory character, the Treaty clarified what Nordic cooperation should incorporate as well as its main objectives. When the Nordic Council of Ministers was established and the external pre-conditions for the cooperation changed, it was subsequently amended in 1971 and 1993.

In its first 20 years of existence, the Nordic Council not only served as a forum for cooperation among the parliaments but also among the Nordic countries' governments. The governments' representatives had, however, no voting rights in the decision-making process (Wendt, 1965, p. 12) and most of its activities took place at the parliamentary level. Nordic governmental cooperation activities were sidelined, weak and uncoordinated (Nordiska Rådet, 1973, p. 26). After failing to imple-

ment new steps of Nordic integration, i.e., the institutionalized Nordic Economic Community, the Nordic Council of Ministers was established in 1971 as a separate intergovernmental institution. Its main tasks were to strengthen ties and to promote more regular and structured cooperation and coordination among the governments. As a consequence, the Nordic Council's role changed as it then turned into a purely inter-parliamentary organisation. It then became one of the Nordic Council's main functions to monitor intergovernmental cooperation and to develop and maintain a good and close dialogue with the Nordic Council of Ministers (Jutila & Tikkala, 2009, p. 6). The close links between the parliamentary level and the governments and the Nordic Council of Ministers are an essential part of Nordic cooperation. In more recent years, it has become common practice that government representatives, even prime ministers, address the annual Nordic Council meetings and discuss issues of importance with the members of parliaments. This link is a special feature of Nordic cooperation, distinguishing it from other forms of international cooperation where the governmental and parliamentary levels are more strictly divided (Hagemann, 2005, p. 3). Since then, the main tasks of the Nordic Council were to issue recommendations to the governments, take initiatives, give inspiration, exert control and express criticism (Wendt, 1965, p. 21).

The Nordic Council of Ministers is responsible for the implementation of common policies and projects within a contractually regulated system of rules. It promotes and coordinates the cooperation among the Nordic countries' governments in a wide range of policy areas and fields of public administration. However, as a general rule it has been established that Nordic cooperation "never goes further than the interests of each country permit" (Nordiska Rådet, 1973, p. 27). The Nordic Council of Ministers' core activities include social affairs and the development of the Nordic welfare state model, environment, culture as well as research and education. The cooperation on cultural issues, education and research is central as these topics form important elements of Nordic identity in terms of language, culture and values (Nordisk Ministerråd, 1998, p. 2). This also shows that Nordic cooperation is not just about states' interests; it can be best described as a hybrid of calculated interest-based and identity-based partnerships (Olsen, 1998, p. 363). It is also within the aforementioned areas as well as energy, consumer protection, technology and regional development in which the Nordic Council of Ministers developed fairly advanced capabilities for problem solving (Schumacher, 2000a, p. 15). In policy areas in which common interests do not prevail, there is no (or very limited) formal and institutionalised cooperation. Traditional foreign policy, (military) security and defence policy were excluded from formal cooperation, as was closer economic cooperation. The security policy traditions, multilateral ties and economic orientations of the Nordic countries differed too considerably

in order to render fruitful cooperation on a permanent basis possible.

Officially, the Nordic countries' prime ministers head intergovernmental Nordic cooperation as formalized in the Nordic Council of Ministers. The prime ministers meet for informal consultations at least twice a year. Currently, the organisation consists of eleven ministerial councils. The Ministerial Council for general Nordic cooperation, consisting of the ministers for Nordic cooperation, coordinates, similarly to the Council of General Affairs of the EU, the formal cooperation. The other ten councils are responsible for one specific or several policy areas: labour, sustainable growth, fisheries, aquaculture, agriculture, food and forestry, gender equality, culture, legislative affairs, environment and climate, health and social affairs, education and research, and finance. Since 2016, there is also an ad hoc Council for digitalization. Decisions in any of the ministerial councils are taken by unanimity. The Nordic Council of Ministers is chaired by a one-year presidency that rotates among the five member states. The presidency drafts a programme with priorities, objectives and guidelines for the upcoming year. While the ministers only meet occasionally to take the political decisions, the Nordic Committee for Cooperation, consisting of high-level officials from the Nordic countries' ministries of foreign affairs, is responsible for the day-to-day coordination of general cooperation and the more technical decision-making process. Various expert committees of national senior officials from the various line ministries prepare the decision-making process and the implementation of activities in the specific issue areas, supporting the work of respective ministerial council. The Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat in Copenhagen is an important backbone for the institutionalized intergovernmental cooperation. Its tasks are to initiate, implement and follow up on policy decisions; to develop knowledge on which to base Nordic solutions, and to build networks for the exchange of experiences and ideas (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2020). The Secretariat is headed by a secretary-general, usually a senior politician from of one the five member states, who is responsible for the day-to-day running of the organisation. The Secretariat employs about 100 people divided into three thematic departments, i.e., culture and resources, growth and climate, and knowledge and welfare, the Secretary-General's office in charge of cross-cutting issues and international affairs, as well as two supporting departments, namely human resources, administration and law, and public relations. The Nordic Council of Ministers runs regional information offices in the capitals of the three Baltic States, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and used to have offices in St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad for several years. A wide network of several institutions, centres and offices work under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers including, for example, Nordforsk fostering Nordic research cooperation, Nordic Energy Research, the Nordic Innovation Centre and various cultural institutions.

3. Changes and Institutional Reforms within the Nordic Council of Ministers

3.1. Reform Efforts since the 1990s

Since they were established, the institutions of Nordic cooperation had to persistently react to newly emerging internal and external challenges and to adapt to new circumstances in order to maintain their relevance. The external conditions and circumstances for Nordic cooperation and its institutions had, in particular, changed fundamentally by the end of the 1980s and early 1990s when the Cold War came to an end and the Soviet Union collapsed. Finland and Sweden joined the EU in 1995, while Norway and Iceland stayed out but joined the newly established European Economic Area, gaining access to the EU's internal market by 1994. Thus, the purpose and the added value of Nordic cooperation needed to be redefined in relation to European integration. However, there were significant doubts about the current and future relevance of institutionalised Nordic cooperation, some negativism, perceiving in particular the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council as outdated, and related demands to close these bodies (for example, Bagerstam, 1995, pp. 11–12). Nonetheless, there was a widespread notion that Nordic cooperation and its institutions still had a place within the new international system but simultaneously had to adapt to "the needs of the changing external environment" (Stenbäck, 1997, p. 7) as well as the changes in the member states' national interests and needs.

Both the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers adopted a new three-pillar structure for their work, covering intra-Nordic cooperation, cooperation with the Nordic region's ('Norden') adjacent areas (the three Baltic states, the Baltic Sea region, Northwest Russia as well as the Barents and Arctic regions) and Nordic cooperation in a wider European context. To match this, the Nordic Council abandoned its previous committee structure based on particular issue areas (e.g., economy, environment and culture) and instead established three committees along the lines of the three geographically-oriented pillars in 1995. While looking good on paper, in practice the new structure was unclear and did not work well. The three committees had to deal with too many different issues that partly did not connect. The new structure did also not correspond well with the still more topic-oriented the Nordic Council of Ministers (Kristiansen, 2001, p. 57). Because of these shortcomings and after intensive deliberations, the Nordic Council returned to its original committee structure in 2001.

The Nordic Council of Ministers initiated a number of structural changes, such as establishing an annually rotating Council Presidency among the member countries for a smoother coordination of its activities and the aforementioned information offices in the Baltic States and in St. Petersburg. It reduced the number of

formal committees of senior officials and the number of institutions operating under its umbrella and introduced, where necessary, a new definition of their work (Schumacher, 2000b, p. 214). Furthermore, structures were created to better coordinate the EU policies of the Nordic countries such as a contact group consisting of representatives from the permanent representations of the Nordic countries in Brussels to foster the cooperation between them and to provide the Nordic Council of Ministers with relevant information. In addition, the Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat jointly with the permanent representations obtained the status of a think-tank on EU-related questions. However, these measures were not effective or helpful in practice (Maertens, 1997, p. 42) and were soon abandoned.

In 1997, the Nordic Council of Ministers launched a 'strategy-project' that had particular impact on organisational and administrative aspects in relation to the new political strategies. This was necessary as the Nordic Council of Ministers' organisational structure was perceived as confusing, inflexible and full of inertia, becoming a stumbling block for developing the cooperation further (Bennedsen, 1998). The project aimed at improvements in the allocation and distribution of responsibilities and competences among the various actors within the system; a re-organisation of the Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat; a more effective steering of agreements and the budget in the Nordic institutions, and improved control of projects funded from the joint budget. The Secretariat was enabled to obtain a more active role in the preparation and implementation of political decisions in relation to the ministerial councils (Nordisk Ministerråd, 1998, p. 1). The report *Open to the Winds of Change: Norden 2000* identified several trends as main challenges and tasks for Nordic cooperation in the 21st century: globalisation, European integration, environment, democracy, welfare, market and economy, culture and education, demographic development and migration, security and technological development (Nordic Council & Nordic Council of Ministers, 2000). The same report was critical of the large number of ministerial councils (18 at the time) and institutions working under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers with an eye to effectiveness and efficiency. Therefore, a reform in 2005–2006 aimed at reducing the number of ministerial councils from 18 to 11, partly through mergers, in order to establish a clearer prioritisation and to render Nordic cooperation more effective, focussed, dynamic, forward-looking, concrete and politically as relevant as possible (Hedegaard, 2005, pp. 2, 35). In order to match the new political structures and their thematic focus and to shape clearer responsibilities, the Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat was subsequently reorganised in terms of the four sectoral departments' issue-related competences and responsibilities, as were the budgetary structures and procedures. An evaluation of the 2005 reforms suggested several further measures, for example another restructuring of the secretariat, reducing the number of departments from four to the current three, and establishing guidelines for better cooperation between secretariat and presidencies, clearly outlining the respective responsibilities and tasks, adopted in 2009. The main aim with all these measures was to renew the Nordic Council of Ministers constantly so that it could remain a political institution compatible with the times (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2009, p. 30).

3.2. Modernisation Process 2014–2017

This was also the main objective of a new process of modernisation and reform from 2013/2014, addressing new challenges and demands as well as criticisms. Despite earlier efforts to become more flexible, dynamic and demand-oriented, an often heard criticism was that the Nordic Council of Ministers was still too bureaucratic and cumbersome, lacking clear political substance, relevance and leadership (Strang, 2012, p. 66). This process was officially launched when the ministers for Nordic cooperation developed four visions for future cooperation titled *Tillsammans är vi starkare* ('Together we are stronger') in February 2014 (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2014a). The visions included both inward- and outward-looking ambitions. On the one hand, efforts of traditional Nordic cooperation were to be continued: to strive for a borderless Nordic region, especially in terms of further removing border obstacles to continue allowing free movement for all citizens and companies across Nordic borders, and an innovative Norden with a strong focus on welfare, education and training, creativity, entrepreneurship, sustainability and research. On the other hand, in response to growing international interest in Nordic experiences and solutions, the ambition was to promote the Nordic welfare model as well as the model of Nordic cooperation more strongly outside the region, contributing to a more visible Nordic region. Finally, the vision of an outward-looking Norden underlined the ambition to intensify Nordic cooperation with regard to global affairs as well as within international organizations (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2014a).

Building on these ambitious future visions, the Nordic Council of Ministers initiated a process of modernization and reform aimed at highlighting and strengthening the political relevance of the cooperation, making it more effective and opening up new fields of cooperation (Opitz & Etzold, 2018, pp. 3–4). Based on the report *Nyt Norden* ('The New North') with 39 recommendations by then the Nordic Council of Ministers Secretary General Dagfinn Høybråten, the ministers for Nordic cooperation adopted a catalogue of reforms covering four areas in autumn 2014: (i) ministerial cooperation, (ii) an effective the Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat, (iii) budgeting as well as (iv) the project and programme level (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2014b, pp. 11–12). Among many proposed measures, the meetings of the ministerial councils should acquire a stronger strategic focus on relevant policy issues in their respective fields and their long-

term implications for Nordic cooperation rather than small-scale administrative issues (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2014b, pp. 26–28). In particular, the need for a more systematic dialogue on international and EU policy issues as a significant field of future cooperation has been identified. Related issues of common interest should be given a more prominent place on the agenda of all ministerial council meetings (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2014b, p. 4). The recommended changes specifically upgraded the role of the Secretariat as well as the position of the Secretary-General and his right to take initiatives as engines of the cooperation. The latter was granted explicit permission to set the Nordic Council of Ministers' procedural rules and meeting agendas (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2014b, pp. 60–61). Furthermore, the budgeting process for the Nordic Council of Ministers institutions should become leaner and more flexible. In addition, it set itself the aim of better linking and evaluating the numerous Nordic Council of Ministers projects and programmes. These and more other specific reform measures started to be implemented soon after, resulting in various changes in the modes of operation.

This, however, was not the end of the story. The ministers for Nordic cooperation soon saw the need to continue and expand the modernization agenda and to do even more to strengthen the relevance of the cooperation for politics, business and civil society. The background to this was the deterioration in relations with Russia following the crisis in Ukraine, which had an impact on the Nordic Council of Ministers' involvement in northwest Russia as it had to close its offices there which were categorized as foreign agents by Russian authorities. In addition, the considerable migration movements of 2015 that directly affected all five Nordic countries, as well as the EU's legitimacy crisis, increased the pressure to take new action in reaction to these developments and created both new challenges and opportunities for Nordic cooperation. In spring 2016, a new report *Nordens tid er nu* ('The Nordic Region's time is now') was issued as the basis for further reforms (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2016a). Building on the earlier reform report and the changes already concluded and implemented, it entailed a number of more traditional key issues, such as developing the North into the world's most integrated region, strengthening Nordic commitment to sustainable growth and increasing the dialogue with the citizens (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2016a, p. 10). Thus, the main objectives of the 11 measures subsequently adopted by the ministers were to continue making the cooperation more effective and flexible by creating more dynamic budgeting procedures and working modes in the various committees as well as a smoother interaction between government officials and the ministers (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2016a, pp. 9–13). The structures should be enabled to react more quickly to new developments and demands. These implied in practice the reorganization of several ministerial councils. For example, the council for environment was expand-

ed to include climate in order to provide joint Nordic climate change initiatives with more political weight and an institutional basis (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2016a, pp. 12, 56–58).

The aim of functioning more flexibly implied that one-off informal ministerial meetings could be convened and ad hoc ministerial councils could be established (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2016a, pp. 12–13, 58–62). Such ad hoc councils may, within a limited and specified period of time, deal with a specific field of cooperation not covered by the existing structures. This proposal was implemented soon when an ad hoc council for digitalization was inaugurated in 2017 for three years. Digitalization is indeed another topical and important issue asking for political action, for example to enable the use of national electronic identification systems across the Nordic borders. The overarching aim of the new cooperation was to turn Norden into a digital frontrunner region (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2018). As a sign of the desired flexibility, even the Baltic countries were invited to participate in the ad hoc cooperation although not being members of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Initially, it also has been the intention to establish an ad hoc ministerial council for cooperation in the field of integration of refugees and immigrants, but related plans have been dropped due to disagreement among the governments. At least an informal ministerial meeting in autumn 2016 launched a cooperation programme on integration. The aim of this multi-sectoral programme was to coordinate and harmonise integration measures and to learn from each other by intensifying the dialogue and exchanging information among national agencies on the situation of immigrants and refugees in the respective countries (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2016b). However, its purpose and objectives only came into being on the basis of the lowest common denominator and remained unclear. In practice, the programme did not have much relevance and substance but appeared to have a mainly symbolic value. Closer cooperation on actual migration and asylum policies, including intra-Nordic distribution schemes and joint minimum criteria for accepting refugees as recommended by several left-wing delegates to the Nordic Council, has been deemed unthinkable by the governments.

Another important issue in the reform recommendations was a more prominent role for the heads of government in the formal cooperation, including greater policy-making powers (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2016a, pp. 14, 73–74) somewhat along the lines of the EU's European Council. Traditionally, prime ministers, foreign and defence ministers get regularly together in more informal settings outside the formal structures only. Therefore, the intension was to link both levels more closely and to involve the heads of government on a more systematic and regular basis in ongoing projects of the Nordic Council of Ministers in order to give the formal cooperation more political weight and visibility. Toward this end, instruments such as declarations and political initiatives by the prime ministers were recommended

to be used more systematically and regularly. However, similar ambitions had been expressed various times in the past without sorting any visible effect. Also this time, it seems that not much has changed in practice.

Unlike the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic Council has not initiated any far-reaching structural reforms since 2001. Its main focus has been on reviving the political debate and increasing the political relevance of parliamentary cooperation. This also implied discussing topical but politically sensitive issues of international interest and relevance outside the official agenda of institutionalized Nordic cooperation such as migration, border controls, EU-affairs and foreign and security policies. In this regard, the Nordic Council intends to play the role of initiator encouraging the intergovernmental level to take its initiatives up and to consider more formal cooperation in these fields (Opitz & Etzold, 2018, p. 4). This has, however, only happened to a limited extent so far, taking into consideration that the Nordic Council's recommendations to the Nordic Council of Ministers are non-binding. To give the Nordic Council's recommendations more weight, it would be necessary to elevate the body in relation to the Nordic Council of Ministers and to link their activities and themes more closely.

The journey toward more political relevance had not ended here. In summer 2019, the Nordic Council of Ministers launched a new vision for Norden according to which it should become "the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030" (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2019). The cooperation in the Nordic Council of Ministers must serve this purpose (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2019). To put this vision into practice, the future priorities of the cooperation within the Nordic Council of Ministers should be to turn the Nordic region into a green, competitive and socially sustainable Nordic Region. To succeed, it is necessary that all parts of the Nordic Council of Ministers' structures identify and formulate main goals linked to the vision as a basis for intersectoral action plans for the implementation of the strategic priorities including a clear allocation of responsibilities (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2019). As already outlined in the previous reform proposals, representatives of civil society as well as the business community were given a voice in this effort as well. In mid-2020, an action plan for the implementation of the vision had been drafted. All Nordic ministerial councils and other Nordic institutions contributed specific proposals within their area of expertise to the plan.

4. New Relevance through Reforms? Strengths, Weaknesses and Potential of the Nordic Council of Ministers

As outlined above, the Nordic Council of Ministers underwent an incremental transformation process including optimisation measures as well as several structural and budgetary reforms since the 1990s. The organisation showed a general willingness and ability to adapt to new external circumstances and to conduct several reforms, although slowly and reluctantly. In a previous study (Etzold, 2010), this and a number of other pre-conditions for continued existence and relevance of international organisations have been derived from theories of international relations, in this case neoliberal institutionalism and social-constructivism, as well as organisational theories and applied as independent variables to the case of the Nordic Council of Ministers and other regional organisations in Northern Europe. The Nordic Council of Ministers matched several of these theoretical criteria: A certain interest in the organisation by member states so long as it was of use for implementing their interests in combination with past achievements and the prospect for future success; maintaining old and creating new purposes; a strong anchoring of the idea and concept of Nordic cooperation in Nordic societies; common values and elements of a common identity as an ideological basis for the cooperation; the implementation of at least some changes and a well-developed and fairly influential bureaucracy with a secretary-general who owns some political weight and impact and is able to act as a driver for change.

Still, despite fulfilling these theoretical criteria and showing at least some adaptability in order to stay in existence and to retain some relevance, there has never been a major overhaul of structures and contents owing to considerable inertia within the Nordic Council of Ministers. There could indeed be situations in which big changes are not required to retain an international organisation's relevance. But once they appear necessary to keep an organisation going, displaying a principal willingness to change might not be enough, if it is not followed by tangible action. Overall, reforming the Nordic Council of Ministers has been perceived as difficult since despite all similarities the Nordic countries are in some political, economic and administrative respect different. In addition, views on certain reform measures and new fields of cooperation, in particular EU affairs, conflicted considerably. Owing to these differences, various measures including, for example, abolishing or restructuring certain ministerial councils or committees, received both approval as well as major criticism from stakeholders. It appeared that several stakeholders had fairly advanced ideas for change, while others were mainly interested in maintaining the status quo.

Therefore, several observers were critical of the reforms in the 1990s, their results and the organisation's significance: In their opinion the reforms have been insufficient and did not prevent the gradual marginalization of the Nordic Council of Ministers (Olesen & Strang, 2016, p. 35). Also, the reforms undertaken during the 2000s were rather small-scale. Several of the various measures taken during these two periods have been similar, using the same key words such as 'more flexibility,' 'more effective,' 'increasing political relevance,' etc., without having any visible major effect. Therefore, some argued that to regain any political relevance in the future, the Nordic

Council/the Nordic Council of Ministers system would require radical reform now (Olesen & Strang, 2016, p. 40). This could imply "to make the Nordic Council of Ministers more ad hoc-oriented and flexible and to let it expand on mutual EU directive implementation and to secure a more coordinated Nordic voice in the EU" (Olesen & Strang, 2016, p. 41).

Indeed, the Nordic Council of Ministers' most recent attempt to regain strength and impact, to act more flexibly, ad hoc and demand-oriented and to redefine its position within the wider landscape of cooperation in Europe has been politically more ambitious and wide-reaching than previous reform efforts, while again using similar reform language as before. As outlined above, it covered more institutional aspects, affecting all its structures including the ministerial councils, the secretariat and the highest political level, and has therefore been more comprehensive than previous reform efforts. The reform process also stretched over a longer period of time than previous ones and took, divided into two phases (see above), nearly four years.

While the reform process had officially concluded by late 2017, an evaluation was conducted in spring 2018 which included a survey among Nordic stakeholders. The overall conclusion was that the reforms have strengthened and improved the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers and that it therefore has taken an important step in the right direction (Resonans Kommunikation, 2018, p. 5). There was a wide consensus that the reforms had laid the groundwork to sharpen the political and strategic focus, to allow the Secretariat to work more effectively and to render the cooperation more relevant and flexible (Resonans Kommunikation, 2018, pp. 63–64). The evaluation also revealed an awareness that the reforms were only the beginning of a longer process toward a more focussed and modern organisation which would require more time. Also both strengths and weaknesses of the process became obvious; it was widely seen as positive that the implementation was conducted quickly, the Secretary-General had played a decisive role and seemed to have managed to strengthen his overall role and position within the organisation and that important discussions about the added value and purpose of Nordic cooperation have been brought in motion. On the other hand, some criticized the fact that there was not enough space and time for an adequate involvement of all interested stakeholders and that the overall direction of the process had been unclear due to the very many recommendations and conclusions going in partly different directions. They wished for more communication and debate about the process and a clearer narrative including a common and tangible direction that all could have taken as a point of departure (Resonans Kommunikation, 2018, pp. 65–66).

The evaluation came perhaps too early and cannot be regarded as representative with only 56 respondents. Since most respondents were representatives of the structures of Nordic cooperation as well as national gov-

ernments, there is also a certain bias at stake. Hardly any independent assessments on the most recent reform efforts exist thus far. Two years later, it is still difficult to judge for outsiders, whether the reform and modernisation process has been an overall success as several changes have not been communicated well and are therefore not very obvious. In several cases it is even difficult to identify whether and how they have actually been implemented (see for example the aforementioned case of the intended strengthened role of the prime ministers in official Nordic cooperation).

The effective implementation of reforms is complicated by a general problem the Nordic Council of Ministers and other structures of formal Nordic cooperation are facing: In recent years several differences in preferences and ways of handling various political issues among the five countries have become evident. In this context, an occasional lack in willingness to coordinate their policies and to cooperate within the established institutional structures by the governments has become apparent. These features potentially undermine the Nordic Council of Ministers' efforts to foster its relevance. As a case in point, the Nordic countries have not been able to find common answers to urging international challenges such as the changing security environment and migration. Additionally, the current Covid-19 pandemic has been handled rather differently in the various countries, driving a wedge between them rather than encouraging further cooperation, for example, in the health sector or in cross-border crisis management. Instead during the migration crisis 2015–2016, border controls had been reintroduced and in the Covid-19 crisis most intra-Nordic borders have even been completely closed. These events can be seen as major setbacks for the Nordic ambition of a borderless Norden after many years of work to abolish border obstacles. In both situations, a particular lack of communication among the governments as well as a tendency to return to more national approaches became apparent.

Against the backdrop of these and various other challenges in recent years, the weaknesses and limits of cooperation within the Nordic Council of Ministers have become evident: No majority voting or 'opting-out' system that would allow countries to abstain from a particular initiative while the remaining countries could move forward (Strang, 2012, p. 70) adding an extra flexibility; an overall lack in supra-national structures and policies; the Nordic Council of Ministers and Nordic cooperation in general seemed to have turned into a platform for projects and agencies for selling Norden as a trademark rather than a political arena for the dialogue and cooperation among various stakeholders (Strang, 2020); no common immigration and asylum policies; no common foreign and security policies, and lacking progress in establishing close cooperation and coordination in EU affairs. Reluctant efforts to establish more Nordic cooperation in these policy areas have at least resulted in more informal settings that however do not have an institu-

tional backbone. This implies that the Nordic Council of Ministers has a limited role to play in those. For example, cooperation in defence policies takes place outside the Nordic Council of Ministers structures. Likewise, the Nordic Council of Ministers never evolved into an arena or an instrument for the coordination of EU policies and establishing a joint Nordic agenda on the European level (Olesen & Strang, 2016, p. 36). Despite related ambitions, stronger EU cooperation remains difficult to put into practice owing to different interests and traditions even today. While the Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat principally regards itself as a facilitator, as a meeting place and as an instrument which could be used to complement the member states' EU policies, in practice, it seems reluctant to take on a more proactive role. The old idea to establish a Nordic Council of Ministers representation in Brussels did not find any support among the governments at any point. These examples give proof of a certain dilemma that became apparent in any reform effort within the Nordic Council of Ministers in recent years. The interests of different stakeholders did not always match each other; some wanted to go further than others were willing to go. The consensus principle in decision taking in the Nordic Council of Ministers is an often-discussed case in point. Several stakeholders wanted to have it replaced by majority voting or an 'opting-out' system (see above) to render the organisation more flexible and responsive. Others argued against it since for them it is an important characteristic standing for the whole principle of Nordic cooperation: cooperation in fields where common interests exist and on which all can agree.

Thus, against the light of the not very favourable current pre-conditions, the real effect of the recent reform efforts in a long-term perspective and hence also the relevance of the Nordic Council of Ministers might partly depend on whether the Nordic countries will be able to find a new common understanding on what they want and are realistically able to achieve together. This applies to both the cooperation within the existing institutional framework as well as more informal settings, in case the organisation is not perceived as the suitable framework for dealing with certain issues. To make this work, a clear division of labour between both levels and a clear assignment of responsibilities to each of them would be helpful. The success of reforms also depends on mutual support and trust: Governments must transfer the necessary competences and resources to the Nordic Council of Ministers to achieve results while the institution has to convince the governments of its added value (Opitz & Etzold, 2018, p. 8) in order not to be sidelined. The Nordic Council of Ministers is likely to be relevant to the Nordic countries and their governments when it is able to make a contribution to solving common problems and making the governments communicate and cooperate effectively and efficiently with each other in certain policy areas such as environment, climate, social affairs and research. To establish its relevance, it would help when there is

clear evidence that important political decisions affecting Norden have been taken within a Nordic Council of Ministers setting, i.e., one of the ministerial councils. Indeed along the lines of Strang's (2020) aforementioned assessment, the Nordic Council of Ministers might find more political relevance when again being used more as a political arena and as a platform for facilitating the dialogue and the cooperation among various stakeholders, not just governments.

Furthermore, in order to the reforms to be effective the Nordic Council of Ministers would need to set clear realistic goals for itself based on an honest assessment of what the organisation is actually capable of. Visions such as the one of August 2019 can be useful to set ambitions and the general path for future cooperation and look attractive as a trademark and selling point. As an overall guideline they might be particularly helpful when they match the capacities and capabilities of an organisation to achieve such ambitious goals. Otherwise they might just cause disappointment. Owing to the current circumstances and challenges, it is at least questionable whether it is feasible and realistic for the Nordic Council of Ministers to turn the Nordic region into the "most integrated and sustainable region in the world" (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2019) and whether it is really necessary to be 'best.' The main goal might rather be to find common solutions to tangible common challenges through cooperation, matching the organisation's capabilities and strengths.

5. Conclusions and Perspectives

Despite obvious shortcomings and inertia, the Nordic Council of Ministers has at least undertaken several efforts to adapt to new external circumstances in the past and to retain some relevance and meaning for the Nordic countries' governments. The organisation is particularly able to achieve tangible results in those policy areas in which common interests exist such as environment, climate, research, removing border obstacles and social affairs. The most recent reform process has been ambitious, thus more ambitious than the previous ones, affecting various institutional aspects. It has sorted some positive effect in some areas, while in others clear results are not in place so far or not visible. The current difficult circumstances and challenges do not make any reform process an easy task.

Against the background of the Nordic Council of Ministers' strengths, weaknesses and shortcomings, Nordic cooperation as it is conducted within the Nordic Council of Ministers can most fittingly be characterized by differentiated integration rather than constituting a common political order of its own. Differentiated integration is currently widely discussed in academic circles against the light of the UK's exit from the EU (for example Gänzle, Leruth, & Trondal, 2019). Along these lines, the Nordic Council of Ministers promotes full integration only to a limited degree but respects integra-

tion to different extents and speeds by fostering cooperation and coordination of only certain policies where these are possible or desired and provide some further added value. It might indeed strengthen Nordic cooperation and the Nordic Council of Ministers in particular if the Nordic countries would be able to develop a strong common political voice in European and international affairs by establishing effective joint policies and if the Nordic Council of Ministers would be able to play a role in this. But this cannot be forced so long as a strong common political will and a strong common denominator do not exist. This creates a certain dilemma. But instead of cooperating on the basis of the lowest common denominator, the Nordic Council of Ministers might rather focus on a selected number of aforementioned areas in which close cooperation is politically most relevant, in which strong common interest exist, where an added value is given and where the Nordic countries and their citizens could profit most from the cooperation. By doing so, the Nordic Council of Ministers could still complement and contribute to efforts at the European/EU level trough joint action by building on its strengths and simultaneously being aware of its limits. Even without striving for deeper integration, the body could serve as a role model for cooperation among other groups of countries of one region, consisting of both EU member as well as non-member states. Both from an International as well as European Studies perspective, the Nordic Council of Ministers is also a good example of how international organisations despite difficulties at least attempt to adapt to new external circumstances and try to retain or even strengthen their relevance. Whether these attempts have been successful in the long run is a question for further research.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Nordic Administrative Collaboration: Scope, Predictors and Effects on Policy Design and Administrative Reform Measures

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Abstract

This article examines whether Nordic administrative collaboration is still 'alive and kicking,' or whether it has been marginalized by increased integration into Europe and strong international reform trajectories. We analyse the scope and intensity of Nordic administrative collaboration from a structural perspective based on the perceptions of civil servants in the Norwegian central government. We also address the implications of Nordic collaboration for policy design and reform measures. The main conclusion is that Nordic administrative collaboration can best be described as differentiated integration. The scope of Nordic administrative collaboration is rather broad, and its internal structural features vary significantly. Nordic collaboration is perceived to have more of an effect on policy design than on specific administrative reform means and measures. However, structural features also matter.

Issue

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1. Introduction

In the EU literature there is a debate about the rise of a European administrative space resulting from increased European integration as the EU grows and develops (Olsen, 2003; Trondal & Peters, 2013). This literature addresses the convergence of administrative systems and policies and emphasizes the spread of common administrative traditions (Knill, 2001; Meyer-Sahling & Yesilkagit, 2011), public management practices (Christensen & Lægreid, 2007) and coordination of EU policy at the national level (Kassim, Wright, & Peters, 2000).

In the Nordic countries, the development of a common 'Nordic administrative space' has a long history. Nordic parliamentary collaboration goes back to 1952 when the Nordic Council was established. On the gov-

ernment side, the Nordic Council of Ministers was set up in 1971 with a secretariat in Copenhagen. In each country there is a minister for Nordic cooperation and a Nordic Committee for Cooperation, which coordinates the day-to-day work of Nordic intergovernmental cooperation. This article examines collaboration at the administrative level as experienced by civil servants in the central government.

One interesting question is what effects the Nordic countries' joining the EU at various times and with different forms of affiliation have had on the Nordic administrative space (Jacobsson, Lægreid, & Pedersen, 2004). Denmark joined the EU in 1972, Sweden and Finland became members in 1995, and Norway and Iceland received associate status through the European Area Agreement, also in 1995. Research on this topic

to date has identified an effect of increased integration into Europe on administrative policy in the Nordic countries. Norwegian national coordination of EU policy has to a large extent copied the Danish model (Jacobsson et al., 2004). The Nordic countries' establishment of semi-independent regulatory agencies, the reorganization of integrated organizations into single-purpose organizations, corporatization, contracting out and privatizing service production all resonate with the liberal market principles of the EU. Another external factor affecting Nordic administrative collaboration stemmed from the New Public Management (NPM) reform trajectory that addressed managerialism, which had its origins in the OECD but came to the Nordic countries largely via certain EU member states. Later this was superseded by post-NPM reform trends, which introduced more horizontal coordination of government organizations and efforts to enhance coordination between governments and other actors (Christensen & Lægreid, 2007).

The question is whether Nordic administrative collaboration is still 'alive and kicking,' or whether it has become marginalized by these forces. Have we seen a process of disintegration (Olsen & Sverdrup, 1998) or has integration simply become more differentiated between different Nordic countries, and different policy areas and institutions, with countries integrating to a different extent, at different times and at different speeds (Leruth, Gänzle, & Trondal, 2019; Schimmelfenning, Leuffen, & Ritterberger, 2015)?

This article addresses the scope and intensity of Nordic administrative collaboration, especially as seen by Norwegian central government actors. The article aims to answer three research questions by applying a structural perspective. The first question is a descriptive one, while the other two are explanatory. First, what is the scope of Nordic collaboration among Norwegian civil servants, measured by a) participation in Nordic committees or working groups and b) contact with Nordic governmental collaboration bodies? Second, to what degree can structural features, such as administrative level, position, and main tasks, explain the variation in Nordic collaboration among Norwegian civil servants? Third, what are the effects—as perceived by Norwegian civil servants—of Nordic collaboration on policy design and administrative reform measures?

To answer these questions, we use the findings from an extensive survey of civil servants in Norwegian ministries and central agencies conducted in 2016. We also draw on secondary sources analysing change and stability in Norwegian central government (Christensen, Egeberg, Lægreid, & Trondal, 2018), Nordic collaboration (Jacobsson et al., 2001, 2004; Jacobsson & Sundstrøm, 2020; Lægreid & Pedersen, 1994), and Nordic administrative reforms (Greve, Ejersbo, Lægreid, & Rykkja, 2019; Greve, Lægreid, & Rykkja, 2016, 2018). Other sources include relevant public documents such as several reports from the Norwegian Agency of Public Management and information from managers in this agency as

well as in the Department of ICT and Administrative Policy in the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernization.

In the following, we first give an account of current Nordic administrative reforms and collaboration. Second, we present the theoretical basis of our analysis, including hypotheses about variations in the scope and intensity of Nordic collaboration and the perceived effects of this collaboration on policy design and reform measures. Third, we specify our data sources. Fourth, we describe the scope of Nordic collaboration among civil servants in ministries and central agencies and look at how that scope varies according to structural factors. Fifth, we examine how the civil servants perceive the effects of Nordic collaboration on policy design and administrative reform efforts in their own field of work. Sixth, we analyse the differences in Nordic collaboration and in the perceived effects based on the theoretical perspective and draw some conclusions.

2. Nordic Administrative Reform: An Adaptive and Agile Trajectory

The tradition of close collaboration and of drawing inspiration from other Nordic countries when launching new public policy and administrative reform initiatives is long (Lægreid & Pedersen, 1994). Even if there are differences between the Nordic countries in public policy and administrative reforms, there are also significant similarities— first and foremost the fact that they are all modernizers (Bjurstrøm & Christensen, 2017; Greve et al., 2016). According to Knutsen (2017), the Nordic model has been challenged, but is still viable. There are several Nordic models and the relationship between them is not very clear. Moreover, there is a combination of old traditions persisting and new forms of distinctiveness.

When the international performance management system was introduced in the Nordic countries it was largely adapted to fit the existing national administrative context (Kristiansen, 2015). The Nordic performance management style is characterized by bottom-up negotiation processes regarding goals and targets. It is primarily soft and dialogue-based, and performance information is only loosely coupled to sanctions (Christensen & Lægreid, in press; Johnsen & Vakkuri, 2006; Lægreid, Roness, & Rubecksen, 2006). Furthermore, the Nordic countries seem to be able to combine a public administration that values professionalism and a public service ethos with a substantial effort to introduce managerial tools (Hammerschmid, Stimac, & Wegrich, 2014). The managerial reforms have also been supplemented by reforms based on e-government, transparency, citizens' engagement, and coordination, reflecting a post-NPM reform trajectory.

It is, however, not very easy to link these reform trends directly to NPM or post-NPM in the Nordic countries. For example, agencification has a long history, and numerous relatively independent agencies were estab-

lished pre-NPM. In addition, the Nordic countries were frontrunners regarding transparency long before post-NPM reforms became a main trend (Greve et al., 2016). Hansen (2011) has revealed that there are similarities as well as differences regarding the adaptation of various reform measures in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Taken together, the reform trends can be seen as both constrained and enabled by national administrative traditions. At the same time, these administrative traditions might also change as a result of more contemporary administrative reforms.

A large-scale survey of top public-sector administrative executives in central government ministries and agencies in nineteen European countries provides insight into the specific administrative traditions and reforms of the Nordic countries. The survey was conducted in the period 2011–2014 and the Nordic respondents comprised 1,907 top civil servants in ministries and central agencies from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland. The overall response rate for the Nordic countries was 35% (Greve et al., 2016). The survey shows that managerial tools are common in the Nordic countries and that managerial role perceptions focusing on efficiency are rather strong (Greve et al., 2016). Overall, measures designed to improve the internal management of the administrative apparatus are used more widely than privatization and marketization. Management by objectives and results is widespread, for example.

According to the survey, traditional bureaucratic features, such as specialization by purpose or tasks and hierarchy, are still very much present in the Nordic countries. However, such hierarchical coordination and governance is less common than in many other European countries (Lægreid, Randma-Liiv, Rykkja, & Sarapuu, 2016; Wegrich & Stimac, 2014). The internal administrative hierarchy is rather weak compared with the rest of Europe. The use of collegial network arrangements, such as ad hoc, cross-cutting horizontal working groups, is common, according to the executives working in central government, but they are mainly set up as supplementary coordination arrangements. At the same time, the quality of vertical coordination within individual policy areas is seen as rather high in the Nordic countries. Horizontal coordination across policy areas is, on the other hand, perceived as weaker, but nevertheless better than in other European countries (Lægreid et al., 2016). A combination of high managerial autonomy and weak politicization is also a common feature in the Nordic countries compared with the rest of Europe.

The survey showed that Norwegian administrative executives tend to have a more positive view of reforms, seeing them as more consistent, comprehensive, and substantial than the average (Lægreid & Rykkja, 2016). They were also seen as more bottom up, less contested by unions, more open to public involvement, and more about improving service delivery quality than about cost reductions and downsizing. The Norwegian executives saw collaboration and cooperation as an important re-

form trend and reported that policy coherence and coordination had improved in recent years. Reforms in Norway were, moreover, seen as rather successful overall and as having resulted in improvements rather than in deterioration.

In general, executives in the Nordic countries rated public administration performance as higher than in other European countries. Thus, when the survey was conducted the situation was generally felt to have improved regarding issues such as efficiency, trust, staff motivation, service quality, and transparency (Greve et al., 2016). Overall, the Nordic countries were characterized by a high level of reform activity with substantial public involvement, and the effects of the reforms were judged positively. The Nordic model therefore emerges as one that is agile and adaptive, where new reform elements are rather effortlessly incorporated into the existing Nordic welfare state model (Greve et al., 2019).

The Nordic countries can be seen as rather eager reformers (Greve et al., 2018). However, there is not one dominant reform trajectory but rather a layering process going on, resulting in a hybrid and mixed system characterized by a complex administrative culture (Lægreid, 2017). The Nordic administrative tradition is therefore more multi-functional, representing a mixed model that includes partly conflicting values and cultures and hence produces tensions and trade-offs (Ejersbo, Greve, Lægreid, & Rykkja, 2017). The Nordic countries have been affected by their increased integration into Europe as well as by the NPM reform movement, but there are also differences between them. For example, when looking at how the Nordic countries managed the COVID-19 crisis, a traditional difference between Sweden and the other Nordic countries appeared still to be relevant (Christensen & Lægreid, 2020). Sweden is characterized by a collegial type of governmental decision-making and lacks formal individual ministerial power over the central agencies, while the other Nordic countries' espousal of the principle of ministerial responsibility allows a higher degree of individual steering of central agencies (Öberg & Wockelberg, 2016).

The Nordic countries are dynamic in incorporating new external reform elements into the public sector, fitting what Streeck and Thelen (2005) identify as incremental institutional change. Reforms seem to have become a routine activity, and one set of reforms generally tends to generate new, related reforms (Brunsson & Olsen, 1993). The administrative apparatus consists of rather composite institutional arrangements including partly competing views of how the public administration should be organized and structured. One reform idea is not simply swept away by another. The reform trends are complementary and supplementary rather than alternative. This results in a layered and hybrid Nordic administrative reform model in which new reform elements are added to existing ones.

The Nordic countries have been influenced by various governance ideas and display a modernized manage-

rial and performance management perspective on public sector reform, coupled with participation and consultation in the reform process, increasing collaboration via network arrangements, and a continued emphasis on transparency. In this respect, the Nordic countries to some extent represent Neo-Weberian states, according to Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017). The overall reform narrative is one of modernization, with a combination of management, performance management, decentralization, whole-of-government coordination in networks, and transparency. The Nordic model thus emerges as a mixed system (Olsen, 2010) combining professional governance, stakeholder engagement, legality, and the more traditional Weberian bureaucratic principles, with a limited dose of market-based governance. Overall, the reforms are more system-maintaining than system-transforming, characterized by pragmatism and transformation in slow motion. At the same time, the organizational structure of the public sector is rather complex. Years of continuing reform efforts mean that the public sector is still in a state of transformation.

Although similarities between the Nordic countries stand out in many respects, there are also some divergent perceptions of reform processes, trends, and content among Nordic executives (Greve et al., 2019). Sweden is in some respects a deviant case, scoring low on the perceived importance of digital governance and high on economic management tools, such as decentralized financial and staff decisions and performance management. Bjurstrøm and Christensen (2017) find that Sweden has taken a more radical NPM path, as illustrated, for instance by the privatization of public schools (Bjørklund, Clark, Edin, Fredriksson, & Krueger, 2005) and by a general trend towards marketization (Sundstrøm, 2015).

In the executive survey analyzed by Greve et al. (2016), Iceland stood out with a high score on crisis-driven reforms and relatively low public involvement. Icelandic executives saw the reforms as being rather contested by the unions and as focusing on cost-cutting and downsizing. Norway displayed the opposite pattern on these two survey questions. Different from Sweden, the executives from Finland and Denmark perceived the reforms as being more bureaucrat-driven, more contested by the unions, and as characterized by rather little public involvement. These reform nuances in the Nordic countries may be connected to different domestic contexts, management styles and administrative traditions.

Nordic civil servants meet annually in a longstanding, permanent Nordic forum for administrative policy. Here the participants exchange information about what is on the administrative reform agenda in the different countries. Participants in the forum contend that the Nordic countries face similar challenges, but often at different times. There are many examples of Nordic countries' looking to one another for inspiration and role models, but few of these examples involve one country directly copying another. Similar solutions for open government,

trust-based reform initiatives, efforts to reduce red tape, sector analyses, and evaluations are some initiatives that can be seen as being mutually inspired. In recent years, Norway has been inspired by reforms taking place in Denmark, for example. This is illustrated by the establishment of the Norwegian Digitalization Agency and the Agency for Administration and Economic Management as well as new initiatives within the fields of public sector innovation, digitalization, ethical guidelines, management codes of conduct, and leadership development. In Norway, the regulations for good management are inspired by the Danish Leadership Pipeline Institute. In addition, the introduction of an Innovation Barometer and a Digital Mailbox in Norway was inspired by similar arrangements in Denmark.

Administrative reforms in Norway are often launched after similar reforms have been implemented in other Nordic countries. Recent examples are the region and municipality reform and the police reform (Christensen, Lægreid, & Rykkja, 2018). The reform of higher education, reforms related to immigration, transport infrastructure, the organization of the consumer apparatus, and climate change and sustainable development also have similar features. Some Norwegian reforms, such as the hospital reform and the reform of the welfare administration, have also inspired similar reforms in other Nordic countries. Thus, Nordic countries find inspiration for administrative policy and reforms in neighbouring countries.

A survey of Swedish ministries and central agencies in 2019 showed that after 20 years of EU membership Nordic collaboration was still as strong as it was before Sweden joined the EU (Jacobsson & Sundstrøm, 2020). It concluded that Nordic administrative collaboration in Swedish central government was stronger than ever and seemed to have become more important the more Sweden became integrated into European collaboration.

Although the rhetoric surrounding public sector reforms is very similar in all the Nordic countries, there are more differences across countries when it comes to the use of specific reform means and measures, producing both converging and diverging practices as, for example, in the field of educational evaluation (Hansen, 2010). In the area of higher education, similar goals are pursued through different organizational arrangements (Bleiklie & Michelsen, 2019). Also, in the area of evidence-based policymaking (Elvbakken & Hansen, 2019), education policy (Helgøy & Homme, 2007), and food safety regulation (Elvbakken, Lægreid, & Rykkja, 2008), the Nordic countries all share the same basic ideas, but they are implemented in specific organizational settings and national contexts and therefore vary.

Overall European and international reform trajectories influence the Nordic countries. However, national filters lead to reform lags and variations, which impacts on the reforms (Christensen, Gornitzka, & Maassen, 2014). The reform trajectories are both constrained and enabled by specific national cultural and structural contexts. Summing up, the Nordic administrative tradition can be

seen as a mixed model that includes partly conflicting values that produce tension and trade-offs. This may have changed over time, and there are certainly differences between the Nordic countries, despite many similarities (Lægreid, 2017).

