Thesis outline

This is my first thesis plan/outline. It will hopefully result in a thesis in four years time. I will be very grateful for any comments!

Introduction

It is often claimed that national party politics\(^1\) are more or less immune to Europeanisation effects or at the very least that this area is the least affected by the European integration process (Blomgren 2003; Hix & Lord 1997; Jachtenfuchs & Kohler-Koch 2004; Ladrech 2007; Mair 2001; Tallberg et al. 2010). Considering that the European Union is above all a political project, that an overwhelming majority of both elected officials and parties has views on the membership in the EU and that most other aspects of the political sphere has been thoroughly affected I find this argument slightly strange\(^2\). Arguably the political parties as well should be affected by such a profound change of the political institutions (Bartolini 2005:319-326). What is even stranger is the apparent lack of systematic studies on effects of European integration on the national party systems (Carter, Luther, & Poguntke 2007; Gherghina 2009; Goetz & Hix 2001; Ladrech 2002a; Mair 2007b). In this text I will attempt to design a study aiming at explaining how European integration affects national party systems.

Theoretical concerns

In this text party system is defined as “the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition” (Sartori 2005:38), that is the system is to be found by studying the relation between the parties and how every party is dependent on the other parties in the system. Thus an effect on national party systems would be an effect on the relation between the parties making up said system. It should also be noted that parties, and party systems, are “not simply objects, but also subjects” (Mair 1997:9). This means parties have a large influence over agenda-setting and also that both parties and party systems determine our frame of reference when observing and interpreting the political world.

Political parties should be affected at a national level by the European integration simply because of the changes to the national political environment in which they act (Ladrech 2002a, 2002b; Mair 2007b; Poguntke 2007). Either directly (the existence of European elections or the European parliament as a new arena), or indirectly through more subtle influences (Mair 2007b). Especially indirect effects of European integration has been ignored in research even though these indirect effects may prove more important in the long run (Mair 2007b). The various party systems have mostly been studied isolated from the larger process

\(^1\) In this text, “political parties”, “party systems” et cetera generally refers to the national parties, party systems and so on. When I refer to political parties on a European level, I will do so explicitly. Of course there may always be inconsistencies and errors.

\(^2\) Considering that the Norwegian liberal party Venstre split over the question of European integration and that at least two governments in Norway (1971, 1990) has broken down over the same issue (Damgaard 2000:154), it appears that there are at least some effects of European integration.
of European integration: partly there has been a division between different disciplines within political science, partly the party system research has avoided treating Europe as a project and finally the impact of Europe on the domestic arena seems to have been underestimated (Gherghina 2009; Goetz & Hix 2001).  

This “split” or lack of contact between the study of Europe and the study of parties is problematic. If the project of European integration is a political construction and if its development has affected the political reality of the member states, it must necessarily be understood in relation to the political parties, which are, after all, the main political actors in almost all contemporary political systems. Thus a combination of these two theoretical “complexes” or “schools” is necessary in order to answer the question posed earlier. A similar approach has been discussed by Binnema who claims that “[p]arties and Europe cannot be understood in isolation from each other” when studying the political reality of contemporary Europe. (Binnema 2009:179) Though in the end Binnema opts for an approach more based on party theory than Europeanisation (Binnema 2009:2-3, 180-181).

Yet another reason to suspect linking between changes at a European and national level is that politics at these levels has become more and more interlinked (Aylott 2002:456-457; Hegeland 2006; Mair 2007b:164). If one can speak of a real process of European integration it should have effects even at the national party system level. At the same time “... while we still speak of separate layers of decision-making, in practice they have become so intertwined as to become indistinguishable“ (Mair 2007b:164). This, in my view, argues even more for a study at the national level, because then there obviously should be great differences between the situation of today compared to 30 or 40 years ago.