3. An Administrative Structural Approach

We examine the differentiated integration of the Nordic countries as an administrative phenomenon, seen from an organizational and public administration point of view as a system of interconnected ministries and central agencies (Bauer & Trondal, 2015; Egeberg & Trondal, 2018; March & Olsen, 1989; Olsen, 2010). More specifically, we apply a structural perspective to examine the scope of Nordic collaboration and its perceived effects on policy design and administrative reforms in the Norwegian central civil service. The structural perspective underlines that the structural context of civil servants, meaning where they are situated in the formal organizational structure as well as their external network participation and contact patterns will influence their perceptions and behaviour as civil servants (Christensen, Lægreid, & Røvik, 2020; Egeberg, 2012; Egeberg & Trondal, 2018; Simon, 1958).

Our approach underlines that the structural context of civil servants will influence the scope of Nordic collaboration, how they perceive other countries as role models for their policy design, and the significance of different administrative reform measures in their daily work. Thus, Nordic collaboration through integration in network structures is first treated as a dependent variable, affected by where civil servants are located in the internal administrative organization, and then as an independent variable that may affect policy design and the perceived significance of administrative reform measures.

The main expectations are first, that the scope and intensity of Nordic collaboration will vary according to how relevant these tools are for different civil servants in their structural positions and related to their main tasks. Second, that their Nordic access structure, related to their contact and participation patterns, together with structural variables will have different effects on the use of international role models in policy design as well as on the perceived significance of different reform measures (Figure 1).

First, 'administrative level' differentiates between civil servants working in ministries and those in subordinate agencies. Civil servants working in ministries will be expected to score higher on participation and contact with Nordic bodies than those in the agencies because they are higher up in the hierarchy. Concerning the effects of administrative level on policy design and administrative reform tools, civil servants working in ministries will be expected to see more significant effects since they are situated at a higher level in the hierarchy and thus are more involved in policy design and administrative reforms.

The second structural variable is 'formal position' in the civil service hierarchy. The general assumption is that the hierarchical level at which civil servants work will differentiate the Nordic collaboration pattern and its perceived effects. Leaders and managers will be expected to be more integrated in a Nordic network and overall to see more impact on policy design and administrative reform patterns, while executive officers will be expected to score lower overall on Nordic network connections and on effects related to policy design and administrative reforms.

The third structural variable used is 'formal tasks,' divided into three types—planning, organizational development, and (re)organization and coordination. We will expect civil servants formally working with coordinative tasks, planning and organizational development, and (re)organization tasks to be more strongly integrated into Nordic networks. We will also expect to see more significant effects on policy design and administrative reforms because their attention structure is biased towards these.

Finally, we would expect tight 'Nordic contact and participation patterns' to lead to stronger use of international models in policy-making and also to stronger perceived significance of different reform measures.

4. Database

The primary empirical data in this article consist of an online survey of civil servants in Norwegian ministries and central agencies conducted in 2016. All civil servants with at least one-year tenure, from executive officers to top civil servants in the ministries, and every third civil servant in the central agencies, randomly selected, were
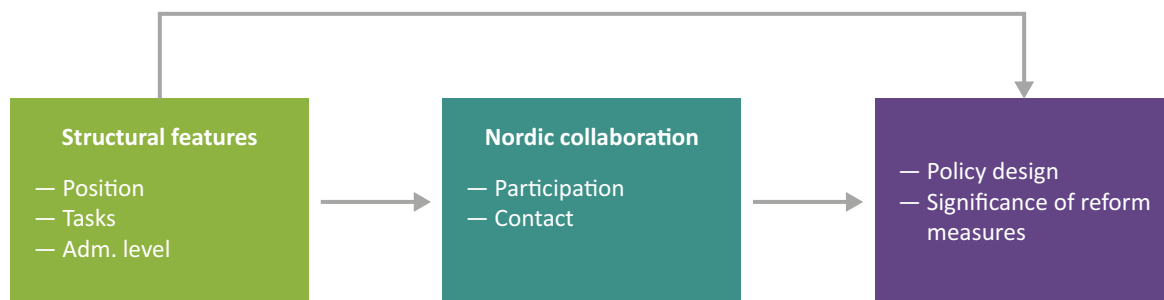

Figure 1. Research design.

included. In total, 2,322 employees from the ministries and 1,963 from the central agencies answered the survey. The response rate was 60.1% in the ministries and 58.9% in the agencies, overall a very high response rate. It was a unique survey, representative of civil servants in the Norwegian central government. The survey has been conducted every 10 years since 1976. Questions about Nordic collaboration and Nordic inspiration regarding policy design were included in earlier versions of the survey but the questions were not identical. Nevertheless, this gives some indication of change over time, which will be briefly referred to in the analyses.

The scope of Nordic collaboration is covered by two variables recording the civil servants' contact and participation patterns. Regarding participation, the following question was asked: 'Have you participated in a Nordic committee, working group or similar in the last year?'

Regarding contact, the following question was asked: 'How often do you estimate that you have had contact with Nordic governmental collaborative bodies over the last year?'

For both questions the respondents could choose between three categories: a) yes, several times, b) yes, once and c) no.

Regarding policy design the following question was asked: 'How often does it happen in your field of work that models are borrowed from other countries and/or international organizations when new measures or tasks are prepared?' The respondents could answer on a 5-point scale from 1) 'very often' to 5) 'very seldom/never.'

Regarding administrative reform measures, the following question was asked: 'A number of reforms and measures have been launched in conjunction with modernization and renewal work in government. How significant have the following reforms/measures been in your field of work?' On this set of questions, addressing fourteen different reform measures, the respondents could answer on a 5-point scale from 1) 'very significant' to 5) 'very insignificant/not used at all' and 'not relevant.'

The internal structural variables include administrative level, hierarchical position, and tasks. Regarding administrative level, we distinguish between ministries (1) and central agencies (2). Position varies from low, meaning executive officers and advisors, to middle managers and top civil servants. The tasks variable concerns whether organizational development and (re)organization or planning and coordination is a main task or not.

5. The Scope of Nordic Cooperation

About one third of the civil servants in Norwegian central government have contact with Nordic collaborative governmental bodies annually (Table 1). Mostly, these contacts have occurred a few times during the last year. This type of contact is more frequent than participation in a Nordic committee or working group. 17% report that they have done this during the last year. About half of respondents reported several such meetings. The correlation between participation and contact is statistically significant (Pearson R= .48**). For ministerial civil servants contact with Nordic collaborative bodies is at the same level as with the European Commission, and for civil servants in central agencies it is at the same level as with EU agencies, although overall it is lower than with authorities in other countries altogether (Christensen, Egeberg, et al., 2018, p. 103). Contact with Nordic collaborative government bodies has remained at a rather stable level over the past 20 years. Participation in Nordic collaborative bodies is higher than in EU committees, but lower than in committees and working groups in other international government organizations. Over time, there has been a decrease in participation in Nordic committees and working groups among the civil servants (Christensen, Egeberg, et al., 2018, p. 104). In a survey of civil service bodies in 1998, 40% of the Norwegian authorities in ministries and central agencies reported that they participated annually in Nordic committee, project—or working groups and 27% had monthly or more frequent contact with authorities in other Nordic countries in connection with EU/EEA-related work (Larsen, 2001).

6. The Drivers of Nordic Cooperation

The scope of Nordic participation and contact varies to a great extent with structural features, such as administrative level, position, and main tasks (Table 2). It is more common among civil servants in management positions than among executive officers as well as among those who have planning or coordination as a main task. Somewhat surprisingly, Nordic collaboration is less common among those who have organizational development or reorganization as a main task, indicating that Nordic collaboration might be more linked to policy design than to administrative reforms and that having main tasks linked to organizational development and reorganization has mainly an internal organizational focus. The importance of structural factors is similar for both participa-

Table 1. Participation in and contact with Nordic public bodies among civil servants in Norwegian central government over the past year (2016, percentages).

	Yes	No	N = 100%
Participated in a Nordic committee or working group	17	83	3,183
Contact with a Nordic collaborative governmental body	32	68	3,182

Table 2. Variations among civil servants in Norwegian central government in participation in and contact with Nordic bodies (2016).

	Participation	Contact
Administrative level	−.08***	.06**
Position	−.10***	−.15***
Main task		
— Organizational development/reorganization	−.05***	−.04**
— Planning	.06**	.05***
— Coordination	.06***	.08***
R2	.03	.04
R2 scared	.02	.04
F	15.799	28.340
Significance	.000	.000

Notes: Linear regression and standardized Beta coefficients. ** = significant at .01 *** = significant at .001.

tion and contact. The only difference is that civil servants in ministries have more contact than those working in central agencies, while the relationship is the other way around for participation in committees and working groups.

7. The Perceived Effects of Nordic Cooperation on Policy Design and Administrative Reforms

Regarding policy design, 43% of Norwegian civil servants often look to other countries for inspiration and role models when new measures and tasks are prepared. Only 9% say that this happens very seldom or never. So external influence plays quite a big role in policy design. The Nordic countries themselves are at the top of the list of model countries (Jacobsson et al., 2004). And such inspiration obviously goes both ways. For Swedish central government bodies, Finland and Norway were at the top of the list in 2019 regarding inspiration from other countries, followed by Denmark. Over time, Finland has become the most important collabora-

tion partner, which probably has more to do with EU integration than with Nordic collaboration. One indicator of this is the EU PISA studies, which revealed that Finland differs from the other Nordic countries in pupils' school performance. In 1998, 21% of Swedish agencies said that they often got inspiration from other Nordic countries; by 2019, this had increased to 34%. The highest numbers were in the field of business, culture, and environment (Jacobsson & Sundstrøm, 2020). Thus, we can conclude that Nordic collaboration is still important for the Nordic countries.

We also see that participation in Nordic committees and working groups as well as contact with Nordic collaborative government bodies increases the changes that international role models will be used in policy-making (Table 3). Structural features, such as position and tasks, also matter. Civil servants in management positions and those working with planning and coordination as a main task more often look for inspiration and role models abroad when new policy measures and tasks are prepared. This is also to some extent the

Table 3. Inspiration and role models from external countries or international organizations for policy design among civil servants in Norwegian central government measures by Nordic contact and participation pattern and structural features.

	Inspiration from international models
Participation in Nordic committees/working groups	.13***
Contact with Nordic collaborative government bodies	.12***
Administrative level	.01
Position	−.08***
Main task	
— Organizational development/reorganization	.04*
— Planning	.15***
— Coordination	.07***
R2	.10
R2 scared	.08
F	40.022
Significance	.000

Notes: Linear regression and standardized Beta coefficients. * = significant at 0.05; *** = significant at .001.

case for those working with organizational development and reorganization.

When it comes to administrative reform means and measures, most of the listed means and measures are seen by civil servants as relevant in their own field of work. Digitalization, agency management, goal formulation, and transparency are ranked as the most significant, followed by coordination, risk management and evaluation, control, and monitoring. This picture is pretty similar to the one revealed in a survey of top civil servants in the Nordic countries in 2012–2014 (Lægreid & Rykkja, 2016, p. 115). The pattern is rather similar across the Nordic countries. However, Nordic participation and contact does not have a significant effect on the perceived importance of most means and measures, such as form of affiliation, red tape, flexibility, evaluation and control, value-based management, risk management, digitalization, contracting out, agency management and goal specification.

Table 4 shows that there are some effects on perceptions of public-private partnerships, evidence-based policy making, role separations, transparency, and coordination, especially when it comes to contact with Nordic collaborative bodies. Participation in Nordic committees and working groups does not seem to be of great importance. The table also shows that structural patterns, such as administrative level, position and having planning or coordination as a main task, also matter. But the main picture is that these factors can only explain a small part of the variations in the perceptions of these reform means and measures.

8. Discussion: Revisiting the Structural Perspective

This analysis has, first, revealed that Norwegian civil servants are very well integrated into a Nordic network of participation and contact. Contact with Nordic collaborative government bodies is more frequent than active participation in Nordic collegial bodies. The contact pattern has been rather stable over the past 20 years, but there has been a decrease in participation in Nordic committees and working groups. Overall, there has been no significant disintegration of the Nordic administrative collaborative network despite stronger integration in the EU. The intensity of the collaboration is slightly weaker, however, as illustrated by less frequent participation in Nordic collaborative bodies. Thus, there seems to be a differentiated integration that still allows for a Nordic administrative space.

Second, the Nordic collaborative network is also differentiated. It varies to a great extent with the civil servants' organizational affiliation, position, and main tasks. Civil servants who are in leadership positions in ministries and who have planning and coordination as main tasks are more integrated into a Nordic contact pattern. The same goes for participation in project—and working groups for those working in central agencies.

Third, the effect of Nordic collaboration is stronger on policy design than on administrative reform means and measures. Civil servants with a Nordic collaborative network are more inspired by international role models than those without such a network. However, Nordic collaboration plays a less significant role when it comes to specific administrative reforms. Several reform measures are not affected by Nordic collaboration, and for those that are, contact patterns are more important than participation patterns. When it comes to public-private partnership, separation of roles, transparency, and coordination, Nordic contact plays a significant role. Increased Nordic contact seems to stimulate such reform measures.

Fourth, internal structural features such as tasks, administrative position, and administrative level also matter for some of the reform measures. Having planning

Table 4. The perceived significance of different administrative tools and measures among civil servants in Norwegian central government by Nordic contact and participation pattern and structural features. Linear regression.

	Public–private partnership	Evidence based policymaking	Role separation	Transparency	Coordination
Nordic participation	.01	.05*	.00	−.02	.00
Nordic contact	.10***	.04	.06*	.08**	.05*
Administrative level	−.08**	.07**	−.02	−.03	.01
Position	.01	−.07**	−.02	−.05*	−.03
Main task:					
— OD/reorganization	.01	.03	.04	.00	.04
— Planning	.03	.08***	.08**	−.02	.05*
— Coordination	.03	.06**	.05	.01	.07**
R2	.02	.03	.01	.01	.01
R2 scared	.02	.02	.01	.01	.01
F	5.324	8.285	3.463	3.471	3.364
Significance	.000	.000	.001	.001	.000

Notes: Standardized Beta coefficients. * = significant at .05; ** = significant at at 01; *** = significant at .001.

and coordination as a main task seems to play a role for the importance of means and measures related to evidence-based policy making, role separation and collaboration. Civil servants in ministries are less focused on public-private partnerships and more on evidence-based policy-making compared with those working in central agencies. Evidence-based policy-making and transparency are also more prominent in ministries than in central agencies.

There might also be indirect effects. We have shown in Table 2 that Nordic contact and participation patterns can be predicted by structural factors. When in Table 3 and 4 we add Nordic contact and participation patterns in addition to structural factors as predictors of international policy inspiration and for the significance of different reform tools, the structural factors might also have an additional indirect effect on policy inspiration and use of reform tools through Nordic communication and participation patterns.

Summing up, the findings give some support to the structural perspective. We find, first, that the scope and intensity of the Nordic contact pattern varies according to the organizational affiliation, position, and main tasks of the civil servants. Second, inspiration from international role models seems to be affected by Nordic collaboration as well as by internal structural features. Third, there are also some effects of Nordic contact patterns as well as of administrative position, organizational affiliation, and task structure in the central bureaucracy on the civil servants' perceived significance of some reform means and measures. However, the effects of Nordic collaboration are weaker on administrative reform measures than on policy design.

9. Conclusion

Taken together, the qualitative data, secondary data and the survey data collected for this article show that Nordic administrative collaboration can best be seen as differentiated integration. A common Nordic administrative space exists and exhibits some distinct features that distinguish it from other European administrative families, even if there also are some similarities with non-Nordic countries (Greve et al., 2016). When it comes to policy design and administrative reforms in the Nordic countries, there is also variation across them with respect to policy areas, tasks, administrative levels, and positions. Overall, the picture is characterized by syncretism, combining existing and new administrative arrangements in an adaptive and agile way (Ansell, Trondal, & Øgård, 2017; Greve et al., 2019).

We conclude that Nordic cooperation has evidently not collapsed with more integration of the Nordic countries into the EU. Even if participation in Nordic central government bodies might have been reduced somewhat, contact is still rather frequent. The Norwegian civil servants still look to their colleagues in neighbouring Nordic countries for inspiration regarding policy design

as well as administrative reforms. In particular, Norway seems to collaborate closely with Sweden and Denmark. Also, for Swedish central government bodies there has been no decline in Nordic administrative collaboration (Jacobsson & Sundstrøm, 2020). As far as our data go, they indicate that Nordic administrative collaboration is still 'alive and kicking.' It has been affected by, but not marginalized, by increased European and international integration.

The main picture is, however, that Nordic countries' copying policies and administrative reform measures from each other is not a simple and straightforward process. Domestic policy design and administrative reforms are not simply taken on board as a blueprint of what is going on in neighbouring countries. The timing, pace, and intensity of the reforms vary across countries, and there are more similarities in general reform and policy ideas than in specific policy design and reform means and measures. Rather than copying arrangements through simple diffusion there is an editing and translation process going on in which the general reform ideas are modified and adapted to the specific domestic traditions and situations as they move from one Nordic country to another (Greve et al., 2019). The external Nordic administrative collaboration pattern matters, but so do internal structural characteristics.

This study has some limitations. First, the data base has a bias towards cross-sectional data. More longitudinal data would have strengthened the empirical description. Second, the data base has a Norwegian bias, and more data from the other Nordic countries would have strengthened the findings. Third, the data on international inspiration in policy-making is not specifically linked to the Nordic countries, which might weaken the proxy of this variable.

Going back to our more specific research questions, we can, first, conclude that the scope of Nordic administrative collaboration among Norwegian civil servants in central government is rather broad, especially when it comes to contact with Nordic governmental collaborative bodies but also when it comes to deriving inspiration and ideas for administrative and policy reforms. Second, this collaborative pattern varies significantly with internal structural features, such as administrative affiliation, position, and main tasks. Third, we see that Nordic collaboration is perceived to influence policy design more than on specific administrative reform means and measures. Fourth, we see that internal structural features also matter when it comes to explaining variations in how civil servants are inspired by external models in policy design and in the perceived significance of specific reform measures.

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Article

Nordic Cooperation in the Nuclear Safety Sector: High, Low, or Differentiated Integration?

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Abstract
Nordic cooperation has been depicted as eroding due to the increased importance of EU-related cooperation and integration. However, scholars propose that longstanding Nordic networks, grounded in professions and located in the state administration, may prove to be more robust toward external changes. This article discusses this proposal by looking at Nordic cooperation between the national radiation protection and nuclear safety authorities in Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland. The article maps behavioural perceptions of agency staff based on a dataset of 37 interviews to illustrate if the cooperation between the Nordic authorities is characterized by high integration, low integration, or differentiated integration within the nuclear safety sector. The study finds that the cooperation is differentiated between the highly integrated areas of radiation protection and emergency preparedness, and the less integrated areas of nuclear security and safeguards. To account for variation, the data indicates the importance of path dependency and portfolio.

Issue
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1. Introduction

It has been suggested that the world should look to the Nordic countries in order to build prosperous, well-governed, and liberal democracies. In this view, the Nordic combination of a strong state, well-functioning rule of law, and a responsible democracy is a promising recipe for good government (Lægreid, 2020, p. 421). Moreover, political scientists discuss the features of 'Nordic models' (Knutsen, 2017, p. 9), while some depict the Nordic countries as 'Nordic lights' showing the way in times of crisis (Nedergaard & Wivel, 2018, p. 2). Scholars also ask if and how European integration through the European Union challenges and changes cooperation between the Nordic countries (Olsen & Sverdrup, 1998, pp. 10–12). Furthermore, studies on government agencies cluster the Nordic countries together based on their

geographical location and shared politico-administrative culture (Verhoest, van Thiel, Bouckaert, & Lægreid, 2012, p. 10), and these countries are characterized by large public sectors with small core governments, numerous large agencies, and large-scale decentralization of tasks and competencies to the subnational levels of governments (Verhoest et al., 2012, p. 15). Moreover, the Nordic countries are relatively small, with informal administrative culture, a high level of mutual trust between political and administrative executives, and extremely low corruption rates (Balle Hansen, Lægreid, Pierre, & Salminen, 2012, p. 259; Lægreid, 2018, p. 83; Verhoest et al., 2012, pp. 15–16).

The focus of this article is Nordic cooperation in the nuclear safety sector, and this sector may be divided into three different pillars: safety, safeguards, and security. Safety is defined as the protection of people, environ-

ment, and society from the consequences of radiation. It includes radiation safety and radiation protection concerned with issues like the use of radiation in medicine. Moreover, safety covers emergency preparedness, and finally, safety encompasses nuclear safety, which in general is about how to operate nuclear facilities to avoid accidents. Safeguards is about ensuring that nuclear material, technology, and information is used for peaceful purposes, and not to develop nuclear weapons. It thus includes arms control and non-proliferation. Finally, security is linked to both safety and safeguards and it is mainly about protecting nuclear facilities from terrorism, and how to avoid theft of nuclear material, technology, and information. The article examines cooperation between the national authorities on radiation protection and nuclear safety in the five Nordic countries of Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland. A shared characteristic between these authorities is that they are expert bodies where specialized knowledge is essential, and the workforce is characterized by highly educated and skilled experts (Krick & Holst, 2020, p. 2). An important differentiating feature is that only Sweden and Finland have nuclear power plants. Denmark and Norway have had nuclear research reactors, while Iceland never have had nuclear power-generating installations.

The article asks: Why does the degree of integration vary between issues of safety, security, and safeguards, involving the same actors, in the same sector, at the same level? To account for this variation, the article studies the effect of institutional and organizational variables. In so doing, two basic assumptions emerge: first, history and context matter (Lægreid, 2020, p. 424; Olsen, 2018). Scholars have emphasized the essential role of history and the problems of universal, non-contextual explanations by not analysing the conditions under which organizational factors are likely to have explanatory power. As different public administrations are located differently in time and space, the question is how the past affects the future and how public administrations learn—or not—from experience and changing environments (Olsen, 2018). Secondly, organization matters (Olsen, 2018). It has been argued that organization theory is a powerful instrument for approaching public governance as organizational factors are expected to create biases in governance processes, making some choices more likely than others (Egeberg & Trondal, 2018, pp. 1–4; Lægreid, 2020, p. 422). The article therefore contributes to the organization theory-based institutional approach in public administration research (Lægreid, 2020, p. 421) by emphasising that public bureaucracies are more than instruments in the hands of national governments. They are also partly autonomous institutions that do not adapt in a simple and straightforward way to new steering signals or to changing environmental pressure (Lægreid, 2020, p. 423).

Furthermore, the phenomenon of inter-administrative coordination has been predominantly studied with a focus on their proliferation and effectiveness in pro-

moting common principles, rules, and best practices (Keohane & Nye, 1974; Slaughter, 2004). Studying the cooperation between the Nordic authorities in the nuclear safety sector adds to this literature by unpacking the cooperation itself. The study also reflects discussions on differentiated integration (Gänzle, Leruth, & Trondal, 2020) and shows that Nordic cooperation in the nuclear safety sector best can be described as differentiated between the highly integrated safety areas of radiation protection and emergency preparedness, and the less integrated areas of nuclear safety, security, and safeguards. Finally, the article demonstrates how national authorities collaborate in a sector where parts of the portfolio are 'core state powers.' Core state powers are defined by their "institutional significance for state-building," which include foreign and defence policy, public finances, public administration, and the maintenance of law and order (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, 2014, p. 1). The implication is twofold: First, the case facilitates an opportunity to study the effect of non-core and core state portfolios on cooperation within the same sector; secondly, portfolios of core state powers are a hard case where highly integrated cooperation is less likely. The national authorities in the Nordic countries have portfolios reaching from non-core issues—like radiation protection—to core state issues, such as nuclear security. The study finds that the differentiated cooperation between the Nordic authorities in the nuclear safety sector mirrors the division between non-core portfolios and core-state portfolios. Hence, the data indicates the importance of path dependency as well as portfolio where integrated cooperation is more challenging to establish and maintain in core-state portfolios.

The article proceeds as follows. Section 2 outlines the theoretical framework in two steps: First, integration is defined and operationalized, and secondly, independent variables that might account for variation are outlined. Sections 3 and 4 briefly introduce the method and data, and present the empirical findings. Section 5 summarizes key findings and contributions to the literature.

2. Theoretical Framework

This article focuses on the organization theory-based institutional approach to public administration. In organization theory, integration is understood as the coordination between two or more actors and how they adapt collaboratively to solve a problem or provide a service (Jacobsen, 2017, p.198). Coordination is thus pictured as the purposeful alignment of tasks and efforts to achieve a defined goal (Lægreid & Rykkja, 2015; Verhoest & Bouckaert, 2005, p. 95). The term coordination also implies the use of mechanisms that more tightly and formally link together different units (Keast & Mandell, 2014). Through coordination mechanisms—and thus the integration of units—synergies are created, enabling organizations to become more efficient and effective (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 197). National agencies, as public en-

tities, are expected to create optimal value for citizens, and cooperation between agencies is thus a means to increase value. Consequently, cross-territorial cooperation between functionally similar agencies is mainly about how these agencies manage to pool and exploit common resources across territories (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 204). In literature on inter-organizational relations, coordination is defined as a behavioral process with focus on interactions and relations between actors. This approach also concentrates on how the interaction is organized, and the aim is to highlight explanations for coordinative behaviour both by looking at characteristics of the actors involved and the characteristics of how the coordination between organizations is organized or structured (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 200).

The degree of integration between the authorities is operationalized by looking at four coordination mechanisms focused on both behaviour and organizational dimensions (see Table 1). First, the most used operationalization of coordination appears to be the type and intensity of interaction between actors (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 210; Keast & Mandell, 2014). This article thus concentrates on contact patterns and communication flows, where regular contact and communication indicate a high degree of integration. Secondly, the existence of reciprocal trust will most likely have a substantial impact on coordination, where trust makes communication flow easier, reduces costs associated with monitoring other actors in the cooperation, and dampens conflict between participants (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 211). Thirdly, high levels of integration are recognized by the degree of formalization in the cooperation. The existence of permanent structures where the actors involved can meet to coordinate activities through direct communication indicates high degrees of integration (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 207; Keast & Mandell, 2014). Finally, the pooling of resources imply that tasks and different types of resources are 'moved out' of the original organizations, suggesting higher degrees of integration (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 208). In addition, this article includes the perceived importance of the cooperation as an indicator of the level of integration.

The degree of integration in the cooperation between the Nordic authorities on radiation protection and nuclear safety is analyzed on a continuum reaching from a low degree of integration to a high degree of integration (see Table 1).

To account for variation on the degree of integration, the article studies the effect of historical institutionalism and organization structure. While the degree of integration is not simply conditioned by these factors, the aim is to show that historical institutionalism and organizational structure adds to the understanding of which factors influence integration in cooperation between national agencies at a higher level, such as the Nordic one. The article discusses the effect of path-dependency, size, horizontal specialization, and vertical specialization on integration, by both studying properties of the Nordic cooperation itself, and also by looking at characteristics of each individual authority in the Nordic countries.

Historical institutionalism is based on the basic assumptions that history matters, and that history is not a chain of independent incidents (Steinmo, 2008). The focus is thus on the construction, maintenance, and adaptation of institutions (Sanders, 2006, p. 42), emphasizing the origin and evolution of the rules, norms, and practices shaping policy outcomes and the structure of polities (Fioretos, Falleti, & Sheingate, 2016). The conceptual toolbox related to historical institutionalism consists of concepts like path dependence and critical junctures (Fioretos et al., 2016).

In this study, path dependency is understood as "dynamic processes involving positive feedback" (Fioretos et al., 2016) overlapping with the idea of 'increasing returns' (Pierson, 2000). These ideas capture a basic element in understanding path-dependency displaying how the costs of changing from one alternative to another will increase over time creating a self-reinforcement dynamic, making deviation from an existing path increasingly more difficult (Fioretos et al., 2016; Pierson, 2000). Path-dependent processes are born through critical junctures, understood as "a period of significant change, which typically occurs in distinct ways in different countries (or in other units of analysis) and which is hypothesized to produce distinct legacies" (Collier & Collier, 2002, p. 29). Thus, path dependency shows how particular historical junctures have lasting consequences. However, path dependent arguments based on positive feedback propose that not only 'big' events have big consequences. Small ones, that happen at the right time, can have vast consequences as well (Pierson, 2000). Furthermore, literature on institutional change suggests that path-dependent lock-in is a rare phenomenon, opening the possibility that institutions normally evolve in incremen-

Table 1. Operationalization of integration.

Proxy	Low degree of integration	High degree of integration
Contact pattern	Infrequent communications flows	Regular communications flows
Trust	Low reciprocal trust	High reciprocal trust
Formalization	None or ad hoc	Permanent structures
Resources	Resources remain in each authority	Pooled resources
Perceived importance *	Low	High

Note: * Of the cooperation. Source: Based on Jacobsen (2017) and Keast and Mandell (2014).

tal ways (Thelen & Mahoney, 2010, p. 3). In relation to Nordic cooperation in general, Olsen and Sverdrup (1998, p. 26) suggested that longstanding Nordic networks, grounded in professions and located in the state administration, may prove to be more robust toward external changes than Nordic cooperation which lack these characteristics. In broad terms, robustness refers to a complex system's ability to remain functional and stable despite uncertainty, and also to the system's capacity to withstand and survive external shocks (Bankes, 2010; Capano & Woo, 2017). Moreover, in organization theory, robustness refers to an organization's capacity to retain its core characteristics under evolving circumstances (van Oss & van 't Hek, 2011, p. 4). Though discussed, robustness is often associated with the concept of resilience (Capano & Woo, 2017; Walker, Holling, Carpenter, & Kinzig, 2004), and both concepts may function as frameworks for understanding how complex systems self-organize and change over time (Anderies, Folke, Walker, & Ostrom, 2013). Regarding path dependency, proposition one (#1) is that Nordic cooperation will be more integrated if the cooperation has been successful in achieving its goals leading to positive feedbacks and self-reinforcing dynamics. Moreover, integrated cooperation is more likely if there is a longstanding history where critical junctures have strengthened the cooperation. Finally, integration increases if the cooperation has showed robustness toward external changes and shocks. The expectation is therefore that Nordic cooperation in this sector will be more integrated on issues of radiation protection, rather than on nuclear safety, security, and safeguards.

An organization structure is a normative structure consisting of rules and norms specifying, more or less clearly, who is expected to do what and how (Egeberg & Trondal, 2018, p. 5). Different dimensions of the organizational structure enable varied insights into how structure affects individual behaviour (Egeberg & Trondal, 2018, pp. 6–7). The following outlines three structural variables: size, horizontal specialization, and vertical specialization:

- The size of an organization indicates the capacity to initiate policies, develop alternatives, implement decisions, and monitor compliance (Egeberg & Trondal, 2018, p. 7). Large organizations, in terms of staff size, are therefore less dependent on other actors or organizations to carry out its task, and thus they are more autonomous than smaller organizations. Consequently, small organizations must, to a greater degree than their larger counterparts, build capacity through other means, like cooperation, using the potential benefits of economies of scale (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 203). Proposition two (#2) is thus that large authorities in this sector, like those in Sweden and Finland, will be less integrated into the Nordic cooperation than the smaller authorities in Denmark, Norway, and Iceland.

- Horizontal specialization shows how different policy areas and issues are supposed to be linked together or de-coupled from each other (Egeberg & Trondal, 2018, p. 8). Moreover, horizontal specialization influences the division of portfolios in organizations. In the case of the Nordic authorities on radiation protection and nuclear safety, their overall portfolio may be viewed through two different lenses. The first lens divides the portfolio into core state and non-core portfolios. Core state powers portfolios are connected to foreign and defence policy and include issues like nuclear security and safeguards. The other lens divides the portfolios into the three pillars of safety, security, and safeguards. Two propositions follow: First, the expectation is that there will be both less cooperation and integration between the Nordic authorities on core state portfolios because these policy areas will be more closely tied to the national government and parent ministries (#3). Secondly, the expectation is that cooperation between the authorities will follow departmental lines, where units with shared sector affiliation will collaborate (#4). Hence, different parts of the national authorities will be involved in Nordic cooperation to different degrees and extent, and the cooperation between the Nordic authorities will therefore be characterized by differentiated integration.

- Vertical specialization refers to the division of labour between different hierarchical levels within or between organizations. Studies show that inter-organizational specialization leads to agency officials paying significantly less attention to signals from executive politicians than their counterparts in the ministries, creating more leeway for expert-based decision-making (Egeberg & Trondal, 2018, pp. 10, 86; Holst & Gornitzka, 2015). Hence, vertical specialization favours agency autonomy vis-à-vis the national government and parent ministries, creating leeway for expert-concerns rather than national, political concerns. Proposition five (#5) is thus that organizations, which are de-coupled from the parent ministry, will be more likely to engage in Nordic cooperation than organizations structured as part of the parent ministry or other overarching organizations, like the authorities in Denmark.

3. Data and Method

To unpack the cooperation between the Nordic authorities in the nuclear safety sector, this study benefits from an original dataset based on a qualitative research method. Qualitative methods encompass rich and detailed data which may provide deep understanding. Moreover, interviews open a window into the perceptions of interviewees, their experiences, and underlying processes, enabling a better understanding of com-

plex social realities (Buchana, Garbutt, & Seymour, 2018; Smith & Elger, 2014, p. 119). The interview data consists of 37 semi-structured expert interviews with officials from all of the national authorities on radiation protection and nuclear safety in the Nordic countries, conducted in 2018 and 2019. 22 interviews were conducted at the Norwegian Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority (DSA), with the remaining 15 interviews from the authorities in Iceland, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. All interviewees are highly educated and skilled professionals, and the data include interviews with officials from the management level of all the authorities. Staff working on communication and administration have not been included. The interviewees were selected based on their strategic position and widespread knowledge of the functioning of the authorities, and key contacts in the authorities also contributed to recruiting new interviewees. The interview questions targeted aspects of employment, internal and external contact patterns, relationship with the parent ministry, role perceptions, and experiences with international cooperation at different levels. All 37 interviews are important for the findings presented, although primarily presented at an aggregated level. Most interviews were conducted face-to-face, except five interviews conducted via Skype and Lifesize. The interviews were taped and transcribed. To preserve their anonymity, each interviewee was assigned an interview code. The data was collected in accordance with the requirements of the Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

4. Empirical Findings

It is not possible to narrow the cooperation between the Nordic authorities in the nuclear safety sector down to one singular cooperation. Instead, the cooperation follows the division between the three main pillars of safety, security, and safeguards. The data shows that there are important differences in how the national authorities interact within these different pillars, and there is a continuum ranging from safety issues, like radiation protection and emergency preparedness, where the cooperation is characterized by high integration, whereas in security and safeguards issues, cooperation is marked by low integration.

The cooperation on safety can be divided into four different parts: cooperation on radiation protection, emergency preparedness, the Nordic Nuclear Safety Research (NKS), and cooperation on nuclear safety. The cooperation on radiation protection and emergency preparedness is mainly organized around the Nordic chiefs meeting. Once every year the directors of the Nordic authorities gather, and they have several working groups that report to the chiefs meeting. The NKS, mainly funded by the Nordic authorities, is a platform for Nordic research on nuclear safety that includes emergency preparedness. Direct cooperation on nuclear safety is most evident between the Swedish Radiation Safety

Authority (SSM) and the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority (STUK) in Finland. However, there is not a general Nordic cooperation in this area comparable to the one on radiation protection and emergency preparedness. Moreover, the SSM and the STUK have a confidentiality agreement which allows them to discuss some security issues. This may indicate that the cooperation between the Swedish and Finish authorities within the nuclear safety sector is more integrated than the overall Nordic cooperation.

The Nordic chiefs meeting and the working groups on radiation protection and emergency preparedness is the most integrated cooperation between all the Nordic authorities. It is characterized by high levels of trust, continuous communication flows, some attempts to pool resources, joint projects, and permanent structures through the working groups and the annual chiefs meeting. It is also perceived as important by the interviewees. A prominent example is the Nordic Working Group of Emergency Preparedness (NEP):

> We have a great Nordic cooperation with sister agencies in the other countries. We meet twice a year, all of us working on emergency preparedness in these countries. And we can have joint publications, joint working groups, joint exercises, seminars, and workshops, so it is very important for us to have this Nordic network. And of course, we cooperate with many others as well, but I would probably say that the most important sphere is the Nordic cooperation, because that is where the nearest nuclear facilities are located. That is one part of it, but it is also important to have joint Nordic recommendations, for example. So, we know each other well! (Interviewee 36)

Furthermore, interviewees underscore the importance of building strong relationships, with a foundation of trust and shared knowledge, to gain joint understandings of practices in the other countries. Another critical element to the cooperation is the need for colleagues, which is scarce at the national level, and interviewees explain why cooperation is important as follows:

> The reason why this is important to us, is that the professional communities are small, and there are very few people working on every single issue—sometimes just one person. So, it's very vulnerable, and to have colleagues, you must go outside your country. So, I guess that's what I'm passionate about: professional cooperation. (Interviewee 21)

Finally, attempts to pool resources and benefit mutually within the field of radiation protection are described in this way:

> We are small countries with limited resources, so we don't need to do the same things in all the five countries. That's a very good output of the Nordic groups—

it is better to cooperate, compared to everyone doing the same things by themselves. (Interviewee 2)

The modern awareness of ionizing radiation started in the late 1800s with the discovery of X-rays and radioactive uranium, giving rise to medical radiation. In the 1930s scientists achieved nuclear fission, which led to the construction of nuclear reactors and the atomic bomb. Indeed, the scope of both the dangers and possibilities of nuclear energy peaked during the Second World War, giving birth to cooperation targeted to encourage and facilitate safe and peaceful use of nuclear energy like the establishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1957. The Nordic countries were also interested in peaceful use of nuclear energy and Norway, Sweden, and Denmark proved to be forerunners by building research reactors during the 1950s, while Finland had their first research reactor operating from 1962. However, only Sweden and Finland decided to construct nuclear reactors for energy production, first put into operation during the 1960s and the 1970s. Today, all the research reactors have been, or are in the process of being, decommissioned. Only reactors for energy production in Sweden and Finland continue to operate in the Nordic countries.

Regarding the historical roots of the Nordic cooperation within the nuclear safety sector, the events of the Second World War prompted the Nordic countries to have their own nuclear meetings from 1949. Eventually, this led to two parallel tracks of Nordic cooperation within this field. The first track originated in 1957 with an initiative of the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) to establish a permanent committee on questions related to nuclear energy: the Nordisk kontaktorgan for atomenergispørsmål (NKA). The Suez Crisis in 1956 underscored Europe's dependence on imported oil and the NKA was to oversee planning and activities in the field of atomic energy and encourage mutual assistance in case of nuclear accidents. The NKA was made up of officials from the ministries of energy, industry, and foreign affairs, accompanied by experts. Economic growth in the Nordics during the late 1960s increased the demand for electricity, making questions of nuclear power highly relevant. The NKA formed new groups to address such questions, and while the NKA grew, the organization increasingly became more complex and less transparent. The 1970s and 1980s brought growing concerns for the environment, pollution, and modern technology, exemplified by *The Limits to Growth* report from 1972. Simultaneously, the opposition against nuclear power grew in the Nordic countries sparked by incidents like the Three Mile Island accident in 1979. Moreover, the NKA was increasingly viewed as a controversial political actor functioning as 'a state in the state' promoting nuclear power, and eventually the NKA was dissolved after the Chernobyl disaster in 1986. However, the research branch of the NKA, the NKS, survived and the NKS is still an important part of Nordic cooperation in the nuclear safety sector.

The other track of cooperation gained importance in 1959 when the NCM recommended cooperation between the Nordic radiation protection authorities. The initiative encouraged regular expert meetings starting in 1961 and an agreement on early warning in case of an accident. While Iceland was not part of this agreement in the beginning, they joined in 1965. Initially, the cooperation addressed questions related to radioactive fallout, which was a major concern in the Nordic countries due to the culmination of nuclear bomb tests during the 1950s. The result was a joint Nordic statement on the matter and cooperation expanded and further evolved through the development of the Nordic Flag Books, dealing with international recommendations on radiation protection adapted to Nordic conditions. The first flag book from 1976 marked a significant contribution toward a common Nordic view on radiation protection. From the beginning, the Nordic countries had separate authorities for radiation protection and nuclear safety, and these authorities only interacted sporadically. However, the first directors meeting with representatives from both the radiation protection authorities and nuclear safety authorities was held in 1977, establishing the chiefs meeting with its working groups. In contrast to the cooperation through the NKA, the cooperation between the authorities strengthened after Chernobyl and led to the establishment of the NEP. Furthermore, the cooperation withstood the Fukushima accident in 2011, and the development of the newest flag book from 2014 shows that the cooperation between the Nordic Authorities continues to be important and influential:

> The cooperation between the authorities was smooth and unconstrained by political influence, while the NKA was approaching the end. The authorities were praised for their handling of the impact of the Chernobyl accident, and the cooperation between the authorities continues to be very useful to this day. (Interviewee 5)

In the years after the Second World War, there was no established European cooperation between national authorities in the nuclear safety sector. However, in 1999, the Western European Nuclear Regulators Association (WENRA) was established, and in 2007 the Heads of the European Radiological Protection Competent Authorities (HERCA) was created. The WENRA deals with questions related to nuclear power plants and mainly nuclear safety issues, while The HERCA revolves around radiation protection. The data suggests the importance of both organizations, however in distinct ways. On areas where there is no established Nordic cooperation, like nuclear safety, cooperation in other arenas will be increasingly important for the authorities. Thus, on issues of nuclear safety, cooperation through the WENRA is highly important as the only organization of its kind in Europe:

I think to some extent it has happened on nuclear safety, where we don't have that much cooperation in the Nordic countries as we have on radiation safety. And the reason is that on the nuclear safety area, we have WENRA for instance. So, we already work together very effectively and efficiently, and the goals of WENRA are aligned with our goals and the Nordic countries goals, so we don't need to have a specific cooperation forum within the Nordic countries. (Interviewee 1)

Regarding radiation protection, the Nordic cooperation was established and successful long before the HERCA was founded, and the data suggests that cooperation through the HERCA has not diminished cooperation through the chiefs meeting. The data also indicates that the Nordic authorities use the established Nordic cooperation to coordinate opinions and Nordic statements to gain leverage at the international level. Thus, Nordic cooperation on radiation protection also serves as a resource and coordination platform toward other organizations where the Nordic authorities are present:

One thing is to make our work more influential and more effective nationally, but at the international level, when we participate in certain international meetings, we first discuss within the Nordic countries. Then we might find that we all agree, and then we have more leverage to put forward certain opinions that we share. Usually we share most of the opinions, so it is quite easy to work within the Nordic countries. So, I think that at least these two points are very important in the Nordic cooperation: We have more leverage at the international level, and we can work more efficiently at the national level if we combine all our resources. (Interviewee 2)

The brief historical outline above suggests that the cooperation between the Nordic authorities on radiation protection succeeded in contributing to the development of radiation protection in the Nordic countries and also internationally by developing a common Nordic understanding manifested through joint statements and the flag books. The data thus suggests that the combination of longstanding roots and success in achieving its goals are important for explaining the highly integrated cooperation on radiation protection. As one interviewee put it: "The Nordic cooperation has been around for a long time, and it has been very influential. So, many international practices came from the Nordic groups originally,

and there are several active groups on different areas" (Interviewee 2). Moreover, important critical junctures, like Chernobyl, strengthened the cooperation and it displayed robustness in its capacity to withstand and survive external shocks. The data indicates that Nordic cooperation on radiation protection also displays robustness toward changes in the organizational environment, where the cooperation upholds its important role despite new actors like the HERCA. Thus, the historical context of the cooperation makes it plausible to assume that self-reinforcement dynamics are in place, making deviation from the existing path and pattern of cooperation less likely.

Regarding Nordic cooperation through the NKA, history shows that cooperation on issues more directly related to nuclear power plants—like questions of nuclear energy, nuclear safety, and nuclear security—are more politically contested and thus more difficult to maintain over time at the Nordic level. The cooperation through the NKA was also driven by officials from the ministries, while the experts from the authorities played a minor role. The data thus indicates that the proximity to the political level may have made cooperation more turbulent. Furthermore, a series of small and large critical junctures and incremental evolvements of the organization—like the growing skepticism to nuclear power, the declining transparency of the NKA, and the Three Mile Island accident—created an environment where, eventually, the NKA was not able to withstand the external shock of the Chernobyl accident. After the dissolvement of the NKA, other actors like the WENRA have gained influence in the field of nuclear safety, and the data suggests that path dependent mechanisms makes Nordic cooperation on nuclear safety comparable to the one on radiation protection, redundant. Thus, by studying Nordic cooperation in the nuclear safety sector after the Second World War, proposition one (#1) holds. It shows the relevance of path dependency through positive feedback and critical junctures for understanding why cooperation on radiation protection and emergency preparedness is highly integrated at the Nordic level, compared to cooperation on issues of nuclear safety, security, and safeguards.

Considering the size variable, the Nordic authorities differ considerably in terms of how many employees the organizations have (see Table 2). The main proposition regarding size is that the largest organizations integrate into Nordic cooperation to a lesser degree than smaller structures. However, considering the most integrated part of the Nordic cooperation—cooperation on radiation protection and emergency preparedness—the

Table 2. Number of employees in the national authorities.

	Iceland	Denmark	Norway	Sweden	Finland
Employees	10	13 * 40 **	120	300	333

Notes: * The Nuclear Department, ** The Radiation Protection Unit (SIS).

data shows that all the authorities are equally committed, and they all perceive the cooperation to be important for their own organization:

> I would say that the Nordic cooperation is extremely important! First of all, international cooperation is very important. For a small expert organization, it is really the only way in which you can secure and maintain competence for the staff. It is easy to get stuck when you are in a small country and you are the only organization dealing with something. So international cooperation is extremely important. But to me, the most important cooperation internationally is the Nordic cooperation. I consider the Nordic cooperation to be extremely important, and I think it is quite clear that the Nordic cooperation has improved radiation safety in the Nordic countries. (Interviewee 5)

A possible explanation is that both the Swedish and the Finnish interviewees describe their organizations as small and with limited resources. Thus, since small organizations need to build capacity through cooperation to be able to carry out their tasks, the proposition holds (#2). The size of an organization also indicates degrees of autonomy and the capacity to initiate policies, develop alternatives, implement decisions, and monitor compliance (Egeberg & Trondal, 2018, p. 7). The data suggests that the largest authority, the Finnish STUK, has a more active and pronounced agenda toward influencing other actors, also at the international level:

> I would say that the Finns are the very best. Exactly what their strategy is, I wouldn't know, but I do know that if you look at the international context, you will almost always find a very skilled and talented Finn in different arenas, and it is quite typical that they are very accomplished within our field. (Interviewee 6)

Regarding the horizontal specialization of the Nordic authorities, the data indicates that there is less cooperation and integration between the Nordic authorities on the core-state portfolios of security and safeguards compared to the non-core portfolio of radiation protection. One possible explanation is that the foundation for such cooperation is lacking since these questions are more relevant in countries with nuclear power plants. However, the data suggests that the lack of cooperation is first and foremost related to the characteristics of security and safeguards issues. Security issues are marked by secrecy, and except some interaction between the SSM and the STUK, cooperation is scarce: "These security people are very strict, and sometimes they don't want to discuss, and because of these sensitive issues, they cannot really share information like in the safety area. You cannot compare their practices" (Interviewee 3). And: "Security is different. You can't talk about it because it's confidential, and that's why it's more difficult in the international forums" (Interviewee 1). The same follows for issues re-

lated to safeguards, which in general are described as 'political,' where the main cooperation is channeled through the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the IAEA. The data thus shows few signs of joint Nordic cooperation within both the areas of security and safeguards:

> Safeguards are more political. There is much more political influence also at the technical level in this area. There is North Korea and Iran and India. Pakistan, Israel….So, it easily becomes kind of high-level political discussions even at the technical level. (Interviewee 4)

Consequently, different parts of the authorities will be integrated into a Nordic cooperation to different degrees, where units and personnel working on issues related to security and safeguards will be least integrated. The data thus supports both propositions related to the horizontal specialization of the Nordic authorities where, first, there is less cooperation on core-state portfolios (#3), and secondly, the cooperation follows departmental lines, where units with shared sector affiliation tend to cooperate (#4). This leads to quite different patterns of cooperation and explains why there is not just one Nordic cooperation within the nuclear safety sector and between the national authorities. Rather, there are different arenas for cooperation which differ in their degree of integration. Furthermore, the data suggests that the difference in degree of integration partly is caused by the characteristics of core-state portfolios and non-core portfolios, where cooperation on core-state portfolios is more challenging to establish and maintain.

Furthermore, the five Nordic authorities differ in regard to both the vertical and the horizontal specialization, and the structure in Denmark stands out compared to the other four authorities. Horizontally, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Finland each have one agency working on issues of both safety, security, and safeguards. In Denmark, however, these policy areas are divided into two different units where the SIS mainly deals with issues of radiation protection, while the Nuclear Department focuses their work on issues of nuclear safety, security, safeguards, and emergency preparedness. Vertically, the SIS and the Danish Nuclear Department are not independent agencies, but the SIS is a department in the Danish Health Authority, while the Nuclear Department is part of the Danish Emergency Management Agency. Hence, the portfolio of the nuclear safety sector is divided between two units which serve as departments in two different agencies subordinated to different ministries. The other four Nordic authorities are independent agencies formally subordinated to one ministry, except the DSA which is formally subordinated to three different ministries. Considering the integrated Nordic cooperation on radiation protection and emergency preparedness, the data suggests that all the national agencies and the two departments in Denmark are equally involved. One explanation is that the interviewees experi-

ence autonomy toward parent ministries and overarching agencies based on their specific knowledge and expertise: "Historically speaking, we are the experts and we have the necessary knowledge which the ministry basically lacks" (Interviewee 10). Also:

> People have their own tasks and it's quite individual what you are working on. I have projects and activities I manage myself, and professionally speaking, I am the expert within my field, so, there is nobody else who has much to object or to say. (Interviewee 30)

Thus, the findings show that the authorities perceive contact with epistemic communities and experts as fundamental for the functioning of the organization:

> It's important to have the international focus. So, if we turn it around: How would we manage if we didn't work internationally? It wouldn't have worked at all!....Remember, it is a small area of expertise. So, we who work within DSA would need to have very good justifications if we were to regulate radioactivity, radiation, and emissions in a completely different way than our international partners. (Interviewee 23)

> But a great deal of the input we get on things that are important to us often originates from international arenas: international conferences and organizations. We take home what is necessary, and these inputs provide important premises for our further work. (Interviewee 24)

Hence, the data indicates both leeway for expert concerns and the importance of cooperation between expert bodies. The data therefore shows few signs of differences in the engagement within Nordic cooperation due to differences in the vertical specialization between different authorities (#5).

5. Conclusion and Outlook

This study finds that the cooperation between the Nordic authorities in the nuclear safety sector is differentiated between the highly integrated areas of radiation protection and emergency preparedness, whereas the areas of nuclear security and safeguards is marked by low degrees of integration. To understand this variation, the article unpacks the cooperation itself by asking why these differences occur within the same sector and between the same actors. The findings suggest the importance of path dependency by highlighting two different path dependent mechanisms. First, positive feedback makes deviation from existing paths less likely, and secondly, critical junctures display the robustness of the cooperation when confronted with external shocks and changes. Thus, the longstanding history and success of the Nordic cooperation on radiation protection and emergency preparedness contributes to explaining why this coopera-

tion upholds its importance. It also confirms Olsen and Sverdrup's (1998, p. 26) suggestion that longstanding Nordic networks, grounded in professions and located in the state administration, may be more robust toward external changes than Nordic cooperation, which lacks these characteristics. The findings also correspond to the division between non-core portfolios and core-state portfolios, where integrated cooperation on core-state portfolios are more difficult to establish and maintain than cooperation on non-core portfolios. Cooperation on core-state portfolios is a hard case and the findings in this study confirm this notion.

The study reflects organizational-institutional approaches to political science by suggesting that governance systems and practices under stress may revert to or strengthen established organizational traditions, practices, and formats, reinforcing institutional path-dependencies (Gänzle et al., 2020, p. 15). Thus, crises may produce critical junctures that generate 'windows of opportunity' for more integrated cooperation. The study shows under which conditions crisis and external shocks might lead to either more integrated cooperation or its breakdown. Furthermore, the study adds to the organization theory-based institutional approach in public administration research highlighting how national expert authorities, placed in the state administration, are partly autonomous institutions where a great deal of what is important originates from epistemic communities. Moreover, the findings offer insight into how cross-territorial cooperation between functionally similar authorities at the same level function and evolve over time, highlighting how they manage to pool and exploit common resources across territories. Finally, this study contributes to the study of differentiated integration (Gänzle et al., 2020) by showing how national authorities and agencies act as incoherent wholes where patterns of cooperation and degrees of integration vary within the same authority.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Developing Nordic Cooperation in Renewable Electricity Policy: Exploring Views from Finland and Sweden

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Abstract
Calls for extending Nordic cooperation in the energy sector consider increased cooperation to be a tool to further support the creation of a smart Nordic energy system and realize the sustainable energy transition. To enhance our understanding of the state of Nordic energy cooperation, this article focuses on renewable electricity policy development in Finland and Sweden against the backdrop of facilitating and accelerating the Nordic energy transition. Building on previous research, the respective policy landscapes in Finland and Sweden will be scrutinized with insights from expert interviews, allowing the highlighting of the role of the actors in shaping the national and international energy transition policy. Ultimately, the article will explore the possibilities to enhance Nordic cooperation and question a possible future institutionalization of Nordic energy cooperation from the perspectives of Finland and Sweden. The aims of the article are twofold. First, to analyze the current policy mixes in Finland and Sweden with a special focus on bottlenecks and development needs and, second, to explore the viewpoints of the stakeholders from these two countries regarding potential and bottlenecks for developing Nordic energy cooperation.

Keywords
energy policy; energy transition; Finland; Nordic; renewable electricity; renewables; Sweden

1. Introduction

The Nordic energy transition is based on a set of ambitious policy goals agreed upon in the main strategies pertaining to energy and climate as interconnected policy fields. These national strategies are reflected on the regional level, for example, through the Declaration on Nordic Carbon Neutrality, adopted in 2019. Striving for carbon neutrality and the electrification of interconnected sectors with renewable electricity (NORDEN, 2019; TNCEP, 2020) encompasses a variety of policy challenges. The need to transform the power sector and electrify heat and transport sectors are a part of the drivers for this vision (TNCEP, 2020). This entails the coordination of a variety of national policies in a complex policy environment that requires speedy developments so as to address the multitude of challenges set out in the respective national strategies.

These ambitious goals and already realized achievements in the energy sector position the Nordic region as a frontrunner in the energy transition, having an exemplary function within the EU and globally. Simultaneously, the Nordic progress also raises questions about possible acceleration and how Nordic cooperation can be one tool for accelerating the energy transition.

Ambitious goals, as a part of high-level policy strategies, must be operationalized at the policy level. Here, actors and policy processes are vital. The question of interests and their influence on supporting or hindering a concerted effort must be especially considered in this context. The focus here is on these themes in line with the calls found in the policy mix literature to focus more on actors and policy processes and on how these, in turn, can affect the content of policy mixes (Rogge, Kern, & Howlett, 2017, p. 2), with efforts to further account for the role of politics in shaping policy (Meadowcroft, 2011).

Empirically, the focus is on policies aimed at supporting the development of renewable electricity in Finland and Sweden. Finland and Sweden share interconnectors and are planning a further interconnector to be taken into use in 2025 (Fingrid, 2016). Additionally, they share similar characteristics influencing the development of their energy system toward having a higher share of renewable sources. They are sparsely populated Nordic countries with population centers in the South requiring the development of North–South transmission capacities; they share a similar cold climate, have energy-intensive industries and long transport distances. Additionally, both Finland and Sweden have a strong bioenergy component in their energy mixes as well as a share of nuclear energy to support the decarbonization of their energy mixes. As opposed to Finland, where wind power has been slower in gaining traction, Sweden also has a well-developed capacity in terms of wind power generation (IEA, 2019, p. 100).

The aims of this article are, first, to outline and discuss the policy mixes, as they pertain to renewable electricity support in Finland and Sweden, and, second, to discuss the opportunities and challenges for Nordic cooperation in developing renewable energy support policies in the future. To do so, Section 2 introduces the theoretical background for this article, focusing on policies, the need to better understand actors involved, and the ways in which the potential for Nordic energy cooperation has been seen in the literature. Section 3 introduces the data set. Section 4 draws on the interview data to analyze the policy landscape in both Finland and Sweden before focusing on the development of Nordic cooperation. Finally, Section 5 presents the conclusion of the article.

2. Theoretical Background

National strategies for climate and energy encompass a set of interlinked goals for the development of the energy sectors and the development of electricity from renewable sources. Putting these goals into practice requires a move from strategies to policy instruments for implementing energy transitions and the need to better understand these processes of policymaking, including a focus on how different actors shape the possibilities for operationalizing high-level strategies into policies. This move from the abstract level to the operational level is of importance for: 1) understanding different approaches for developing and implementing national and regional policy mixes, 2) understanding the ways in which policies develop through inputs from a wide actor base, and 3) understanding the role of actors and a widening actor base.

2.1. Energy Transition Policies

How to move from high-level strategies and how policies situated under the umbrella of these wider strategies develop have been focus areas in the literature on policy mixes for energy transitions. Policy mixes are understood as consisting of respective interacting policy instruments as well as long-term strategies, characteristics, such as consistency and coherence, and the ways in which policy processes shape the development of policy mixes (Rogge & Reichardt, 2016). Recent research on policy mixes has focused on paying sufficient attention to the complexity, interactions, and interdependencies of different elements of a policy mix as well as focusing on the temporal dynamics and the situatedness of policies under wider frameworks (Edmondson, Kern, & Rogge, 2019). The temporal dimension and the iterative nature of policymaking are core components given the long timeframes of transitions, where instruments will change according to the changing objectives and stages of innovation (Turnheim et al., 2015).

Analyzing the development of policies allows for better insight into the political processes underpinning their development and provides an opening for better understanding the variety of actors involved. Additionally, the role of the actors and institutions in shaping and developing the energy transition policy mixes is central in moving beyond privileging structure at the expense of agency and in understanding the ways in which the actors can play different roles at different times (Flanagan, Uyarra, & Laranja, 2011, p. 706).

2.2. Focusing on Actors

Recent research emphasizes the understanding of policy as a socially constructed ideational framework (Kuzemko, Lockwood, Mitchell, & Hoggett, 2016). In this context, research focuses on how actors are shaped by a "regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive rule system" and on institutional barriers as counterbalances to dominant approaches rooted in energy economics and engineering (Tenggren, Wangl, Nilsson, & Nykvist, 2016, p. 150). Lindberg, Markard, and Andersen (2019, p. 2), stress the importance of the actors' roles and preferences as these influence the policy process as well. This aligns with calls to focus on actors and politics in the study of policy mixes (Flanagan et al., 2011; Rogge & Reichardt, 2016).

Here, it is assumed that a focus on the policies and involved actors furthers our understanding of what works in national settings as well as the regional level of cooperation in renewable energy policies. Focusing on the role of these policies in supporting the development of Nordic cooperation on the renewable electricity policy also connects to the narrative of the Nordic countries as leaders in this field (Sovacool, 2017) that are possibly able to accelerate transitions with regard to EU-level activities.

This article focuses on the policies and their development, in the cases of Sweden and Finland, regarding renewable electricity supply and the potential they provide for developing Nordic energy cooperation. The analysis will focus on the defining features of these policies and

on the perspectives of the involved actors. The analysis will also ask to what extent these policies can serve as points of departures for Nordic cooperation on renewable electricity policy.

2.3. Nordic Energy Cooperation

The Nordic dimension in the implementation of respective national climate and energy strategies features strongly in debates on realizing the energy transition in the region. Additionally, the current *Nordic Programme for Co-operation on Energy Policy* highlights renewable energy and the Nordic electricity market as key areas for cooperation (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2017).

The Nordic Council of Ministers for Business, Energy, and Regional Policy commissioned a report in 2017 with the aim of strategically reviewing Nordic cooperation in the field of energy and its potential for development in the future (Ollila, 2017). Highlighting the strength of the existing cooperation and political will as a key driver, cooperation is understood as a tool to reach national goals more effectively while creating "the smartest energy system in the world" in a cost-efficient way (Ollila, 2017, p. 10). Apart from supporting national goals, the importance of a "systematic, strategic and political approach to cooperation, in order to strengthen the Nordic voice, raise the Region's profile and secure Nordic influence in international forums—in particular the EU" (Ollila, 2017, p. 9), alongside the consensus-based nature of cooperation is stressed in the Nordic Council of Ministers report. One proposal relates to conducting Nordic analyses of the impact national policies can have on neighboring countries. Concerning EU-level cooperation, it is suggested that a strong Nordic voice can aid in increasing influence and in promoting the adaption of Nordic solutions on a global scale (Ollila, 2017, p. 13). Developing cooperation is also grounded in meeting the challenges stemming from transitioning to a higher share of renewables, as a well-integrated grid supports the expansion of fluctuating renewables. The report also mentions debates on support for renewable energy that focus on striking a balance between incentivizing specific energy sources and technology neutral schemes. Here, focusing on evaluating the trends in technological developments is seen as useful in contributing to this debate. Also, the need for a clear vision to involve the Baltic countries in energy cooperation in the region has been mentioned (Ollila, 2017, p. 30).

In a recent report, the Nordic transmission system operators refer to the increased complexity of the system, as a result of becoming more integrated and more automated, necessitating new approaches by regulators, transmission system operators, and market stakeholders to ensure successful future development. Among the main identified challenges are increasing flexibility and the need to ensure adequate transmission and generation capacity. Price signals can be distorted by unsuitable support schemes, and the ensuring of ade-

quate capacity can benefit from coordinating subsidies on the regional level. Ensuring transmission adequacy then requires regional coordination and the balancing of European, Nordic, and national perspectives on developing the transmission system to meet future system challenges. Here, the common goals for developing the transmission grids in the Nordics are valuable (Statnett, Fingrid, Energinet.dk, & Svenska Kraftnät, 2016, pp. 3–6).

Karimi, Lund, Skytte, and Bergaentzlé (2018) focus on the ways in which EU, Nordic and national polices set the framework for the energy system flexibility while also unintentionally creating barriers, for example, by preferring specific solutions. Insufficient market signals as well as uneven frameworks for different renewable energy sources in national frameworks are detrimental to market flexibility. Fiscal policies have a strong role to play here, as subsidies or tax exemptions can give a comparative advantage to specific resources or technologies, resulting in market distortions. Consistent fiscal policies, dynamic taxation for electricity as well as the abolishment of support during periods of negative prices are possible tools for mitigating the negative effects of support policies and leveling the playing field. The national context plays a key role in applying these recommendations, as a core benefit of Nordic cooperation in the ongoing energy transition is the enabling of more efficient solutions without side-lining the respective national needs. Thus, cooperation does not automatically mean a focus on harmonization; instead, coherence of frameworks and policies should be the focus (Karimi et al., 2018, p. 5).

Taken together, the complexity of the policy challenge ahead is acknowledged, and bottlenecks are identified while also building on the positive experiences with regard to cooperation in the field of energy in the Nordics. Implementation requires the translation of high-level priorities into specific policy measures in the respective countries and the spelling out of the benefits to be gained by cooperation.

3. Data Set and Method

The data set for this article consists of twelve semi-structured expert interviews conducted in March and April 2020 (see Table 1). These approximately one-hour-long interviews were conducted with stakeholders in Sweden (n = 5), Finland (n = 6), and in Nordic organizations (n = 1), representing the public sector as well as selected interest groups and businesses. Taken together, these interviews form an in-depth picture of these stakeholders' viewpoints. The interviewees represent the key actors dealing with renewable electricity in the region and, thus, can provide inputs for gaining a better understanding of both the respective national situation and the Nordic situation. These interviews also allow us to get a better picture of the current discussions taking place in policy circles. At the same time, the small sample size of the expert interviews limits the possibilities of having a more comparative approach. The interviews followed a

semi-structured themed approach to allow respondents to elaborate freely on the topic while taking their specific expertise into account. The themes are based on the analytical framework, exploring the adopted support policies, current as well as future bottlenecks in developing the renewable electricity policy, the perception of the process of policymaking, the current situation regarding Nordic cooperation in the field of renewable electricity as well as a view on the future regarding the development of Nordic cooperation. The interviews were conducted online, recorded, and transcribed. The interview transcripts were then coded in ATLAS.ti against the themes of the theoretical framework (see Section 2), which provided an overview of the data and enabled the analysis to provide better insight into how respondents evaluated the importance of themes and how these different aspects are connected according to the stakeholders.

The interview data is supplemented with documents focusing on the national energy policy development in Sweden and Finland as well as documents focusing on Nordic cooperation in the field of energy.

Table 1. List of respondents.

Respondent number	Sector
FI01	Business
FI02	Interest group/business
FI04	Public
FI06	Public
FI07	Public
FI10	Business/network
SWE05	Interest group/business
SWE08	Public
SWE09	Business/network
SWE11	Business
SWE12	Public
NORD03	Public

Notes: FI: Finland, SWE: Sweden, NORD: Nordics.

4. Analysis and Discussion

This section outlines the main components of the policy framework for renewable electricity in Finland and Sweden. Building on this and the interviews, the evaluation of the policy mix and possible bottlenecks as well as a look at the future follow. The section then focuses on developing Nordic cooperation as seen in the context of Finland and Sweden.

4.1. Finland

4.1.1. Energy Mix

The Finnish total primary energy supply is dominated by domestic biofuels, nuclear power, and oil imported mainly from Russia. Taken together, biofuels and oil ac-

count for over half of the total primary energy supply, with the supply of biofuels increasing by 30.1% and oil supply decreasing by 8.6% since 2007. Finland imports nearly a quarter of its total electricity supply. The share of renewables in the total primary energy supply has grown, on average, by 2.7% per year. In 2017, the share of renewables reached 33.4%, the majority of which came from biofuels. In terms of electricity production, 47% was covered by biofuels, hydropower, and an increasing share of wind, and nuclear power covered about one-third of the electricity production (IEA, 2018, pp. 20–24). Here, hydropower has been an important part of supplying renewable electricity; however, little potential for further developing hydropower is seen, as most capacities have already been exploited, with most of the remaining potential being protected from utilization (Aslani, Naaranoja, Helo, Antila, & Hiltunen, 2013, p. 509). Finland also imports electricity from Sweden (IEA, 2018, pp. 20–24).

4.1.2. Strategies and Support Schemes

The strategic themes in Finland's Government Programme are achieving carbon-neutrality by 2035, becoming the world's first fossil-free welfare society, strengthening carbon stocks and sinks in the short and long-term, making electricity and heat production nearly emission-free by the end of the 2030s, and taking the security of supply concerns into account (Government of Finland, 2019, pp. 34–41). Attaining these policy targets relies on a variety of policy measures, such as the intended phase-out of coal by 2029, a step-wise phase-out of using oil for heating by the early 2030s, and halving the use of peat in energy production by 2030 (NECP Finland, 2019, p. 12). The National Energy and Climate Plan sets the target of having a 51% share of renewable energy in the final energy consumption and a renewable energy share of 30% in road transport by 2030. Achieving these goals presupposes a wide-ranging electrification of society, an approach that is in line with the policy measures in energy supply highlighted in the Finnish NECP, especially with regard to the promotion of wind and solar power, promotion of biogas in electricity and heat production, a premium system for renewable electricity, and the phasing-out of coal in energy production (NECP Finland, 2019, p. 18).

Supporting renewable electricity depends on a variety of policies. From 2011 to 2018, Finland used a feed-in premium scheme for renewable electricity from wind, biogas, forest chips, and wood fuels. While the feed-in tariff has been phased out, plants under the scheme will receive support for up to 12 years after production has started. In 2018, legislation specified the adoption of a sliding premium-based system, using competitive auctions in 2018 and 2019 for mature renewable technologies. Under this system, aid was granted to seven wind power projects, with a total annual electricity production of 1.36 TWh, that are expected to start produc-

tion in 2021. No new operating aid schemes are included in the Energy and Climate Strategy (IEA, 2018, p. 28; NECP Finland, 2019, pp. 93–102). Additional measures include aid for using forest chips in combined heat and power generation and the Energy Aid Scheme, an investment subsidy mainly focused on commercializing new technologies and the non-ETS sector, including advanced biofuels. This scheme includes support for large-scale demonstration projects (NECP Finland, 2019, p. 94).

Other measures include reducing the taxation on small-scale electricity production and supporting energy advisory services and communication regarding the demand-side response to consumers (NECP Finland, 2019, p. 95).

4.1.3. Expert Views

Respondents saw a decrease in the uncertainty in the policy framework over the past decade which they attributed to the reduced risk of policies overlapping and to a more market-based approach in the region (FI01; FI03), while also pointing out that the importance of the energy and climate topics on the political agenda has grown across the political spectrum (FI01). Respondents representing the public sector evaluated the impact of the direct support schemes positively, with wind power benefitting the most from the feed-in tariff scheme, but less success for small combined heat and power and biogas. The support scheme for forest chips also failed to meet expectations. Discussing the costs of the feed-in tariff in the case of wind power, one respondent pointed to the impact of lower-than-expected electricity prices on the final costs (FI07) while evaluating the scheme as an overall success, as it not only reached the set targets but also contributed to creating a situation where no government support for wind power is needed anymore (FI04; FI07).

The move away from direct subsidy schemes puts more focus on other measures and the support for new and emerging technologies. This shift in policy focus brings a new set of challenges that, among other things, increase the need for more coordination due to a wider stakeholder base involved in the process (FI07). Additionally, a close evaluation of the underlying objectives of the support schemes is necessary. In this context, a respondent stressed that the design of new support measures necessitates a clear strategy for ways of targeting future measures, using, for example, technology readiness levels as indicators when making decisions to either support research and development or large-scale demonstration projects (FI04). The phasing-out of subsidies was welcomed by respondents with a business background, reflecting their preference for further developing market-based approaches and minimal subsidies that help in avoiding market interference (FI01). Overall, these changes in the policy landscape are in line with the support for market-based solutions among the interviewees (FI01; FI02; FI07).

Respondents saw the extension of the stakeholder base from two perspectives. The increasingly complex policy environment leads to a higher number of actors being involved in policymaking, while the nature of the energy transition also aims at including small-scale producers, emerging companies, and citizens. Especially regarding citizens, clear communication and the provision of information are vital to support this development (FI07). This aligns with the Finnish policy efforts to provide more advisory services to consumers.

Interviewees stressed the need to simplify the permitting processes and to further clarify the policy frameworks on both the Finnish and the EU levels alongside the need to ensure investment security for mature technologies. Regarding the further streamlining of the permitting procedures, one respondent stressed that the permitting process should be "smooth, quick, predictable and such that it takes into account the…country-wide need for renewable energy, renewable electricity. And not concentrate too much on too small, local issues in permitting" (FI01). The importance of improved permitting processes in moving to a distributed energy system in Finland has been stressed in previous research as well (Ruggiero, Varho, & Rikkonen, 2015).

The connection between bioenergy and the national interest was mainly focused on the possible competition among companies in the sector, though this was not seen as a source of conflict (FI07).

4.2. Sweden

4.2.1. Energy Mix

The Swedish energy mix is characterized by hydropower, nuclear power, and bioenergy, accounting for 73% of the total primary energy supply. Electricity production relies mainly on hydropower and nuclear power in addition to smaller shares of wind and bioenergy. Wind power has grown rapidly, making Sweden a net exporter of electricity. This trend is expected to continue. The composition of the energy mix is characterized by a shift from oil to biofuels and, more recently, wind power (IEA, 2019, pp. 20–24, 100).

4.2.2. Strategies and Support Schemes

The overarching targets of the Swedish energy policy are 100% renewable electricity generation by 2040, a 50% share of the final energy consumption to be covered by renewable sources by 2020, making energy consumption 50% more efficient in 2030 as compared to 2005, and becoming the first fossil-free welfare state (NECP Sweden, 2020, p. 7). The electricity certificates system, introduced in 2003 and shared with Norway between 2012 and 2020, is the core measure for supporting the development of renewable energy. The year 2017 saw the extension of the system till 2045 (NECP Sweden, 2020, p. 59). Additionally, the taxes for the microgenera-

tion of renewable electricity have been reduced. Starting in 2009, Sweden supported the installation of photovoltaic systems for companies, public organizations and private individuals. However, this scheme will expire at the end of 2020. Furthermore, the tax deductions for the investment costs for installing photovoltaic cells or solar heating systems are available for individuals. The storage of self-generated electricity is supported by providing grants to private individuals to support the installation of storage systems with the aim to increase flexibility; this scheme will end in 2020. Measures for avoiding the double-taxation of electricity as well as for an exemption of network charges for consumers using self-generated electricity have also been put in place (NECP Sweden, 2020, pp. 60–61).

4.2.3. Expert Views

The electricity certificate scheme is the dominant support scheme. The respondents evaluate the scheme as a stable, cost-efficient way of supporting renewables (SWE12). Additionally, discussions to end the systems early have been made based on price signals, as one respondent put it: "We are sort of at a point where…the system still works but there is no job for it" (SWE12). After extending the initial timeframe, the attractiveness of the system for investors grew (SWE08). The sharing of the system with Norway from 2012 to 2020 was evaluated positively. However, a point of conflict during this period was the allocation of renewable energy production between Sweden and Norway. Additionally, the Swedish decision to revise the goal for 2030 was taken without consulting Norway (SWE08). One respondent referred to a further challenge:

> The perceived similarity between Sweden and Norway, I'm not really sure whether that has been an advantage or a problem, because, a lot of times, we just assume that it would be the same, sort of; when we were looking into the matter, it really wasn't. (SWE12)

Difficulties arose, for example, from the different distribution of responsibility and power among the participants, leading to tensions but also resulting in valuable learning (SWE12). The overall positive reception among the respondents stands in contrast to research on the first phase of the scheme initially finding that the certificate scheme minimizes short-term social cost but does not contribute to driving technological change, keeping consumer costs low and being equitable (Bergek & Jacobsson, 2010, p. 1267).

The phasing-out of the photovoltaic support was seen positively, as the cost for photovoltaic systems has been decreasing and as phasing-out provides a way to eliminate parallel subsidies. Additionally, the need to better evaluate the possible impact of the support for solar power in the Swedish context was highlighted given

the small role it is expected to play in the Swedish energy system (SWE12). Furthermore, the support for solar has been criticized for having unclear ambitions regarding the expected goals and timeframe. Here, conflict among the Swedish actors regarding the usefulness and scope of the scheme emerged from the interviews (SWE08; SWE05). Additionally, the measures to support solar were seen to be "blurring the system" and creating discontinuity in the industry (SWE12).

The national interest in bioenergy also emerged, with one interviewee noting that Sweden also imports biomass and that the increased demand for biofuels in order to phase-out fossil fuels might increase competition (SWE08).

4.3. Views on Nordic Cooperation

Overall, the interviewees saw Nordic cooperation and its future potential in the development of the electric energy systems and the implementation of the energy transition in a positive light. In addition to discussing the different paths for the future of the Nordic energy cooperation in the field of renewable electricity, the interviewees also highlighted the bottlenecks and the phasing-out of subsidies as common themes. The core of Nordic cooperation was clearly located in the development and functioning of the Nordic electricity market. The importance of the Nordic electricity market and of market-based policies was referred to by several respondents (FI01; FI07; SWE09). The phasing-out of the subsidy schemes in Finland and Sweden is expected to positively impact investment security, as it ensures that investors can rely on the market prices of emissions and electricity (FI02), reflective of the preference for a market-based approach. This preference has also emerged in previous research on Nordic stakeholders as a cornerstone of developing the electric energy system (Kilpeläinen, Aalto, Toivanen, Lehtonen, & Holttinen, 2019).This contrasts with research more critical of market optimism, instead arguing that market-based incentives need to be better supported by strong policymaking (Moe, 2015; Mundaca & Markandya, 2016).

Respondents saw the development of transmission infrastructure and the permitting processes as the main bottlenecks in further developing Nordic cooperation. This is in line with previous research (Kilpeläinen et al., 2019; Tenggren et al., 2016, stakeholder reports (Statnett et al., 2016), and the national bottlenecks identified by the respondents in the interviews.

The case of Finnish–Swedish cooperation on bioenergy was brought up by several respondents. The respective national interests were highlighted, though these were not seen to interfere with the possibility of having a common voice on bioenergy issues such as sustainability criteria on the EU level (FI07; SWE05; SWE08). Instead, the possibility of increasing knowledge at the EU level was mentioned as a main feature of Finnish–Swedish cooperation. While the national interest in companies was

highlighted, the overall benefits were seen to outweigh the concerns about national industries (FI07). Previous research also pointed to disagreement among the Nordic countries over the issue of bioenergy, with Finland being the Nordic country where support for bioenergy, especially in the transport sector, is more pronounced than in the other Nordic countries (Kilpeläinen et al., 2019). However, in the present study, these points of disagreement did not emerge in the interviews, instead, the focus of the discussion on biofuels was on it being a potential area of common interest and cooperation.

The value of Nordic cooperation in the field of energy as a consistent feature of policy cooperation was stressed, with special attention drawn to how the elements of cooperation have become so ingrained in the region that they are taken "for granted" (SWE11). Simultaneously, further institutionalization was seen cautiously. The interviewees highlighted that the existing networks and cooperation channels have been sufficient in bringing about good results and will be sufficient for meeting future challenges. The combination of high-level cooperation and informal cooperation in the region was valued for matching different use cases and entry points for cooperation. At the same time, the vision for Nordic cooperation in the field of energy, as introduced in the Nordic Council of Ministers report, was seen as having had a positive impact by providing a common point of entry (NORD03). Simultaneously, value was seen in the better coordination processes of developing energy strategies (FI06) and exploring possibilities for better aligning national plans (FI10) within the existing cooperation framework. The importance of informal channels in developing Nordic cooperation has been stressed in previous research as well. Strang (2016, p. 8) emphasizes the role of bottom-up cooperation and numerous links among a variety of actors as features that result in cooperation permeating all levels of political life. Whereas this informal cooperation can be seen as a strength of Nordic cooperation, there are also concerns that the strong role of the informal processes of cooperation are due to the existing Nordic institutions not being strong enough (Olesen & Strang, 2016, p. 27).

Room for improvement is seen in the process of moving from high-level strategies to national policies. However, this is not necessarily a feature of Nordic cooperation only, and, instead, this resonates with the difficulties involved in policy development and the difficulty in moving from overarching goals to the implementation on the ground (Rogge & Reichardt, 2016). The interviewees also highlighted the need to acknowledge the national differences and interests among the Nordics (SWE08; FI10).

Considering the impact of Nordic cooperation on the EU, the common Nordic voice is described as impactful and valuable, with the Nordic experience in developing cooperation being useful at the EU level. The respondents expect no need to further institutionalize Nordic cooperation at the EU level, instead preferring

the use of existing networks to cooperate on EU matters. Additionally, it was highlighted that Nordic cooperation and the benefits it has brought for the Nordic region should be highlighted at the EU level while also stressing that the differences in pace and setting influence regional solutions (SWE11). Referring to the Nordic Council of Ministers report and its vision for Nordic cooperation, the respondents argued that a focus on the topics is preferable to a focus on the institutional arrangements (SWE11). This skepticism toward institutions of Nordic cooperation and a trajectory of moving to more informal consultations has also been noted in the literature (Olesen & Strang, 2016, p. 36). The limits were clearly referred to with a special focus on the national differences among Nordic countries, which was also evident when discussing the joint certificate scheme by Norway and Sweden or the limits of the cooperation among Finland and Sweden regarding bioenergy. One respondent summed up as follows:

> Sometimes when people talk about Nordic cooperation, they have this almost unrealistic dream that if we do it together, everything will be much better….It's not going to work like that, we are different countries and we are members of the Union and it is in the Union where we negotiate. (SWE11)

The impact of the EU legislation is also seen in changing the nature of policy frameworks in the Nordics. Here, a shift from more general high-level policies in the Nordics to more detailed policies, influenced by the EU, was highlighted (FI06). The increased role of the EU in influencing ways of Nordic cooperation has also been highlighted by Olesen and Strang (2016, pp. 36–39) while also pointing to a lack of a systematized Nordic cooperation in implementing EU directives, again pointing to the strong presence of ad-hoc solutions on a case-by-case basis. This preference is also visible in the stakeholder perspectives in the present study. The role of Nordic cooperation as an intermediate framework between national solutions and EU cooperation also plays a role here, as it makes reforming the institutional framework necessary but also difficult even if there is increased political will for cooperation (Olesen & Strang, 2016, p. 43). If the actors, as expressed in the interviews, prefer the existing networks and more informal channels, it will impact the possible ways for strengthening and developing Nordic cooperation.

Regarding Nordic cooperation, the Finnish respondents also highlighted the need to look to the Baltics, especially Estonia, and the role Finland can play in serving as a bridge for this cooperation and for putting more focus on this issue (FI10; FI06). The value added by engaging in dialogue, not only with Nordic but also Baltic countries, on designing and implementing energy and climate policies with a special focus on cross-border impacts has also been highlighted in the latest IEA review of Finland's energy policies (IEA, 2018, p. 16).

The interviewees also related these issues to the overarching goals of matching the speed of change that policies seek to address with the speed of change in developing, adjusting, and updating the respective policies. The possible role of the industry actors in this acceleration was highlighted by the business respondents (SWE11). An agreement prevailed on the need to find ways to speed up developments in the energy sector by introducing a greater possibility for flexible development to the policy framework (FI10; SWE11; NORD03). This is in line with research exploring the temporalities in energy transitions (Turnheim et al., 2015) that stresses the complexity and path-dependencies of energy transitions.

5. Conclusions

This article set out to analyze the development of the current policies regarding renewable energy in Finland and Sweden and to explore the potential for Nordic energy cooperation.

The respective policy mixes of Finland and Sweden, though employing different instruments at different points of time, share a set of commonalities, such as the identification of similar bottlenecks related to the permitting processes and necessary grid development as well as an understanding that a sufficiently flexible regulatory framework is needed in order to develop policies and measures at a speed that will be able to keep up with the energy transition. Additionally, a strong market-based approach and the need to develop policies in line with this after the phasing-out of the current direct subsidies represent the viewpoints of the stakeholders. Overall, the stakeholders from varying backgrounds see the policymaking processes as sufficiently open and flexible. The positive impact of the Nordic electricity market on operations has been highlighted as well.

The policy field of bioenergy provides a good example of cooperation for Finland and Sweden, where possibly competing national interests do not impede the cooperation for achieving common goals and developing a stronger international position, which was the case with the definition of the sustainability criteria on the EU level.

When it comes to Nordic cooperation on renewable energy, a broad agreement can be found regarding its positive impact and its use as a tool for voicing a Nordic position at the EU and international levels. Here, the trickle-down effect of the broader visions for the future of Nordic cooperation to different levels of policymaking has been observed. At the same time, the respondents were cautious to call for the further institutionalization of Nordic cooperation, arguing that the current mix of high-level cooperation and informal channels of cooperation among a variety of actors are better suited to the ever-changing and complex energy policy environment.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Adapting to a Global Health Challenge: Managing Antimicrobial Resistance in the Nordics

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Abstract
This article explores the adaptation of Norway and Sweden to one of the major challenges to global public health, antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Guided by assumptions derived from institutional theory, the article investigates whether, and, if so, how the AMR problem has affected the two Nordic countries' administrative systems and frameworks for Nordic cooperation. The article builds on selected literature, expert interviews, and public documents. The findings suggest that the international impact on Norway and Sweden's managerial adaptation to AMR is limited. Instead, adaptation takes place through incremental change within existing structures for disease prevention and control and follows traditional ways of organizing political and administrative systems.

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1. Introduction

The Coronavirus pandemic in 2020 appeared as a defining global health crisis facing national governments with extreme challenges of crisis management and cooperation. The crisis revealed that nation-states chose a variety of different approaches to the management of the same major health threat. Even in a relatively homogenous region such as the Nordic region, there was variation among the countries' approaches. The crisis demonstrated the need for effective mechanisms of preparedness, coordination, and management in health governance. This article will explore the management of one of the other big challenges to global public health identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO), namely antimicrobial resistance (AMR). The WHO's prioritization of AMR management became particularly apparent in 2015 when the WHO's Global Action Plan was published (WHO, 2015). The Global Action Plan represented a key event in global health governance by providing guidelines for AMR management and encouraging all WHO members to implement national action plans for AMR. Thus, the WHO provided a framework for global influence on AMR management. The increase of AMR implies that a growing number of antibiotics become ineffective and thus contribute to an increasing number of deaths worldwide. It is estimated that within the EU, annually, AMR is responsible for approximately 33,000 deaths and approximately EUR 1.5 billion in healthcare costs and productivity losses (Cassini et al., 2018; Organisation

for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018). Some estimates show that, without effective policies, by 2050 as many as 10 million people may die each year from causes related to AMR (O'Neill, 2014). Managing the problem of AMR is a complex endeavour as it (similar to Covid-19) both spreads across national borders and affects different sectors. Thus, AMR represents a major challenge to all levels of governance, including Nordic cooperation. This article investigates Norwegian and Swedish adaptation to the AMR problem, with an emphasis on the two countries' administrative systems and frameworks for international (Nordic, European, global) cooperation. The main research questions are: (a) How have the central administrative systems of Norway and Sweden adapted to the AMR challenge? And (b) has the adaptation to AMR strengthened Nordic cooperation or has Nordic cooperation been surpassed by international influence (EU, WHO) and/or by unique national characteristics? The key puzzle, which the article addresses, is whether, and, if so, how and why nation-states' adaptation to a major common challenge leads to changes in domestic administrative structures, as well as in cooperation patterns across national borders. Thus, the article aims to increase the understanding of the conditions for collective action and institutional adaptation in the face of common external threats. The study reveals barriers against standardized responses to crosscutting challenges such as AMR and highlights the need for country-specific historical and institutional contexts to be taken into account when managing major cross-border challenges.

The Nordic countries have a long tradition of cooperation on health-related matters. Of particular importance has been the common Nordic labour market, established in 1954, and the related social security agreement from 1955 giving Nordic citizens more or less the same welfare services when working in other Nordic countries (Pedersen, Røed, & Wadensjö, 2008). Beyond this, Nordic cooperation on health has been characterized by 'soft modes of cooperation,' i.e., by non-binding commitments and network activities, involving in particular experts and researchers. One example of such networks is the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS), which, among other things, includes an expert group on AMR. The EU has added important elements to the Nordic cooperation by requiring that all members implement EU law. Norway is required to implement such rules through the EEA Agreement. However, even though network activities are included also in EU cooperation, the EU's formal competences in health are limited. Thus, the core responsibilities for national health systems remain in the hands of the nation-states. Hence, when dealing with major health challenges such as AMR, Norway and Sweden have been relatively free to choose which tools and measures to use within their administrative systems. In the following paragraphs, derived from institutional theory, we generate assumptions about the adaptation to

the AMR challenge within the Nordics—with a particular focus on Norway and Sweden.

2. Institutional Approach to Adaptation: Internal and External Factors

Based on institutional theory, this section aims to generate assumptions about the Nordic adaptation to the AMR problem by presenting two perspectives, which emphasize internal and external factors, respectively.

The *internal perspective* lends inspiration from historical institutionalism and the concept of path dependency and emphasizes factors rooted in the historical development and specific institutional characteristics within the nation-states. Here, adaptation takes place through incremental steps (Lindblom, 1959; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010) or path-dependent choices (Pierson, 2000; Pollitt, 2008) and is characterized by stability and institutional continuity. One of the (indirect) basic assumptions within this literature is that dramatic change is primarily triggered by shocks, major events, or critical junctures which create 'windows of opportunity' for innovation and transformative change (Kingdon, 1995; Pierson, 2004). Derived from the *internal perspective*, we pose two alternative assumptions:

(i) Adaptation to the AMR challenge is path-dependent, based on well-established and unique administrative structures and routines for handling the same types of problems. Thus, managing AMR is characterized by incremental changes and minor adjustments, which only add to (and do not replace) pre-existing structures and routines within the Nordic administrative systems.

(ii) The AMR challenge represents a major event— a critical juncture—which strengthens the efforts to learn from each other within the Nordics and which leads to the establishment of innovative and new administrative structures within Nordic cooperation.

The *external perspective* lends inspiration from theories of diffusion and Europeanization-emphasizing factors, which are rooted in events taking place outside of the Nordic cooperation, as well as outside national governments' direct control. Two sets of factors are highlighted: First, the EU influences domestic administrations through the adoption of binding, as well as non-binding commitments. This relates to the idea that the EU may be a source of influence that contributes to a "central penetration of national systems of governance" and leads to the adaptation of "national and sub-national systems of governance to a European political centre and European-wide norms" (Olsen, 2002, pp. 923–924). Here, adaptation takes place by implementing and adhering to authoritative decisions and recommendations adopted at the EU level (Bondarouk & Mastenbroek, 2018; Treib, 2014). The second set of exter-

nal factors are rooted in global ideas and initiatives. Here, influence is not channelled through one particular central authority above the nation-states (such as the EU), but instead via horizontal mechanisms such as epistemic communities (Haas, 2016), cooperative networks, and information exchanges between governments, thus triggering a potential for diffusion of common global ideas and norms (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017). Thus, adaptation takes place on the basis of peer pressure, learning, and imitation/copying. A key concept in the context of AMR, and relevant to the article's external perspective, is the 'One Health' principle, which pervades international strategic documents on the issue (c.f. European Commission, 2017; European Council, 2016; WHO, 2015). 'One Health' is here understood as a global template for administrative adaptation to enable the fight against AMR. Accordingly, "stemming the superbug tide" (OECD, 2018) necessitates the engagement of "everybody—in all sectors and disciplines—in the implementation of the [global] action plan on AMR" (WHO, 2015, p. 5). Adapting management structures to 'One Health,' thus places demand on public administrations to extend their horizontal (cross-sector) and vertical (multi-level) lines of coordination. Derived from the *external perspective*, we pose two alternative assumptions:

(i) EU influence surpasses unique Nordic approaches and contributes to the implementation of European specific solutions to the management of the AMR crisis.
(ii) Global initiatives lead to the diffusion of global norms, standards, and ideas, which surpass Nordic cooperation and contribute to the convergence of national systems of AMR management in line with the 'One Health' principle.

3. Methods and Data

The article presents a study of Norway, Sweden, and the Nordic cooperation's response to the AMR challenge. The article's ambition is mainly empirical, but it also seeks to substantiate a number of assumptions derived from institutional theory in order to establish whether, and, if so, how and why the AMR problem has affected the administrative systems and cooperative framework of the Nordic countries. Norway and Sweden are both: (a) part of the Nordics, (b) small and wealthy welfare states with modern administrative systems and similar cultures, and (c) strongly linked to the EU (Sweden as a member, Norway as part of the EEA Agreement). There is a long tradition of learning from each other within the Nordic cooperation, hence the likelihood of cross-border policy diffusion regarding AMR management. For the time being, the Nordic countries seem able to keep the burdens of AMR at bay (c.f. Cassini et al., 2018, p. 6). Furthermore, all four countries score below average (with Sweden scoring lowest) in the EU/EEA-area measurement on antimicrobial consump-

tion in the primary care and hospital sector (2018 data; European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control [ECDC], 2020). Measured by sales of veterinary antimicrobial agents marketed mainly for food-producing animals (2017 data), the Nordic countries also seem to be on the right path. Thus, Norway reports the lowest numbers in Europe (3.1 mg sold per population correction unit [PCU]) with the numbers for Sweden, Finland, and Denmark being 11.8, 19.3, and 39.4 mg/PCU, respectively. In comparison, the highest-scoring member state reported 423.1 mg/PCU (European Medicines Agency, 2019, p. 24). All Nordic countries score well below the mean for Europe with regard to AMR prevalence (ECDC, 2018), even though Denmark continues to have a greater problem than the others regarding some multi-resistant bacteria in humans, food animals, and meat (DANMAP, 2019, p. 2). Nonetheless, compared to other regions in Europe, the Nordic region as a whole so far stands out as successful in maintaining a low prevalence of AMR. Both Norway and Sweden are active participants in the international work on AMR and both countries stress the importance of international cooperation in this area. Thus, one key question raised in this article is whether this active international engagement has paved the way for international rules and recommendations on AMR management to influence AMR management and administrative structures in the Nordics. The data of the article consists of selected literature, written transcripts from 20 expert interviews (see Supplementary File for a comprehensive overview) and 'grey' literature (legal documents, strategies, action plans, reports). The interview data were generated over a three-year period (2017–2020). Interviewees were selected either on basis of a mapping exercise of the public organizations involved in Norway and Sweden's management of AMR, or after having been identified as key persons by other interviewees. Most interviews were face-to-face, but due to geographical distance and (more lately) the Covid-19 outbreak, some were completed by phone or video conferencing. A potential weakness of the article relates to the breadth of the interview data. Especially the Norwegian case could have benefitted from more interviewee accounts. However, since many of the interviewees are key senior personnel with long-standing contributions to the management of AMR, we consider the overall accounts to cast invaluable light on the article's research questions.