Much earlier and present scholarship seems to suggest that the European and national levels are mostly separate and that this has grave consequences (Mair 2001). In effect the political parties are “quarantining the EU issue within limited parts of the different arenas in which parties operate” (Aylott 2002:447). The result is that the national parties and thus the party systems are “protected” from Europeanisation while the integration itself is plagued by depoliticization, rule of experts and voter apathy. Today it may occasionally seem like this compartmentalization has gone so far that there are almost no links between national and European politics (Jachtenfuchs & Kohler-Koch 2004; Tallberg et al. 2010:95-96). It has also been claimed that European integration in constricts the range of possible policies at the national level thus causing a convergence of the parties (Dorussen & Nanou 2006; Mair 2007a, 2007b). The policy space is claimed to be limited by European regulations and even when a state is opting out of a certain EU policy area this limits the competition since this decision is usually based on some kind of agreement between national political parties. According to Mair this means

“…we cannot organize opposition in the EU – we cannot appeal for votes against a government in elections or in parliament – because the EU itself has been depoliticized. … Moreover, by becoming depoliticized itself, the EU also helps to depoliticize decision-making at the national level, tending therefore to bring even the member states to the status of polities without politics.”
(Mair 2007a:7-8)

3 Similar arguments are developed by among others Ladrech (2002a, 2007) and Mair (2007b)

4 Similar arguments are made by Johansson and Raunio (2001), Parsons (2007) and others.
Whether or not European integration leads to depoliticization (and Hix (2008) would argue that it does not necessarily do so), this should also have effects on the national party systems.

It should be noted that parties and party systems, which are “two quite different foci of analysis” (Mair 1997:6), requires different analysis and also requires that we keep the change of parties and of party systems separate. Mair (1997:16) argues that adaptive and ever-changing parties, leads to more stability in party systems, the reason being that established parties constantly adapt “to forestall new challengers and take advantage of new opportunities”, in fact the very reason party systems freeze at all is because the parties are so adaptive.

**Europeanisation**

Preliminary I will define Europeanisation after Ladrech (2007): “Europeanisation in this article is defined as changes in party behaviour and/or structures, traceable to influences emanating from the EU, whether direct or mediated through institutional and policy changes in the national political system member states.” A broader and less specific definition is to be found in *Europeanisation* by Graziano and Vink (2007:7): ”... we thus understand Europeanisation very broadly as the domestic adaption to European regional integration.” Another common usage of the concept Europeanisation is the constructing of European institutions or really the construction/institutionalization of the European level (see fex Mair 2007b:155-156); while this understanding has its merits, it has no place here.

As Radaelli argues (2000, 2004) Europeanisation must be understood not necessarily to mean convergence *per se*, or harmonization – these are possible but not necessary outcomes; Europeanisation might as well lead to a “differential” impact (Graziano & Vink 2007:10). Ladrech’s/Radaelli’s5 (Ladrech 2002a) definition also means this process may consist either of small, incremental steps or a grander revolution, or indeed anything in between; the main point is that it is a dynamic process. Additionally it is important to recognize that the responses to Europeanisation may also affect the process itself (Ladrech 2002a). This perception of Europeanisation as a *process* rather than an outcome is also shared by Graziano and Vink (2007:10). Likewise, these processes can be seen as either as independent top-down changing the political realities and affecting the parties scope of action or as dependent bottom-up where the political parties attempt to influence the process itself (Cole 2001:33).

Baun et al (2006:255-256) argues Europeanisation should not strictly speaking be viewed as *one process*, but several, and these processes affect all three dimensions of the political system – polity, politics and policy. This process or rather the reactions to this process is of major interest; Ladrech (2002a:395) writes ”[i]n other words, the Europeanisation of political parties will be reflected in their response to the changes in their environments.” This cannot be understood as a well-defined, orderly process, but as Hanley (2002) remarks Europeanisation appears “as a dynamic, unruly and sometimes contradictory process”. On a final note, Europeanisation should not be properly understood as a theory, but a phenomena; it is something to study, look for, or explain, not something which explains (Graziano & Vink

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5 This is Ladrech’s own name on this definition. The reason being that he claims to build as much on Radaelli’s work as his own (Ladrech 2002a:392).

6 Though I will occasionally write “one process” this should not be taken as a statement.
Europeanisation is not the solution or explanation: it is the problem (Ladrech 2002a; Radaelli 2004).