4. Findings

4.1. Sweden's Responses to AMR

4.1.1. Basic Administrative Structures

Swedish public administration is, among other things, characterized by dualism and local self-government (Hall, 2016). Dualism implies that most state-level resources and expertise are located at the agency-administrative

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level. The ministries, in turn, are relatively small. All decisions by the Government ministries are settled collectively. This means a "ban on ministerial rule" of the agencies (Bäck & Larsson, 2008, p. 176; Hall, 2016, p. 3). Swedish state agencies are thus entitled to autonomy, especially in recruitment and internal organization (Hall, 2016, p. 4). Swedish local-self-government constrains the state's access to instruct the public administration at local and county level. Agencies in the health and food and veterinary sectors are active in issuing guidelines and recommendations for voluntary adoption at local- and county-level (Interviews D and F, 2019). In the health sector, competence is shared between the municipalities, county councils (organizing, financing and provision of care), and the state (responsible for the national health policies; Public Health Agency of Sweden [PHAS], 2014, p. 20). The county medical officer manages communicable disease prevention and control within their county, whereas PHAS coordinates communicable disease prevention and control at state-level (Swedish Parliament, 2020, Chapter 1, para. 7–10). In the food and veterinary sector, the state shares competence with the counties and the EU-level. The county council with the county veterinarian manages disease prevention and control on delegated authority from the Swedish Board of Agriculture (SBA; state-level management of risks to animal health) and the Swedish Food Agency (SFI; state-level management of risks to food safety). The National Veterinary Institute manages the monitoring of risk, assessment of and preparedness for animal- and food-borne disease. The Government, including the agencies, respond to the European Commission which enforces the EU's food and veterinary policies.

4.1.2. AMR Pre-2015

The first Swedish action plan on AMR (the SPAR-plan) came in 2000. Written by the National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW; state-level coordinator of disease prevention and control until 2014) together with relevant authorities, organizations, and the Swedish Strategic Programme Against Antibiotic Resistance (STRAMA; see below), the SPAR-plan emphasised "adequate" monitoring procedures, prudency in antibiotic consumption, and a cross-sectoral approach to AMR (PHAS, 2014, p. 23). In 1999 and 2001, Sweden initiated national programs to monitor AMR and antibiotic consumption in the food and veterinary (SVARM under the National Veterinary Institute) and the health (SWEDRES under PHAS) sectors. These were to provide data to the European surveillance networks on AMR and antibiotic consumption (initiated in the late 1990s). In 2006, the Swedish Parliament endorsed the Government's strategy on AMR and healthcare-associated infections (HAIs; PHAS, 2014, p. 23). The strategy was a continuation of the SPAR-plan. It was published by the Ministry of Health, and complemented by Ministries such as Enterprise (agriculture, food

and veterinary) and Environment (Government Offices of Sweden, 2005). In 2010, the Government commissioned the NBHW to evaluate and issue recommendations on further steps. The NBHW then invited the EU's agency for disease prevention and control (ECDC) to assess Swedish work on AMR. Emphasising previous Recommendations (European Council, 2001, 2009), the ECDC identified shortcomings in the inter-sectoral structuring of what were otherwise very good sector accomplishments (Government Offices of Sweden, 2012, p. 2; Interview H, 2019). Thus, the Government Offices of Sweden (2012) instructed the NBHW and SBA to set up a coordinating mechanism to facilitate inter-sectoral activities and information exchange on AMR. The mechanism was, however, a formalization of pre-existing patterns of interaction (PHAS, 2014, p. 33). These had been promoted by the profession-driven initiation in 1995 of the STRAMA, to transcend the human and food and veterinary sectors and preserve antibiotics' efficiency (PHAS, 2014, p. 30). STRAMA came to consist of local, informal, networks (one in all counties) and one state-level network with state agencies and professional associations. By 2010, the state-level STRAMA had been incorporated into the state to facilitate information exchange across sectoral and territorial boundaries (PHAS, 2014, p. 31).

4.1.3. AMR Post-2015

Shortly before the Global Action Plan on AMR (GAP; WHO, 2015) was published, the agencies of the mechanism presented a new action plan on AMR and HAIs (NBHW, 2015). The six objectives (NBHW, 2015, pp. 17–19) of the action plan contained inter-sectoral (I–II), and sector-specific activities (III–VI) in the health, food and veterinary, and environment sectors. The 20 agencies of the mechanism voluntarily committed to follow-up the action plan. There was no additional funding from the Government; hence, the emphasis on activities to involve a minimum of two agencies, and being in line with agencies' jurisdictions and activity plans.

In 2016, the Government Offices of Sweden (2016) issued a new Swedish strategy on AMR, published by the Ministry of Health, but, referring to One Health, signatories also included the Ministers for Health, Rural Affairs, and Higher Education. The inter-ministerial coordination on AMR had, puzzlingly, given the rule on collective decision-making, been considered insufficient for some time (Interviews F and H, 2019). Responding to agency calls (PHAS, 2016, p. 7), the Government enacted an inter-ministerial working group to facilitate information sharing and follow-up of the strategy. The Government Offices of Sweden's (2016, p. 2) seven strategic objectives provided welcome direction for the mechanism's agencies on what/where to focus efforts at national and international levels (Interviews G and H, 2019). In conjunction with the renewal of the mechanism's mandate (2018–2020), the agencies revised their action plan to accommodate objectives and activities to the strategy (Government Offices of

Sweden, 2017, p. 1; PHAS, 2017, p. 5). The Government Offices of Sweden (2017) simultaneously decided to designate both the PHAS and SBA as chairs of the mechanism (annual rotation). Compared to the 2012–2017 mandate where PHAS was chair, the food and veterinary, and health sectors with the new mandate were recognized as equals (Interview D, 2019). Finally, to strengthen participation in the follow-up of activities within the mechanism, the Government Offices of Sweden (2017) forwarded the instruction to all 20 agencies. Despite the added constraint on agency autonomy, this move was asked for in two consequent evaluations by the agencies themselves (PHAS, 2016, p. 6; SBA, 2019, p. 7).

The Government Offices of Sweden (2016, p. 17) strategy stipulated that Swedish leadership was to promote the AMR issue within the EU and in international cooperation. Thus, "if overuse of antimicrobials brings harmful effects in Sweden, it has similar effects elsewhere" (Interview D, 2017). In parallel to the 'EU-track,' where Swedish efforts focus on keeping AMR on the European Council and Commission's agenda (Interview M, 2017), Sweden has raised the issue within the Nordic Council of Ministers. However, Nordic cooperation does not seem to constitute the main pillar of Swedish AMR diplomacy (Interviews M, 2017; O, 2019). Collaboration instead is found in alliances such as the Swedish-launched Alliance of Champions from 2015, with participation from Nordic (Norway), European (Germany, the Netherlands, the UK), African, American, and Asian partner countries (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015, 2020, pp. 15–17).

4.2. Norway's Responses to AMR

4.2.1. Basic Administrative Structures

Norway, much like Sweden, has a public administration characterized by local self-government. The primary healthcare services (such as nursing homes and the General Practitioner [GP] scheme) in Norway are run by the local municipalities with the municipal medical officer managing local-level disease prevention and control (Norwegian Parliament, 2020, para. 7–1, para. 7–2). The specialist care institutions (hospitals, laboratories, etc.) are run by four health enterprises each with a relatively high degree of autonomy within its region. These are owned and governed by the Ministry of Health and Care Services. The main state-level agencies involved in disease prevention and control are the Norwegian Directorate of Health (NDH; manages the health policies set by the ministry) and the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH; monitors the national epidemiological situation, provides knowledge for the NDH's managerial functions, has operative responsibility for national infectious disease outbreaks). The overall responsibility for health policies lies with the Ministry of Health. The food and veterinary sector has less local self-government. Thus, the Norwegian Veterinary Institute monitors and

assesses the risk from animal- and food-borne disease. The Norwegian Food Safety Authority (NFSA) is the competent authority in Norway for ensuring that plants, fish, animals, and foodstuffs are safe. NFSA is subordinate to the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Fisheries, all of which have specific responsibilities for the food and veterinary sector. Norwegian ministers are subjected to ministerial responsibility. Thus, each minister answers directly to Parliament on the affairs within their designated sector. This implies a clear subordination of food and veterinary agencies to their parent ministry, but also the EU/EEA-legal regime to which corresponding Norwegian regulations must comply.

4.2.2. AMR Pre-2015

Prepared in 1999 by an inter-agency working group led by the NIPH, the first Norwegian action plan (2000–2004) on AMR was depicted as being "pioneering work" due to its cross-sectoral perspective (NIPH, 1999, 2005, p. 3). Five ministries were behind the plan whose overriding goal was the preservation of antibiotics' efficacy (NIPH, 1999, p. 12, 2005, p. 6). The objectives covered knowledge needs, antibiotic consumption, infection control, and included the provision of data to European surveillance networks. In 2000, two programs to monitor AMR and antibiotic consumption were established: one for humans (NORM, coordinated by the University Hospital of North Norway) and one for animals (NORM-VET, coordinated by the Norwegian Veterinary Institute). The siting of NORM at a University Hospital ended a dispute between hospital laboratories (longstanding performers of AMR monitoring) and the NIPH over the program's location (Interview Q, 2020). In 2003, the NDH drafted another action plan (2004–2006) on hospital infections. Finalized by the Norwegian Ministry of Health (2004), one out of three objectives covered antibiotic consumption and AMR. After these two action plans expired, the activity level dropped, however (Interview Q, 2020). Thus, under the coordination of NIPH, a national strategy (2008–2012) was drafted (Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services [Norwegian Ministry of Health], 2008, pp. 8–9). Finalized by an interministerial steering group with five ministries, the strategy marked a continuation of the intersectoral approach to AMR. Noteworthy, at some stage, it was decided not to copy the Swedish STRAMA model to coordinate the implementation of AMR measures (Interview Q, 2020). The transboundary nature of AMR meant the potential intrusion into several policy sectors with marked jurisdictions. There was also uncertainty as to the county medical office's suitability to both support the municipalities with AMR and perform its function as a supervisory authority (Interview P, 2020). Whereas in Sweden the county medical officer provides a linkage between the local, regional, and statal, many in Norwegian primary care consider the office a "proxy state police authority not to be dealt with" (Interview Q,

2020). Ultimately, it was decided to work with the existing organizational structures, thus implementing measures sector by sector (Interviews P and Q, 2020).

4.2.3. AMR Post-2015

Aided by the momentum at the international level (Interview Q, 2020), agency personnel and experts in 2013 were instructed to prepare a new national strategy on AMR. The interim expert group was yet again intersectoral. New was the emphasis on 'One Health' as reflected in the expert participation from agriculture, fishery, environment, and health (NIPH, 2014, p. 6). The final report identified knowledge gaps in Norway's approach to AMR. Referring to the urgency of the AMR problem plus the limited time to complete the report, the expert group identified cross-sectoral measures amenable to swift implementation (NIPH, 2014, pp. 5–6). The national strategy was finalized in 2015 with the Minister of Health, the Minister of Fisheries, the Minister of Agriculture and Food, and the Minister of Environment as signatories—emphasising its accordance with the GAP (Norwegian Ministry of Health, 2015, p. 7). Different from the previous policy approaches, the national strategy had measurable and verifiable objectives (Norwegian Ministry of Health, 2015, p. 7; Interview Q, 2020). The Norwegian Parliament had decided for the strategy to target a 30 percent reduction by 2020 (compared to the 2012 level) in the population's antibiotic consumption (Interview P, 2020). By 2018, the reduction was reportedly 24 percent (Norwegian Directorate of Health, 2019, p. 4). The strategy had four cross-sectoral objectives, including one on international, normative work, plus sector-specific objectives and eight prioritized areas of action (Norwegian Ministry of Health, 2015, pp. 8–19). An interministerial working group was to follow up on the strategy's implementation. It was decided that action plans should be drafted on the objectives specific to the health and food and veterinary sectors. In the health sector, the NIPH, together with agencies and expert communities, drafted the action plan for the ministry (Norwegian Ministry of Health, 2016, pp. 3, 22). The action plan targeted primary, specialist, dental care, the general population, and the state-level organizing of work (Norwegian Ministry of Health, 2016, p. 4). The ministry decided for an inter-agency steering group—the NDH (lead), NIPH, Norwegian Medicines Agency, and Norwegian Directorate of eHealth—to coordinate the follow-up of the action plan. In 2019, yet another action plan (2019–2023) was added by the Norwegian Ministry of Health (2019, p, 6). Besides a situation report on Norwegian infection control (NIPH, 2018), this action plan built on the ECDC's (2019, p. 2) recommendation of a "rapid step-up of infection prevention and control in [Norway, to contain] VRE, CRE, and other emerging multidrug-resistant bacteria." The action plan on the objectives specific to the food and veterinary sector was published by the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food (2016) with inputs from the NFSA, Norwegian Veterinary Institute, and industry representatives. Structured around the national strategy's eight areas of action, it was to be dynamic, thus allowing for amendment while respecting the existing budgetary limits (Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food, 2016, pp. 1–2). Different from the approach in health, the ministry coordinated the implementation, and emphasised in its reporting both the national and international objectives of the national strategy.

Like Sweden, Norway's national strategy addressed the need to be a driver of international, normative work on AMR (Norwegian Ministry of Health, 2015, p. 8). Norway stressed the need for Nordic collaboration to promote joint positions at the EU and international level (Norwegian Ministry of Health, 2015, p. 17). In 2017, during its presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Norwegian Government hosted a Nordic seminar on AMR (to which the EU Commissioner for Health and Food safety gave the opening speech; Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2018, p. 23). After the seminar, the Norwegian Government (2017) conveyed its ambition to take a leading role in the global fight against AMR. Echoing Sweden, Norway's diplomatic work on AMR at the international level seems largely structured around broader alliances, such as Friends of AMR (including Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and a number of other Western countries) and the Alliance of Champions.

4.3. Adapting Nordic Cooperation to AMR

Nordic cooperation on health has primarily been a "platform for inter-Nordic diffusion and transnational learning" (Kettunen, Lundberg, Østerberg, & Pedersen, 2016, p. 69), thus, developing what can be labelled a "Nordic epistemic community" (Haas, 2016; Kettunen et al., 2016, p. 69). Although Nordic health systems share some key characteristics such as an emphasis on the active role of the state and universal health coverage, they have also chosen different ways of organizing their health sectors regarding, among other things, the role of private service providers and the allocation of responsibilities between levels of government. The Nordic countries have established a framework for cooperation on health and social affairs based on 'soft' coordination mechanisms. The Nordic Council's Secretariat is responsible for the day-to-day running of intergovernmental cooperation. The Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Health and Social Affairs consists of representatives from all Nordic countries, meets several times each year, and prepares the meetings of the Nordic Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs.

The AMR problem has been discussed among health bureaucrats and professional experts in the Nordics for many years. A Nordic expert group was established in 2013, followed by a strategy group in 2015. The strategy group was given the mandate "to use the Nordic collaboration to support the work being coordinated inter-

nationally in e.g., the EU, WHO, FAO and OIE in order to address antimicrobial resistance" (Nordic Council, 2017, p. 9). However, as of 2017, no proper proposal from this group had been submitted. Thus, the first real attempt to "outline political initiatives and specific proposals for Nordic solutions in the fight against AMR" was not made until 2017 when the Nordic Council published a white paper on Nordic initiatives in the area of AMR (Nordic Council, 2017, p. 9). The white paper was published on the background of the report from 2014 on the future Nordic cooperation on health (Könberg, 2014), and the Nordic Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs' *Declaration on Antimicrobial Resistance through a One Health Perspective* from September 2015. The Declaration stated, among other things, that the Nordic countries agree "to strengthen the Nordic collaboration to maintain a low level of antimicrobial resistance and prudent use of antimicrobials," "support exchange of best practice and ensure an efficient use of the Nordic resources," and "use the Nordic collaboration to support the work being coordinated internationally" (Nordic Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs, 2014). The white paper of 2017 outlines twelve initiatives for Nordic cooperation on AMR, including an emphasis on solutions that utilize existing and new instruments, stakeholders that would help find the solutions, as well as the Nordic Region's role in a broad global response to AMR (Nordic Council, 2017, p. 11). Most of the initiatives (1–7, 9) are related directly or indirectly to medical practices and innovations. However, some of the initiatives also refer to administrative and institutional issues: 8) Nordic institutions and online database in the area of microbiology; 10) Co-ordination of food control and allocating responsibilities between national bodies in the Nordic Region; 11) A coordinated approach to the impact of relevant EU regulation and legislation, and to the international dissemination of Nordic experiences in combating AMR; 12) A joint Nordic action plan, complete with details of funding, reporting and political control. The white paper further states that "it may prove impossible to cover all of the points," but also that it is "crucial to draw up a Nordic action plan for dealing with any epidemic or similar immediate health disaster" (Nordic Council, 2017, p. 41).

In accordance with the EU's action plans and GAP, the plans for Nordic cooperation are framed within the 'One Health' approach. However, the Nordic Council does not in the white paper specify how this approach can be operationalized in the context of Nordic cooperation. Generally, the Nordic initiatives do not represent any major changes in Nordic cooperation. The initiatives are mostly in line with previous cooperation on health, containing proposals for joint research, funding, information exchange, and flexible coordination, primarily supplementing and building on existing arrangements. Despite the ambition of using Nordic collaboration in international AMR diplomacy, few joint initiatives have emerged since the white paper of 2017. There is a regular exchange of written reports and collaboration on joint statements, but, as yet, no further specification of Nordic measures has been made (Interview N, 2019).

5. Discussion: Nordic Adaptation to AMR Management

5.1. Adaptation: Internal Factors

The stories of Norway and Sweden's administrative approach to AMR neatly meet the characteristics of an incremental course of development. Besides constituting step-by-step evolving formations of the late 1990s, the two countries' trajectories highlight how distinct institutional settings enable and/or constrain 'better coordination' on AMR. Thus, the upper tier of administration, the ministries, seem more closely involved in AMR policy and management in Norway (ministerial responsibility) than Sweden (collective decision-making). In Norway, public health officials in the Ministry of Health have repeatedly elevated the AMR issue onto the Ministry's agenda (Interview Q, 2020). In Sweden, the Government's lead on the AMR issue seems to rest with the agencies to a greater degree—hence, the pronounced expert rule on the matter. Building on STRAMA and longstanding cooperation on zoonoses, the agencies in the health, food and veterinary sectors have created an intersectoral coordination structure (also including environmental agencies). Norway's approach to AMR seems less streamlined regarding coordination structures; there is an emphasis on the inter-sectoral 'One Health' principle, but the agency structures to follow up the national strategy and action plans (2015–2020) mainly facilitate coordination *within* policy sectors. Thus, we observe that the organization of AMR management, to a high degree, follows sector competence and responsibilities. Norway's subordination of the state administration to sector ministries is suggestive of a 'sector first' mindset, which reflects a threshold to intersectoral coordination beyond the necessary. This sentiment also is alive and well at the agency-administrative level in Sweden (Time, 2019). However, 'the sector first' mindset is likely to be weaker in Sweden given the collective decision making within the Government Office. Swedish agency officials might thus be more accustomed to coordination that goes beyond their sector, at least within the upper tiers of the administration.

In light of these observations, the article finds limited support for the assumption that AMR constituted a major event—a critical juncture—that brought major changes to administrations in Norway and Sweden and to Nordic cooperation. However, the article provides support to our assumption that adaptation to the AMR challenge is path-dependent as our findings reveal that AMR initiatives have been added to (and do not replace or radically change) the existing governance structures relating to disease prevention and control. This addition has in turn been elevated to become a global, European, and Nordic issue.

5.2. Adaptation: External Factors

Since the beginning of the 2000s, the AMR problem has received increased political attention (Kahn, 2016). International organizations have become important as arenas for information exchange and as sources of proposals on how to manage AMR. The question is whether, and, if so, how the global and European work on AMR has influenced AMR management in the Nordics.

It is important to make a distinction between the management of AMR within the food and veterinary sector, where EU competences are strong, and management of AMR within the health sector, where EU competences are weak (Hervey & McHale, 2015). Both Sweden and Norway are part of the Europe-wide system for food and animal inspection and control and are thus required to implement and adhere to EU/EEA legislation in this area (Ugland & Veggeland, 2006). However, even in these sectors, there is wide variation within Europe regarding the use of antibiotics for animals, the prevalence of AMR in livestock, and how to manage the problems (Interview J, 2017). Thus, although the EU has 'penetrated' national systems of governance on selected areas, national administrations have preserved their distinct national characteristics.

According to Art. 168 of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*, the "responsibilities of the Member States shall include the management of health services and medical care and the allocation of the resources assigned to them" (Consolidated version of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union, 2012, article 168). Thus, the EU relies mostly on non-binding methods of coordination in the health sector. This takes place through a number of meetings and networks involving politicians, senior officials, and experts. Two examples are the Health Security Committee (includes the health sector) and the EU AMR One-Health Network (includes both the health and veterinary sectors) where Commission officials and national representatives meet (Norway as an observer). The Health Security committee is designated to support information exchange and to coordinate the management of and responses to health crises, including AMR. The task of the AMR One-Health Network is to "present national action plans and activities, share best practices, discuss policy options and enhance coordination" (European Commission, 2019). In the context of European cooperation, however, Norway and Sweden seem to perceive themselves more as role models than as passive receivers of EU influence when it comes to AMR management. Sweden, for example, had an active role (supported by the other Nordic countries) in the process leading up to the 2006 EU ban on the use of antibiotics as growth promoters in food animals (Edqvist & Pedersen, 2001; European Council, 1998; European Commission, 1998; Interview D, 2017). All Nordic countries have emphasized international dissemination of Nordic experiences in combating AMR and all have agreed on the ambition of using Nordic collab-oration to promote Nordic AMR strategies internationally (Nordic Council, 2017). Thus, although Norway and Sweden so far appear as the most active among the Nordic countries, 'Nordification' of AMR strategies in Europe may, in fact, better characterize the development than 'Europeanization' of Nordic strategies.

The WHO created momentum for its role in AMR management when it published the GAP in 2015. Two elements stand out in this plan: the urge for member states to have in place national action plans within two years, and the emphasis on a 'One Health' approach. Norway and Sweden have developed national action plans in accordance with the WHO recommendation and both countries emphasize the 'One Health' approach. However, on closer examination of the details of strategies/action plans and the (lack of) operationalization of the 'One Health' approach, it becomes clear that the influence of global ideas on national management strategies and administrative structures is limited.

The Nordic initiatives for strengthening cooperation on AMR include both the emphasis on 'One Health' and the aim of developing a Nordic action plan. However, so far, these initiatives have not really contributed to any substantial change in the framework for Nordic cooperation; AMR management remains a national prerogative and Nordic cooperation in the health area remains limited. The limited convergence of administrative structures and the limited progress in further developing the Nordic cooperation can be explained by governments' protection of national sovereignty in the health area, as well as by path-dependent ways of organizing and managing emerging health challenges. In the Nordic response to AMR, there is much emphasis on the advantages of the 'Nordic model' and the success of Nordic countries in fighting AMR. Nordic adaptation to AMR is, however, more characterized by ambitions of exporting ideas and solutions to international organizations than on the need for the Nordics to implement ideas and recommendations from the international level. A comment made by a Norwegian public official illustrates this point: "If the whole world had been like Norway and Sweden, then the consumption of antibiotics and management of disease prevention would have been a phenomenon, not a problem" (Interview Q, 2020). Generally, external factors seem to have limited importance for Nordic systems for AMR management. Thus, the article's findings do not support the assumption that EU influence surpasses Nordic approaches and lead to European specific solutions to the management of the AMR crisis. Neither do the findings support the assumption that global initiatives and diffusion of norms, standards, and ideas, have contributed to the convergence of national systems of AMR management. Even though the Nordic countries, as well as the EU, lend support to the idea of adapting AMR management to the 'One Health' principle, so far this idea seems to be characterized more by 'branding' than as an operational guiding principle for converging developments in the administrative structures for AMR management.

6. Summarizing Conclusions

The central administrative systems of Norway and Sweden have adapted to AMR by supplementing sector responsibility with coordinating mechanisms within the upper tiers of government while leaving the operative responsibility to sector authorities. For Norway, AMR management is mainly taking place within existing administrative structures with only weak coordination mechanisms. Sweden has over time established a more comprehensive coordination system for ministries and agencies (cf. 'the coordinating mechanism'/STRAMA). However, even in Sweden, the operative AMR work takes place according to sectoral lines in government and according to the basic established administrative system for disease prevention and control. The Nordic countries have responded to AMR by emphasising the need for strengthening Nordic cooperation. However, the Nordic Council responded late, coming up with new initiatives as late as 2017, and the initiatives moreover do not really represent major steps forward in strengthening cooperation. Instead, the Nordic initiatives signal an incremental approach where ambitions are relatively low. AMR management supplements existing systems without substantially changing neither the national administrations nor the Nordic cooperation framework, thus highlighting the importance of both path-dependency in governmental structures and the traditional emphasis on national sovereignty in the health sector. The Nordic countries' ambition of being frontrunners in AMR management has added to the limited international influence on their administrative systems. Turning back to our assumptions about Nordic adaptation: There are few signs of EU influence contributing to standardized/Europeanized solutions to AMR management in the Nordic administrations, except for a few areas where EU competences and/or common interests are strong. Thus, we do observe some convergence in the food and veterinary area, although such convergence primarily appears in strategies and legal measures and less in administrative adaptations. Global initiatives have contributed to the diffusion of ideas on AMR. However, the 'convergence' between administrative systems caused by such ideas appears mostly as 'window-dressing,' i.e., by the inclusion of 'fashionable' concepts such as 'One Health' without making substantial changes to the systems. Thus, AMR management in the Nordics is characterized by incremental change within existing structures of disease prevention and control and on traditional ways of organizing political and administrative systems. The findings of the article thus reveal some of the conditions for (and limitations of) institutional change and highlight the importance of considering the variation of historical developments and institutional contexts when understanding the adaptations of administrative systems to the AMR challenge. The article thus adds to the literature on how and why (multiple) administrative systems respond to major external challenges.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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Article

Going Nordic in European Administrative Networks?

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Abstract
The integration and policymaking of the European Union (EU) are claimed to challenge Nordic cooperation as a separate 'common order.' Increasing interdependencies in the EU have forced all EU member states to collaborate and share sovereignty in an increasing number of policy areas. This article studies the coexistence of Nordic cooperation and European integration by taking a network approach. It analyses the extent to which Nordic members of European Administrative Networks 'go Nordic' to solve problems or exchange advice, information and best practices. Based on unique survey data on interactions related to the implementation of EU policies in Social Policy, Health and the Internal Market by national governmental organisations across the EU and the European Economic Area (EEA), we use social network analysis to test for distinguishable patterns of Nordic cooperation. We find evidence to suggest that Nordic cooperation in the EU and EEA is best characterised by differentiated integration. The Nordic states tend to form a separate community for problem-solving and exchanging best practices, advice and information in Health and Social policy networks, but less so in SOLVIT, a network related to the Internal Market.

1. Introduction

Existing literature presents European integration as a major challenge to Nordic cooperation: As European integration has progressed, the Nordic political order has arguably lost some of its relevance (Olesen & Strang, 2016; Strang, 2016; Sverdrup, 1998). However, political orders could potentially coexist: Being part of a larger political order does not necessarily dissolve pre-existing political networks. The Nordic states could maintain a Nordic nucleus within the larger European setting. In this article, we examine whether and how Nordic cooperation coexists with European integration by taking a network perspective.

Three different expectations on Nordic cooperation concerning European integration can be derived from existing literature. Firstly, Nordic cooperation has been characterised as particularly informal and widespread across the national administrations (Sundelius, 1977; Sundelius & Wiklund, 1979, 2000), leaving it rather unaffected by further European integration. Secondly, increased cooperation on a European level may make broad cooperation easier and more attractive than interactions amongst the Nordics only (Strang, 2016). As a result, European cooperation may inhibit Nordic cooperation by weakening the political will and opportunity to act regionally (Sverdrup, 1998). Thirdly, in line with theories on differentiated integration (Leruth,

Gänzle, & Trondal, 2019; Schimmelfennig, Leuffen, & Rittberger, 2015), the strength of Nordic cooperation may differ across policy areas because of the varying degrees of institutionalisation through which integration has processed.

Nordic cooperation has long roots. Key institutional developments took place before or alongside European economic integration. A first, Nordic Social-Political meeting was held in Copenhagen in 1919, with the aim to coordinate the Nordic approaches to the first International Labour Organization conference to be held the same year (Kettunen, Lundberg, Österberg, & Petersen, 2016). The Nordic countries were first movers in establishing free movement across borders. Already back in 1943, Sweden had abolished work permit requirement for citizens from Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway and, between 1952 and 1957, requirements for visas and passports were gradually abolished between the Nordic countries (Tervonen, 2016). The Nordic Council, established in 1952, became a driving force behind further institutionalisation (Olesen & Strang, 2016, p. 29). In 1954, a common labour market was agreed upon. The adoption of the Nordic Social Security Convention in 1955 paved the way for equal treatment of Nordic Citizens in terms of welfare rights across the region. In 1957, furthermore, the treaty establishing a Nordic passport union was signed.

These far-reaching agreements paved the way for regular interaction among Nordic politicians and governmental organisations (Kettunen et al., 2016; Strang, 2016). This has led to well-established cooperation between state representatives at both the official and semi-official level (Kettunen et al., 2016, p. 86). At the same time, Nordic economic cooperation as a separate economic order never really institutionalised. In the 1950s, a plan for a Nordic customs union was negotiated, running parallel to the drafting of the European Economic Community. The plan was, however, buried in the light of European developments. Later, at the end of the 1960s, a plan for a Nordic Economic Community (NORDEK) was drafted, but never signed (Strang, 2016, p. 5).

Overall, Nordic cooperation has been challenged by parallel European integration. In 1973, Denmark became a member of the European Community, followed by Sweden and Finland in 1995. Norway and Iceland remain outside, but are members of the European Economic Area (EEA) and thus members of the internal market, the rules of which they have to apply. As European integration progressed and took over as a dominant theme in Nordic Council meetings (Olesen & Strang, 2016, p. 33), it increasingly overshadowed Nordic cooperation (Kettunen et al., 2016; Olesen & Strang, 2016; Tervonen, 2016).

In this article, we examine Nordic cooperation in three European Administrative Networks (EANs). The networks relate to policy areas that display a variant degree of EU involvement, from "limited EU poli-

cy involvement," i.e., health and welfare, to "considerable EU involvement," i.e., internal market (Buonanno & Nugent, 2013, pp. 7, 11). The first network is the Administrative Commission for the Coordination of Social Security Systems (AC). Being established in 1958, the network is one of the oldest EANs. The network assists the Commission on Regulation 883/2004 concerning welfare across borders, i.e., the rights of European citizens to social security when they reside or work in another member state. The task of the Administrative Commission is to facilitate the uniform application of Community Law. To do so, it may issue recommendations and make decisions on how the articles of the relevant EU regulation shall be interpreted and applied. It is thus a forum for both information exchange and problem-solving.

The second network is the cross-border healthcare (CBHC) expert group, established as part of the Patients' Rights Directive 2011/24 (PRD). The role of this network is to assist the Commission on the implementation of the PRD, laying down the rules and conditions when European citizens seek planned healthcare treatment in another member state. The network foremost exchanges information between participants and has no direct problem-solving function.

The third network is SOLVIT. This network was set up in 2001 to address misapplication of internal market law. SOLVIT is a problem-solving network and has considerable competences in terms of case handling. The network consists of national SOLVIT centres. Citizens or businesses can submit cases concerning the misapplication of internal market law to the SOLVIT centre in the country where one resides or the business is established. This SOLVIT centre then is to contact the SOLVIT centre in the member state where the alleged misapplication has taken place. Consecutively, the two SOLVIT centres have to examine the case, aiming to solve misapplication if this is uncovered.

In all three networks, network members may interact in a plenum, in subgroups, or bilaterally—between those involved in a specific case or an issue addressed. These interactions can have different aims. To begin with, they may aim at solving problems related to the interpretation or application of EU rules. Furthermore, interactions may aim at the exchange of information, of advice on the interpretation or application of EU rules, or of best practices for doing so.

We collected data on all four types of interaction: problem-solving, exchange of information, exchange of advice and exchange of best practices. We did so by using a self-developed survey to map out the structure of each network. By adopting a social network approach, we put the bilateral interactions of transnational bureaucracy (Strang, 2016; Sundelius, 1977; Sundelius & Wiklund, 1979, 2000) at the centre of our analysis, allowing us to assess whether there is indeed a tendency to 'go Nordic' in EANs. We study the strength of Nordic cooperation in each network by visualising network interactions to

detect the existence of a separate Nordic community and to test whether interactions cluster among Nordic network members.

We find that, despite long-lived European integration, there is still a strong Nordic community within the broader European political order. Nordic cooperation and European integration coexist, without the latter crowding out the former. However, our findings also show that the strength of Nordic cooperation is differentiated (Leruth et al., 2019; Schimmelfennig et al., 2015): It depends on the level of institutionalisation, which varies across policy areas.

In the following sections, we first set out our theoretical argument and expectations on the strength of Nordic cooperation in EANs. After discussing transgovernmental cooperation in EANs more generally and framing Nordic cooperation as informal transgovernmentalism, we develop three different expectations on Nordic cooperation in light of European integration. The subsequent section details our methodology, data collection and operationalisation. Next, we discuss the results from our study in terms of both the visualisation of detected communities within the networks and the significance of Nordic cooperation. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings in the conclusion.

2. Theory

2.1. Nordic Cooperation in European Administrative Networks

This article analyses Nordic cooperation against the background of ever-increasing European integration. Since its inception, European integration has extended in scope and substance, with the European Commission as the core executive. However, in light of its extensive legislative and administrative tasks, the Commission's resources and formal competences are limited, especially in the realm of policy implementation and enforcement. It therefore depends strongly on cooperation with national administrations to realise its functions and objectives (Mastenbroek & Martinsen, 2018; Trondal & Peters, 2013). This form of regular and multilevel cooperation occurs in what has been termed as the European Administrative Space (EAS; Hofmann, 2008; Olsen, 2003) or an emergent European Executive Order (Trondal, 2010). The EAS has institutionalised a common administrative capacity, driven by the interactions between the Commission and national administrative organisations. The EAS has been defined as a space "in which increasingly integrated administrations jointly exercise powers delegated to the EU in a system of shared sovereignty," marked by "a high degree of close administrative cooperation between all levels of member states' administrations with the European institutions and bodies in various policy phases" (Hofmann, 2008, p. 662). Seconded National Experts, European agencies and EU committees are important parts of the EAS in EU agenda-setting and

decision-making processes (Egeberg & Trondal, 2009; Trondal, 2010; Trondal & Peters, 2013). Also, EANs play an important role in the implementation and enforcement of EU policies (Mastenbroek & Martinsen, 2018).

EANs are key components of the EAS. They can be defined as "networks that consist of institutional representatives of national executives—primarily departments and/or agencies—with tasks in the realm of national implementation or enforcement of EU policies" (Mastenbroek & Martinsen, 2018, p. 423). While displaying differences in organisation and structure, EANs share two key features: Their members are civil servants and they are tasked with improving the national implementation and enforcement of EU policies. In both respects, EANs are similar to transgovernmental networks, which the International Relations literature has presented (Bach & Newman, 2010; Eberlein & Newman, 2008; Slaughter, 2004). EANs are mostly transgovernmental in the sense that they are constituted by national and EU governmental actors, represented by civil servants meeting with their peers from other member states.

In terms of tasks, EANs deal with a fundamental dilemma of supranational governance. On the one hand, states are increasingly interdependent and commit themselves to cross-border cooperation, which translates in international norms, rules and policies. On the other hand, they are reluctant to delegate the competencies required for the implementation of these international agreements, which thus remain at the national level. To escape this supranational governance dilemma, EANs are to assist the Commission in overseeing the implementation and enforcement of EU rules. Network interactions are supposed to attenuate national interests and instead establish an enabling environment for the implementation and enforcement of mutual agreements (Eberlein & Newman, 2008).

The more specific functions of EANs and the relational structure between actors are likely to differ across networks. In terms of functions, it matters what flows in the network, i.e., what characterises interactions. Some networks are primarily information-based. These are labelled information networks (Slaughter, 2004, p. 56). Here, actors exchange information about implementation and enforcement practices and challenges. Additionally, participants may exchange best practices, or seek advice from other peers on how to deal with implementation/enforcement problems. Other networks have problem-solving competences. They may solve cases on misapplied EU law or issue administrative decisions on how to interpret or implement specific articles in a legal act. Both information networks and problem-solving networks are regarded as key to learning. Regular network cooperation teaches actors about new or different approaches to implementation-related problems and facilitate expert-driven policy learning (Vantaggiato, 2019). By exchanging their ways of doing things, actors learn from one another.

The relational structure of networks, as constituted by network interactions, also varies. This structure may be largely horizontal, with network members interacting amongst each other on equal terms and to the same extent (Slaughter, 2004; Slaughter & Hale, 2010). Alternatively, networks may develop a more asymmetric or vertical structure, the Commission or a member state representative constituting a nodal position, sometimes to the extent of becoming the "teacher of norms" (Versluis & Tarr, 2013). The structure of a network is important because the central actors in a network are more likely to control interactions. This allows them to put a substantive mark on interactions, deciding what constitutes relevant information or what is a best practice, as well as allowing them to provide advice to other actors. They thus become more in charge of defining problems and solutions, which is by no means neutral but instead a rather powerful position from which to influence European integration. Controlling and distributing information matters.

The internal structure of a network thus informs us about the power distribution in a network. The relational structure offers an opportunity structure to members, which they can use to set agendas and control how resources, such as information, best practices and advice, are shared between actors (Vantaggiato, Kassim, & Wright, 2020). Yet, the relational structure of a network can also be clustered. Some clusters may be rather insulated from the rest of the network, being incapable or unwilling to reach out. Likeminded states may seek one another and, instead of learning across differences (Sabel & Zeitlin, 2008), they will primarily turn to their counterparts with whom they already share experiences to solve problems and exchange information, best practices and advice.

2.2. Nordic Cooperation as Informal Transgovernmentalism

The case of Nordic cooperation fits well with the concept of transgovernmental relations, which refers to interactions among administrative units of national governments (Keohane & Nye, 1974). As emphasised by Sundelius (1977) and Sundelius and Wiklund (2000), Nordic relations are rather treated as an extension of domestic policymaking than handled through a single foreign policy channel. They found that interactions are mainly informal, i.e., without formal decision-making authority, and take place predominantly among national civil servants handling day-to-day activities. In doing so, civil servants in governmental sub-units maintain considerable independence vis-à-vis their political principals. Crucially, Nordic cooperation takes place through such transgovernmental interactions between the respective administrations. These interactions are broad in scope and run deep inside the national bureaucracies (Sundelius & Wiklund, 1979, 2000). Informal interactions and cooperative behaviour among Nordic officials are stimulated through socialisation processes, enabled by regular meetings and social activities enhancing social and personal relations among them (Sundelius, 1977).

Moreover, more informal cooperation inspired the institutionalisation of the Nordic community in the first place. Instead of constituting a basis for transgovernmental interactions amongst Nordic states, these institutionalised structures were established to codify existing practices and to facilitate greater coordination (Sundelius & Wiklund, 1979, 2000). In turn, the institutionalisation of regular meetings enhanced interactions and continuous contacts (Sundelius & Wiklund, 1979, 2000). The importance of these informal bilateral interactions among the Nordics has been emphasised by Ojanen (1999). In her view, informal cooperation in the Nordic community takes place to a greater extent than formal cooperation; informal links being the norm and ideal for Nordic cooperation. She posits that these bilateral relations are a result of existing parallel national structures in Nordic administrations, which make it easy to identify the right counterpart. These bilateral relations also function as a driver for bringing Nordic administrations closer together (Ojanen, 1999).

While Nordic cooperation is mostly studied as multilateral coordination, there has been a plea for a more systematic analysis of the bilateral relations within the Nordic community (Strang, 2016). The appeal to map interaction patterns has been echoed in studies on EANs more generally (Mastenbroek & Martinsen, 2018; Vantaggiato, 2019). It is not only important to see how frequently national administrations interact and about what (Sundelius, 1977), but also crucial to see who interacts with whom and for which purpose (Martinsen, Schrama, & Mastenbroek, 2020). Along these lines, Nordic cooperation can take the character of a set of bilateral interactions between national administrations.

2.3. Nordic Cooperation in Light of European Integration

We develop three expectations on Nordic cooperation in light of European integration. First, the informal character of transgovernmental relations among the Nordics could be an asset for Nordic cooperation, despite more European integration. While European integration is based on more formal commitments to a supranational union, not allowing formal groupings of countries, Nordic cooperation is characterised mostly by the joint management of relations among Nordic administrations on the subnational level (Ojanen, 1999). In that sense, the EU does not inhibit the interactions among the Nordics, and European integration should not pose a threat to Nordic cooperation. Even more so, it is common for like-minded countries to cooperate more within the EU, particularly within EANs (Martinsen et al., 2020; Vantaggiato, 2019). We expect that the long history of informal cooperation has deepened Nordic transgovernmental relations (Ojanen, 1999; Sundelius & Wiklund, 1979). We thus assume Nordic cooperation to be particularly 'strong,'

meaning that it is more straightforward for civil servants to interact with their Nordic counterparts instead of their European ones:

> Expectation 1: Nordic cooperation is strong across policy areas.

Instead, we may expect Nordic cooperation to be stronger in some policy areas than others. In line with theories on differentiated integration (Leruth et al., 2019; Schimmelfennig et al., 2015), the level of integration can be assumed to differ across policy areas. In particular, we expect that the extent of institutionalisation in a particular area affects the strength of Nordic cooperation. Existing institutionalisation begets interaction. The institutionalisation of Nordic cooperation consists of three major achievements, namely: a passport union, a common labour market and the social security convention (Kettunen et al., 2016). Other types of free movement, however, never materialised on the Nordic level, but rather on the European level in the form of the European internal market. Instead, the Nordics have a long tradition of free movement of people, labour and the development of a distinct, Nordic type of welfare state. Because of this deep institutionalisation on the Nordic level, state representatives at both the official and semi-official level have established continued cooperation (Kettunen et al., 2016). In addition to already established institutional cooperation in certain policies, institutional similarity may tie Nordic representatives tighter together. Rose (1993) argues that, due to similarity in economic resources and closeness in both ideology and geography, the Nordics are particularly well suited for lesson-drawing across borders.

More recently, similar arguments and empirical accounts about the importance of institutional similarity for cooperation have been put forward in the literature on transgovernmental cooperation (Efrat & Newman, 2016, 2017) and EANs (Martinsen et al., 2020; Van Der Heijden, 2019; Vantaggiato, 2019). The familiarity of institutions and similarity of domestic experiences and common challenges facilitate interaction and the exchange of resources across national administrations. A Nordic model of welfare, including health, is often presented to exist where common social norms and institutions are shared, and which is characterised by relatively generous welfare protection, an encompassing national health service system, tax-financing and universal coverage of the population (Bambra, 2007; Kettunen et al., 2016; Martinsen et al., 2020; Wendt, 2009). Therefore, deeply institutionalised Nordic models in areas of health and welfare policies will make it particularly easy for civil servants from the Nordics to interact with one another. On the other hand, apart from the free movement of persons, other types of free movement did not materialise at the Nordic level but developed first and foremost in the European internal market. Also, Nordic economic cooperation as a separate economic order has not institution-

alised. We expect this lack of institutionalised Nordic economic cooperation to affect civil servant interaction in the area of the internal market:

> Expectation 2: Nordic cooperation is stronger in areas of health and welfare policy than in the area of internal market policy.

At the same time, Strang (2016, p. 17) rightly asks: "Why would a Dane cooperate with a Finn, instead of a German?" In other words, are the Nordics more integrated amongst themselves than with other EU member states? There are three reasons for a potential crowding-out effect of European integration on Nordic cooperation. First, increased involvement in EANs makes it easier to interact with states beyond the Nordics (Strang, 2016). This renders Nordic cooperation less relevant. Transgovernmental cooperation thus becomes increasingly less uniquely Nordic (Browning, 2007; Lawler, 1997). Second, increased European integration may even inhibit Nordic cooperation, as it weakens the political will and opportunity to act regionally. Further institutionalisation of the European Union is argued to lead to the demise of formal cooperation among the Nordics (Sverdrup, 1998). The constant deepening of European integration has increased the interdependencies of Nordic states with non-Nordic EU members and provided most policy issues with both a Nordic *and* an EU dimension (Olesen & Strang, 2016). In sum, deepening European integration has affected the political motivation and the opportunity structures for interaction and exchange among the Nordics. As a result, we may expect that there is no significantly stronger cooperation among the Nordics than among all European network members:

> Expectation 3: Cooperation is not stronger among Nordics than across the rest of Europe.

In the next section, we discuss the methods we use to put these expectations to the test.

3. Methods

3.1. Social Network Analysis

To gain insight into the degree of Nordic cooperation in the context of European integration we use social network analysis. This method allows us to place bilateral interactions among administrative units in the Nordics and all EU member states at the centre of analysis. The pattern of interactions forms a network in which each national administrative unit is positioned concerning its counterparts. The network data enables us to do two separate analyses.

First, we will visualise network interactions and run a community-detection algorithm to ascertain whether the administrative units of the Nordic states can be captured as a separate community of preferred partners

within the overall network. Communities in networks can be defined as subnetworks in which the interactions within are denser than the interactions outside of it (Murata, 2010). In other words, such clusters of national administrative units are more closely related to each other than they are with other counterparts in the network. To detect such communities we use an algorithm, called walktrap, which randomly 'walks' through the network until it gets 'trapped' into a densely connected subnetwork (Pons & Latapy, 2005, p. 1). Simply put, the walktrap algorithm runs short random walks across four ties from one network member to another as it calculates the modularity score. This score measures the degree to which each tie falls within a certain community compared to what you would expect if ties were distributed at random. This type of bottom-up cluster analysis seeks to optimise the modularity score to iteratively detect the number of communities present in the network (Murata, 2010). After running the community-detection algorithm, we visualise the network of interactions and colour each separate community to see whether the Nordics indeed tend to belong to the same community or subnetwork.

Next, we use Exponential Random Graph Models to test whether Nordic cooperation is significantly more likely than cooperation among national administrative units across Europe. These models are appropriate for analysing the inherently relational structure of networks (Handcock, Hunter, Butts, Goodreau, & Morris, 2008). They enable us to explicitly model the likelihood that the Nordics interact with one another instead of with other national administrative units. Interactions can take on several different forms; counterparts can exchange information, advice or best practices, but they can also engage with one another to solve problems related to their administrative tasks. We model each interaction type separately for all different EANs in our study.

3.2. Data Collection and Operationalisation

We collected the data on each interaction type for the EANs across the policy domains using our own online survey tool. We distributed the surveys to one representative from each member of the network separately for SOLVIT, the Administrative Commission and the CBHC expert group.

In each survey, we asked the respondents with which other national representatives they were most frequently in contact to exchange 1) *advice*, 2) *best practices*, 3) *information* and 4) to *resolve problems* concerning their relevant administrative tasks. We treat all network interactions as non-directed network ties. For example, if a national representative in Sweden indicated an exchange of information with a national representative in Norway, we assume that both were involved in this relationship. Each type of bilateral interaction results in a distinct adjacency matrix for every EAN. We used these matrices to visualise the networks and their communi-

ties and included them as the dependent variables in our Exponential Random Graph Models.

We conducted the survey on SOLVIT among all national SOLVIT centres in 2018, with a response rate of 97%. We did not receive a response from Iceland. We distributed a similar design survey among national representatives of the Administrative Commission in 2018, with a response rate of 100%. In 2019, we conducted our survey on the national representatives of the CBHC expert group, reaching a response rate of 87%. We did not receive a response from Croatia, Iceland, Spain and the United Kingdom. Such high response rates are sufficient to accurately represent and model the networks as if they were complete (Borgatti, 2006). Unfortunately, we do miss information on the position of Iceland in the network of the CBHC expert group; they neither participated in the survey nor were named by other members as most frequent contacts. Also, Norway and Iceland are not members of the Administrative Commission, where they only have observer status.

To test whether the Nordics interact significantly more with one another than with any other network member, we created a variable indicating which member is Nordic (coded as 1) and which member is not (coded as 0). We defined Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Iceland as Nordic states. In the Exponential Random Graph Models, we included *Nordic cooperation* as a dyadic attribute, indicating all interactions among the Nordics compared to interactions with non-Nordics.

We controlled for inherent interdependencies within the networks by taking into account *transitivity*. This network trait denotes the commonly found tendency of network members to close triads, meaning that one is more open for interactions with those that one already knows indirectly through others (Goodreau, Kitts, & Morris, 2009). We operationalise this by including a statistic called geometrically weighted edgewise shared partners (GWESP) in our models. By measuring transitivity in this way, we also account for the fact that there is a declining positive impact for each additional shared partner (Snijders, Pattison, Robins, & Handcock, 2006).

4. Results

4.1. Network Visualisations and Community Detection

To gain insight into the patterns of interaction and the component of Nordic cooperation within the context of European policy implementation, we visualise all four types of network interactions for each EAN (Figures 1 to 3). The identified communities are coloured differently and divided into separate clusters. This tells us how many communities were identified in each network graph and whether there is a Nordic community amongst them. The squared nodes indicate which of the network members are Nordic states.

First, as to the Administrative Commission, Sweden, Denmark and Finland indeed belong to the same com-

munity for all four types of interaction (see Figure 1). However, they do not form a secluded community, as this subnetwork comprises non-Nordic countries as well. With regard to information exchange, this community is rather broad and at the core of the network. Concerning the exchange of advice and best practices, the Nordics involve the Baltic states as well as the United Kingdom and Ireland. Problem-solving in the Administrative Commission shows the strongest Nordic cooperation, as they belong to a separate community, only including Latvia. Overall, Nordic cooperation is visible in the network coordinating social security systems, while the Nordics are more integrated into the network more generally.

Turning to the CBHC expert group, secondly, we see that interactions are particularly clustered among the Nordic states. While we have no data on Iceland, we see that Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland tend to exchange information, advice and best practices more than with their other European counterparts (see Figure 2). To a somewhat lesser degree, this is also true for problem-solving. When they do interact with non-Nordic administrative units, these tend to be from the Baltic states. Particularly the relationship between Finland and Estonia is strong. Nordic cooperation thus seems particularly strong when it comes to the exchange or resources among national administrative units coordinating healthcare on a European level.

Third, there is no clear Nordic community within SOLVIT (see Figure 3). Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland are mostly part of separate communities, interacting more with non-Nordic states than with each other. This finding, which is in line with our third expectation, shows that the Nordics are integrat-
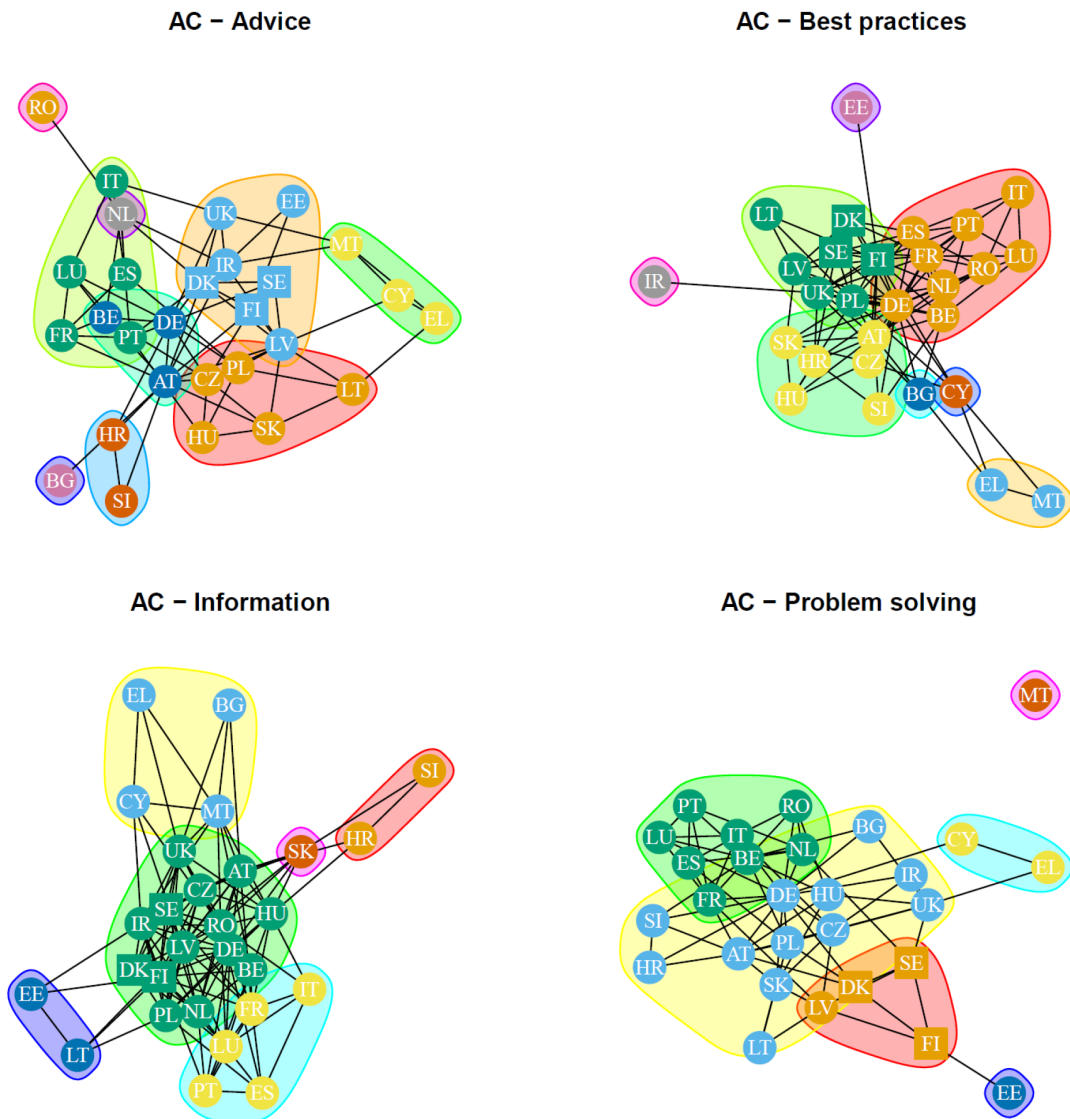

Figure 1. Network visualisation of interactions in the Administrative Commission with community detection. Notes: Each colour represents a different detected community. Nordic states are represented by a square; all others are represented by a circle.

CBHC − Advice

CBHC − Best practices

CBHC − Information

CBHC − Problem solving

Figure 2. Network visualisation of interactions in the CBHC expert group with community detection. Notes: Each colour represents a different detected community. Nordic states are represented by a square; all others are represented by a circle.
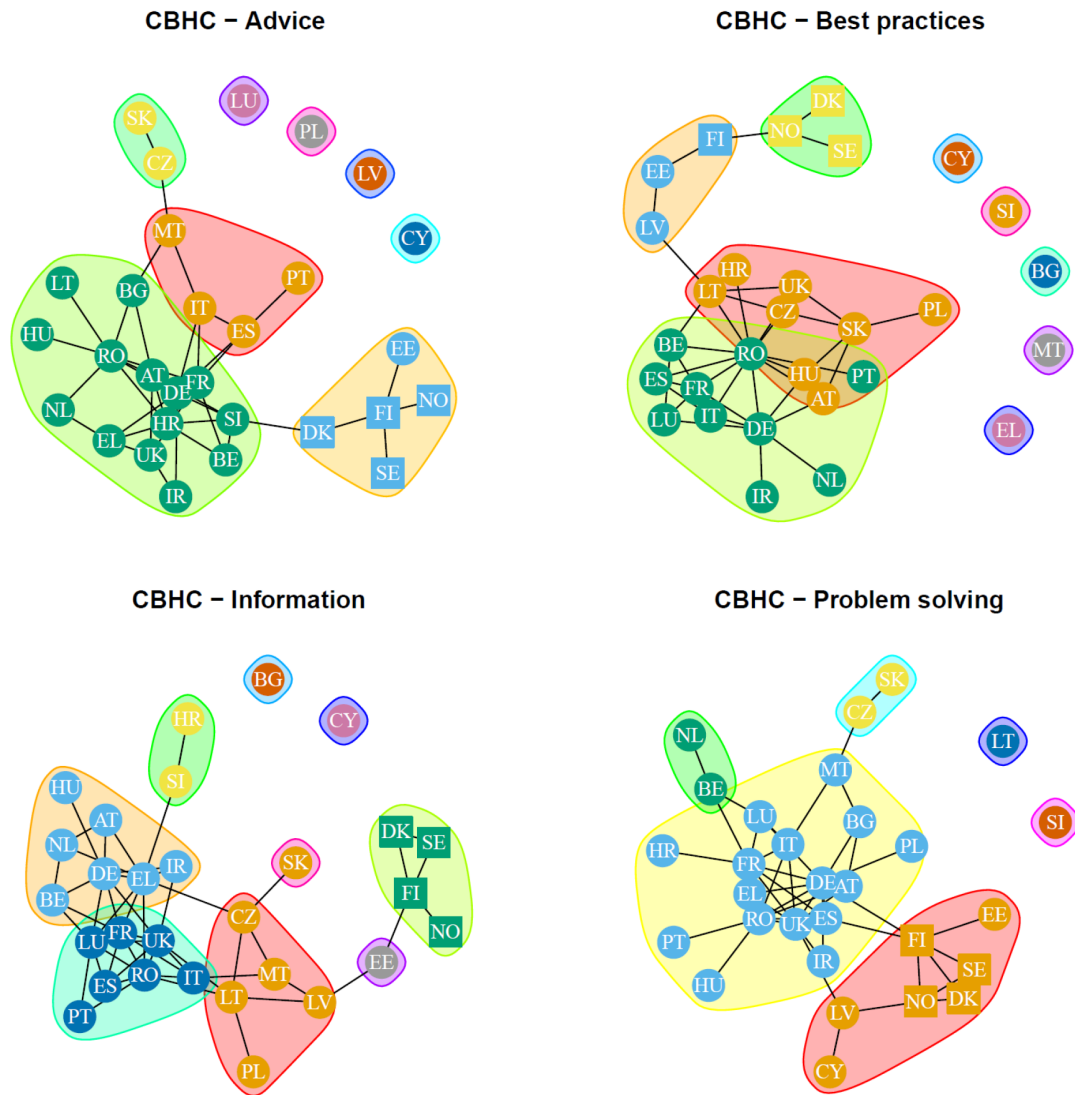
ed within the larger European context to the extent that there is no clear sign of Nordic cooperation in the context of internal market policy.

4.2. Modelling Nordic Cooperation Within European Administrative Networks

To test the significance of Nordic cooperation, we developed an Exponential Random Graph Model for every type of interaction in each EAN (see Table 1; Goodness of Fit diagnostics are in the Supplementary File). We control for transitivity, which tends to make interactions among already indirectly related nodes more likely, and see whether Nordic states interact significantly more with one another than with other members. The structural tendency to close triads is significant across networks and interaction types, indicating an overall dense interaction level in EANs.

First, in line with our community detection, we find significant Nordic cooperation within the Administrative Commission when it comes to problem-solving. All else being equal, the Nordics are almost twice more likely to interact to solve problems with one another than they are with other members of the Administrative Commission (odds ratio = 1.90, p < 0.1). Odds ratios can be calculated by exponentiating the relevant model coefficient. We do not find similar effects for the exchange of advice, best practices or information. This is likely due to the fact, as indicated by the community detection stage, that Nordic cooperation in this policy area does not preclude interactions with other members.

Furthermore, we find particularly significant and strong Nordic cooperation in the CBHC expert group, for all types of interactions. Administrative units of the Nordic states are more than five times as likely to exchange advice with other Nordics than with non-
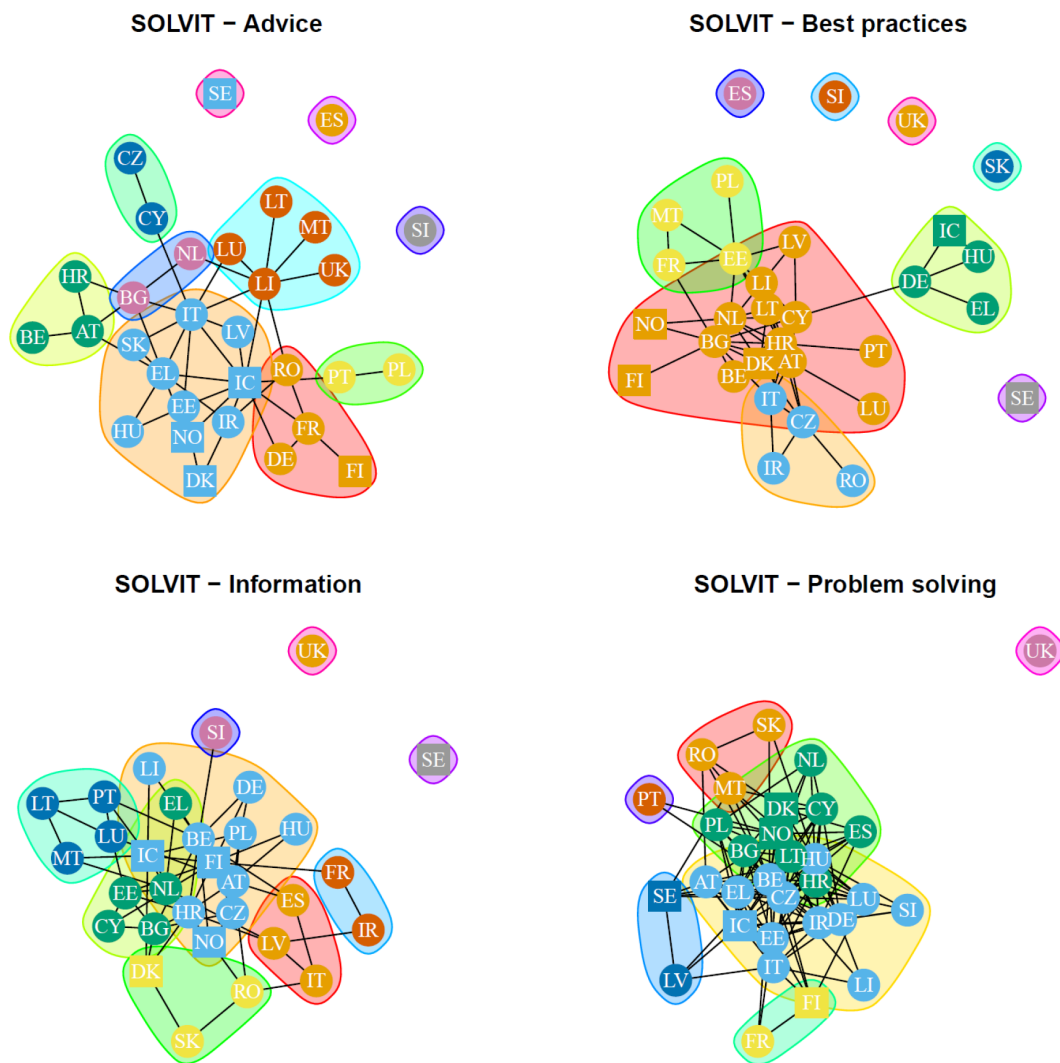
SOLVIT − Advice

SOLVIT − Best practices

SOLVIT − Information

SOLVIT − Problem solving

Figure 3. Network visualisation of interactions in SOLVIT with community detection. Notes: Each colour represents a different detected community. Nordic states are represented by a square; all others are represented by a circle.

Nordic counterparts (odds ratio = 5.16, $p < 0.05$). This effect is even stronger for the exchange of best practices, for which Nordic interactions are seven times more likely (odds ratio = 7.25, $p < 0.01$). The effect is strongest for information exchange: Here, interactions with other Nordic members are more than nine times as likely as interactions with non-Nordic members (odds ratio = 9.23, $p < 0.01$). At the same time, problem-solving among the Nordics is more than twice as likely compared to the non-Nordic states (odds ratio = 2.35, $p < 0.01$). This confirms our earlier descriptive finding that, in the area of EU healthcare policies, Nordic cooperation is particularly strong.

Finally, we find no significant effect on Nordic cooperation concerning interactions between SOLVIT centres. In accordance with our community detection, the Nordics are as likely to cooperate with each other as they are with other European SOLVIT centres. Nordic cooperation does not seem to be of any significance in the internal market policy area, which is an area dis-

playing extensive European integration and no separate Nordic integration.

In sum, Nordic cooperation is visible in EANs concerning the implementation of both European health and social policy. Interactions have a particularly Nordic character in the area of healthcare. By contrast, we find no Nordic clustering of interactions in the area of internal market policy. This supports our second expectation that Nordic cooperation is differentiated. In other words, Nordic cooperation seems to depend on the level of institutionalisation, which differs across policy areas. The presence of both deeply-rooted Nordic welfare models and existing Nordic cooperation that predates European cooperation in the health and social welfare policy domain, seem to underpin further Nordic cooperation. Vice versa, the Nordic component in European cooperation is insignificant in internal market policy, an area in which Nordic cooperation was weak to begin with, European integration being much more advanced.

Table 1. Exponential Random Graph Models.

	Administrative Commission				CBHC expert group				SOLVIT			
	Advice (1)	Best practices (2)	Information (3)	Problem-solving (4)	Advice (5)	Best practices (6)	Information (7)	Problem-solving (8)	Advice (9)	Best practices (10)	Information (11)	Problem-solving (12)
Density	−2.511*** (0.402)	−4.518*** (0.937)	−2.522*** (0.935)	−2.695*** (0.415)	−4.018*** (0.674)	−4.751*** (0.930)	−4.754*** (0.903)	−3.860*** (0.458)	−2.850*** (0.335)	−4.035*** (0.427)	−1.888*** (0.316)	−6.046*** (1.372)
Transitivity	0.572*** (0.206)	2.378*** (0.633)	1.243** (0.573)	0.464** (0.198)	0.435** (0.200)	0.732*** (0.227)	0.657*** (0.226)	0.951*** (0.246)	0.657*** (0.198)	1.489*** (0.301)	0.277* (0.159)	3.575*** (0.947)
Nordic cooperation	0.185 (0.297)	−0.237 (0.217)	−0.287 (0.245)	0.642* (0.351)	1.642** (0.708)	1.981** (0.960)	2.222** (0.942)	0.853** (0.423)	−0.067 (0.298)	0.219 (0.235)	−0.429 (0.273)	−0.291 (0.183)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	363.845	422.075	478.906	370.537	257.861	238.760	281.893	274.984	285.774	309.138	376.154	555.310
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	375.650	433.880	490.711	382.342	269.880	250.779	293.912	287.003	298.200	321.564	388.580	567.736

Note: Levels of significance: *$p < 0.1$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$.

5. Conclusion

Across the board, Nordic interactions have proven rather resilient to European integration, contrary to the expectation formulated in existing literature (Olesen & Strang, 2016; Sverdrup, 1998). Our study has shown that a strong Nordic community still exists within the broader European community when it comes to interactions concerning the implementation and enforcement of EU rules. This demonstrates that political orders can very well overlap and exist simultaneously. Being part of a larger political order does not inhibit Nordic cooperation. In fact, we find that going Nordic is still very much apparent within EANs.

However, the Nordic effect seems contingent on the level of institutionalisation, which differs across policy areas. Our findings support the differentiation hypothesis on regional integration (Leruth et al., 2019; Schimmelfennig et al., 2015). Nordic subnetworks in EANs exist in those policy areas in which Nordic cooperation predates European integration, and was maintained in parallel to later EU developments. Both the established cooperation and the institutional similarity of the Nordic welfare model (Kettunen et al., 2016) appear to ensure the preservation of Nordic cooperation in the health and social welfare policy domain. The finding that institutional similarity is crucial for selecting partners for cooperation and lesson drawing (Rose, 1993) confirms earlier studies on transgovernmental interactions (Efrat & Newman, 2017; Martinsen et al., 2020; Van Der Heijden, 2019; Vantaggiato, 2019). Instead, in the strongly Europeanised area of internal market policy, where Nordic cooperation was never very successful and a clear Nordic model remained absent, we found no significant Nordic cluster in interactions.

In addition to our finding that the Nordics tend to interact with their Nordic counterparts in areas of previous Nordic cooperation and development of a Nordic model, we find that there is a Baltic connection as well. This indicates that Nordic cooperation may extend its regional base, to the extent of including the Baltics. Even though the Baltic states never really became official players in Nordic cooperation (Olesen & Strang, 2016), initiatives from the 1990s to establish cooperation frameworks may have led to the development of this Nordic–Baltic connection. The precise background of this finding requires follow-up research.

In sum, the findings suggest a link between previously institutionalised Nordic interactions and the bilateral interactions among officials in administrative units. The exchange of resources such as information, best practices and advice as well as interactions to solve problems related to the implementation of EU policies in the national context is clearly structured along institutional dimensions shaped by Nordic cooperation. This emphasises the importance of studying the actual interactions that make up transnational bureaucracy (Strang, 2016; Sundelius, 1977; Sundelius & Wiklund, 1979, 2000)

and their networked structure (Martinsen et al., 2020; Mastenbroek & Martinsen, 2018; Vantaggiato, 2019) to assess the relevance of Nordic cooperation within the broader political order.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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Article

New Alliances in Post-Brexit Europe: Does the New Hanseatic League Revive Nordic Political Cooperation?

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Abstract
As Brexit removes the Nordic countries' most powerful ally from the EU, what does this imply for their approach to European affairs? The literature on small states within the EU suggests that they can counterbalance limited bargaining capacities by entering two types of alliances: strategic partnerships with bigger member states and institutionalised cooperation on a regional basis. Against this backdrop we ask whether, by significantly raising the costs of non-cooperation for Nordic governments, the Brexit referendum has triggered a revival of Nordic political cooperation. We scrutinise this conjecture by analysing Nordic strategies of coalition-building on EU financial and budgetary policy, specifically looking at attempts to reform Europe's Economic and Monetary Union and proposals to strengthen the EU's fiscal powers. We find that Nordic governments have successfully collaborated on these issues in the context of new alliances such as the 'New Hanseatic League' or the 'Frugal Four.' Yet, their coalition-building strategies rely on relatively loose and issue-specific alliances rather than an institutionalisation of Nordic political cooperation, implying that this revival of Nordic political cooperation hardly involves the institutions of 'official' Nordic cooperation. We argue that this reflects lasting differences among the Nordics' approach to the EU as well as electorates' scepticism about supranational institution-building, implying that 'reluctant Europeans' are often also 'reluctant Scandinavians.'

Keywords
Brexit; budgetary politics; Economic and Monetary Union; fiscal integration; intergovernmentalism; Nordic cooperation; small states

1. Introduction

The Brexit referendum of 2016 has led to much soul-searching about the future of European integration. While its outcome sent shockwaves across Europe, its impact was felt more in some places than in others, with the Nordic countries being among the hardest hit. Not only did a British exit imply the loss of the Nordics' most powerful ally in European negotiations, which often led a 'market-making coalition' focused on market liberalisation and free trade (Quaglia, 2010). It also brought about the prospect of a power shift in Brussels favouring euro area countries, potentially pushing the euro outsiders among the Nordics further to the side lines (Huhe, Naurin, & Thomson, 2020). Hence, the events since 2016 have forced Scandinavian governments to rethink their approach toward European integration.

The literature on 'small states' typically assumes that all Nordic countries confront similar structural disadvantages in EU policymaking due to their relatively limited bargaining power and constrained financial resources. However, research in this tradition has also shown that

small states can and do successfully influence EU policy and that coalition-building is decisive for success (Thorhallsson & Wivel, 2006). Similarly, Diana Panke argues that small states' limited bargaining power "can potentially be counterbalanced with two strategies: institutionalised coordination on a regional basis and strategic partnerships with bigger states" (Panke, 2010, p. 802). While the latter strategy implies forging strong ties with one of the EU's 'great powers' in an asymmetric relationship, the former relies on a pooling of powers among equals.

This juxtaposition between two complementary strategies serves as the starting point for our analysis. We investigate how the Nordic countries seek to compensate for the loss of its most important 'big power' ally within the EU after 2016. Do they focus on strategic partnerships, replacing one big partner with another, or do they instead try to further institutionalise Nordic cooperation to defend their joint interests in EU negotiations? Given that the Nordic countries have long been recognised for being particularly effective in turning intra-Nordic cooperation into extra-Nordic influence (Grøn & Wivel, 2018), this article asks if Brexit has brought about a revival of Nordic political cooperation.

Our analysis focuses on the area of EU financial and budgetary policy with a special emphasis on reforming Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and discussions about strengthening the EU's fiscal powers. We focus on these reforms as 'crucial cases' for two reasons: First, recent reform initiatives in this area all seek to further strengthen the euro through the creation of additional supranational institutions and are thus emblematic of integration schemes observed with scepticism by both the Nordics and its now-lost ally. As these initiatives carry the potential to irreversibly alter the path of European integration in a more federalist direction, the stakes for the Nordics are high and we should expect them to adopt a public position. At the same time, however, EMU reform poses a 'tough test' for Nordic cooperation since only one of the five Nordic countries, Finland, is an EMU member state, which may make coordination among the Nordics particularly challenging. Hence, EMU reform may serve as a least likely case for effective Nordic coordination on EU policy. This implies, to invoke Jack Levy's 'Sinatra inference,' that if the Nordics can make it here, they can make it anywhere (Levy, 2002).

While detailed negotiations are still ongoing, the empirical record thus far suggests that the Nordics have indeed increased their collaborations to fight off ambitious reform proposals. They have successfully stunted ambitions to create a genuine euro area budget with a stabilisation function or to increase the size of the long-term EU budget. While they made concessions on the Covid-19 recovery fund, they received substantial increases to their budget rebates in return. Yet, these results were mostly achieved through cooperation within loosely defined alliances such as the 'New Hanseatic League' or the 'Frugal Four' which also

involved other countries such as the Baltic states, Ireland, Austria, or the Netherlands. These ad-hoc coalition-building attempts were driven by intergovernmental cooperation rather than by strengthening the role of the official institutions of 'Norden'—that is: the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers—in EU affairs. Furthermore, actual attempts to further institutionalise official Nordic cooperation on EU policy have been blunted, as the resistance to creating a common representation in Brussels shows.

We argue that this mixed record of Nordic political coordination after Brexit reflects the very same mechanisms that have made the Nordic countries 'awkward partners' in European integration in the first place. First, Nordic political elites and electorates share a deep-seated scepticism towards supranational arrangements which limit national autonomy (Stegmann McCallion & Brianson, 2018, p. 6), be they European or Nordic. Due to this hesitation regarding pooling resources in a lasting fashion, Nordic countries favour flexible and issue-specific alliances over a long-term institutionalisation of Nordic cooperation in EU affairs, which may involve strengthening supranational institutions at the regional level.

Second, despite often being viewed as a relatively coherent bloc, there is great variation between the five Nordic states' and their preferences on EU policy. The experience of the sovereign debt crisis in the euro area and the Brexit vote may have brought Finland—the EU's former poster child of the North—closer to its more sceptical neighbours. Yet, the simple fact that Nordic cooperation brings together non-EU members (Norway and Iceland) and EU members with formal (Denmark) and de facto (Sweden) opt-outs, already reveals the difficulties associated with making institutionalised Nordic cooperation a central tool for ensuring national interests, since these may not always be well-aligned. This matters because utilising institutionalised cooperation to counterbalance limited bargaining power presupposes homogeneous interests within groups (Panke, 2010, p. 803), which cannot be taken for granted in the case of Nordic cooperation.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: The next section situates Nordic strategies toward EU policy in the wider literature on 'small states' in European integration, discussing the strategic options smaller member states have at their disposal to influence policy in general and how the Nordic countries make use of them in particular. It also discusses the relationship between Nordic cooperation and European integration in this light. The following section illustrates these dynamics empirically by analysing Nordic approaches towards EU financial and budgetary policies after Brexit, focusing on the coalitional logics the Nordics have utilised to influence reform outcomes. We conclude by highlighting the implications of our analysis for the future of European integration and Nordic cooperation.

2. Small States in European Integration: What Strategies for the Nordic Countries?

While all European countries are small by global standards, what constitutes a small state in the context of European integration is far from obvious. Hence, researchers frequently use proxies such as population size, voting weights, or GDP to distinguish small states from middle powers and big players. Despite this lack of a commonly agreed definition, however, there is little doubt that the EU enlargements of 1995 and 2004 have drastically changed the balance between smaller and bigger member states. If we follow Panke and Gurol (2019) in identifying countries as 'small' if their populations are smaller than the EU27 average of 16,5 million, then 20 out of 27 member states fit that definition, including all Nordic countries.

Even if Europe's small states already displayed a surprising 'strength of the weak' when adjusting to the rapid changes in the global economy throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Katzenstein, 1985), the prospect of economic integration offered additional advantages. As members of a large single market, for instance, small states could reap benefits associated with large economies such as economies of scale and increased competition. However, this came at the cost of potentially playing only a minor role in collective decision-making processes. As Thorhallsson and Wivel (2006, p. 658) aptly summarise, such steps in integration make small states "at the same time more dependent on strong international institutions and less able to influence their decision-making."

2.1. Structural Disadvantages in EU Decision-Making

Small states confront several obstacles in their attempts to influence decision-making at the EU level, with limited voting power being only the most obvious impediments. Outside of intergovernmental conferences, the increasing use of qualified majority voting in EU decision-making is theorised to weaken small state influence on EU decision-making further. Given that the informal norms of decision-making by consensus rather than formal voting remains the primary mode of decision-making (Heisenberg, 2005), the impact of qualified majority voting on small-state influence should not be overstated. Even within a consensus culture, however, small states face size-related disadvantages. As they tend to have smaller public budgets, their ministries and embassies usually manage the same workload with significantly fewer staff. In the context of EU negotiations, such capacity constraints may result in delayed or vague positions, decreasing the argumentative power required for negotiation strategies focused on persuasion (Panke, 2010).

The small states literature has identified a list of counterstrategies that small states may employ to overcome such disadvantages. First, the 'rotating Council Presidency' offers smaller states a platform to promote niche national interests or novel policy ideas (Bengtsson,

Elgström, & Tallberg, 2004). Holding the Presidency offers an important window of opportunity to increase 'soft' or normative power for countries lacking hard-power resources. Second, somewhat paradoxically, the relative weakness of small states allows them to adopt a role as 'honest brokers.' As they cannot expect to successfully push through their national interests in the same way as countries like France or Germany do, small states are less likely to meet the same level of suspicion when tabling a compromise. A reputation as honest brokers then also allows small states to shape the agenda as 'norm advocates' (Björkdahl, 2008) or policy 'frontrunners and role models' (Jakobsen, 2009). Third, selective engagement and prioritisation allows small states to concentrate their limited resources on those issues where they have the most important economic and political interests at stake. If small states adopt positions only relatively infrequently, this means that "when they do, decision-makers in the Council are particularly attentive to them" (Arregui & Thomson, 2009, p. 660).

While the above counterstrategies apply to small member states individually, the literature suggests that for small states to successfully influence EU policy, "coalition-building has been decisive" (Thorhallsson & Wivel, 2006, p. 660). Here, Panke (2010) usefully distinguishes two complementary approaches to coalition-building: strategic partnerships with bigger states such as France, Germany, or (formerly) the UK on the one hand, and institutionalised coordination on a regional basis on the other. While the former implies an asymmetric partnership, the latter approach suggests a more balanced power relationship within an alliance that cannot be divided into 'leaders' and 'followers' as clearly. Typical examples of such regional-based horizontal alliances include the Benelux, Nordic cooperation, the Baltic group, or the Visegrad Four. The analysis below seeks to shed light on the open question of whether strategic partnerships and horizontal coordination can be substitutes and, more specifically, whether Brexit increases the utilisation of horizontal cooperation among the UK's Northern allies.

2.2. The Nordic Approach as a Success Case of Small State Influence?

While voting procedures and capacity constraints could lead us to expect that small states hold both less bargaining power and argumentative power than bigger EU members, the empirical record remains inconclusive. An empirical analysis of national bargaining success on EU legislation, for instance, finds France and Germany doing poorly and small states like Ireland, Luxembourg, or the Nordic states doing 'particularly well' (Golub, 2012, p. 1311). Similarly, studies of the intergovernmental conferences (IGCs) at Amsterdam and Nice did not find that large member states hold outsize bargaining power (Finke, 2009; Slapin, 2008). Hence, it is not a foregone conclusion that small states are powerless, neither in 'ordinary' legislative decision-making nor at extraordinary IGCs.

Among the heterogeneous group of small member states, the Nordics are typically seen as particularly active and effective in enshrining their preferences in EU legislation (Panke, 2010, 2011). Their success is somewhat surprising, given that the Nordics are relative latecomers and often regarded as 'reluctant Europeans' (Grøn, Nedergaard, & Wivel, 2015; Miljan, 1977). If we assume that experience with EU decision-making implies learning and comes with extensive knowledge and networks, these resources should be less pronounced for relatively new member states like Sweden and Finland, which only joined in 1995. One might therefore expect the Nordics to carry less influence in Brussels than more seasoned groupings such as the Benelux countries (Maes & Verdun, 2005). However, Daniel Naurin (2007) provides evidence that the Nordic countries have quickly developed large amounts of network capital to cooperate at the EU level, with Sweden lagging behind only the 'big three' and being far better connected than larger member states such as Spain or Italy.

Alongside network capital and a strategy of prioritisation and selective engagement, normative power has been another key source of Nordic influence. Sweden and Denmark in particular are proud promoters of the 'Nordic model' of welfare and labour market policy and their attempts to export the model has been quite successful within the EU (Bengtsson et al., 2004). A striking example may be seen in the adoption of 'flexicurity' as a core element of the European Commission's reform recommendations to many EU member states in the context of the European Semester process (Bekker, 2018; Haas, D'Erman, Schulz, & Verdun, 2020). Other prominent examples include Finland's 'Northern Dimension Initiative' (Arter, 2000) and Denmark's success in coordinating the Eastern enlargement process during its 2002 presidency (Bengtsson et al., 2004).

A pertinent question in the current period of change, however, is to what extent Brexit will negatively affect the hitherto effective strategies of the Nordics. Given that Denmark and Sweden have the closest network ties to the UK and have traditionally held the most similar policy positions, they face particularly high hurdles in maintaining previous levels of influence. Thus, both countries are among those most "likely to become significantly less central in Council networks if they do not take compensating measures" (Huhe et al., 2020, p. 154). It remains an open question whether such compensating measures focus on building new strategic partnerships (e.g., by collaborating more closely with Germany) or emphasise horizontal coordination instead by turning intra-Nordic cooperation into a platform for extra-Nordic influence to a greater extent than in the past.

2.3. Nordic Cooperation and European Integration: A Difficult Relationship

The history of Nordic political cooperation has been characterised as "littered with grand schemes that never materialized" (Grøn & Wivel, 2018, p. 272). Despite setbacks, however, the project has continuously moved on. As one striking example, the creation of the Nordic Council of Ministers followed failed discussions to establish a Nordic common market as an alternative to the European Economic Community. This example already underlines that Nordic cooperation has always been influenced by the broader European integration project. It is thus no coincidence that the future of 'Norden' is back on the agenda at a time when the EU itself appears to be at a crossroads (Olesen & Strang, 2016).

In the context of EU affairs, it is useful to distinguish informal formats from 'official' cooperation in the context of the Norden institutions, the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers. While informal interaction formats such as breakfast meetings of Nordic ministers prior to EU summits are well established and serve a useful purpose in pooling information and expertise (Ruse, 2015, pp. 54–56), the role of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers in coordinating Nordic EU policy remains significantly less clear, not least because these institutions include both EU insiders (with varying numbers of opt-outs) and outsiders. Following the contrasting outcomes of several referendums on EU membership in the fall of 1994, Norway and Iceland stayed on the outside, while Sweden and Finland joined Denmark as EU members—with direct consequences for Nordic cooperation (Gänzle & Henökl, 2018). The Nordic Council responded to this challenge by radically overhauling its internal structures. Instead of following policy areas as organising principle, three pillars were adopted including EU relations and cooperation with neighbouring regions (especially the Baltics) alongside intra-Nordic matters (Opitz & Etzold, 2018). While the three-pillar structure proved unworkable and was hence abandoned after only five years, many attempts to strengthen the coordination of EU policy within 'official' Nordic cooperation followed.

The latest reform program, *Nyt Norden* (The New North), emphasises the need to make official Nordic cooperation more political and relevant, especially for international and European affairs (NORDEN, 2016a). The aim appears to be to counter the increased marginalisation of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers since the 1990s, when a strengthened role of the prime ministers translated into governments' preferences for cooperating 'informally and outside the old institutions' (Olesen & Strang, 2016, p. 35). While the Nordic Council of Ministers has increasingly focused on the EU in recent years, it may still be better understood as a forum for discussions rather than coalition-building of a Nordic 'bloc.' Hence, Grøn and Wivel (2018, p. 276) describe the role of 'official' Nordic cooperation within EU affairs as an arena for sharing information and informally testing arguments rather than finding common policy positions and strategies. Our modest ambition for the empirical discussion below is to assess to what extent Brexit may have changed this pattern by also giving the

institutions of 'official' Nordic cooperation a bigger role in EU policy.

3. Nordic Cooperation on EU Financial and Budgetary Policies After Brexit

Our analysis focuses on the area of EU financial and budgetary policy, which offers a particularly 'tough test' for Nordic influence. This includes initiatives to reform the EMU and to increase the EU's budgetary powers. The Nordic countries' highly differentiated patchwork of integration arrangements in this area are likely to make intra-Nordic coordination on these issues particularly challenging. However, these developments also constitute crucial cases for the Nordics because recent EMU reforms involve a significant deepening of European integration in the area of core state powers and thus threaten to further decouple the Nordic countries from 'core Europe.' What is more, ambitious proposals to create supranational institutions are emblematic of centralising ambitions always observed with scepticism by the Nordics. Attempts to bolster the EU's and the euro area's fiscal powers also go directly against Sweden's and Denmark's traditional strategy to selectively and defensively engage with European integration in order to preserve crucial 'bastions of national autonomy' (Wivel, 2018, p. 14).

3.1. The New Hanseatic League and EMU Reform

On the pertinent issue of EMU reform, the Nordic countries have responded to the Brexit shock by joining the so-called 'New Hanseatic League' as the perhaps most visible new grouping in EU politics. Bringing together small states with a strong preference for free trade and balanced books, the alliance emerged at the end of 2017 and built on the long-standing practice of organising informal meetings among the Nordic and Baltic EU members (NB6) prior to Council meetings in Brussels (Schoeller, 2020). In addition to the Nordic and Baltic states, Ireland and the Netherlands joined the new coalition. Notably, this implies that Denmark and Sweden were the only euro outsiders within the group, giving them the opportunity to retain a voice in debates about the future of the euro. The group's most tangible output consisted in a series of position papers published throughout 2018, focused on Banking Union, Capital Markets Union, and the reform of the European Stability Mechanism, respectively. Taken together, these reforms constitute a potentially far-reaching deepening of European integration without renegotiating the treaties.

From a Nordic perspective, these initiatives (and the Banking Union in particular) constitute a critical fork-in-the-road. While Finland joined the Banking Union by virtue of its EMU membership, Sweden and Denmark have set up national taskforces to address the question of whether to join on a voluntary basis through an arrangement called 'close cooperation.' Both have initially decided not to opt in based on concerns about paying for bank failures in other member states and a preference of regulatory autonomy (Spendzharova & Bayram, 2016). However, unlike the UK, both have not vocally opposed the Banking Union and, after the publication of reports by government commissions at the end of 2019 (Danish Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs, 2019; Swedish Ministry of Finance, 2019), Denmark and Sweden are currently further exploring the option of joining. Their final position will likely be of critical importance for their future approach to European integration. As the Banking Union requires the funding of a common safety net for dealing with the resolution of struggling banks, sceptics see it as a stepping-stone in the direction of fiscal union. Staying on the outside thus threatens to open an even wider gulf between euro insiders and outsiders—an unfortunate development from the perspective of the Nordics (Brianson & Stegmann McCallion, 2020; Korkman, 2015).

With a future opt-in to the Banking Union still in the cards for the Nordic euro outsiders, negotiations about completing the Banking Union were of relevance for them as well. When the New Hanseatic League first issued a position in 2018, new institutions for banking supervision and resolution had already been created, focussing the Banking Union debate squarely on the missing third pillar, a European Deposit Insurance Scheme, to replace existing national or regional schemes (Howarth & Quaglia, 2018). While the New Hanseatic League did not generally rule out the creation of a common backstop for banking crises or a European Deposit Insurance Scheme, it made any discussions on completing the Banking Union conditional on prior efforts to reduce legacy debts at the national level (Hanseatic League, 2008a). This discussion specifically centred on the amount of non-performing loans on Southern European banks' balance sheets as a legacy of the sovereign debt crisis. The New Hanseatic League demanded far-reaching national efforts in risk-reduction as a precondition for any sort of risk-sharing.

Similar as with their published positions on the Capital Markets Union (Hanseatic League, 2008b) and the European Stability Mechanism reform (Hanseatic League, 2008c), the New Hanseatic League remained closely aligned with German preferences. The group has consistently positioned itself as fiscal hawks opposing any form of redistribution within the euro area or grand leaps in European integration—reportedly with the 'tacit approval from Berlin' (Khan, 2018). Hence, the Nordics' strategy under the umbrella of the New Hanseatic League combines both elements of coalition-building: coordination with like-minded small states while also seeking German support. This has led the *Financial Times* to conclude that the success of the New Hanseatic League's attempts to replace Britain will "be determined by their ability to persuade the bigger EU states, and particularly Germany, to join them" ("A daunting task,'' 2018).

3.2. The 'Frugal Four' and Opposition to Centralising Fiscal Powers

Yet another informal format took centre stage in debates about the EU's budgetary powers. Denmark and Sweden joined Austria and the Netherlands under the label of the 'Frugal Four,' to position themselves jointly as advocates of budgetary discipline from 2018 onwards. The policy initiatives of the group can be seen in three interventions designed to prevent fiscal transfers and a further delegation of budgetary powers to Brussels: opposition to a budgetary instrument for the euro area, to an EU budget bigger than 1 percent of EU GDP, and to issuing joint debt to fund the recovery from the Covid-19 crisis. While the Frugal Four succeeded on the first two counts, their opposition did not prevent a deal on the EU's recovery fund.

The idea to create a euro area budget—dubbed Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness—forms part of French president Emmanuel Macron's broader vision for European integration expressed in his Sorbonne speech in 2017. When Germany endorsed a watered-down version of the idea as part of the 'Meseburg Declaration' of June 2018, this change of position invoked the fear among the Frugal Four that Germany might make too many concessions to France and hence triggered their open and proactive opposition (Schoeller, 2020). While the instrument originally was meant to be large enough to provide the euro area with enough fiscal firepower to fight economic downturns, the Frugal Four under the leadership of Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte successfully reined in Macron's ambitions through public interventions (Verdun, 2020). After lengthy discussions, an agreement on the Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness's design in October 2019 saw its scope and scale shrunk dramatically: It was thought to receive only €17 billion of basic funding for the period of 2021–2027 and hence did not allow for fiscal transfers to counteract asymmetric shocks. When the Covid-19 crisis spurred proposals for a much bigger (but temporary) recovery fund in May 2020, the small (but permanent) Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness was "unceremoniously scrapped" (Brunsden & Fleming, 2020) altogether.

In parallel discussions about the EU's long-term budget for 2021–2027 (the multiannual financial framework), the Frugal Four drew the line at 1 percent of EU GDP. They predictably opposed the Commission's plans to preserve the EU's spending power despite the loss of the UK's contributions because they, as net contributors, would potentially face substantially higher costs. In a joint opinion piece issued in February 2020, the 'frugal' heads of government reiterated their 1 percent limit and demanded "a system of permanent corrections to protect individual states from having to shoulder excessive budgetary burdens" (Kurz, 2020). Again, the planned negotiations of the multiannual financial framework were derailed by the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, leading to a completely new stage and intensity of budgetary negotiations.

As the economic fallout of the Covid-19 lockdowns became clearer in the following months, fiscal policy debates focused on how to fund the recovery. Mirroring earlier discussions about 'eurobonds,' an initiative led by France, Spain, and Italy to issue joint European debt (christened 'coronabonds') was opposed by the Frugal Four and Germany and hence quickly stalled in April 2020. Yet in a dramatic turn of events, German chancellor Merkel and French President Macron issued a joint proposal on May 18 to jointly fund €500 billion worth of grants to countries hit hardest by the pandemic. Remarkably, this proposal did not only include sizable (non-repayable) fiscal transfers, but also foresaw the European Commission issuing debt and thus setting a precedent for large-scale, centralised borrowing in the EU. Within a week, the Frugal Four issued a counter-proposal focused on (repayable) loans worth €250 billion. Their proposal emphasised the 'temporary, one-off nature' of the fund and argued for strict economic conditionality and against any mutualisation of debt (Frugal Four, 2020). The European Commission followed on May 27 by issuing its own proposal for a €750 billion recovery fund (dubbed 'Next Generation EU'), which combined grants worth €500 billion with loans of €250 billion.