According to Binnema, the main problem with the concept of Europeanisation in relation to political parties is the top-down approach where ‘“something European’ that subsequently affects ‘something national”‘ (2009:7). However, this is not necessarily the case if one regards Europeanisation as a process where the parties are active agents shaping as well as being shaped.\(^7\)

With this definition, Mair’s justifiable concern that Europeanisation is built on a distinction national – European which may no longer be as clear or relevant (2007b:164), is also less of a problem, because whether the distinction is getting blurred is of minor importance when the agency of the parties is emphasized. This distinction does seem to dominate within this field and it cannot be denied that political parties are still national political parties. The europarties are rather loosely bound confederacies than united parties; they can be viewed as agents and arenas for the national parties rather than agents themselves (Hanley 2008).\(^8\)

**Research Question**

This brings me to my preliminary research question: How does European integration affect the national party systems? As argued above some sort of effect should be noticeable, the main issue will be how to examine these effects. A broad, general question such as this one is of course hard to examine by itself, unless it is bound into an empirical context and thereby constrained in time and space.

I want to examine effects on a systemic level, to find patterns of effects, changes and adaptations, but also resistance and constants, but since a party system is impossible to study by itself it is the political parties forming it which must be the subject of the enquiry: by examining these and comparing them it is possible to say something about the party system. Focus will be placed on how the parties react to and partly also by their responses shape these processes of Europeanisation and how this affect the competition between the parties.

If Mair’s above-mentioned argument concerning the freezing and adaptation of parties and party systems is correct, and if the European Union constrains the range of policy, Europeanisation should lead to less adaptive parties and thus more instable party systems. Thus we have two possible outcomes: either policy is limited by European integration and parties are constrained in their adaptation which means party systems will be more instable or the policy limitations because European integration are rather minor and does not constrain parties’ adaptive abilities which would leave more stable party systems. As mentioned above, convergence in the form of Europeanisation does not have to lead to convergence in outcomes, since these are moderated by the national political system. However, if we can find several similar political systems, outcome should also be similar, that is a convergence.

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\(^7\) Though in all fairness Binnema does consider the possibility of such an approach, but ultimately rejects it (2009:2).

\(^8\) Though Hix, Noury and Gérard argues that their coherence is steadily increasing, no one is really suggesting the europarties are replacing the national parties, for one thing the MEPs are still more loyal to their national parties than the europarties (Hix & Noury 2009; Hix, Noury, & Roland 2007). Coman (2009) partly challenges and partly complements this view.
There are two major problems with this research question: making it manageable (and not too large to handle) and the problem of causality (i.e. how do we know this is a European effect or not). The first issue is most easily solved by making this into a comparative case study, what Mair calls “…quite a slow and sustained series of case-study analyses…” (2007b:162), where some kind of selection limits the amount of data and will be dealt with in the next chapter. The second issue is one of research design, argumentation and analysis and will be addressed in the chapter after that.

Selection of Cases

Lijphart (1975:163) argues that comparative case studies are a good way of solving the “many variables, small N predicament”. This would clearly be the case when examining Europeanisation effects on national party systems. At the most one could argue that there are 30-40 cases in Europe. Yin (2009:53) argues that there are no real difference between the methodology of a single-case study and a multiple comparative case study. Additionally Yin argues that multiple-case studies should be seen as replications and not samplings, this increases the possibilities of generalizing the results. It also affects the selection of cases.

The selection of cases is without a doubt on of the most difficult and important aspects of a comparative case study. The basic design of my thesis is a comparative study of the Nordic party systems. There are several reasons for picking the Nordic states as cases for this comparison:

1. Ease of access to materials, not only in purely practical terms, but also culturally and linguistically.

2. Similarity of the cases, not only politically and system-wise, but also culturally. This will hopefully make comparing easier and allow for more reliable results since it keeps some “national-level characteristics ‘constant’” (Bergman 2000:6).

3. A certain variation between the cases; Norway and Iceland has not joined, Sweden, Finland and Denmark did not all join at the same time. Also the debate whether to join the EU and its predecessors did not start at the same time in all five countries and has had different outcomes. Thus both the starting point of the debates on Europe and the actual membership dates are varied between the cases.

4. I believe this is a fairly common set of states to compare, not only is there plenty of similarities and but perhaps even a tendency to further Nordic convergence (Petersson 2005:175-181). The popularity of a design is not in itself a guarantee that it is a good design, but it does increase the odds of it being so.