Frugal opposition determined the headlines in the run-up to a crucial EU summit to negotiate both the multiannual financial framework and the recovery fund, when numerous European leaders visited the Dutch PM as the informal spokesperson of the frugal group to persuade them (Khan & Brunsden, 2020). Throughout the tense negotiations at what would become the second-longest summit meeting in the EU Council's history (July 17–21, 2020), the key battle lines focused on the ratio between grants and loans and governance issues, with the Frugal Four insisting on retaining national vetoes over the disbursements of money to other member states. The deadlock was ultimately broken when the 27 heads of state and government agreed on a €1,074 billion long-term budget plus a €750 billion Covid-19 recovery fund. While the Frugal Four dropped their opposition to the disbursement of any non-repayable grants, they succeeded in reducing their value from €500 billion to €390 billion. Similarly, the agreement does not foresee national vetoes but a temporary 'emergency brake' (of up to three months) if individual member states feel that other member states do not fulfil the reform promises made in return for the funds received. As the joint negotiation of the long-term budget and the recovery fund gave ample room for horse trading, the Frugal Four received substantially increased rebates for their budget contributions in return for their agreement. Hence, they ultimately signed on to a deal widely perceived as a historic leap forward in European integration.

While the budget rebates and reduced volume of grants allowed the Frugal Four to present the deal as a

success to their domestic constituencies, it may prove to be a pyrrhic victory in the long run. The summit negotiations clearly saw small states punching well above their weight; yet the final agreement establishes the principle of joint EU borrowing and thus marks a decisive step towards fiscal integration. To repay some of the borrowed sums, EU-wide plastic taxes or carbon border fees are currently being discussed, which suggest that Europe has "boarded the train towards more common taxation and cannot get off and turn back" (Sandbu, 2020). Despite their powerful resistance at the July 2020 summit, its final outcome therefore contradicts the Nordics' preferences for limited integration in important ways. Why?

Compared to the case of EMU reform, two elements reduced the Nordics' bargaining position on EU budgetary politics. First, they found themselves opposed by Germany on several counts. Their position to reduce the overall size of the multiannual financial framework took a hit when Germany signalled its willingness to increase its own budgetary contributions early on. More dramatically, the Frugal Four counterproposal for a Covid-19 recovery fund did not only draw the ire of its usual opponents in the South but German misgivings, too. This suggests that Nordic cooperation on EU affairs after Brexit may require tacit German approval to be effective. Second, the Nordic countries failed to present a united front after Finland broke the ranks. Following parliamentary elections in 2019, the new centre-left government changed course by clarifying that "Finland's policy on Europe does not involve a single-handed commitment to Hanseatic Leagues or any other blocs; instead, we collaborate with everyone and foster the unity of the EU" (Finnish Government, 2019). While Finnish positions on budgetary matters were often not substantially different from those of the Frugal Four, domestic politics produced a change in tactics, leading Finland's new government to avoid the Hanseatic and Frugal coalitions—much to the dismay of conservative and right-wing parties in the Finnish Parliament (Eduskunta, 2020). This ultimately changed three days into the July 2020 summit, when Finland's prime minister Sanna Marin joined the Frugals following heated exchanges with Southern European leaders (Khan, Fleming, & Brunsden, 2020). For the most part, however, Finland avoided being associated with the Frugal Four, underscoring how domestic politics and different tactics among the Nordic countries can undermine the effectiveness of Nordic political cooperation in EU affairs.

3.3. Official Nordic Cooperation on European Affairs

Nordic attempts to influence EU policy through alliances such as the New Hanseatic League and the Frugal Four clearly follow the tradition of informal and intergovernmental political cooperation. While these initiatives are driven by national heads of government (Frugal Four) or finance ministers (New Hanseatic League), the official

institutions of Norden seem to have little role to play on these debates. The limited role of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers may surprise against the backdrop of several declarations to increase their role for Nordic cooperation in EU affairs. However, these developments are in line with the limited impact of several initiatives to increase Norden's footprint in Brussels. One striking example includes the proposal to establish a joint office of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers in Brussels to represent Norden in the EU. The national governments in the Nordic Council of Ministers did not approve of the plan—presumably because of concerns about undermining their national representations (Opitz & Etzold, 2018, p. 5). Even the inter-parliamentary Nordic Council was deeply split on the issue, as seen in an unusually contested 38–32 vote in favour of a much watered-down compromise to temporarily send a Nordic Council liaison officer to Brussels, which was opposed by the centre-right parties (NORDEN, 2016b).

This episode underlines that the Norden institutions' ambitions to strengthen their role in EU affairs after Brexit have thus far not substantially altered the state of play in Nordic political cooperation (Etzold & Opitz, 2016). An external evaluation of the reform process 'The New North' (*Nyt Norden*) consequently finds that Norden has the "greatest room for improvement" regarding their stated goal of strengthening cooperation on international and EU issues (Resonans, 2018). As the existing institutional forms of Nordic cooperation did not allow much of joint Nordic positioning on EU affairs, Brexit as a potential critical juncture may have brought about far-ranging reforms to accommodate such ambitions. Yet no such developments can be observed, possibly owing to the 'moving-target' character of Brexit during the period under investigation. In this sense, Brexit resembles a complex 'known unknown' which makes it rational for other member states to adopt a 'wait and see' approach. Hence Brexit has thus far not altered the Nordics' preference for coordinating their positions informally through relatively loose and issue-specific intergovernmental coalitions rather than within the long-established official institutions of Norden. This preference for pragmatism might still change once Brexit becomes an established fact. Otherwise one will be tempted to agree with previous studies that the future of Nordic political cooperation may lie outside these institutions (Olesen & Strang, 2016).

4. Conclusion

What emerges from our analysis is that Brexit introduces new dynamics into European politics by changing the coalitional logics among EU member states. The loss of a powerful ally pushes smaller and relatively prosperous states like the Nordics to voice their preferences more audibly, as experienced most clearly at the Special European Council summit of July 17–21, 2020. In lobbying against fiscal transfers and further integra-

tion of core state powers, different alliances to maximise Nordic influence on EU politics have come into focus. Among these, the New Hanseatic League features as the broadest platform, attracting large numbers of member states in a flexible arrangement, where adherence and support varies depending on substantial policy issues. The Frugal Four, by contrast, follow a more transactional coalition logic, representing a relatively exclusive (and potentially volatile) club in which membership is based on the status of net-contributors and strong preferences for budgetary discipline. Both formats have assumed considerable prominence in post-Brexit EU politics and joining them has proven a surprisingly successful strategy for Nordic states to overcome their size-related disadvantages in EU decision-making, albeit to varying degrees. While the Nordics successfully opposed far-reaching EMU reforms in the context of the New Hanseatic League, they were forced to accept a decisive leap towards fiscal integration following the Covid-19 crisis. This suggests that, after Brexit, Nordic strategies to influence EU affairs may require both internal unity and (tacit) German approval to be effective.

While Brexit has pushed the Nordics to adopt a more prominent role in EU affairs, their preferred mode of cooperation remains informal and intergovernmental. This article identifies two important obstacles which keep the institutions of official Nordic cooperation from playing a more important role in EU affairs. First, the Nordic countries are "neither homogenous nor consistent with respect to EU integration" (Grøn & Wivel, 2018, p. 269). This is particularly true concerning EMU, where Finland's status as the Nordic's only full EU-insider contrasts with the more hesitant approach of its neighbours, thus limiting their ability to cooperate across the board. Considering the particular obstacles the Nordic euro outsiders face to effectively influence EMU reform, their relative success in doing so suggests that Nordic coalition-building may be even more successful in less 'difficult' policy areas such as health policy or environmental protection. Second, the opposition to increasing the presence of Nordic cooperation in Brussels through a joint representation of the 'Norden' institutions signals that there are continued reservations regarding the strengthening of institutions above the national level, be they European or Nordic. In this sense, the Nordics are often not only reluctant Europeans but also 'reluctant Nordics' (Arter, 1999, p. 311). Both aspects are nothing new and have complicated Nordic political cooperation for decades. While one might have expected the external shock of Brexit to raise the costs of non-cooperation for Nordic countries sufficiently to break with this pattern, the empirical record thus far suggests otherwise.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Party Positions on Differentiated European Integration in the Nordic Countries: Growing Together, Growing Apart?

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Abstract
The Nordic countries constitute an interesting laboratory for the study of differentiated European Integration. Even though Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden share some historical, cultural, socio-economic and political characteristics, all those countries have ultimately opted for a different kind of relationship with the EU. Whereas Finland, a member of the Eurozone since its inception in 1999, has been considered to be part of the Union's 'inner core' for quite some time, Iceland and Norway, in contrast, have opted to remain outside the EU albeit closely associated via the European Economic Area Agreement. The variation of relationships has also been reflected in Nordic parties' positioning vis-à-vis European integration in general and differentiation of European integration in particular. Broadly speaking, party families can be distinguished along traditional (e.g., agrarian, Christian democratic, conservative, and social democratic) and modern (e.g., socialist left, green, and populist radical right) ideological orientations. Although political parties belonging to both the traditional and modern Nordic party families have adopted different stances on European differentiated integration, we would assume—against the backdrop of Nordic cooperation—higher levels of transnational cooperation in European matters. Consequently, this article examines the similarities and differences between parties belonging to the same ideological family, and the extent of transnational party cooperation in the Nordic countries. Drawing on a series of interviews conducted with party representatives as well as on official party documents, this article shows that although institutionalized party cooperation mostly reflects divisions between party families, such institutionalization does not include a common vision for European integration. We conclude that the low level of partisan Nordic integration is primarily caused by domestic-level factors, such as intra-party divisions, government participation and public opinion.

Issue
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1. Introduction

For a long time, the Nordic countries—Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden—have been broadly perceived as "a linguistic, cultural, economic, social, and political-ideological area, of considerable homogeneity" (Andrén, 1967, pp. 8–9). Clearly, this perception has

been reinforced by the fact that post-World War II Nordic cooperation predated the establishment of the European Community in 1957. In 1952 already, inter-parliamentary cooperation was formalized in the Nordic Council. The Council encompassed parliamentary representatives from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden as well as the autonomous areas of the Faroe

Islands, Greenland, and the Åland Islands. In 1971, intergovernmental cooperation amongst the Nordic countries was eventually supplemented by the creation of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Whereas Nordic cooperation failed in advancing cooperation towards a Scandinavian defense and economic union in the 1950s, it produced some remarkable successes in the field of passport-free travel and integration of labor markets. In July 1954, the Nordic labor market was established and four years later, building upon the passport-free travel area of 1952, the Nordic Passport Union came into place. These measures helped ensure that citizens of the Nordic countries were able to move and establish themselves freely in this area. Subsequently, a Nordic Convention on Social Security was endorsed and there were even ideas for creating a single market amongst the countries. Yet, they were abandoned in 1959 when Denmark, Norway, and Sweden decided to join the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), which was founded in 1960 and eventually joined by Finland one year later. EFTA was characterized by a strong injection of Scandinavian countries with Denmark, Norway and Sweden, which were joined by Austria, Portugal, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Together with the United Kingdom, the economic center of the EFTA, Denmark and Norway agreed to seek full membership in the European Community at the beginning of the 1960s. Eventually, Denmark became a member of the EC in 1973—whereas a popular referendum in Norway produced a majority opposing EC membership. Subsequently, Finland and Sweden became EU members in 1995, while the Norwegian population voted against membership in 1994 yet again, and Iceland only briefly considered joining the EU as a response to the global financial crisis in 2009. These different approaches have been explained by the varying political influence of industrial sectors across the five countries (Ingebritsen, 1998), the historical relevance of national sovereignty, autonomy and self-determination (Hansen & Wæver, 2002), the existence of an influent Eurosceptic base among the population (Raunio, 2007) as well as political constraints imposed by the post-World War II geopolitical context of the Nordic as well as Baltic region (Hubel, 2004). Thus, with regards to the EU, the Nordic countries have always had a tumultuous relationship with it, prompting Miljan (1977) to name them 'reluctant Europeans,' while Stegmann McCallion and Brianson (2018) refer to them as 'awkward partners' in the North. Yet, this does not mean that Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden share a common vision on European integration either.

Until fairly recently, the literature on party preferences towards the EU has mostly focused on views on membership (see e.g., Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). But the diverse responses to agreements between states and the EU occurring in the 1990s have eventually made the membership/non-membership dichotomy obsolete, also among the Nordic countries (Egeberg & Trondal, 1999). As demonstrated by Denmark's opt-outs of the Maastricht Treaty and Sweden de facto opting out

of the third stage of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) following a set of national referendums, EU membership no longer means full participation in the process of European integration. Similarly, just as there are many 'shades' of qualified Euroscepticism (Leruth, Startin, & Usherwood, 2018), analyzing support or opposition to Europe requires one to have a look at the policy-area level rather than on the EU as a whole. As Europe has become an increasingly tangible issue in national politics, this article contributes to the study of European differentiation (Gänzle, Leruth, & Trondal, 2020) and Nordic cooperation (Stie & Trondal, 2020) with data exploring the role of political parties on the politics of European integration (Mair, 2007).

This article examines Nordic party positions on European differentiation, i.e., the general mode of integration (or disintegration) processes and strategies that exist within the EU (Stubb, 1996). Most particularly, it assesses the similarities and differences of such positions within party families, given the historical relevance of the Nordic party structure (see Berglund & Lindström, 1978). Eight party families can be identified: the six traditional—i.e., Conservative, Liberal, Agrarian, Social Democratic, Socialist Left (formerly Communists), and Christian Democrat—families, to which the Greens and Populist Radical Right can be added as a result of their increasing relevance since the early 1990s. This study relies on a content analysis of party manifestos released during general election campaigns held between 1990 and 2010, and draws on thirty-four semi-structured interviews conducted by the lead author. The interviews were held with high-level party representatives (members of parliament, existing/former ministers, existing/former party leaders) and party advisors in all five Nordic countries between 2011 and 2014 in the aftermath of the global financial and economic crisis of 2007/2008 and in the midst of the Eurozone crisis. Interviewees were asked about their respective party's positions on differentiation and the level of transnational cooperation with their Nordic counterparts on the matter (Leruth, 2014). In terms of research design, four policy areas close to the "core state powers" (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, 2014) have been identified in these interviews: the European Economic Area (EEA) affiliation or full EU membership; the EMU; the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (AFSJ); and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The interviews were conducted in the early years of Europe's polycrisis (i.e., before the so-called migration crisis and the Brexit vote) but at a time when the issue of European integration was heavily politicized, especially in Iceland (in the context of the country's application for EU membership), Sweden, and Finland (given the rapid rise of Eurosceptic parties in both countries). This analysis could thus pave the way for future analyses of the lasting impact of the polycrisis on Nordic party positions towards European integration.

As the analysis covers 35 parties divided into eight party families across five countries, the article's main ob-

jective is to offer a set of comparative accounts to determine whether belonging to a party family shapes a party's position on European integration. An in-depth analysis of the causes and consequences of party cooperation (or lack thereof) on European integration in Finland, Norway, and Sweden based on part of this material has been written by Leruth (2014). This article shows that although institutionalized party cooperation mostly reflects divisions between party families, such institutionalization does not include a common vision for European integration. It is argued that specific internal factors, such as intra-party divisions, public opinion, or participation in government can explain such divisions within existing party families. In sum, the study documents a surprisingly low level of partisan Nordic integration, primarily caused by domestic-level factors.

2. The Nordic Countries as 'Models' of Integration

The early 1990s saw the establishment and institutionalization of differentiated mechanisms of integration in the EU. Both the United Kingdom and Denmark, through their opposition towards some aspects of the Maastricht Treaty (albeit for diverging reasons), are considered as the pioneers of differentiation. Altogether four 'models' of integration that are championed by Nordic countries are discernible in the literature (see Leruth, Gänzle, & Trondal, 2019).

Most prominently, the 'EEA' or 'Norwegian Model,' which was the subject of much discussion and debate as a potential model for the United Kingdom following the 2016 Brexit vote, allows a non-member state of the EU to maintain a very close relationship—"quasi-membership" in the words of Lavenex (2004, p. 684)—with the Union through a dense web of institutionalized relations (e.g., Fossum & Graver, 2018). In addition to Norway, this model also embraces Iceland and Liechtenstein as non-EU members. As part of this relationship, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway get full access to the Single Market. In return, they are exempted from participation in policy areas such as the Common Agricultural Policy and are expected to only implement the EEA-relevant share of EU legislation. Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway are also exempted from having a formal say and influence in the decision-making process of EU institutions—a consequence of non-membership which has been coined as 'fax democracy' by some (pro-EU) Norwegian interviewees. Even though initially designed as a temporary form of integration, which would eventually pave the way for full EU membership, this model of differentiation has now become permanent, with both Norway and Iceland seeking to maintain the status quo rather than EU membership or any fundamental reforms to their existing relationship with the EU (Fossum & Graver, 2018). Moreover, because the EU at the time of negotiation in the early 1990s assumed the 'EEA model' to be a merely temporary arrangement, the agreement was designed fairly fa-

vorable to the EEA countries, for example by granting bureaucrats from EEA countries participatory rights in the decision-shaping committees of the Commission and the Council as well as the establishment of a parallel *bespoke* institutional construction. This idea was launched early by Jacques Delors in the EEA negotiations as "common decision-making and administration institutions" which would serve as a separate EEA decision-making structure between the EU and EFTA. However, this arrangement was for constitutional and political reasons reduced from "decision-making" structures to "decision-shaping" structures during the EEA negotiations (Wade & Støren, 2019, pp. 111–112).

The 'Danish model' can be considered as a form of quasi-permanent differentiation. As a response to a negative referendum on the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, the majority of Danish political parties prepared a compromise document which will ultimately be reflected in the so-called Edinburgh Agreement of 1992. This Agreement granted a series of permanent opt-outs of the Maastricht Treaty to Denmark with regards to participation in the third stage of the EMU, justice and home affairs, and the common security and defense policy, subject to the eventual ratification of the Treaty via a second referendum. Since the implementation of these opt-outs, however, successive Danish governments have been trying to transform some of these opt-outs into 'opt-ins,' as the model was deemed to ultimately harm Danish influence and interests (see e.g., Danish Institute for International Studies, 2008). Yet, such attempts were rebuked by the Danish population in two referendums held in 2000 (on joining the Eurozone) and 2015 (on AFSJ-related opt-outs). As such, and despite successive governments' opposition towards some of these opt-outs, the Danish model has become quasi-permanent.

The 'Swedish model' is legally complex as Sweden does not have any formal opt-outs of EU policies and is thus de jure bound to be part of the EU's inner core like Finland. However, the country is yet to join the third stage of the EMU, following the result of the 2003 non-binding referendum on the matter which was driven by internal divisions within the Swedish Social Democratic Party. This triggered an unprecedented form of de facto differentiation, as Sweden's decision not to join the Eurozone was tolerated by the European Commission. This model was followed by the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. However, the Swedish model of differentiation is unstable as it relies on political will (i.e., tolerated by Brussels) and not on legal grounds.

In contrast, Finland has been considered a core EU member state ever since it joined in 1995. Similar to non-aligned Austria joining the EU in the same year, the end of the Cold War provided Finland with the opportunity to apply for EU membership and thereby geopolitically step out of the Cold War shadow—which had forced the country to maintain close ties with the Soviet Union as a consequence of the 1948 Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance. Finland entered a phase of "EU

honeymoon" (Ojanen, 2005) pioneering important external relations initiatives in the field of the Common Foreign and Security Policy as well as the EU's Northern Dimension to draw Russia closer to the EU. Most importantly, it was amongst the founding members of the Eurozone signaling the country's ambition to leave its peripheral destiny and become part of the EU's inner circle. In the aftermath of the Euro-crisis and the rise of the Eurosceptic Finns Party, some political voices (mostly within this party) uttered the idea of leaving the Eurozone without leaving the EU. More recently, the Finnish government has been eager to position itself closer to countries like the Netherlands and Austria, which are adamant in preserving financial rigor in light of discussions on how to support those EU member states who have been affected most severally by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Historically, Nordic Cooperation has not only always been restricted to low politics but also rather selective—perhaps reiterating broader European integration. As such, over the past three decades, the Nordic countries have played an important role in shaping differentiation in the EU, either by seeking a close relationship with the EU as outsiders (Norway and Iceland) or seeking de facto (Sweden) or de jure (Denmark) opt-outs of the EU. This shows that European integration falls outside the so-called Nordic or even Scandinavian model of government (see Arter, 2008). Although we have assigned the emblematic term of 'model' to three of the Scandinavian countries, we would issue a note of caution in applying them beyond these cases in a more generic sense. It only holds for the Norwegian and Danish model in that these patterns of relations with the EU are underpinned in legal terms by the EEA agreement in case of Norway and by the acceptance of de jure differentiation in the case of Denmark.

3. Nordic Party Families and Their Positions on Differentiation in the EU

The five Nordic political systems share a series of common characteristics. Among these is the prevalence of similar and well-established party families which predominantly compete on a left-right dimension (Grendstad, 2003), and a strong sense of cooperation among the five states, as illustrated by the long-lasting collaboration between parties through the Nordic Council (Olsen & Sverdrup, 1998). While the Nordic party systems have been prone to 'earthquake' elections in the 1970s, early 1990s and late 2000s (Knutsen, 2004), it has become widely accepted that eight well-established party families are present in these countries.

Table 1 offers an overview of the different Nordic party families. It is worth noting that some countries (especially Iceland) have seen the emergence of new political parties over the past few years; these parties have not been taken into consideration within the framework of this study as it is deemed too early to determine whether they will have a lasting impact on the Nordic party system, as demonstrated by the mixed fortunes of the Swedish and Icelandic Pirate parties.

At the transnational level, however, cooperation between Nordic political parties does not systematically follow ideological preferences. Table 2 summarizes party affiliations in the Nordic Council and at Euro-Party levels. Overall, affiliations mirror party families, but there are

Table 1. List of well-established political parties in the Nordic countries, per party family.

	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
Conservative	Conservative People's Party	National Coalition Party	Independence Party	Conservative Party	Moderate Party
Social Democratic	Social Democrats	Social Democratic Party	Social Democratic Alliance	Labour Party	Social Democratic Party
Agrarian	Venstre	Centre Party	Progressive Party	Centre Party	Centre Party
Christian Democratic	N/A (no national seats since 2005)	Christian Democrats	N/A (non-existent)	Christian Democratic Party	Christian Democrats
Liberal	Danish Social Liberal Party	Swedish People's Party	N/A (new parties since 2016)	Liberal Party	Liberal People's Party
Socialist Left	Red-Green Alliance	Left Alliance	Left-Green Movement	Socialist Left Party	Left Party
Green	Socialist People's Party	Green League	N/A (covered by the Left-Green Movement)	Green Party (national seat since 2013)	Green Party
Populist Radical Right	Danish People's Party	Finns Party	N/A (none)	Progress Party	Sweden Democrats

Note: Authors' own compilation.

Table 2. Nordic Party cooperation and affiliation in the Nordic Council and in the European Parliament.

Party family	Affiliation level	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
Conservative	Euro-Party	European People's Party	European People's Party	European Conservatives and Reformists Party	European People's Party (associated)	European People's Party
	Nordic Council	Conservative Group	Conservative Group	Conservative Group	Conservative Group	Conservative Group
Social Democratic	Euro-Party	Party of European Socialists	Party of European Socialists	Party of European Socialists	Party of European Socialists	Party of European Socialists
	Nordic Council	Social Democrat Group	Social Democrat Group	Social Democrat Group	Social Democrat Group	Social Democrat Group
Agrarian	Euro-Party	ALDE party	ALDE Party	Unaffiliated	Unaffiliated	ALDE Party
	Nordic Council	Centre Group	Centre Group	Centre Group	Centre Group	Centre Group
Christian Democratic	Euro-Party		European People's Party		European People's Party (observer)	European People's Party
	Nordic Council		Centre Group		Centre Group	Centre Group
Liberal	Euro-Party	ALDE Party	ALDE Party		ALDE Party	ALDE Party
	Nordic Council	Centre Group	Centre Group		Centre Group	Centre Group
Socialist Left	Euro-Party	European Left/Nordic Green Left	European Left/Nordic Green Left	Nordic Green Left	Nordic Green Left	Nordic Green Left
	Nordic Council	Nordic Green Left	Nordic Green Left	Nordic Green Left	Nordic Green Left	Nordic Green Left
Green	Euro-Party	European Greens	European Greens		European Greens	European Greens
	Nordic Council	Nordic Green Left	Centre Group		Not represented	Centre Group
Populist Radical Right	Euro-Party	Identity & Democracy (associated)	Identity & Democracy (associated)		Unaffiliated	European Conservatives and Reformists Party
	Nordic Council	Nordic Freedom	Nordic Freedom		Unaffiliated	Nordic Freedom

Note: Authors' own compilation, based on data available from the European Parliament and Nordic Council's websites.

some exceptions. Parties that do not follow the pattern of their 'sister' parties are highlighted. This is the case of the Icelandic Independence Party, which joined the soft Eurosceptic European Conservatives and Reformists Party founded by David Cameron in 2009; the Icelandic Progressive and Norwegian Centre Parties, which are not affiliated with any Euro-Parties; and the Finnish and Swedish Greens, which are part of the Nordic Council's Centre Group rather than the Nordic Green Left. This table also shows there is no clear pattern of collaboration between Nordic populist radical right parties, despite the existence of the Nordic Freedom group in the Nordic Council. This is not a new phenomenon, as there have been some ideological divisions between these parties as well as reputational concerns with regards to being associated with parties that have an extreme right past (i.e., the Sweden Democrats; see McDonnell & Werner, 2018).

As Nordic Council party groups and Euro-Parties tend to share a similar political agenda, one could presume that overall (besides the aforementioned exceptions), parties belonging to the same family would share the same position on European integration. The following sub-sections summarize the empirical findings of our study in comparative perspective.

3.1. Social Democratic Parties

Across all five Nordic countries, the social democrats do not appear to share a common view on European cooperation. In Finland, EU membership and further European integration—in all policy areas—have been perceived for quite some time to be largely positive, amongst the party elites as well as amongst the grassroots. The only signs of reluctance were related to developments of the CFSP in the early 2000s (Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue, 2003). Yet, the Finnish Social Democrats have not advocated for differentiation in EU integration as there is a broad consensus within the party regarding the benefits of belonging in the inner core of the EU. The same applies to the Danish Social Democrats, whose position on European integration was constrained by the outcome of the initial referendum on the Maastricht Treaty and subsequent referendums on transforming opt-outs into opt-ins (see e.g., Svensson, 2002). In Iceland, while the Social Democratic Alliance initially agreed that the EEA offered a good compromise for the country's relationship with the EU, the situation changed with the financial crisis in 2008 (Jonsdottir, 2013). Under the leadership of Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, the party politicized the issue of EU membership as a response to the financial crisis, and eventually submitted a formal application after winning the early general election in 2009. In Sweden and Norway, however, the situation is more complex. Both social democratic parties have suffered from strong internal divisions over membership in the EU in particular and not over European integration more generally, and signs of Euroscepticism are perceptible on several levels: among its grassroots members, the elites, the mem-

bers of parliament (MPs), and among appointed ministers when in government. An example of such divisions was illustrated in the question of Sweden's participation in the third stage of the EMU, which led the party to adopt a strategy of compartmentalization and allowed anti-Euro members to campaign for the 'no' camp, which eventually played an important role in shaping the outcome of the 2003 referendum (Aylott, 2005). In Norway, the Labour Party's position was mostly constrained by the outcome of the 1994 membership referendum, although the party has ever after sought active collaboration with the EU:

> [I]n our programme, we say that the best would have been for Norway to be member of the European Union, because that would have made us also a part of the political project and give us influence over decisions which concern us, but we are also a party where there are different views on this issue….After the 1994 referendum…every time the EU has expended its cooperation, we wanted to participate, and we would want to go for further integration. (Norwegian Labour Party MP, interview, October 23, 2012)

3.2. Conservative Parties

In contrast to the Social Democratic party family, Conservative parties are far more united on questions related to the EU and European integration. In Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, conservative parties tend to share similar positions in terms of support for further European integration; they strongly support full EU membership and believe that their respective country should belong to the 'inner core' of the Union. As such, differentiated European integration is not seen as a viable option or as a likely alternative for their respective countries. This position is also shared by a majority of the party members and by conservative MPs. Within the Norwegian Conservative party, EEA membership is considered as "not as a good alternative, but a good tool, as a necessary step for us towards membership" (two spokespersons from the Norwegian Conservative Party, interview, November 7, 2012). It is however worth noting that EU membership has been a non-salient issue for the Norwegian Conservatives since the late 1990s (see Fossum, 2010). By contrast, this has not been the case in Iceland, where the Independence Party marked its strong opposition to Iceland's application for EU membership in the late 2000s. When returning to power in 2013, the party (together with the agrarian Progressive Party) opted to freeze and eventually halt accession talks with the EU. Yet, the level of cohesion within the Conservative Party family is higher than for the Social Democrats.

3.3. Christian Democratic Parties

Compared both to social democratic and conservative parties, Christian Democratic parties are not as well-

established across all Nordic countries, and they are not even effectively represented in their national parliament in Iceland and as the Danish Christian Democrats since 2005. Moreover, the Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish Christian Democratic parties diverge in their views on European integration, even though interviewees suggest there are no significant internal divisions on the matter and that European integration is not a salient issue to them. In Finland, alongside the Finns Party, the party is considered to be the most well-established party opposing EU participation in several policy areas, but without rejecting EU membership per se. The party is particularly critical of participation in the Eurozone and in the CFSP. In Sweden, however, the Christian Democrats campaigned in favor of EU membership in the early 1990s and have supported full involvement in all EU policy areas since 2000, including in the Eurozone. Finally, the Norwegian Christian Democrats have adopted a much more pragmatic position. The party has always opposed EU membership but at the same time advocated for a close cooperation with Brussels in several policy areas while also safeguarding national sovereignty, such as through participation in Schengen:

[W]e need cooperation on security and justice and fighting crime, and so on, and that is what Schengen is all about. So I think our party has considered it as a tool to achieve those needs of cooperation but we also see some challenges, such as the lack of control of our own borders. (Policy Adviser from the Norwegian Christian Democratic Party, interview, July 17, 2013)

As such, the party supports Norway's position in the 'inner periphery' of the Union. These three parties thus differ remarkably regarding their support for European integration, demonstrating again that parties belonging to the same family may display diverging views on Europe.

3.4. Agrarian Parties

Much like the social democratic party family, the Nordic agrarian parties have also been divided and do not share common positions on European integration. In Norway, the Centre Party appears to be one among the most Eurosceptic parties as it is strongly opposed to any kind of institutionalised relations with Brussels, preferring "an all-European cooperation between independent nations" based on the principles of international law (see e.g., Senterpartiet, 1993). In Iceland, the Progressive Party rejected calls to join the EU after the financial crisis in 2008 and contributed to freezing talks when coming back in government with the Independence Party in 2013. This may explain why neither of the parties are affiliated to any Euro-Party, in contrast to agrarian parties in the remaining three Nordic countries: These are members of the pro-European Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. While in Denmark Venstre is a pro-European party that does not advocate differentia-

tion in EU integration, in Finland and Sweden these parties have been characterized by significant internal divisions on the issue. Furthermore, their party leaderships have often promoted differentiated integration by advocating EU membership but rejecting participation in some highly politicised policy areas, especially the EMU and developments in the CFSP. As mentioned by a Finnish Member of Parliament from the Centre Party, the party's initial opposition towards joining the Eurozone was:

A rather easy decision, as not many MPs in my party would have preferred to vote for joining the EMU, because we were not in the government, and because the actual decision to join the European Union was so difficult [due to internal divisions]. (Finnish Centre Party MP, interview, May 22, 2013)

Such intra-party divisions are further illustrated by the decision made by 22 out of 55 Centre Party MPs to vote against submitting Finland's application for EU membership in 1992 (Karttunen, 2009). In Sweden, the Centre Party's preference for differentiation in EU integration was also highlighted by an interviewee: "[W]e would like to see different types of integration within Europe. We could have a multi-core Union so to speak. So, more integration on some issues but less integration on some others" (spokesperson from the Swedish Centre Party, interview, April 7, 2014). In sum, Nordic agrarian parties do not share a common vision on European integration, with the Danish Venstre being the only party in this family fully committed to the idea of European integration.

3.5. Socialist Left Parties

As successors from former communist parties (with the exception of the Icelandic Left-Green Movement), the Nordic Socialist Left parties have generally tended to be opposed to European integration. In Finland, Norway, and Sweden, they were strongly opposed to joining the EU in the early 1990s. However, when it comes to support for cooperation within the EU in particular policy areas, their views tend to differ. The Swedish Left and the Norwegian Socialist Left parties have generally been the most critical and almost unanimously rejected any kind of institutionalised cooperation within the framework of the EU, which is mostly seen as a neoliberal tool. In Finland, however, the Left Alliance has adopted a more nuanced and pragmatic attitude. In the early 1990s, the party failed to adopt a common position on EU membership, which demonstrates the strong internal party divisions on this issue. Subsequently, the party came to change its stance towards European integration and became much more positive. Despite significant internal oppositions, it even supported EMU membership in order to remain in government. In subsequent years, the Left Alliance has remained opposed to participation in the CFSP. The Icelandic Left-Green Movement has also changed its position over time. In 2009, the party formed

the first left-wing coalition government in the country's history with the Social Democratic Alliance, and even though the party was mostly opposed to the idea, they accepted to submit a formal application for EU membership in 2009 before reverting back to its original pro-EEA stance in 2013. This temporal and short-lived switch was explained by a former Left-Green Movement MP:

> First, the party has the opinion that Iceland is better outside the EU than inside. Second, we wanted to facilitate a broad democratic open discussion in the Icelandic society on the pros and cons of EU membership. And third, we want the Icelandic people to decide in a referendum on the future relations of the EU. (Left-Green Movement MP, interview, June 1, 2011)

3.6. Green Parties

The Green parties across the Nordic region have also been divided on European integration. In Finland, the Green League has shared a position similar to the one by the Socialist Left Alliance until the early 2000s, and they presented no official position on EU membership when the debate surfaced in the early 1990s. They were initially opposed to an EMU membership, before changing their position in order to stay in government; and they also opposed developments relating to the CFSP. However, from 2003 onwards the party has started to become more pro-integrationist and has supported cooperation within the EU in most policy areas. In Sweden, the Greens have been, and to some extent continue to be, largely opposed to European integration. The party opposed EU membership from the early 1990s onwards until 2008 when it removed the 'withdrawal clause' from its party manifesto. It also opposed most developments at the EU level—including participation in the third stage of the EMU—but has increasingly come to accept Sweden's EU membership. In Norway, the younger Green Party (established in 1988) favours active relationships with the EU while advocating reforms to the current EEA agreement in order to make it more transparent and focused on climate policy and the European ´Green Deal´. In Denmark, the Socialist People's Party opposed the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty before changing its party position given the role it played to draft the Edinburgh Agreement. The party has supported the existing Danish opt-outs from their membership of the EU since then.

3.7. Populist Radical Right Parties

As outlined above, the Nordic populist radical right parties have had a tumultuous relationship over the past decades, although all but the Norwegian Progress party cooperate in the Nordic Council. Unsurprisingly, they are united in their broad opposition to the process of European integration. Yet the scope of such opposition ought to be explored further, as key differences between Nordic parties are noticeable. The Progress Party was the

only Norwegian political party to not have adopted an official position on EU membership ahead of the 1994 membership referendum. Since then it has supported Norwegian participation in the EU through the EEA agreement. The Finns Party has been more critical to European integration than its Norwegian counterpart. The party (and more specifically its predecessor, the Rural Party) was opposed to EU membership, but subsequently came to accept the result of the 1994 EU membership referendum to join as full EU members and has not called for withdrawing Finland from the Union afterwards. More specifically, however, the Finns Party has been strongly opposed to developments in the CFSP, the AFSJ, and participation in the EMU but never formally sought a withdrawal from the bloc:

> [W]e would like to renew the Union, to make it work better. If the Commission does not want to do it, then we might have to change our line, but at the moment we would like Finland to remain in the Union. (Finns Party MP, interview, May 21, 2013)

Since 2019, under Jussi Halla-Aho's leadership (which led to the emergence of a splinter party, Blue Reform), the party has become more critical and now calls for Finland to leave the Eurozone. As far as the Sweden Democrats are concerned, it should be noted that the party's success is more recent than in other Nordic countries, meaning it did not play a significant role in the 1994 EU membership referendum. Since the early 2000s, the Sweden Democrats have embraced an ambiguous approach to the Swedish 'EU debate,' ranging from support for the existing de facto Swedish opt-outs from the EU to advocating a 'Swexit' in 2018 following the outcome of the Brexit referendum (Leruth et al., 2019). In Denmark, the Danish People's Party has been in favour of the existing de jure Danish opt-outs from the EU, but since the Brexit vote, the party has become divided over whether it should support a Danish withdrawal from the EU altogether, or not. The party's official position has, however, been to remain within the EU but to play a role alongside other parties in the Identity & Democracy group to reform the EU into a Europe of Nations. In sum, although the Nordic populist radical right parties' position on European integration is (broadly speaking) Eurosceptic, we see significant points of divergence both across and within the parties.

4. Conclusion: No Nordic Model of Party Cooperation on EU Matters

The EU has always been a moving target and an evolving building-site of European political order (Olsen, 2007). It has also become an increasingly mixed order characterized by differentiation (be it differentiated integration or, more recently, disintegration; Gänzle et al., 2020; Schimmelfennig, 2018). Although the support and opposition towards European integration by Nordic political parties used to be measured on their views on EU mem-

bership, there can be significant distinctions between political parties belonging to the same Nordic party family. This article has compared Nordic party positions on European integration and differentiation by using party manifestos as well as interviews conducted with high-level party fonctionnaires.

Four sets of findings can be distinguished. Firstly, belonging to a Nordic party family does not impact on a party's position on European integration. There is no unified position on Europe among these parties, although the Conservative party family is overall more pro-European than other Nordic party families (with the exception of the Eurosceptic Independence Party in Iceland).

Secondly, some factors shaping party positions have been identified, and these strongly vary depending on the respective domestic contexts. For some political parties, government participation played an important role (e.g., the Finnish Green League and Left Alliance). For others, public opinion constrained their positions, especially with regards to deeper European integration (e.g., the Norwegian Conservative Party or the Danish Venstre). Intra-party divisions also play a role, especially within the Nordic Social Democratic party family, or the Finnish Centre Party's deep divisions regarding Finland's application for EU membership.

Thirdly, Nordic cooperation between political parties at a transnational level does not lead them to adopt a common position, thus suggesting that domestic factors matter more than pan-European ones of party-political preferences on European integration.

Finally, party positions on European integration are dynamic rather than fixed. This is particularly the case for the Nordic populist radical right party family, as these political parties have adapted their official position over time and thus within varying domestic political contexts, especially when crises arise.

In terms of future or complimentary research needs, it might be worthwhile first to embrace more recent data covering the implications of the so-called refugee crisis of the past decade (culminating in 2015) as well as the implications of the ongoing (at the time of writing) Covid-19 pandemic; and second, to establish to what extent alternative routes for cooperation—such as interparliamentary meetings and conferences (for example the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the EU) or parliamentary meetings at sub-regional level, such as in the context of Nordic or 'Northern' organizations, like the parliamentary assembly of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation—are being used to adjust party positions, if at all.

By all means, the late 2010s have seen the emergence of a new 'Northern' group of reluctant Europeans, the 'Frugal Four,' which includes two of the three Nordic EU member-states, namely Denmark and Sweden, sharing sides with the Netherlands and Austria—and recently supported by Finland. Austrian Chancellor Sebastian

Kurz is adamant in turning this group into a more permanent structure in order to counter the resurged prominence of the Franco-German coalition in EU decision-making. How permanent and stable this group will be still remains to be seen. By all means, it is following in the footsteps of the Hanseatic League of Eurozone member states which are conservative in terms of fiscal policy (see Schulz & Henökl, 2020). As discussions over the future of Europe in a post-Brexit and post-Covid-19 era loom large, it remains yet to be seen whether Nordic divisions over European integration will intensify.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Nordic Security and Defence Cooperation: Differentiated Integration in Uncertain Times

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Abstract
A decade ago, Nordic cooperation on security and defence matters gained momentum, having been largely absent from the map of Nordic cooperation during the Cold War and its aftermath. This article analyses developments along three dimensions of Nordic cooperation: military defence (focusing on the Nordic Defence Cooperation), civil security (in the form of the 'Haga' process), and political cooperation (through the implementation of the Stoltenberg report). Three observations stand out as a result: First, that the three dimensions are intimately related against the background of a common Nordic conceptualization of security; second, that there is simultaneously variation in significant respects (such as driving forces, scope, and degree of institutionalization); and third, that Nordic security and defence cooperation has developed in the context of European and transatlantic security dynamics and cooperation. The second part of the analysis seeks to interpret this picture from the analytical perspective of differentiated integration. The article ends with a set of reflections on the future of Nordic security and defence cooperation in light of the Coronavirus pandemic.

1. Introduction

The last decade has seen a surge in Nordic cooperation in the area of security and defence. This is all the more surprising given the absence of such cooperation during the Cold War and the different security-political orientations and institutional linkages of the Nordic countries: with Norway, Denmark, and Iceland being North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members whereas Sweden and Finland remained non-aligned, and with Denmark, Finland, and Sweden being European Union (EU) members while Norway and Iceland opted for non-membership cooperation. Indeed, Nordic cooperation and integration was in many ways a success story during the Cold War, with intensifying cooperation and even integration in a number of societal fields. As explored further below, security and defence was however not part of this process. Described by Forsberg as the "golden era of Nordic cooperation" (2013, p. 1163), the

Cold War saw the formation of the Nordic Council in 1952, a permanent treaty on Nordic cooperation in 1962, and the Nordic Council of Ministers, established in 1971. Sometimes overlooked due to its relatively weak institutional foundations, Nordic cooperation advanced during the first decade of the Cold War to include things such as a passport union (1952), a common labour market (1954), and a reciprocal social security arrangement (1955). Later advances included a language convention and the Nordic Investment Bank.

Having said that, the Cold War period also contained major failures of cooperation, most notably the idea of a Nordic single market and the Nordic Economic Community (NORDEK); in the latter case a reflection of Denmark's and Norway's decision to opt for the European Economic Community instead (although in Norway's case, the government's proposal to join was defeated in a referendum).

Deliberately, foreign, security and defence policy cooperation was not made part of the mandate for the

Nordic Council as it would have made Finnish membership in the Council impossible given Finland's special relationship to the Soviet Union. Moreover, following the failed negotiations for a Nordic defence alliance in 1949 and Denmark's, Norway's, and Iceland's decision to join NATO, regional security and defence cooperation was not really deemed politically feasible or of great value-added by anyone in the region.

During the Cold War, then, Nordic defence cooperation was essentially limited to cooperation in the context of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping. The Nordic states, apart from Iceland, established the NORDSAMFN forum in 1963 as a group for Nordic cooperation on military UN matters. This was supplemented the following year by a joint Nordic stand-by force at the UN's disposal (NORDBERFN). In 1997, these arrangements were replaced by NORDCAPS (Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support, later to become an integral part of today's cooperation scheme—see further Forsberg, 2013, p. 1167). Nordic cooperation in the context of UN peacekeeping can be understood as a way of balancing different security-political orientations (NATO membership and non-alignment, often referred to as 'the Nordic balance') and a common small state security identity (reflected in UN-mandated international activism).

Today, the situation is fundamentally different in important respects, as cooperation in security and defence has not only been introduced but has arguably risen to the top of the agenda of Nordic cooperation. Still, certain structural preconditions remain, notably the different institutional linkages. Three inter-related dimensions make up security and defence cooperation among the Nordic countries today: military defence cooperation, civil security cooperation, and a political process for advancing cooperation on foreign policy, security, and defence. This article aims to map this evolving landscape of Nordic security and defence cooperation and critically examine the nature and dynamics of cooperation in this sphere utilizing scholarship on differentiated integration, complemented by the concepts of security community and stable peace.

Before exploring the different dimensions of cooperation, a note on terminology is necessary: Non-military security and defence cooperation features under an array of labels in academic scholarship as well as in Nordic and European politics—civil defence, civil security, emergency preparedness/management, crisis readiness, civil protection etc. For reasons of conceptual clarity, this article will reserve the term defence for military defence and primarily use the label civil security when discussing non-military aspects of security and defence. Civil defence may still feature in the text in the context of official documents and statements.

2. Military Defence Cooperation

Nordic cooperation in military defence takes place within the framework of the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO). Founded in 2009, NORDEFCO's aim is to "strengthen the participating nations' national defence, explore common synergies and facilitate efficient common solutions" (NORDEFCO, 2020). While the aim remains the same, the motivation for Nordic defence cooperation has changed fundamentally, from economic reasons (cost-effectiveness) to managing the Russian challenge, to security in the Baltic Sea region. How did we end up here?

The end of the Cold War implied substantial changes to the Nordic security situation, as Sweden and Finland joined the EU and engaged in close collaboration with NATO. This is reflected in examples of closer cooperation among the Nordic countries in military affairs, such as joint armaments projects, cooperation in NATO-led operations in Afghanistan and the Balkans, and the establishment of the Nordic Battle Group in the EU context.

The process of closer collaboration can be traced back to 2006–07 and a Swedish–Norwegian bilateral initiative for cooperation (on exercises and education as well as on maintenance and upgrading of equipment) as a way to cope with the increasingly challenging economic situation (rapid cost development of equipment in parallel to sliced defence budgets as a result of a conducive security environment). In 2008, a trilateral working group (Sweden–Finland–Norway) identified as many as 140 areas of potential bilateral and trilateral cooperation—40 of which could have been initiated more or less immediately (Bailes & Sandö, 2014, pp. 12–13; Forsberg, 2013, pp. 1167–69; Saxi, 2019, p. 663). Finland's reason for joining Norway and Sweden was "the very great challenges facing the country's defence economy" (Saxi, 2019, p. 664).

In November 2008, then, the five Nordic states signed a memorandum of understanding establishing NORDSUP (Nordic Supportive Defence Structures) as a new scheme for cooperation. A year later NORDSUP was combined with two other existing formats for cooperation (NORDAC—Nordic Armaments Cooperation and NORDCAPS—Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support) to become NORDEFCO. The idea was to "produce national military capabilities in a more cost-efficient way by means of multinational cooperation" (Röksund as cited in Saxi, 2019, p. 665).

Hence by 2009, a pan-Nordic framework for military cooperation was in place, driven by an economic rationale and initiated from within the defence forces, but widely supported by Nordic politicians and the Nordic public (according to a study by Oxford Research, referred in Saxi, 2019, p. 665). It is to be noted, however, that for a number of years it remained primarily a Norwegian–Finnish–Swedish project, with limited engagement from Denmark and Iceland. Iceland's special precondition—lacking military forces of its own—explains its purely political orientation. In Denmark's case, the situation was different: Its security policy approach had an explicit Atlanticist orientation and was directed at the United Kingdom and especially the United

States. It also maintained a different profile of its defence forces, applying a clear alliance logic and focusing on selected aspects—niche capabilities—for participation in expeditionary coalition operations. This was in sharp contrast to Finland's, Norway's, and to a degree also Sweden's ambition to maintain conventional defence forces (see Forsberg, 2013, p. 1173).

Early examples of NORDEFCO cooperative activities include training and exercises, for instance among the Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian air forces on a weekly basis, participation in each other's exercises, and regarding international operations (such as joint weekly transport flights to Afghanistan). While these efforts were realized quite swiftly and with notable benefits, cooperation that required a more fundamental restructuring of the armed forces in order to achieve what is sometimes referred to as "system similarity" (Saxi, 2019, p. 668) was much more difficult and less successful. A case in point is materiel acquisition, which proved difficult to achieve, both because of incompatible preferences (such as Denmark and also Norway opting for American aircraft instead of the Swedish Gripen) and different demands, evident not least on the maritime side with there being quite different geographical situations.

In the early 2010s, the enthusiasm for Nordic military defence cooperation had clearly weakened; there was no longer the political will to make the effort (Saxi, 2019, p. 670). Russia's annexation of Crimea and military interference in Ukraine fundamentally changed the situation. The events of spring 2014 contained two inter-related elements of relevance for the future of Nordic military defence cooperation. One was the political will to spend considerably more on national defence (which in effect reduced the relevance of the earlier economic argument for defence cooperation), the other the realization that the Nordic (and Baltic) states were all part of an interdependent security region defined by the major fault line between Russia and NATO (see for instance NORDEFCO, 2014).

Nordic cooperation thus reappeared on the political scene, but as a solution to a different problem than before—not economic difficulties but the Russian threat. Saxi argues that economic logic, as well as the hitherto conducive security situation, proved not to be enough for deeper cooperation: "These internal drivers were insufficiently powerful to lead the Nordic countries down the path of integrating their armed forces" (Saxi, 2019, p. 662). With the Russian annexation of Crimea and the Ukraine crisis, the security situation in Northern Europe took on a different dynamic—and Nordic defence cooperation from 2014 onwards became threat-driven.

In consequence, the Nordic governments expressed their common stance that Russia's activities in 2014 were responsible for the deteriorating security situation in Europe and that enhanced Nordic military cooperation (bilaterally and multilaterally) would be a key part of managing the situation (Regeringen, 2015). Sweden and Finland were in a special situation given that they

were/are not part of NATO. A key development since 2014 has been both of them drawing closer to NATO (based on already close partnerships), a reflection of the perceived importance of NATO as the primary institution for managing the Russian military threat. In consequence, both countries have, for instance, ratified host nation support agreements. Their bilateral relationship has subsequently developed through discussions on how to cooperate during times of crisis and even war, including establishing a memorandum of understanding to cover "operational planning in all contingencies," as stated in 2018 by the Finnish Commander of the Defence Forces Jarmo Lindberg (Lindberg, 2018, p. 18; see also Hultqvist, 2020). Also, legal preparations to receive and give military support (see further Saxi, 2019, p. 673) are now materializing in the form of a bilateral host nation support agreement being set up (Hultqvist, 2020). Both have also sought closer contact with key Western states—with the United Kingdom regarding joining the Joint Expeditionary Force, with Germany regarding the Framework Nations concept, and with the United States, with which a trilateral defence relationship was formalized through the signing of a letter of intent in May 2018 (Regeringen, 2018).

NORDEFCO has seen renewed enthusiasm and importance as a multilateral platform for security and defence discussions and dialogue and for secure communication channels between the Nordic capitals on both the political and military levels. Headed by the ministers of defence (in Iceland's case the foreign minister), cooperation is conducted by the Policy Steering Committee of senior civil servants and assisted by the Military Coordination Committee (see further NORDEFCO, 2020). Today, practical cooperation covers a wide range of activities, organized into five cooperation areas: capabilities, armaments, human resources and education, training and exercises, and operations. Prominent examples of concrete cooperation include air surveillance, enhanced cross-border mobility (with less bureaucracy) for the Nordic defence forces (for instance opening up airbases as alternate landing sites), and large-scale training and exercises as practical means for increasing interoperability (examples include the Aurora 17 and Trident Juncture exercises in 2017 and 2018 with large numbers of troops from Nordic as well as NATO countries).

In contrast to the early NORDEFCO years, the new security situation has made Denmark engage in Nordic cooperation more intensely, both as a part of NATO's management of the Baltic Sea region and directly in relation to the Nordic countries, notably Sweden, with which it signed an agreement in 2016 for better access to each other's air and sea territory and for the exchange of air surveillance data (Regeringen, 2016; on Denmark's reorientation, see also Herolf & Håkansson, 2020, p. 10).

Looking to the future, the NORDEFCO Vision 2025 (agreed by the Defence Ministers in November 2018) is founded on the conviction that "security challenges in our region are becoming more complex and demanding"

and is centred on the idea of transferring the current peace-time framework into something that would apply also during crisis and conflict (operationalized into 16 different target points; NORDEFCO, 2018).

Implementation continues in key areas of the 2025 vision, notably the NORDEFCO Crisis Consultation Mechanism for enhanced information sharing and consultations during crisis and conflict. The Alternate Landing Bases arrangement has been extended to also include armed aircraft. The Arctic Challenge Exercise, conducted in 2019, was the largest air exercise in Europe during the year, involving some 10,000 personnel from Finland, Norway, Sweden, the UK, and the US (NORDEFCO, 2019).

3. Cooperation on Civil Security

2009 proved to be an important year in Nordic security and defence cooperation. Not only was the military side formalized through the birth of NORDEFCO, but cooperation on civil security also deepened substantially, as the Nordic ministers responsible for civil security and emergency management agreed to the so-called 'Haga' declaration on Nordic cooperation in areas of civil security and crisis preparedness (named after the venue for the meeting, a royal estate in Stockholm; MSB, 2009).

The background to this development is to be found in a number of areas. There had been elements of Nordic civil security cooperation also before the Haga process; for instance, the NORDRED system for cooperation among national rescue services, and police cooperation on cross-border crime and terrorism. Moreover, there were institutional foundations for deepening cooperation, not least through the actions of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The environment was, in other words, conducive to advancing cooperation. But, importantly, the development is also a reflection of both tragic events in real life (notably the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean), and a reorientation and convergence of conceptualizations of security among the Nordics towards a comprehensive rather than primarily military notion. Moreover, different forms of political entrepreneurship by the Nordic Council (aimed at a border-free Nordic zone) and by Sweden (reflecting its own security reorientation) played a role, as did the realization that outside help for dealing with non-military security threats was in limited supply (see further Bailes & Sandö, 2014, pp. 13–17, 23–25).

The content of the Haga declaration and subsequent concrete measures reflect a very broad palette of topics, ranging from search and rescue and preparedness against CBRN accidents to crisis communication and strategic air transport to emergency areas. Bailes and Sandö argue that it is hard to see any overarching logic of the evolving cooperation apart from "a combination of national 'favourites' and avenues of least resistance" (Bailes & Sandö, 2014, p. 27). Importantly though, as of 2012, a working group was set up to work on a more ambitious Haga declaration, which materialized in 2013.

This 'Haga II' declaration and process thus rest on the development of deeper cooperation and a clear political interest in the field of civil security and emergency management issues, but lacking explicit priorities and strategic direction. The new process was different in this regard as it was set on a common formulation of societal security and encompassed the 2011 solidarity declaration among the Nordic countries (see further next section). The new vision can be described as a robust and resilient Nordic region without internal borders (MSB, 2013, 2018, p. 11). A central idea was to advance a strategic development plan during the first year of Haga II, rather than adding isolated projects without a comprehensive idea of direction. More specifically, two studies were made the centre of the work process: an audit of relevant cooperation and a study of the preconditions for intra-Nordic host nation support (see further Bailes & Sandö, 2014, p. 33).

Tracing the development further, the ministerial meeting in 2015 decided on a set of twelve points for deeper cooperation, including enhanced sharing of experiences in crisis preparedness and management, assessment of cross-border risks and ability to deal with these, and practical preconditions to receive and provide support among the Nordic countries on the basis of the declaration of solidarity (MSB, 2018, p. 11).

The organization of the Haga process consists of annual ministerial meetings (though often attended by State Secretaries or other senior officials), a working group of officials from relevant ministries, and meetings of the Directors-General of the implementing agencies of each country (MSB, 2018, pp. 12–13). Reflecting the complex nature of the field as well as different organizing principles in different countries, the relevant ministries have been those of Justice, Defence, and Interior (different in different countries and also shifting over time in the same country).

Beyond cooperation at the Nordic level, there are in some areas bilateral and trilateral cooperation, particularly among Sweden, Norway, and Finland. Further deepening of cooperation in the area of civil security has been called for, not least by the Swedish parliamentary defence commission, focusing on issues such as supply security, transport and logistics, critical infrastructure, and health issues. The agreement between Sweden and Finland on economic cooperation in times of international crisis (from 1992) has been suggested as a basis for such bilateral and trilateral cooperation (MSB, 2018, p. 15).

A key element in the Haga process has been the centrality of the EU, both for political input and context and, perhaps more importantly, for money (many activities of the Haga process have involved seeking, and being granted, co-funding from the EU; Bailes & Sandö, 2014, p. 34). Furthermore, all Nordic countries are part of the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism and all countries except

Iceland provide input into the Civil Protection Pool of resources for joint use in the EU.

Here NATO cooperation on civil security matters should also be noted: All Nordic countries are part of NATO's civil emergency cooperation, which is focused around three functions (continuity of government, continuity of essential services to the population, and civil support to military operations; NATO, 2020). Nordic ambitions to deepen cooperation on civil security and defence, therefore, involves not only the EU but also NATO.

4. Nordic Political Cooperation on Security and Defence

The third aspect of Nordic security and defence cooperation can be conceptualized as providing political direction. Again, 2009 is in focus. Thorvald Stoltenberg (former Foreign Minister of Norway) presented his *Nordic Cooperation in Foreign and Security Policy* report to the Nordic foreign ministers in Oslo in February of that year (Stoltenberg, 2009). The ministers had commissioned the report the summer before as a forward-looking analysis of a deepening of practical cooperation in the areas of foreign policy, security, and defence. The Stoltenberg report contained 13 proposals of a rather different character, varying substantially in scale and political feasibility. Reactions to the report were primarily positive, although certain criticisms were levelled from various corners (Forsberg, 2013, p. 1170). Given the forward-looking and in some respects quite drastic nature of the report, the initial implementation of the proposals was slow.

Two proposals stand out as particularly important, one concerning the already mentioned air surveillance of Icelandic airspace. The key question revolved around compatibility with Swedish and Finnish non-alignment. In 2012 both countries agreed to be part of the arrangements from spring 2014 onward, under the condition that the operation was categorized as surveillance and not policing, which would require legal changes (and may be difficult to get public acceptance for). Simultaneously, NATO announced that it would take care of possible interception flights (Forsberg, 2013, p. 1170). A second particularly important proposal, indeed the most far-reaching of them all, was the idea of a Nordic solidarity declaration. Stoltenberg envisioned a Nordic security guarantee that in binding terms would declare how the Nordics would respond "if a Nordic country were subject to external attack or undue pressure" (Stoltenberg, 2009), arguing that this would be natural given that the Nordic states have a lot in common and share a common history and identity, and that the Nordic countries in other ways (through EU and NATO) have commitments in relation to countries with which they have far less in common. A case in point concerns Sweden, which as part of its reformulation and reinterpretation of its non-alignment policy has a unilateral solidarity clause vis-à-vis the other Nordic countries and fellow EU member states, as decided by the Swedish Parliament in 2009.

After a period of political preparation, a Nordic solidarity declaration was agreed in Helsinki in 2011. Adjustments had been made in relation to Stoltenberg's original idea to the effect that it was no longer a formal defence obligation but rather an arrangement that resembles the EU's solidarity clause (article 222 in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union), focusing on natural and man-made disasters, terrorism and cyber-attacks (i.e., not military threats, thereby avoiding sensitive issues about compatibility with NATO obligations; see further Saxi, 2019, p. 665). Notably, the solidarity declaration explicitly situates Nordic commitments so as to "complement existing European and Euro-Atlantic cooperation" (Regjeringen, 2011). It should be emphasized, moreover, that in contrast to the solidarity clause in the EU, which is written into the EU treaty and legally binding, the Nordic solidarity declaration is a ministerial-level expression of solidarity, and not a formalized agreement. The wording and reach of the two are substantially similar, however.

Analysing the implementation of the 13 proposals, the picture is quite varied. In a report from a set of Nordic think tanks, it is concluded that implementation of the Stoltenberg proposals has varied quite fundamentally. Few of the proposals have been implemented in full and others have been partially implemented but as part of other frameworks (primarily EU and NATO). Still, it is reasonable to conclude, along the lines of the implementation assessment, that "the (Stoltenberg) report has been important in changing the overall approach and perspective of Nordic cooperation" (Haugevik & Sverdrup, 2019, p. 4). Notably, however, the assessment report finds no case of significant progress based solely on intra-Nordic cooperation. There are areas of significant progress—cooperation on surveillance of Icelandic airspace and a Nordic rescue network to protect against cyber-attacks—but these are supplemented by either NATO as in the first example, or the EU and NATO in the second.

Partial progress can be detected regarding three of the proposals based on intra-Nordic cooperation—establishing a disaster response unit, on military cooperation (about transport, medical services, education, material and exercise ranges), and on the Nordic declaration of solidarity discussed above. Some other areas of partial progress (understood as the existence of planning and containing small steps of implementation) may be found—a maritime response force, cooperation on Arctic issues, a Nordic maritime monitoring system, and establishing an amphibious unit—but, again, with the involvement of external parties (the Arctic Council and the Arctic Coast Guard forum regarding the first two, the EU regarding the latter two). Three of 13 proposals have seen no progress at all (establishing a Nordic stabilization force, a satellite system for surveillance and communications, and a war crimes investigation unit; Haugevik & Sverdrup, 2019). Regarding Stoltenberg's proposal for cooperation among Nordic diplomatic services, finally, significant developments can be found. The assessment

report classifies these as supplemented by an external body, which could be debated—rather it is to say that what is now in place (instances of co-location and shared representation regarding immigration) was already significantly in place before Stoltenberg, and despite positive rhetoric, little progress has been made since.

A decade after Stoltenberg's report, the debate about taking political cooperation on security and defence matters one step further is increasingly vocal—against the background of a dramatically different security context compared to ten years ago. The Nordic foreign ministers decided at a meeting in conjunction with the Nordic Council session in October 2019 to initiate a new analysis of preconditions for deepening Nordic cooperation on foreign and security policy—popularly referred to as Stoltenberg II—to be conducted by the Icelandic politician and former minister Björn Bjarnason and to be completed by mid-2020 (Nordic Council, 2019). Bjarnason delivered his report on 6 July 2020 and a first implementation discussion is to be held by the Nordic Foreign Ministers in September 2020 (Regeringen, 2020). While it is, of course, impossible to know the faith of the different proposals at the time of writing, it is principally interesting for our purposes to note that the three main themes which organize the 14 proposals—global climate change, hybrid threats and cyber issues, and multilateralism and a rules-based world order—clearly problematize the civilian/military distinction and are based on a broad conceptualization of security (Bjarnason, 2020).

5. Nordic Cooperation on Security and Defence: Key Observations

Three key observations result from this assessment of security and defence cooperation over the last decade, First, the three dimensions of Nordic security and defence cooperation are deeply interrelated, reflecting shared conceptualizations of security by the Nordic states. While employing different terminology, all the Nordic states embrace a perspective on security much broader than merely upholding the territorial integrity of the state; rather it is societal security (the functionality of society and the safety and well-being of its citizens) that is the overarching security doctrine (see further Bailes & Sandö, 2014, pp. 8, 21, 48). In that vein, it can be noted that civil security aspects have also needed development in light of the deterioration of the regional security environment in recent years (MSB, 2018, pp. 5, 12); Bjarnason's report on future cooperation is the latest expression thereof (Bjarnason, 2020).

A second key observation concerns variation. As shown above, the three sectors of cooperation vary along a number of dimensions, including intensity, scope, degree of institutionalization, and driving forces. Interestingly, variation can be found also within each sector of cooperation. Moreover, variation also concerns format: While many things are done 'at Five' there is also a host of bilateral and trilateral processes of coopera-

tion. These patterns of variation are simultaneously a reflection of the differences in political orientation—and arguably a degree of competition—among the Nordic states, despite a shared over-arching perspective on security, as outlined above. Illustrations include not only differences in institutional affiliations but also regarding regional focus (Baltic Sea vs. the Arctic) and policy framing (such as military dynamics vs. human security and feminist peace). In line with the argument of Browning and Joenniemi (2013), difference thus remains a defining feature of intra-Nordic security relations.

Third, the importance of European and Euro-Atlantic linkages is apparent. Both NATO and EU cooperation have deepened in parallel with Nordic cooperation, further integrating the Nordic countries into European and transatlantic structures (see further Bailes & Sandö, 2014, pp. 37–40). Illustrations cover both EU-level support (as in the case of the EU civil protection mechanism, which has been invoked by Nordic countries a number of times) and Nordic contributions to EU-level processes, such as PESCO and the civil emergency pool of resources. On the NATO side, all Nordics are parts of civilian as well as military structures and are also integrated into practical cooperation such as exercises and training. Importantly, the political dynamics clearly posits intra-Nordic cooperation as a part of, not alternative to, European-level and transatlantic developments. By way of illustration, NORDEFCO Vision 2025 explicitly states: "The Nordic Defence Cooperation supplements and adds to the value of wider cooperation in international fora such as the UN, NATO, and the EU" (NORDEFCO, 2018, p. 1). Yet, the independent importance of NORDEFCO remains unclear. In a critical light, Nordic military defence cooperation could be viewed as a secondary structure, influenced by and reflecting first-order structures (EU and NATO/the US; cf. Bengtsson, 2011).

6. A Case of Differentiated Integration?

How can this picture of comprehensive yet varied cooperation in a multi-level setting be interpreted? This article argues that the lens of differentiated integration provides a fruitful analytical framework for further understanding Nordic security and defence cooperation. The literature on differentiated integration has been developed primarily in the context of EU integration, as a way to capture what is today an integral aspect of the European integration process, namely that there is both vertical differentiation (varying degree of centralization of political authority) and horizontal differentiation (variance in the number of participating countries) across policy areas. Long gone is a uniform model of EU integration: From Schengen to the Euro and defence cooperation, it is evident that not all member states are members to all parts of the EU, and not all parts of the EU are integrated to the same degree. In short, Schimmelfennig, Leuffen, and Rittberger (2015) characterize the EU as a system of differentiated integration,

where variation is a key feature (see also Leruth, Gänzle, & Trondal, 2019).

Nordic security and defence cooperation can be conceptualized as a case of differentiated integration. The various components of the policy field have developed at different speeds, advanced to different stages and are integrated to varying degrees. It can indeed be argued that a degree of vertical differentiation exists in the security and defence field. Interestingly enough, against the background of the Cold War and its aftermath, in general terms, the military defence sector has advanced further than the civil security sphere.

Also, horizontal differentiation is an apparent feature of Nordic security and defence cooperation. The five Nordic countries have not been part of the development of Nordic-level cooperation in the same way. Norway and Sweden stand out as leading the process, especially in the early years, whereas Denmark has been more hesitant but picked up speed in later years. Iceland, for its part, has a special approach due to its unique preconditions on the military side, lacking defence forces of its own. Finland, while not pushing the process, is an integral part of both civilian and military matters. Horizontal differentiation also features in the sense that alongside Nordic-level cooperation, there are a number of examples of bilateral and trilateral cooperation schemes that largely, but not fully, mirror the Nordic processes in terms of participation. The bilateral relationship between Finland and Sweden stands out as the most far-reaching in the regional context.

A key theme in research on differentiated integration concerns explanations for variance in integration. Schimmelfennig et al. (2015) venture that two variables are key to explaining the outcome—interdependence and politicization. Interdependence is generally conceived of as a driver of integration, whereas politicization is an obstacle. Empirically, both interdependence and politicization vary across policy areas and countries. In short, the argument is that when high levels of interdependence and asymmetric politicization co-exist, differentiated integration is a likely outcome (Schimmelfennig et al., 2015, pp. 770–774; see also Leruth et al., 2019, pp. 1019–1020).

Applied to the Nordic security and defence context, we may initially conclude that high levels of security interdependence is a defining feature. This is evident not least concerning maintaining a credible defence by small states in a deteriorating security situation, preconditions for effective emergency and crisis management, and cost-effective solutions, especially on the military side. In short, the situation of the Nordic countries is conducive to deeper cooperation. However, there are also obstacles and limitations for proceeding in such a direction, which partly fall under the heading of politicization. Following de Wilde, Schimmelfennig et al. define politicization in the EU context as "an increase in polarization of opinions, interests or values and the extent to which they are publicly advanced towards the process of pol-

icy formulation" (Schimmelfennig et al., 2015, p. 771). In the Nordic context, there are generally low levels of public political contestation, which may reflect common perceptions of interdependence but is arguably also a consequence of a common identity that not only lowers the threshold for cooperation in a general sense but may also facilitate cooperation in sensitive areas (see further Forsberg, 2013, pp. 1163, 1175). Having noted that, there are instances of politicization in the sense of positing Nordic cooperation as competing not least with NATO commitments (related to the issue of institutional foundations, but interpreted in different lights by for instance Denmark and Norway)—not to mention NATO cooperation and membership (in Finland and, especially, Sweden). Also, we see how military issues such as development of joint equipment and cost-sharing have been politicized in the past. This is indicative of a higher degree of differentiation on the military defence side than on civil security matters.

This picture of differentiated integration can be further problematized in light of the literature on security communities and stable peace. Scholarship on security communities is founded on the pioneering work of Karl Deutsch and colleagues on peace in the North Atlantic area (Deutsch et al., 1957). The defining dynamic regarding security communities concerns dependable expectations of peaceful change to the effect that members of the community know that any conflict among themselves will be settled by peaceful means. While Deutsch et al. (1957) focused on the importance of organization and communication as venues for reaching and maintaining such a state, later scholars, notably Adler and Barnett (1998), ventured a constructivist approach centred on value convergence, common identity and trust as drivers for the development, consolidation, and reproduction of security communities.

The literature on stable peace employs a similar logic in conceptualizing stable peace as a state in which members enjoy such high levels of trust that, no matter the severity of conflict among them, they would not consider (the threat or practice of) resolving conflict militarily. While related, the notion of stable peace is broader in scope than that of the security community, as the latter also assumes the presence of reciprocal identification and a common we-feeling (see further Bengtsson, 2000, 2009; Ericson, 2000; Kacowicz & Bar-Siman-Tov, 2000).

The Nordic region is commonly recognized as a primary case of a regional security community or zone of stable peace. From a conflictual and war-torn past, the region now maintains two centuries of peaceful relations including the non-violent breakup of the union of Sweden and Norway in 1905 and the peaceful resolution of the Åland conflict between Finland and Sweden after World War I (for problematization see Jerneck, 2009, pp. 210–215; also to be noted is the fact that Norway and Sweden kept defensive war plans against each other for at least two more decades; see Bengtsson, 2000; Ericson, 2000). Analysing the causal dynamics of the develop-

ment of the Nordic stable peace is beyond the scope of this article (although shared culture and language, transactional logic of trade, communication and exchange, democratization, development of civil society, common practices, and a shared realization of smallness in international relations may reasonably all be part of such an analysis).

While few would dispute labelling the Nordic region a security community or zone of stable peace, it may be argued that the differentiated integration established above makes the Nordic region something of an atypical case. Not only is the low degree of institutionalization noteworthy given the long history and, in parts, depth of cooperation (in contrast to, say, the EU), formal organization, let alone harmonization, from the top has not been a defining feature of the Nordic security community. Moreover, and in a different light, the Nordic zone of stable peace stands out because it seems to rest (at least in the past) on a degree of what Browning and Joenniemi (2013, p. 497) refer to as internal "asecuritization," and, in consequence, difference. Instead of securitization being the driving force of integration and common policy development a natural extension (as in the case of the EU), Nordic cooperation has largely been characterized by the absence of politicizing internal security matters (apart from instances on the military side mentioned above). Differences in orientation and policy have therefore remained and the relatively few common projects to be found in the security and defence area thus far have been primarily technical in nature. This forms an additional or competing explanation for the absence of security and defence cooperation during the Cold War as well as for the differentiated nature of such cooperation in the contemporary era.

7. Conclusion: A Formative Moment for Nordic Security and Defence Cooperation?

Nordic cooperation on security and defence has developed over the last decade into a central aspect of Nordic cooperation. On the Nordic level, military defence cooperation has advanced through NORDEFCO, whereas civil security cooperation takes place primarily within the 'Haga' process. The proposals of the Stoltenberg report have been partially implemented, furthering military as well as civilian matters. In addition to these schemes for cooperation, a number of bilateral and trilateral processes have been initiated. It should be noted that these intra-Nordic processes, simultaneously in different ways, are part of, stimulated by, and conditioned by developments on the European, transatlantic, and global levels: Nordic cooperation is in that sense a secondary structure which cannot be fully understood in isolation from European (and even global) developments.

Nordic cooperation on security and defence can be conceptualized as a case of differentiated integration. Different sectors of cooperation have developed in different ways, at different speeds, and with different driv-

ing forces. Likewise, the Nordic countries have chosen to participate in various sectors to varying degrees and at different points in time. It seems, however, that with the fundamental shift in the regional security environment due to Russia's annexation of Crimea and war in Ukraine, there is movement in the direction of a more uniform approach to Nordic security and defence cooperation (also in the civilian areas).

While progress over the last decade has been substantial, it also appears that there are limits to how far the Nordic countries hitherto have been willing to go. In part, this is a reflection of the varying institutional foundations of the Nordics, with different constellations of membership in the EU and NATO. Moreover, there are obvious national reflexes that prohibit proactive pooling and sharing in military matters. The Haga II vision of a robust and resilient region without internal borders is far from reality. The conclusions of these observations are not easily interpreted. Is the experience of decade-long cooperation on security and defence pointing towards learning, a convergence of thinking, and development of a more common strategic culture, as would be expected from a conventional security community perspective? Or are common processes also to a degree sharpening national egoism and perceptions of variation primary, in essence enhancing politicization? Will difference remain a key feature of Nordic security and defence dynamics?

While these questions are generally relevant for assessing the political dynamics of the last decade, they take on special salience at the time of writing. The Coronavirus pandemic has brutally brought the issue of (the limits of) Nordic solidarity to the fore. As the acute phase of the pandemic withers (in Europe), the differences in Nordic approaches to crisis management appear clearly, both regarding border protection and security approaches, as well as public health and medical strategies. The crisis demonstrates the limits of, but importantly also the potential for, Nordic cooperation in areas such as security of supply, joint procurement, and border-free regimes for the pooling of human resources and joint management of crises and security challenges. But whether there is the political will and trust to pursue this potential remains an open question.

An existential rift among the Nordic states (especially between Sweden and the other four) is now obvious; schemes of cooperation and achievements in integration have in part broken down and distrust is partially replacing the high level of trust that was once a sign of the Nordic region. This in turn spurs a fundamental practical and theoretical question concerning the dynamics of security communities and stable peace. While policy development, as well as academic research, naturally has focused on the establishment and consolidation of stable peace and security communities and the development of trust as a key variable, much less attention has been directed to issues of challenges, reversibility, and decay. The Nordic case may thus once again prove to be princi-

pally important in scholarship on, as well as in the practice of, international relations.

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Article

The Nordic Balance Revisited: Differentiation and the Foreign Policy Repertoires of the Nordic States

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Abstract
Nordic governments frequently broadcast their ambition to do more together on the international stage. The five Nordic states (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Norway) also share many basic goals as foreign policy actors, including a steadfast and vocal commitment to safeguarding the 'rules-based international order.' Why then, do we not see more organized Nordic foreign policy collaboration, for example in the form of a joint 'grand strategy' on core foreign policy issues, or in relation to great powers and international organizations? In this article, we draw on Charles Tilly's concept of 'repertoires' to address the discrepancy between ambitions and developments in Nordic foreign policy cooperation, highlighting how the bundles of policy instruments—repertoires—that each Nordic state has developed over time take on an identity-defining quality. We argue that the Nordic states have invested in and become attached to their foreign policy differences, niches, and 'brands.' On the international scene, and especially when interacting with significant other states, they tend not only to stick to what they know how to do and are accustomed to doing but also to promote their national rather than their Nordic profile. While Nordic cooperation forms part of all the five states' foreign policy repertoire in specific policy areas, these are marginal compared to the distinctive repertoires on which each Nordic state rely in relation to more powerful states. It is therefore unlikely that we will see a 'common order' among the Nordic states in the foreign policy domain in the near future.

Issue
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1. Introduction

Nordic government representatives frequently broadcast their ambition to do more together on the international stage. Proposals range from a former Norwegian foreign minister's call for the Nordics to apply for a joint seat at the G20 (Støre, 2009), and the Finnish President's hyperbolic declaration that "the Nordics are a superpower" during a joint–Nordic summit with US President Barack Obama (Niinistö, 2016). In 2017, the Nordic Council published its first international strategy, urging the Nordic governments "to exploit the opportu-

nities inherent in Nordic co-operation to a far greater extent" (Nordic Council, 2017). The oft-stated rationale for increased Nordic foreign policy collaboration is that the five Nordic states share many basic traits and foreign policy objectives, including an explicit and steadfast commitment to upholding the 'rules-based international order' and its accompanying institutions and belief-systems. Seeking responses to new international challenges, the Nordic governments have been conscious that there may be unexploited potential in pooling their resources. The Nordic populations are also supportive: More than 90 percent deem Nordic cooperation 'important' or 'very

important,' and around two-thirds would like to see increased cooperation (Andreasson & Stende, 2017). This presents us with a puzzle: Despite government ambitions and widespread public support, Nordic foreign policy cooperation in the international domain remains modest. There are few indications that a formalized, discernable, or overarching 'Nordic foreign policy' is in the making. Given the five Nordic states' shared assessments of the international environment, their similar values, overlapping interests, good internal relations, and oft-repeated aspiration to collaborate more, both interest- and identity-driven theories of action would anticipate intensified cooperation. In short: If the Nordic states are so similar, and the incentives to collaborate so strong, then why does the 'Nordic dimension' not feature more prominently in the everyday foreign policies of the individual Nordic states?

Answering this question has a bearing on our understanding of the push and pull factors of Nordic cooperation, and thus also on whether the Nordics can be said to represent an "integrated and independent 'common order'" as laid out by the Academic Editors in the editorial to this thematic issue (Stie & Trondal, 2020). We argue that foreign policy is a domain where shared societal and political traits do not make Nordic joint positions and action more likely. Instead, each Nordic state seeks individual recognition and assistance from significant others, also when a collective Nordic approach may have given them a stronger voice and platform. We suggest that this is because the structural conditions of the Nordic states: Being small-to-medium powers dependent on positioning themselves in relation to more influential players, they have developed niche strategies to signal their own distinctiveness, also vis-à-vis one another. In doing so, they rely on policy instruments which have emerged over time, spawned by decisions made in the wake of the Cold War. We draw on Charles Tilly's concept of 'repertoires' (Tilly, 1979) to highlight how these bundles of policy instruments take on an identity-defining quality. We propose that the Nordic states are more invested in their foreign policy differences than they tend to acknowledge in joint statements and documents and that their attachment to these differences hinders more substantial Nordic integration in the foreign policy domain. While often advocating the Nordic brand when they meet on the international arena, in day-to-day foreign policy, the Nordic states are also competing for attention, visibility, and influence. Given the relative socioeconomic and political homogeneity of the Nordics, there is, therefore, a premium on positioning themselves in relation to one another when pursuing attention and support from more powerful states. Seeking access to policymakers in Washington, DC, Denmark has foregrounded its 'super-Atlanticism,' and Norway its proficiency in peace and reconciliation, for example. In the quest for attention, there is not an insignificant element of the 'narcissism of small differences' involved, in that each state 'doubles down' on its distinctiveness. It follows from this

that we do not see identity as 'coming before' or explaining action. Rather, identity has to be enacted and performed (Butler, 1997; Epstein, Lindemann, & Sending, 2018), and such performances are done through available repertoires. By investing in distinct foreign policy identities and strategies, each Nordic state has tailored its own repertoire, which creates path dependencies and around which its foreign policy is organized.

We begin with a brief review of theory-driven scholarship on Nordic foreign policy cooperation before we present the concept of foreign policy repertoires in more detail and explain why it provides leverage for understanding Nordic foreign policies and the (lack of) formalised, strategic coordination and collaboration. Next, we compare and discuss the Nordic states' individual foreign policy choices, especially in relation to key international actors, noting that the Nordic component of each state's foreign policy remains modest. While some areas of intra-Nordic foreign policy cooperation, for example, regional defence, have moved in the direction of more formalised cooperation and 'deeper' integration, other areas, such as the Nordics' overarching approaches to the EU, continue to be marked by 'differentiation.' Finally, when it comes to relations with the US, Russia, and China, and on joint responses to global challenges, we find that despite bold ambitions, these remain characterised by separate political goals and actions ('disintegration'). We conclude that due to the robustness of distinct national foreign policy repertoires, overarching Nordic foreign policy coordination is likely to remain ad hoc and case-by-case oriented in the foreseeable future.

2. The Literature on Nordic Foreign Policy Cooperation

Scholarly work on the Nordic region and on 'Nordicness' ranges across multiple subdisciplines. As discussed elsewhere in this special issue, we see different degrees and mechanisms of cooperation within the Nordic region across a range of issue areas. Over the last few years, there has been renewed political interest in how the Nordics could pool their (material and social) resources together on the international arena, both for national and regional gain as well as for the greater good of international politics writ large. This 'revival' or 'renaissance' of the Nordic dimension is echoed in the scholarly literature and is manifest in the quantity of recent edited volumes and special issues on Nordic cooperation. One bulk of this research highlights the Nordic region as being particularly successful in managing globalization, with the Nordics typically featuring among the top-ten in the UN's Human Development Index, and having a reputation and track record as 'norm entrepreneurs' (Ingebritsen, 2002) and international 'do-gooders' (Rumelili & Towns, in press). As one observer has pinpointed, during the Cold War, "the Nordic bastion was gradually reinterpreted to mean not only relatively similar societal identities, but also the idea that these identities represented progress: 'better off,' not just 'different from'" (Mouritzen, 1995,

p. 10). Much recent scholarship also discusses (and thus helps keep alive) this idea: That a specific 'Nordic brand' exists on the international arena, that the Nordics are models or frontrunners "with best practices to share" (Strang, 2016, p. 1), and that a new kind of 'Nordism' or 'Nordicness' may now be on the rise (Hyde-Price, 2018).

A second strand of research has focused on how the Nordic states—individually and (potentially) as a collective—relate to great power politics and individual great powers. Recent studies have compared Nordic approaches to China (Forsby, 2019; Sverdrup-Thygeson, Lindgren, & Lanteigne, 2017) and Russia (Hansen, 2018; Kragh, 2018; Rowe, 2018; Smith, 2018), as well as responses to changes in British foreign policy following the Brexit referendum (Fägersten et al., 2018), and US foreign policy under the Trump administration (Breitenbauch, 2017). Many of these studies highlight how foreign and security policy choices in the Nordic states are heavily conditioned by structural factors, where realpolitikal considerations kick in. The extra-Nordic conditioning of foreign and security policy was also present in scholarly literature in the early Cold War years, with, for example, Arne Olav Brundtland's work on 'the Nordic balance' (1966). Brundtland argued that the alliance choices of the Nordic states—Swedish neutrality, Finland's Friendship, Cooperation and Assistance Treaty with the Soviet Union, and Danish and Norwegian NATO membership—balanced one another and helped diminish great power tensions in the region as a whole. These choices were perhaps less the result of a "deliberate design" than they were an "aggregated result of incremental decisions and adjustment" (Holst, 1990, p. 8), but they served to situate each Nordic state in an institutional setting that balanced between competing concerns. However, the parameters for this internal Nordic balance changed with the end of the Cold War and with Finland and Sweden joining NATO's Partnership-for-Peace programme and becoming members of the EU. In 1992, Ole Wæver diagnosed that "there will still be lots of Nordic networks, lots of cooperation built on the closeness of the languages, and so on. But politically and emotionally speaking, the driving idea will not be Nordism" (Wæver, 1992, p. 100). Wæver deemed it unlikely that 'Norden' could come to represent an alternative organization to the European community, or that the Nordic states in the future would form a functional subgroup within the EU institutions and structures. Instead, he anticipated "a Baltic (possibly also Arctic) rearticulation of Norden" (Wæver, 1992, p. 96).

In the prolongation of such analyses, a number of in-depth comparative studies have emerged over the last three decades, mapping and comparing how the Nordic states have related to key regional and international organizations of which some or all are members. The literature on Nordic approaches to European integration is particularly rich, including in the subfield of foreign, security, and defence policy (e.g., Bailes, Herolf, & Sundelius, 2006; Iso-Markku, Innola, & Tiilikainen,

2018; Rieker, 2006). Seeking to explain differences in the Nordic states' approaches to European integration more broadly, one influential study identified "different visions of European unity" as particularly important (Ingebritsen, 1998, p. 184). The argument was that the governments of Denmark, Iceland, and Norway had adopted a 'British-style' intergovernmentalist vision of Europe, whereas the governments of Finland and Sweden had gone along with a 'German-style' multilateralist vision. The former position combined a strong preference for national autonomy with Atlanticist security solutions; the latter foregrounded supranational ambitions and a stronger European security dimension (Ingebritsen, 1998, pp. 184–185). A few years later, an alternative account was offered by a group of scholars associated with the 'Copenhagen School.' Setting out to explain how each Nordic state had ended up with their current approach to the EU, the scholars traced the formation of national identity historically, showing how the individual states' self-understandings had emerged in relation to specific, dominant representations of Europe (Hansen & Wæver, 2002). Studies have also examined the dynamics of Nordic collaborative efforts within multilateral bodies such as the UN, including variations in their individual approaches which could be ascribed to differences in their foreign policy identities and profiles (Jakobsen, 2017; Laatikainen, 2003). In what follows, we build on these insights and add to them by stressing how foreign policy identities become attached to and performed through distinct foreign policy repertoires. Thus, starting with the imperative of securing territorial integrity given certain structural conditions, we highlight how foreign and security policy choices become 'sticky' and generate path dependencies because of the repertoires around which identities come to be organized. The Nordic states have often taken pride in being reliable, responsible and recognizable as foreign policy actors. This can help explain why—despite a range of shared political and socioeconomic characteristics and stated ambitions of further Nordic integration—the Nordic states foreign policies have remained distinct.

3. Layered Foreign Policy Repertoires

Much of the scholarly work on foreign policy has sought to explain state action either by mapping the prevailing material interests at stake, identifying key norms to which the state is committed, or considering foreign policy as a product of the international structural parameters within which the state operates. In one authoritative understanding, foreign policy actions "are linked together in the form of intentions, cognitive-psychological factors, and the various structural phenomena characterizing societies and their environments" (Carlsnaes, 2013, p. 317). Other approaches have stressed how identity and culture, either in the form of practice and habit (Hopf, 2010; Pouliot, 2008) or institutionalized norms (Checkel, 2005; Finnemore, 1996), are key to understand-

ing how foreign policy is formulated and put into action. Much of the foreign policy literature thus foregrounds what we may call endogenous drivers of states' foreign policy choices, but notes at the same time how states operate within a specific structural context and under specific power-political circumstances. Such assessments recur also in the literature on the Nordic states' foreign and security policies. While we have no quarrel here with analyses that foreground the primacy of national interests defined in terms of state survival and economic interests, nor analyses that highlight changes in states' interests due to international and regional norms, we draw attention to how an emphasis on available material and social means—repertoires—allow us to offer a different account of foreign policy in the Nordic region. Independently of the identity and intentions of any given state, the (perceived) availability of policy instruments is a necessary ingredient of foreign policy action. Foreign policy choices are heavily conditioned by what, for material, historical, political, and social reasons, are considered to be possible policy interests and action paths. That is: States tend to formulate and conduct their foreign and security policies based on what they see as available paths and instruments—investing in an alliance, providing development aid, contributing military troops, supporting multilateral institutions and so on—and only change these gradually. In doing so, they develop and become accustomed to, specific ways of doing things, which become institutionalized in how they signal to and interact with key international players. Extending Charles Tilly's concept of repertoires (1979), Goddard, MacDonald, and Nexon (2019) have suggested that statecraft and foreign policy can be fruitfully analysed as revolving around such repertoires: "States enjoy, in theory, an infinite or at least a very broad range of tools….They may, for example, mobilize their military forces, conquer their neighbors, muster alliances, impose sanctions, 'name and shame,' or petition international bodies'' (p. 312).

Thus understood, a repertoire is the configuration of a set of tools or instruments that are typically drawn upon to advance different interests in interaction with others. Repertoires are not static but evolve slowly, as new elements are added. In Tilly's phrasing: "Repertoires vary from place to place, time to time" but innovation and change take place "*within the limits set by the repertoire* already established for their place…[and]…time" (Tilly, 2006, p. 35, emphasis added). We contend that repertoires are also relatively resistant to systemic changes. There are two key reasons for this. The first is that path-dependency is created when actors invest in particular ways of doing things, becoming good at and developing networks around certain issue-areas (e.g., 'digitalization,' 'women, peace and security' or 'peace and reconciliation') or certain instruments (e.g., sanctions or multilateral investments; Peters, Pierre, & King, 2005). The second reason is that states attach their identity to and perform their distinctive profile through these repertoires. Repertoires are therefore central for states' ability to signal to other states who they are, what they are capable of doing, and what others can expect from them (Tilly, 2006, p. 41; see also Neumann & Sending, 2020; Rowe, 2020, p. 4). By drawing attention to the repertoires that each state has developed over time, we highlight how what are considered as possible tools or action paths, come to structure the type of foreign policy that can be conducted. This is so because foreign policy identity or profile is not just 'there,' available for everyone to see or adopt. Rather, identity comes into being through actions and performances, which in turn necessarily rely on what Vincent Pouliot has referred to as 'available ways of doing things' (Pouliot, 2020). This stress on performance is important, as it implies, in Duvall and Chowdhury's (2011, p. 338) apt formulation, that "there is no doer before the deed." In other words: The kind of foreign policy actors that Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Norway or Sweden are, in the eyes of other international actors, emerges through that state's foreign policy actions, actions which are in turn conditioned by historically established repertoires. By dint of its historical decisions and investment of resources, Finland has a different foreign policy repertoire than Norway; this fact structures the Finnish and Norwegian governments' respective room for manoeuvre on the international arena and in relation to significant other actors.

Understanding foreign policy through a focus on repertoires becomes even more important when we consider the structural conditions under which the Nordics find themselves, having to manage conflicting demands in their environment. The literature on hegemony suggests that repertoires rest to a considerable degree on the provision of public or club goods, such as security guarantees, an open trade system, and so on (Cooley & Nexon, 2020). It can be seen as a contract, where the hegemon provides security guarantees in exchange for political loyalty from the subordinate state (Lake, 2009). In this perspective, both Denmark and Norway have, bilaterally and through their NATO membership, entered into a contract with the US for security guarantees, offering political loyalty and support in exchange. But a quick glance at the foreign policies of Denmark and Norway also reveals how much both states' foreign policies are organized around seeking attention from and access to US policymakers. Both states want to be recognized as reliable, competent, and useful partners, and they, therefore, strive to contribute to the production of the club and public goods that the US—qua hegemon—is assumed to produce for them. Denmark and Norway's contributions to the wars in Afghanistan and Libya are cases in point. At the same time, these two states' foreign policy repertoires are not, as realist accounts might claim, solely organized around the pursuit of military support, or security: understood as territorial survival. Ontological security—to preserve and be recognised as a particular kind of self—will, in many cases be as or even more important (Mitzen, 2006), particularly for smaller states like

the Nordics. The quest for political and diplomatic clout and recognition from key others will be important objectives in and of themselves (Jakobsen, Ringsmose, & Saxi, 2018; Lindemann & Ringmar, 2015). A focus on repertoires adds complexity to accounts focusing on identity as a foreign policy driver, because it takes into account how states also use their identities strategically, to acquire access, influence, and support. Being a frontrunner in development assistance or peace and reconciliation, for example, can be a comparative advantage, and something a smaller state can use as a bargaining chip in efforts to gain attention from a significant other state. This explains why small states in some settings will emphasize rather than tone down their uniqueness in a group of likeminded peers, engaging in a "friendly kind of status competition" (Røren, 2019). In the Nordic context, Denmark stands out as the most 'Atlanticist,' Sweden the most 'feminist,' and so on.

3.1. The Individual Foreign Policy Repertoires of the Nordic States

There are many similarities in the five Nordic states' foreign policies, including in their geopolitical framework conditions, their resources, their political systems, and in how they see themselves and their room for maneuver in the international system. All the Nordic states have been staunch and vocal supporters of democratic values, the rule of law, and good governance, as well as of multilateral frameworks that have guaranteed the upholding of these since the late 1940s: the UN, NATO and the EEC/EU. At the same time, important differences in the individual states' foreign policy identities and repertoires remain—differences which can in large part be traced back to paths taken and decisions made during and in the wake of the Cold War.