5. The historically remarkable stability of the Nordic party systems and the earlier strong current of euroscepticism make it interesting to examine these systems in particular; if Europeanisation effects can be found here, they should be present elsewhere.

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9 Though this seems to have abated now (Tallberg et al. 2010), note the current lack of eurosceptical Nordic MEPs, the strength of euroscepticism in the Nordic states placed them apart from the European mainstream (Aylott 2002:441; Damgaard 2000:153).
It seems as the Danish and Norwegian systems have changed more than the other three, just based on the appearance and importance of new parties. This gives a variation in outcome, which may be important.

Finally, Yin argues that five-six cases is a pretty good number for replications within a multiple-case study (2009:58).

One risk with this design is that the results may be specific for the Nordic countries and not open to a Europe-wide generalization. This risk might be larger with this design, but is actually something that cannot be avoided when making any kind of selection of cases. Alternative designs would have been to pick cases all over Europe, but this does not give a clear-cut selection mechanism and heightens the risk of “cherry picking cases” or self-selection. Of course one could argue that picking dissimilar cases is also a possible design, but this would probably lessen the possibilities of comparing the cases even if the result of the study might be easier to generalize. By selecting we increase the margins of error, but by using un-biased selections we make the design more transparent and avoid self-selecting thus the results are more reliable. In the end there will always be a trade-off between comparable cases and as broad selection as possible.

Another design would be to include all cases of a certain Europe-wide party family. Besides making it impossible to actually study the party system, this brings up another problem, which I avoid by using the Nordic states only: how similar are really the member parties of for example the European People’s Party? Or any of the other party groups? One could of course argue the omission of the new member states of Central and Eastern Europe on the basis of them not having had established party systems for an extended period of time; this might increase the similarities. What should then be done about Greece, Spain and Portugal? Which parties can really be accepted as representative for their European-wide party family? A final problem would be that the sheer size of these party families would make my planned approach more or less impossible due to time and effort constraints.

The very same factors which make the Nordic states well suited for comparing, also threaten the possibilities of generalizing to a Europe-wide scale. The very fact that the Nordic states are so similar to each other also means they as a group is different from the other European states, that is one could argue that there is a certain Nordic exceptionalism. However in my view this may also be constructed as improving the chances of generalizing: if the Nordic states are extreme cases and still exhibit certain trends, one could argue that these same trends should be present in more “moderate” cases as well. If on, the other hand, the Nordic cases are too exceptional any possibilities to generalize to a European level will be slim.

Party systems are not directly observable in themselves. Instead the observable variables are the parties. In a study over an extended period of time, such as this one, it is therefore preferable if the same parties are present during the entire time period. Thus this study will be limited to the parties included in the “classical Nordic five-party system” consisting of a conservative, a liberal, an agrarian/centrist, a social democratic and left socialist party.

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10 See Petersson (2005) for a discussion on these similarities. Additionally, Lawler (1997) argues that the Nordic debates over participation in the European project was characterized by the prominence of exceptionalist arguments. See also discussion below.
The Nordic Five-Party Systems

In reality, as Petersson writes, there are eight political systems within five Nordic states (Petersson 2005:27). However, the three additional systems tend to encompass very small populations – even compared to the other Nordic states.

The five Nordic states’ main advantage for a comparative study is that they have very similar political systems, though there are differences (Petersson 2005:31-34). At any rate the dominant parties tend to be from the same five party families. Furthermore, the political parties have traditionally had a very strong position within the political life (Petersson 2005:34, 49, 64, 164-5) and they have played a larger role than simply being electoral organizations since they have been mass organizations deeply anchored in society. This makes a study of the Nordic party systems even more interesting: if a European influence can be isolated here, it should be even more important in a system where the parties are weaker. Today it is no longer be accurate to speak about a Nordic five party system, so clearly something has happened to them.

For a time-frame, until the early 1970’s the Nordic states had approximately the same party systems as they had had 1920 (Lipset & Rokkan 1967:50; Möller 2007:282; Petersson 2005:35). Though these systems have been similar and remarkably stable, 1973 appears as a watershed in Norway and Denmark, and especially during the 1980’s and 90’s the party systems “un-freeze.” Mair (1997:19) mentions that the west European political parties now exist in an era of political change and electoral flux, and dates the begin of this period to approximately the early 80’s, thus 1970 should be a safe starting date for my study.