In the early Cold War years, Denmark, Iceland and Norway chose to seek security guarantees from the Atlantic powers, bilaterally and through NATO. From 1951, Iceland also had US military forces stationed at the Keflavík military base. By contrast, Sweden opted for a policy of neutrality in wartime and freedom from alliances in peacetime, while Finland, also adopting a policy of neutrality, signed an agreement of friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance with the Soviet Union. In one influential reading, these differences in chosen paths constituted a 'Nordic balance,' where the Nordic states' individual security choices complemented and balanced one another in relation to the great powers and helped secure stability in the region as a whole (Brundtland, 1966). While the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent end of the Cold War made these intra-Nordic differences less profound and critical, past choices and experiences continue to shape what these states consider to be feasible foreign policy choices and instruments. All the Nordic states have adapted their foreign policies since the Cold War came to an end, as evident for example in their approaches to NATO and

the EU. However, they have made these adjustments in a way that is consistent with their historically established foreign policy repertoires, which were defined by their respective positioning vis-à-vis the two key security actors during that period: the US and Russia. 70 years after NATO's foundation, and despite the US having become a more unpredictable foreign policy actor under the Trump Administration, Denmark and Norway continue to put Atlanticism first. Both governments insist that bilateral security ties with the hegemon remain as strong as ever. In Iceland's case, the US withdrawal from the Keflavík base in 2006 and its lack of support to Iceland during the financial crisis in 2008, triggered a domestic debate about whether Iceland needed to seek military and economic shelter elsewhere (Thorhallsson, 2018). Still, Atlanticism has remained a key pillar in Icelandic security and defence policy, and the Icelandic EU membership application—submitted in 2009—has since been put on ice. In view of this, Finland and Sweden's repositioning towards closer cooperation with the US, in recent years, including through bi- and trilateral statements of intent, could at one level be seen to represent a convergence around a Nordic 'norm' to cooperate closely with the Atlantic hegemon. The joint statement by the Nordic defence ministers in 2015, describing Russia's recent actions as "the greatest challenge to the European security situation," could be interpreted in the same fashion (Søreide, Wammen, Haglund, Sveinsson, & Hultqvist, 2015). Both Finland and Sweden have also entered into partnership agreements with NATO, allowing them to take part in working procedures and exercises (e.g., Trident Juncture) alongside member states. Still, while Sweden is taking a step towards the US and NATO, it is holding on to its traditional repertoire of freedom from alliances (Fägersten & Jerdén, 2018). Similarly, despite seeking Atlanticist defence guarantees, Finland has been careful to signal that good neighbourly relations and dialogue with Russia remain a priority (Creutz, 2018). Hence, while the intra-Nordic differences in approach to and relations with the US hegemon may seem smaller and less divisive today than they were during the Cold War, they remain significant enough to preclude a unified Nordic approach. Approaching the US under a Nordic umbrella could blur important differences between the states, and hence make it more difficult for each state to communicate its special position and needs to Washington, DC.

A similar picture emerges in relation to the EU. In the early Cold War years, the Nordic states reached similar conclusions and remained outside of the early initiatives for Western European economic integration. Together with Britain, the three Scandinavian states instead formed the European Free Trade Association, hence choosing to be part of 'the-outer-seven' rather than the 'inner-six' constellation in Europe. However, when Britain u-turned and applied for membership after all, both Denmark and Norway followed. In 1973, Denmark broke ranks with the rest of the Nordics and entered the EEC while Norway remained outside after

a majority of voters rejected membership in a nationwide referendum. In 1995, a Norden-in-Europe dimension seemed more possible when Sweden and Finland also joined the EU. However, while both Norway and Iceland are members of the European Economic Area and have also 'opted in' to a wide range of EU policies beyond that agreement, they remain outside of the main EU decision-making bodies. Accordingly, they have to exercise diplomacy 'through the back door' to ensure influence and access (Haugevik, 2017). For the Nordic EU insiders (Denmark, Finland, and Sweden) the EU has become a key arena for inter-state diplomacy and foreign policy formulation. At the same time, and while these three often share basic views, they have maintained distinct foreign policy profiles. Despite being the first Nordic EEC member state, Denmark has upheld a reputation as the more skeptical 'footdragger' in the context of European integration—as the Danish opt-outs under the justice, security, and defence policies suggest (Adler-Nissen, 2014; Andersen, 2018). At the other end of the scale, Finland is the only Nordic state to have adopted the Euro, making it the most 'Europeanised' of the Nordic member states in terms of vertical integration. Thus, under the broader EU- European Economic Area umbrella, we continue to see distinct foreign policies of each Nordic state (Leruth, Gänzle, & Trondal, 2018). Nordic cooperation within the EU has so far taken place either on an informal, ad hoc basis or in a broader format which also includes the three Baltic states (Iso-Markku et al., 2018, pp. 9–16).

In recent years, China has also risen up the foreign policy agenda of all five Nordic states. Having seen trade relations with China increase, all have sought to balance initiatives to boost economic ties, with the voicing of concern regarding human rights. The last decade, both Norway and Sweden have experienced profound difficulties in their bilateral relationship with China following what the Chinese government has deemed violations of the principle of non-interference: The Norwegian Nobel Peace Prize to the dissident Liu Xiaobo in 2010 and the Swedish PEN's award to dissident Gui Minhai in 2019. While a joint Nordic strategy towards China on the issue of human rights may seem like a logical ambition, the Nordic states have so far assumed tailored, national approaches. As Andreas Bøje Forsby (2019, p. 13) has summarized, Sweden "tends to be the most active" in publicly criticizing Chinese human rights violations, while Denmark and Norway have been "somewhat more discreet in their moral activism." Finland and Iceland have both adopted "a relatively pragmatic position vis-à-vis Beijing" (Forsby, 2019, p. 13). For all the Nordics, Forsby observes, the general tendency has been to handle human rights issues in "closed-doors bilateral meetings" or, in Denmark, Finland and Sweden's case, "'outsource' them to Brussels as part of the recurring EU-wide human rights dialogue" (Forsby, 2019, pp. 13–14). Therefore, in relations with China, the Nordic states overall remain an 'uncoordinated quintet' (Sverdrup-Thygeson &

Hellström, 2016), thus serving as an illustration of how perceived needs to tailor and fine-tune approaches to national needs, may effectively hinder a collective Nordic approach. While there is a clear 'pull' to establish a more clearly articulated 'Nordic' component of foreign policy, the structural conditions of each state are such that signalling niche competencies and distinct 'assets' matter more.

3.2. A Joint Nordic Foreign Policy Repertoire?

The basis for intra-Nordic cooperation is the Helsinki Treaty (1962), most recently revised in 1995. The inter-parliamentary Nordic Council was founded in 1952 and the intergovernmental Nordic Council of Ministers in 1971. Intra-Nordic coordination and collaboration from these agreements cover a broad range of issues, including infrastructure, telecoms, the environment, tourism and popular culture, and the free movement of labour. To varying degrees, these initiatives help underpin the idea that a common 'Nordic order' exists. 'Norden in Norden' has been the story about a (Scandinavian) language community, where communication is marked by informality and high levels of inter-state trust. This image of a closely-knit Nordic order and community has formed the basis for discussions both among the Baltic states and in the Balkans, where the Nordic region could serve as a reference point for successful integration.

In prolongation, the Nordic governments have at times sought to capitalize on the success of the 'Nordic model' as a response to globalization, as illustrated for example by the Nordic prime ministers' joint initiative 'Nordic Solutions to Global Challenges' in 2015. The Nordic Council of Ministers has also hinted at a bolder foreign policy ambition, despite this formally belonging outside of these institutional structures. In 2017, the Nordic Council presented its first international strategy (Nordic Council, 2017), which has been used to leverage face time with key allies. The Nordic heads of government's much-publicized joint meeting with Obama in Washington, DC in 2016, was followed up by a Nordic summit with India's prime minister in 2018, and a joint meeting with Angela Merkel in Reykjavik in 2019 to discuss climate change. China has also signalled interest to engage in the '5 + 1' format (Iso-Markku et al., 2018, p. 14).

Seeking to operationalize the sometimes-lofty political ambitions for more comprehensive and committing Nordic foreign policy cooperation, in 2008, the five Nordic foreign ministers invited an expert group led by former Norwegian foreign minister Thorvald Stoltenberg, to "draw up proposals for closer foreign and security policy cooperation between the Nordic countries" (Stoltenberg, 2009). The final report presented 13 proposals for formalizing and strengthening Nordic cooperation in the foreign policy and security domain. The proposals varied in ambition, scope, and feasibility. Thematically, they covered peacebuilding, air surveil-

lance, maritime monitoring and Arctic issues, societal security, cooperation between the foreign services, military cooperation, and a Nordic declaration of solidarity (Stoltenberg, 2009). With its concrete, and in some cases bold proposals, the report has become a standard reference in policy and scholarly debate into the possibilities for, and constraints of, Nordic foreign and security collaboration. It also stimulated debate about the Nordic governments' willingness and ability to translate ambitions into concrete initiatives and structures. One decade later, a review report commissioned by the Icelandic presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers, found that three of the proposals from the Stoltenberg report had been implemented more or less in full: Nordic cooperation on surveillance of the Icelandic airspace, a Nordic resource network to protect against cyber-attack, and cooperation between the Nordic foreign services (Haugevik & Sverdrup, 2019). All these could be seen as proposals that fitted well within and supplemented each state's existing foreign and security policy repertoires, and as instances where collaboration did not duplicate efforts already taking place within NATO or the EU. Further, the review found that *some* progress had been made on seven proposals, if not necessarily in the exact way and form envisioned by the Stoltenberg report. This included the establishment of a Nordic maritime monitoring system and a maritime response force; the strengthening of Nordic cooperation on Arctic issues; the establishment of a disaster response unit; the increase in intra-Nordic military cooperation on transport, medical services, education, materiel, and exercise ranges; the establishment of an amphibious unit; and the issuing of a Nordic declaration of solidarity. Finally, on three of the proposals—the issuing of a Nordic stabilization task force, a satellite system for surveillance and communications, and a war crimes investigation unit—the review found that little or nothing had happened (Haugevik & Sverdrup, 2019). What these three proposals had in common was that they all involved the establishment of specific new structures and units and a high degree of institutionalisation.

These findings suggest that while it is important for the Nordic states to signal a willingness to cooperate, such ambitions are only translated into action to the degree that they fit with the state-specific repertoires around which foreign policy decisions are made. In general, Nordic cooperation within the Nordic region, or administratively in embassies around the world, may be easier to realize because they add to national repertoires, and do not duplicate functions already covered by existing structures or institutions such as NATO or the EU. However, also in these respects, there is a danger of underestimating intra-Nordic differences, for example, in bureaucratic set ups (see, e.g., Bredesen & Friis, 2019). In 2020, the Bjarnason report—commissioned by the Nordic foreign ministers as a follow-up to the Stoltenberg report—recommended that the Nordic states should "build on and expand the Nordic brand," assume leadership on the international stage, and formulate Nordic responses to three key policy challenges: climate change; hybrid and cyber threats; and threats to multilateralism and the rules-based international order (Bjarnason, 2020, pp. 2–3). The report proposed developing common Nordic policies, approaches, or understandings in several areas and, where possible, the pooling of resources and the establishment of common structures. Here, it may be worthwhile noting that the Nordics have often had the ambition to join forces and speak with a common voice, as they share overarching priorities concerning, for example, multilateralism and development work. However, scholars have noted that Nordic cooperation, for example at the UN, has been less extensive than one might expect and has also become less apparent since the EU also started to develop similar ambitions for greater coordination (Laatikainen, 2003). One reason may be that when the Nordic states work together, they run the risk of appearing as moralistic, 'self-righteous,' or 'smug,' as a Swedish foreign minister once observed (Wallström, 2018). Another is that the Nordic states themselves have called for the breaking up of permanent voting coalitions in the UN. Hence it might appear contradictory, even hypocritical if Nordic 'ganging-up' became too apparent. Along with the stickiness of established national repertoires and the inclination to preserve individual niches, these factors could be said to hinder full activation of a Nordic foreign policy repertoire.

4. Conclusion

In the early Cold War years, the Nordic states' geopolitical location, war experiences, geographical proximity to and relationship with dominant powers, as well as their self-understanding as foreign policy actors, led them to pursue different paths in the formulation of foreign and security policies. The differences in choice gave rise to the idea of 'a Nordic balance'—the idea being that the Nordic states' foreign and security policy choices complemented one another and helped reduce great power tensions in the region as a whole (Brundtland, 1966). Following Tilly (1979), we have argued here that structural constraints, along with self-perceptions, resources, and established routines, are constitutive of the individual Nordic states' foreign policy repertoire: What these states can do, what they know how to do, and what others expect them to do in the international political arena (see also Tarrow, 1994). The concept of repertoires thus draws attention to the path-dependency of foreign policy in terms of expertise within a state's diplomatic corps, the networks it can mobilize internationally, its international reputation, and the organizational machinery (budgets, offices, practices) used to implement policy. We have argued that these individual repertoires are key to understanding the continued lack of a 'common order' among the Nordic states in the foreign policy domain. Despite oft-stated political ambitions to move in such a direction, and despite the narratives about Nordic 'likemindedness' and similarities in the organization and

implementation of foreign policy, collaboration in this domain continues to be marked by talk rather than coordinated action, and case-by-case initiatives rather than formalized procedures. We noted at the outset that in foreign policy, shared socioeconomic and political traits do not increase the likelihood of cooperation. This can be put even more starkly: Such similarities can at times reduce the likelihood of cooperation and that we can talk of a 'narcissism of small differences.' Finland and Sweden's neutrality and freedom from alliances during the Cold War spawned foreign policy repertoires and identities that still work against full convergence with NATO members Denmark and Norway, despite changing power political dynamics. Similarly, the Nordic states' relationships with the EU is marked by distinguished models of integration as well as specific relational identities, which structure not only each state's relationship to the EU but also the Nordic states' relations with one another. A more organized, common Nordic approach within the EU is, therefore, less available as a course of action.

We see the Nordic states' foreign policies as being formulated and conducted in a structured environment where they depend on support and attention from more powerful states to advance their interests: Given their relative smallness in terms of economic size and political posture, an overarching foreign policy strategy has been to establish and maintain good relations with more powerful international players. This attention-seeking game is one where smaller states compete for access to and attention from significant other states to advance their national interests. Each Nordic state has over time developed a distinct repertoire that involves niche competencies and resources that are being used to signal distinctiveness vis-à-vis others. Seen from Copenhagen, Helsinki, Oslo, Reykjavik, or Stockholm, the safest bet in gaining access and attention in Washington, DC will often not be to foreground similarities with Nordic neighbours. It remains an open question whether such a 'narcissism of small differences' will continue to characterize future relations with an increasingly powerful China. The Nordics have, broadly speaking, similar interests in their relations with the emerging great power, organized around trade and investments. However, and as shown above, approaches to China have so far differed, not least with respect to the balancing between trade interests and the voicing of concern over human rights. Against this backdrop, we conclude that while Nordic governments and populations are generally positive to a further strengthening of Nordic foreign policy cooperation, there tends to be a decoupling between publicly stated ambitions, and action and resource allocation towards joint foreign policy initiatives beyond the Nordic region. As long as each Nordic state continues to treat Nordic cooperation as part of their individual foreign policy repertoire, rather than committing to developing a collective Nordic foreign policy repertoire, the overarching Nordic foreign policy coordination is likely to remain ad hoc and on a case-by-case basis.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Public Administration and the Study of Political Order: Towards a Framework for Analysis

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Abstract
The contribution of this study is two-fold: First, it outlines a conceptual framework on political order; and secondly, it offers empirical illustrations on the case of Nordic cooperation. Taken together, the article makes a plea for public administration scholarship in the study of political order. Political order consists of a relatively stable arrangement of institutions that are fairly formalized and institutionalized. A common political order, moreover, entails that relevant institutions: (i) are fairly independent of pre-existing institutions; (ii) are relatively integrated and internally cohesive; and (iii) are reasonably able to influence governance processes within other institutions. The article empirically suggests that Nordic-level institutions are less likely to act relatively integrated and independently of member-state governments as well as being able to wield significant influence on public governance processes within member-state institutions.

Issue
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1. Introduction

Turbulence within and around public affairs calls for understanding the conditions for resilient and sustained political order (Ansell, Trondal, & Ogard, 2016; Fukuyama, 2016; Olsen, 2007; Tamuz & Lewis, 2008). The challenge of understanding social and political order is enduring in the social sciences (Elster, 2007; Waldo, 1992) with continuous disputes over "the legitimate role of democratic politics in society" and "forms of political association" (Olsen, 2016, pp. 1–5). So-called failed states, such as Syria fairly recently, accentuate the concern for stabile political order. Periods of crisis, like the Covid-19 crisis, have also highlighted the importance of efficient, resilient and legitimate political order. During historical periods of stability, by contrast, the significance of political order is often taken for granted. During periods of political deterioration, organized arrangements become subject to debate and requests for reforms (Fukuyama, 2013; Pepinsky & Walter, 2019; Trondal, 2010). With an ambition to rediscover the study of Nordic cooperation as well as to advance studies of political order, this study offers ways to theoretically conceptualize politico-administrative order in the Nordic region. The contribution is two-fold: First, it outlines a conceptual framework that highlights the administrative dimension of political order; secondly, merely to illustrate the framework, the article offers empirical illustrations of emergent political order in the European Union (EU) as well as Nordic cooperation.

Unveiling political order involves studying why such orders emerge and disappear (e.g., Bartolini, 2005; Fukuyama, 2013; March & Olsen, 1995; Padgett & Powell, 2012), their consequences—especially how they influence policy outcomes (e.g., Olsen, 2007; Orren & Skowronek, 2004)—and how political order may be the-

oretically conceptualized (e.g., Stinchcombe, 1987). This article is particularly interested in the latter. Perhaps unsurprisingly for institutional building-sites such as the Nordic cooperative arrangements, the institutional soul searching is intense. Studies of unsettled and transitional political orders are, however, much less prominent. Since the classics in administrative sciences (e.g., Gulick, 1937) and up to recent studies of public administration (Emery & Giauque, 2014; Olsen, 2016) the largest focus has been on the study of settled political orders. One notable exception has been a vibrant literature on the study of international public administrations (IPAs; e.g., Barnett & Finnemore, 2004; Bauer, Beyerlein, Ege, Knill, & Trondal, 2019; Bauer & Trondal, 2015; Trondal, 2016; Trondal & Bauer, 2017; Trondal, Marcussen, Larsson, & Veggeland, 2010). International bureaucracies constitute a distinct and increasingly important feature of both global governance studies and public administration scholarship. The IPA literature has advanced these types of studies by offering a 'public administration' approach. This entails that the study of international governmental organizations has been somehow 'normalized,' i.e., that a public administration turn comes to characterize international governmental organizations studies (Trondal, 2007). Studies have shown that IPAs profoundly influence global governance (Biermann & Siebenhüner, 2009), transform power distributions across levels of government (Egeberg & Trondal, 2009), and change the conduct of domestic public sector governance (Keohane, Macedo, & Moravcsik, 2009). Moreover, IPAs are called upon to cope with ever more wicked and unruly public problems. Turbulence in world politics is partly caused by turbulent politico-administrative systems, partly by turbulent environments, and partly by how organizations and their environments poorly match—thus creating turbulence of scale. IPAs may be seen as one coping mechanism in an ever more turbulent global scene (Ansell et al., 2016).

Crisis and disintegration have faced ´grand-theories´ of European integration such as neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism with conceptual and explanatory difficulties, while mid-range theories such as institutionalisms have fared comparatively better (Riddervold, Trondal, & Newsome, 2020). Yet, most discussions of theoretical rehabilitation in the literature have focused on the role of grand-theories, leaving mid-range accounts less discussed. One reason might be that big theoretical ideas may explain general trends more adequately than particularities of cases (e.g., Boin & Lodge, 2016). This article aims to fill the void of mid-range theorizing by applying a mid-range institutionalist approach to conceptuality examine political order.

A common political order arguably consists of a relatively stable arrangement of institutions that are fairly formalized and institutionalized. A *common* political order arguably requires that relevant institutions are: (i) fairly *independent* of pre-existing institutions; (ii) relatively *integrated* and internally cohesive; and (iii) rea-

sonably able to *influence* governance processes within other institutions. In sum, a political order is characterized as a fairly independent, integrated and influential set of institutions that allocate "authority, power, information, responsibility, and accountability" (Olsen, 2016, p. 3). However, one caveat needs to be taken into account: An 'order' does not suggest institutions that are perfectly integrated, coordinated and impeccably independent. They are often imperfectly so (Trondal & Bauer, 2017).

The research question of this study is to what extent Nordic cooperation rises into some kind of 'common' order. To illustrate: In a Nordic context a common order lets us infer that Nordic institutions are able to act relatively independently of member-state governments, be fairly integrated internally (within and among the Nordic institutions), and able to exert influence on the policy processes of member-state institutions—thus ultimately challenging the politico-administrative autonomy of the constituent states. This article, however, suggests that Nordic-level institutions (notably the Nordic Council of Ministers and its Secretariat) in practice are *less likely* to act relatively integrated and independently of member-state governments and *less likely* to wield significant influence on public governance processes within the member-state institutions. In the case of Nordic cooperation, most primary administrative capacities are located within national ministries and agencies, and relatively few at the ´Nordic level´. Member-state administrations are subsequently likely to primarily influence policy agendas and policy implementation.

The article is presented as follows: The next section outlines a research agenda by outlining a public administration framework; the subsequent sections suggest conceptual dimensions that might be used for empirical study.

2. A Research Agenda

Studies of state-building demonstrate that the emergence of political orders involves balancing acts between creating central politico-administrative capacities and institutions safeguarding local independence (Rokkan, 1999). Recent literature moreover demonstrates that the rise of politico-administrative systems at EU-level transforms policy processes at national level. For example, studies show that the European Commission profoundly biases power distributions across levels of government and circumvents domestic democratic governance processes (e.g., Egeberg & Trondal, 2009; Trondal, 2016).

We have seen three subsequent waves of studies on political order, and this article serves as part of the third wave. Briefly sketched, the first wave largely saw domestic political orders as sealed systems of governance in which phenomena external to the nation-state were conceptually treated as exogenous epiphenomena (Wilson, 1989). Studies of public administration was thus largely circumscribed to the study of *domestic* govern-

ing systems (e.g., Christensen & Lægreid, 2007). A second wave of studies directed attention to how international institutions—such as IPAs—contributed to the transformation of national political order. These studies illuminated processes of transformation from an inherent Westphalian towards a post-Westphalian order characterized by a restructuring of political authority (e.g., Bartolini, 2005; Egeberg, 2006) towards institutionalized multilevel governance (MLG; Ansell & Di Palma, 2004; Hooghe & Marks, 2001). This second surge of literature both included the research programme on MLG by Gary Marks and Liesbet Hooghe as well the first wave of literature on multilevel administration (MLA I, see Section 4). From the 1960s, studies of administrative integration emerged focusing on the integration of domestic and international administrative bodies. Studies of administrative integration argued that the domestic-international distinction was conceptually and empirically fuzzy (Rosenau, 1966). The "descriptions of the [EU] Community as 'above,' 'alongside' or 'outside' the member states were seen as oversimplifications" (Pag, 1987, p. 446), stressing 'bureaucratic inter-penetration' between member-state and EU administrative bodies (Cassese, 1987; Rosenau, 1966). More recently, the interdependencies of political orders has perhaps been most successfully captured by the MLG approach (Hooghe & Marks, 2001). The European political order is thus seen as a polymorphic system that integrates governance levels into a complex marble cake consisting of a patchwork of separate but interconnected political institutions at different levels of authority (e.g., Bulmer, 2008, p. 173).

This article subscribes to a third wave of study by highlighting the administrative basis for political order and the organizational dimension of public governance (MLA II, see Section 4). This field of study has been particularly interested in understanding European administrative institution-building (Egeberg, 2006; Rittberger & Wonka, 2011) and more recently the organizational foundation of a multilevel European administrative system (Curtin & Egeberg, 2008; Egeberg, 2010; Egeberg & Trondal, 2009). The European administrative system has subsequently been pictured as a "multilevel and nested network administration, where administrative bodies at different levels of government are linked together in the performance of tasks" (Hofmann & Turk, 2006, p. 583). In short, this third wave of literature has been seen as representing a 'public administration turn' in the study of political order (Trondal, 2007).

3. Public Administration and the Study of Political Order

In an effort to conceptualize Nordic cooperation in particular and to capture basic aspects of political order in general (Painter & Peters, 2010, p. 6; Waldo, 1992, p. 37), this article suggests how the study of public administration may be helpful to conceptually frame political order. One enduring challenge in conceptualizing political order is to

establish theoretically powerful and empirically helpful categories that capture essential and enduring characteristics (e.g., Fukuyama, 2016, p. 222). Our starting assumption is that adequate analytical categories should both offer more empirical variation between than within categories as well as be generalizable across time and space. Examples of less meaningful categories are those treating institutions as sui generis. Such concepts are not generalizable across time and space and easily prevent the accumulation of general knowledge. One recent example is new intergovernmentalism picturing EU agencies as "de novo bodies" (Bickerton, 2012).

Our approach puts the administrative dimension of political order conceptually center stage. There are at least two key reasons for doing so. The first is that administrations represent the action capacities for political orders. Without administrative institutions, public policies will not be initiated, drafted, nor implemented (Fukuyama, 2013). Moreover, the well-being of citizens is shown to be nurtured by societies administered by 'impartial' public bureaucracies (Rothstein, 2012). So, administrative capacities are central for making 'good' and 'living' political orders (March & Olsen, 1989). Secondly, the administrative dimension is by and large neglected in studies of political order (e.g., Rokkan, 1999). In EU studies the administrative dimension has been largely neglected by leading theoretical approaches, such as social constructivism (Checkel, 2005) and intergovernmentalism (Moravcsik, 1998). In effect, advancing a public administration approach to the study of political order, this article supports a thread of thought from neo-functionalist literature which argued that bureaucratic integration of administrative elites was vital for European integration (Haas, 1958, p. 16; Niemann, 2006, p. 280). Moreover, despite focusing on the administrative dimensions of political order, the role of public administration is not analyzed in isolation—as an "intellectual wasteland" (Bobrow, Eulau, Landau, Jones, & Axelrod, 1977, p. 421)—but as requisite capacities that mobilize 'bias' in the making of public policy (Schattschneider, 1975). A public administration approach to political order formation is thus also a theory of political organization (Olsen, 2016).

Notwithstanding developments in the study of the EU administrative system (Bauer & Trondal, 2015; Trondal & Bauer, 2017), contemporary public administration scholarship faces one major challenge. Public administration literature has devoted limited attention to broader discussions on how administrations affect the growth and decline of political order: This literature has for instance not payed much attention to how changing structuring of the state—e.g., agencification and networking of agencies—coincide with forms of multilevel administrative governance (Danielsen & Yesilkagit, 2014; Egeberg, 2006; Fukuyama, 2013; Raadschelders, 2011; Trondal, 2014). It has not sufficiently studied how organizing public policy at one level of governance may influence ways of making public policy across levels of gover-

nance (Egeberg & Trondal, 2016). The next section suggests how administrative science may provide a conceptual toolkit to the study of political order.

4. Conceptual Dimensions of Multilevel Administration

The EU has served as an important research laboratory for understanding political order (e.g., Olsen, 2007). To conceptualize Nordic cooperation, this article builds conceptually on this scholarly laboratory. One main thread in this literature has been on the multilevel nature of the EU polity (Marks, 1993; Piattoni, 2010). According to Trondal and Bauer (2017), a 'level' refers to the distinct and independent institutions, rules, procedures and personnel. A multilevel order thus encompasses distinct and independent platforms that connect these elements at national level with parallel elements at the level above. This platform of elements consists of a puzzling mix of institutional autonomy and institutional interdependence across levels of governance. It contains institutions that act relatively independently from domestic governments as well as enjoy institutional interdependencies or ties between the same institutions (see March, 1999). Recognized by the MLG literature (Hooghe & Marks, 2001), studying this mix of institutional autonomy and interdependencies is vital in order to adequately capture the multilevel character of Nordic cooperation.

Moreover, despite contemporary literature having seen European multilevel order as centered on its administrative dimension (Trondal & Peters, 2013), we have seen two waves of MLA literatures (hereby termed MLA I and MLA II). This study draws attention to the second wave of MLA II literature:

- MLA I: The first surge of MLA studies was particularly interested in the convergence of administrative systems and the convergences of public policies between EU member-states (Olsen, 2007). MLA was thus measured by its *outcome*—that is if administrative forms, practices and ways of doing things became more similar across the member-states. This field of study emerged from the literature of comparative government and comparative public administration, examining the roots of common administrative systems (Knill, 2001; Meyer-Sahling & Yesilkagit, 2011) and management practices (Christensen & Lægreid, 2011). 'MLA' was conceived of as the "convergence on a common European model" (Olsen, 2003, p. 506). In this thematic issue, Lægreid and Rykkja (2020) reflect this approach by their study of administrative cooperation among Nordic ministries and agencies, focusing on the emergence of convergent administrative policies among Nordic states.

- MLA II: A more recent line of research conceives of MLA as featuring novel institutional constellations and configurations. This line of research is in-

terested in examining and understanding *patterns or processes* of integration of public administration institutions—not their outcomes (e.g., Benz, 2015). Such studies have been preoccupied with both understanding processes of European administrative capacity-building (e.g., Rittberger & Wonka, 2011) and processes of multilevel administrative governance of ministerial departments and public agencies (Curtin & Egeberg, 2008; Egeberg, 2010; Egeberg & Trondal, 2009).

Following MLA II, three analytical dimensions have been suggested for analysis in this literature: institutional independence, influence, and integration (Trondal & Bauer, 2017). A multilevel administrative system is thus characterized by the emergence of institutions that are relatively coherent, independent, and able to influence other institutions. Each of these items is shortly discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.1. Independence

Political order formation involves continuous tensions between administrative dependence and independence within and between administrative systems (Trondal, 2017). Political order involves institutionalizing relatively independent administrative capacities; that is, the permanent governing institutions that operate relatively independently of pre-existing political institutions (Matthews, 2012). Huntington (1968) saw autonomy as a necessary requirement of state-formation. Saint-Simon (1964, pp. 35–38) also argued that one necessary factor in building political order is the making of administrative systems that consist of common sets of bureaucratic bodies, which include a congress that serves the common interest independently of national governments. Subsequently, political order at a Nordic level would require an independent Nordic administrative system with some organizational capacities of its own. It would require the existence of independent administrative capacities within and around the Nordic Council of Ministers as the executive arm of the Nordic Council. The development and implementation of public policy from a 'Nordic' perspective would require the supply of such independent Nordic administrative capacities (Olesen & Strang, 2016). Etzold (2020), however, shows that such level of administrative independence does not exist at the Nordic level despite many commonalities and the close cooperation among its countries. Lacking any supranational elements, the institutions of Nordic cooperation are in practice not sufficiently independent.

4.2. Influence

Political order also requires that political institutions be relatively able to influence decision-making processes within subordinate institutions of a system. More generally, the independence and integration of administra-

tive capacities may not only influence how public policy is formulated and implemented, it may also affect the capacity to influence and challenge other institutions (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2019). Within the EU, the European Commission has requisite capacities to influence governance processes within EU agencies as well as national agencies, making national agencies 'double hatted' serving both as national and EU-level regulatory bodies. Studies suggest that the European Commission has de facto capacities to influence everyday governing activities of domestic agencies—making them in practice partly European and partly national (Egeberg & Trondal, 2017) as well as making them autonomous vis-à-vis their parent ministries (Bach, Ruffing, & Yesilkagit, 2015).

However, without requisite independent administrative capacities at its disposal, Nordic cooperation is largely centered on the cooperative behavior among member-state agencies. It is fundamentally the discretionary behavior of agency personnel and sub-units among the Nordic member-states that make up the core fabric of Nordic administrative cooperation. Lægreid and Rykkja (2020) and Kjøndal (2020) substantiate that Nordic cooperation is largely centered on agency-to-agency cooperation within policy sub-systems. Olesen and Strang (2016, p. 28) similarly argue that the Nordic Council of Ministers was largely established on the basis of pre-existing administrative networks among Nordic agencies. This has also been illustrated in a case study of the Norwegian Statistical Agency. Originating in 1889, Nordic statistical cooperation has largely been centered on horizontal network cooperation among national regulatory agencies with a focus on how to develop shared methodologies, statistical registers and user information. Agency directors have met regularly, followed by regular meetings among lower-ranked staff who share common portfolios. Moreover, these networks and meetings have been used to prepare meetings both in Eurostat and in the Nordic Council (Teigen & Trondal, 2015).

As outlined below, an MLA approach is also an organizational approach to public governance. From an organizational theory point of view, the question of how administrative institutions are organized is thought to affect how they evolve and work (Egeberg & Trondal, 2018). The horizontal specialization of administrations and their sub-units may for example affect how they influence other institutions. For example, the sector-specialization of the Secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers is likely to mobilize sector-specialized cooperation among Nordic ministries and agencies. This may cause the development of direct relationships between administrative units of the Nordic Council of Ministers and corresponding national agencies, thus generating sectoral ties between administrative bodies at Nordic and domestic level. Olesen and Strang (2016) show how meetings among Nordic bureaucrats contribute to developing and maintaining a 'Nordic ethos,' illustrated by the many common declarations that have been signed among Nordic countries in certain policy domains.

4.3. Integration

A final characteristic of political order is the extent to which they are internally integrated and able to act coherently. The question is thus how competing patterns of administrative integration and coordination and disintegration, or fragmentation and siloization, co-exist within and among institutions. Studies observe that the emergence of common political orders does not necessarily lead to the rise of coherent and integrated institutions. Instead, Orren and Skowronek (2004) suggest that different elements of administrative bodies tend to overlap, counteract, and be poorly coordinated rather than coordinated and well ´ordered.' Studies show that parallel to the vertical specialization of administrative systems, there is a push for administrative coordination and centralization within national governments, strengthening the executive branch of government (Poguntke & Webb, 2005). This pattern is also observed within the European Commission. Contemporary studies of the European Commission reveal it has become increasingly internally coordinated—both between the different layers of the Commission administration as well as between the Commission administration and the political level (College of Commissioners and their cabinets; e.g., Kassim, Connolly, Dehousse, Rozenberg, & Benjamballah, 2017). These observations are also reflected throughout the history of the European Commission with periods of internal integration and periods of internal disintegration. This was illustrated in the Jaques Delors Commission (1985–1994) which was characterized by presidential power and a neglect of ordinary administrative rules and routines (Christiansen, 2008, p. 63). Kassim et al. (2013) show how the European Commission president has gained more organizational capacities, notably by strengthening the Secretariat-General into a political secretariat for the President. However, Trondal (2012) also shows parallel processes of administrative siloization and turf wars between departments (Directorate-Generals) of the European Commission.

In short, political order involves continuous balancing-acts between and complex co-existences of integration and disintegration of administrative systems. However, there are no studies that have empirically mapped this dimension within the Nordic Council of Ministers, or adjacent institutions.

5. Conceptual Added Value

With an ambition to argue for a public administration approach to the study of political order, the conceptual dimensions outlined above may serve not only to understand elements of political order, but also to accentuate what makes a public administration approach different from its conceptual alternative—the MLG approach. In short, an MLA approach highlights analytical dimensions that remain largely untouched by MLG literature. This section operationalizes variations between the MLG

and the MLA approaches, and also shows how these two approaches may complement each other. However, the section does not offer a thorough review of each literature, which has been provided elsewhere (e.g., Bache & Flinders, 2004; Bauer & Trondal, 2015; Piattoni, 2010). Three conceptual differences are discussed in the following: (i) Units of analysis; (ii) ideas on organizational differentiation; and essentially (iii) causal mechanisms.

5.1. Units of Analysis

The MLG approach has focused on sub-national authorities, or regions, as unit of analysis, and highlighted the complex actorhood that spans levels of authority in contemporary public governance processes (Ongaro, 2015; Marks, Hooghe, & Schekel, 2008, p. 113; Marks, Nielsen, & Ray, 1996). This approach focuses on how the authority of regions gives them requisite capacities to by-pass national governments in their interaction with EU institutions. Due to the interconnection of political authority across levels of governance, it is argued that the distinction between domestic and international relations as well as between domestic and foreign policy administrations has become obsolete, and as a consequence regional actors tend to mobilize policy attention beyond the state (Hooghe & Marks, 2001, p. 4). By contrast, the MLA approach focuses on the administrative structures of political order at different levels of government, notably on the mutual interaction of bureaucratic sub-units across levels of governance. Empirical studies that have used the MLA approach have paid attention to the interaction of administrative sub-units across levels of governance and how such interaction influences bureaucratic autonomy, behavioral logics and administrative styles among administrative office holders (Bauer et al., 2019; Egeberg, 2006; Trondal & Peters, 2013). Focus is thus directed towards how government administrations ´mobilize biases´ in governance processes and systematically shape administrative behavior among civil servants (Schattschneider, 1975; Simon, 1965). The MLA approach assumes that how bureaucracies and their sub-units are organized at all levels of government is likely to systematically shape the administrative behavior evoked by bureaucratic staff, and ultimately influence multilevel administrative governance processes.

5.2. Organizational Differentiation

Although the MLG approach successfully challenged the unitary conception of the nation-state, it simultaneously treated its unit of analysis—regions—as 'black boxes.' In short, the operationalization of regional authority did not include the organizational structuring of sub-national institutions (Marks et al., 2008, p. 115). As a consequence, Ongaro (2015) criticized the MLG literature for being a loose umbrella concept rather than a clear-cut theory. To illustrate, Marks et al. (2008) carefully measured local authority by the use of nine dimensions. Along all dimensions, regions were treated as coherent wholes. Neither of these dimensions suggested how administrative characteristics of sub-national institutions should be conceptualized or applied to a causal model. As a consequence of an absence of an organizational (bureaucratic) dimension, the MLG approach focused on "the allocation of authority across general-purpose jurisdictions" (Marks et al., 2008, p. 111). One explanation for this is the rationalist ontology of MLG which treats administrative institutions as epiphenomena to the interaction of regions (see Section 5.3).

The MLA approach, by contrast, treats the unit of analysis as internally differentiated. Echoing the ideas of institutional polycentrism that studied systems of interconnected sub-units (Ostrom, 2009), the MLA approach assumes that politico-administrative institutions are potentially internally differentiated and that patterns of differentiation systematically influence and bias multilevel administrative governance processes. Viewing political orders as organizationally differentiated moreover implies institutional differentiation and separation of powers being conceptually and causally important (Olsen, 2016, p. 8; see next paragraph). Egeberg and Trondal (2018) suggest how organizational variables can be applied to unpack organizational differentiations—such as organizational capacity (high/low), organizational departmentalization (horizontal/vertical), organizational association (primary/secondary), geographical locus (integrated/disintegrated), organizational demography (e.g., educational background of staff), and organizational coupling (tight/loose).

Organizational differentiation might take the form of internal and/or external differentiation. In the con-

Table 1. A conceptual comparison.

	Multilevel governance	Multilevel administration
Units of analysis	Political arenas (e.g., subnational authorities, regions)	Administrative institutions (public sector organizations and their sub-components)
Organizational differentiation	No differentiation (regions treated as black boxes)	Degrees of differentiation (administrative systems are organizationally specialized systems)
Causal mechanisms	The supply of (regional) authority	The supply of organizational routines

Source: Based on Trondal and Bauer (2017).

text of Nordic cooperation, of particular relevance are *secondary structures* established outside and between primary structures that serve to differentiate the system. The *primary* organizational affiliation of decision-makers is the unit to which s/he is likely to dedicate most attention, time and resources. Examples are a ministerial department or a regulatory agency. Committees, collegial bodies and networks, on the other hand, constitute *secondary* structures, meaning that participants are expected to be part-timers, having their primary affiliation somewhere else, e.g., in a department or agency. Secondary structures—such as administrative networks of regulatory authorities—organize transactions by bringing together part-time participants in mutual exchange of information and expertise (Wood, 2019). Studies show that such bodies facilitate interaction, coordination and trust among primary structures (e.g., Billis & Rochester, 2020; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2012; Lægreid, Randma-Liiv, Rykkja, & Sarapuu, 2016). For example, central governments that complement hierarchies with horizontal devices (e.g., interdepartmental committees) seem to be somewhat more coordinated than those relying entirely on hierarchies (Wegrich & Stimac, 2014).

5.3. Causal Mechanisms

Finally, the MLG and MLA approaches diverge on core ontological ideas of causality of public governance. Although criticized for being a theoretically descriptive concept (e.g., Ongaro, 2015), the essential explanatory component of the MLG approach is actor-centered. Moreover, to the extent that institutional variables are included in the equation, they are largely applied as aggregative items (Marks et al., 1996, p. 170) and thus similar to a *thin* 'exchange based' idea of institutions and human choice (March & Olsen, 1995). According to an exchange-based theory of politics, March and Olsen (1995, p. 7) argue that "politics can be seen as aggregating individual preferences into collective action by procedures of rational bargaining, negotiation, coalition formation, and exchange." Institutional variables thus do not figure as independent variables, but largely as intervening variables that constrain human choices and policy processes. Based on a rationalist ontology, the MLG approach has successfully studied the role of subnational authority as a local push-factor for MLG (Marks et al., 2008).

The MLA approach, by contrast, argues that institutions should be treated as independent variables in the analytical model. The MLA approach thus rests on an organizational approach. An organizational approach is grounded on the assumption that organizational characteristics may explain both how organizations act as well as how they change. An organizational approach in this study emphasizes how decision processes and human behavior respond to a set of fairly stable organizational routines (Cyert & March, 1963). Essentially, stable premises

for behavioral choices are past experiences encoded in rules and expressed in the organizational structure of a government apparatus (Frederickson, Smith, Larimer, & Licari, 2012; Olsen, 2017; Waldo, 1952). Organizational characteristics of the governmental apparatus systematically enable and constrain public governance processes, making some policy choices more likely than others. A theory of organization is thus also a theory of politics (Waldo, 1952). Organizational factors focus and mobilize attention and action capacity around certain problems and solutions while ignoring others, focus attention along particular lines of conflict and cooperation, and so on (Simon, 1983, p. 21). An organizational approach posits that organizational factors are not merely an expression of symbol politics (Feldman & March, 1981; Meyer & Rowan, 1977), but create systematic biases in human behavior and collective decision processes by directing and nudging individual and collective choices towards certain problems and solutions, thereby making certain outcomes more plausible than others (Egeberg & Trondal, 2020; Fligstein, 2001; Gulick, 1937; Hammond, 1986; Schattschneider, 1975; Thaler & Sunstein, 2009).

Contemporary studies in organization theory focus particularly on the explanatory role of organizational *structure* (Egeberg, 2012; Egeberg & Trondal, 2018). An organizational structure is a normative structure, it is a decided order, composed of rules and roles specifying who is expected to do what, when and how (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2019; Egeberg & Trondal, 2018; Scott & Davis, 2016). It suggests how roles, power and responsibilities are distributed, controlled and coordinated. It shapes behavior by providing individuals with "a systematic and predictable selection of problems, solutions and choice opportunities" (March & Olsen, 1976, p. 13). While organizational structure does not necessarily predict or determine actual decision-making behavior, it does make some choices become more likely than others (e.g., Egeberg & Trondal, 2018). As such, organization theory builds on decision theory, with its focus on explaining decision-making behavior (Simon, 1965). This entails that organizational factors do not impact directly on society; rather, they have an indirect effect by influencing the policy process and the decisions made within and outside organizations (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2019). Bounded rationality (Simon, 1965) is one of three key mechanisms that connect role expectations to behavior; the organizational structure helps simplify actors' cognitive worlds by directing attention towards a selection of possible problems and solutions, and ways to connect them. This concept holds that decision-makers operate under three restrictions disregarded by the consequentialist theology of economic man limited information with regards to possible solutions and alternatives; limited cognitive capacity to evaluate and process information; and limited time to make decisions (March, 2011). Consequently, actors opt for a selection of satisfactory alternatives instead of optimal ones and often turn to their immediate environments and avail-

able knowledge to find proper choices (Simon, 1965). The second mechanism—the logic of appropriateness—views human action as driven by internalized perceptions of what is deemed appropriate (March & Olsen, 1989). Finally, actors may find that rule and role compliance is in accordance with their self-interests and utility functions. Organizations are thus incentive systems that administer rewards and punishments (e.g., Ostrom, Ostrom, Aligica, & Sabetti, 2015; Simon, 1983).

In this regard, the MLA approach builds on an organizational approach of public governance (Arellano-Gault, Demortain, Rouillard, & Thoenig, 2013; Egeberg & Trondal, 2018). One such variable is the organization of administrative capacities supplied at *each* level of government. The MLA approach suggests that how such organizational capacities are distributed in sub-unit levels at each level of government is likely to influence human choices and policy processes. Moreover, organizations at different levels that are structured by competing principles may provide multiple and competing choice-architectures for decision-makers, making them aware of multiple preferences, concerns and considerations during the decision-making cycle. Moreover, organizational capacities provide government institutions with leverage to act independently, to enable them some degree of internal integration, and to make them influential towards external institutions (see Section 4.2).

6. Conclusions

This article has drawn attention to a public administration approach to the study of political order. Moreover, the study suggests how this approach adds value by outlining an organization theory of public governance. In sum, the article suggests that a public administration approach is a necessary, yet often neglected, element in a general theory of political order. Focusing on the administrative dimension of politics, this conceptual framework is also a (partial) theory of political organization.

The empirical laboratories that are available to social science are likely to bias the theoretical lessons that are drawn. As the discipline of public administration has been largely locked in national laboratories, the theoretical apparatus available to understand the administrative dimension of Nordic cooperation in particular, and European (multilevel) integration in general, is limited. As a consequence, the sub-discipline of public administration in political science has paid scarce attention to how administrative systems are essential ingredients to (Nordic) political order. This article aims to capture the administrative dimension of (Nordic) political order along three conceptual dimensions: institutional independence, integration, and influence. These dimensions serve to accentuate what makes a public administration lens valuable as well as the organizational dimension of such processes important. Due to organizational differentiation of government apparatuses (cf. Section 5.2), administrative cooperation among Nordic ministries and

agencies are likely to follow sectoral lines (Kjøndal, 2020; Teigen & Trondal, 2015).

A public administration approach is more generally helpful for studying the *consolidation* of embryonic political orders. According to March and Olsen (1995), organizations and organized systems are merely temporary systems of rules and roles, and according to Rokkan (1999) they are provisional resolutions of societal conflicts. A public administration approach to the study of political order helps to capture how emergent political orders that span multiple tiers of authoritative decision-making are dependent on certain administrative resources. This article, however, suggests that Nordic-level institutions are *less likely* to act relatively integrated and independently of member-state governments and *less likely* to wield significant influence on public governance processes within member-state institutions. In the case of Nordic cooperation, most primary administrative capacities are located within national ministries and agencies, and relatively few at the 'Nordic level.' Member-state administrations are subsequently likely to primarily influence policy agendas and policy implementation.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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