Pennings has remarked that “[b]efore this year [1960] party manifestos were often small documents without many specific references to policy-making” (Pennings 2006:268). In addition, the European question is not really an active issue until the late 1960s in any of the Nordic states. A starting point around 1970 seems reasonable, especially if one accepts the argument about the frozen cleavages from the 1920’s; not much should have happened in the intervening time period. Also, before the issue is an active political issue, not much material should be found.

Smaller parties and parties only present in one or few of the Nordic states are excluded. Partly because I fear it may be harder to find the material of minor parties (Hug 2000), partly because similar new parties may not appear in all states at the same time. Also, the threshold to getting into parliament and gaining various forms of financial support from the state varies between the states (Petersson 2005:47). This would mean that selection biases if I expanded the selection outside of the five classical party families would be a much greater problem than if I do not.

This exclusion of minor parties also means that a party such as the Danish People’s Movement against the EU which arguably is a reaction to European integration is not included. These parties tend to either only compete on a European level (Mair 2001:31) and have generally failed to make an impact on the national level. I would also place the Swedish

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11 Variously shifting experiences, for example during World War II seems not to have left too important traces in the party systems.

12 In Denmark the parliamentary election of 1973 is known as the ”landslide election”; the established parties only collected 63% of the votes and six new parties entered the parliament for the first time (Petersson 2005:42).
Pirate Party\textsuperscript{13} in this category. New parties are also, by definition, not present at the start of my reviewed period which also would disqualify them. In the end, while the appearance of new parties outside of my chosen cases must of course be taken into account in a contextual sense, these new-comers are rather a direct effect than an indirect and thus I do not think the indirect effects will be made clearer by including them.

However it is necessary to furthermore limit the selection since the liberal parties present some problems: an important liberal party hasn’t really existed ever in Iceland, and the Norwegian and Finnish parties are very minor since several years.\textsuperscript{14} The above mentioned problems of getting access to material would reasonably be expected to apply also to the presently minor liberal parties. It would of course be possible to accept the Swedish People’s Party as a liberal party, but this party is also the political party of the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland and is an ethnic minority party as much as an ideologically liberal party. Additionally, in Denmark, the liberals split not only along urban/rural lines as in the other Nordic countries, but also along radical/moderate lines. WhileVenstre was dominated by farmers and may be classified as the Danish agrarians, Det Radikale Venstre was an intellectual, urban, “radical” liberal party (Petersson 2005:37-8) and it may not be comparable to the more broadly based Swedish liberal party (and for that matter the Finnish and Norwegian parties).

By excluding the liberal family and counting Venstre as agrarian I believe it is possible to include four out of five party families from the Nordic party system and have all five countries represented in all included families. This will also give us two parties on the right and two parties on the left. There also seems to be different trends in the different party groups, and it seems that various outcomes will be included in this study via this selection.

Of the other four families included I find the agrarian/centrist family most intriguing because of the current diversity: in Norway the Centre Party is currently a minor partner in a centre-left coalition, in Sweden the Centre Party is currently a minor partner in a centre-right coalition, in Finland the Centre Party is a major partner in a centre-right coalition and the largest party in parliament. Additionally, the agrarian parties today vary widely in some of their policy positions such as their stance on European integration.\textsuperscript{15} As for transnational affiliations, the Icelandic and Norwegian parties are not members of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party, nor is the Norwegian party member of the Liberal International. Thus the agrarian/centrist family seems to show divergence based on their international affiliation and their participation in government.

The socialist parties have different backgrounds, but are today very similar to each other. Though the Finnish Left Alliance was formed as late as 1990 it is in many ways a continuation of the old united front of the Finnish Communist Party and various socialist non-communists. The Swedish Left Party was created in 1917, while the Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic were set up during the 50’s and 60’s. Today these parties not only find themselves

\textsuperscript{13} At the very least, the founding of the Pirate Party is influenced by European copyright law.

\textsuperscript{14} The Finnish Liberal People’s Party/Liberals hasn’t managed to gain entry to parliament since 1991. Similarly, the Norwegian Venstre suffered a party split over the European question in 1972 and has since then struggled to get above the parliamentary threshold (Damgaard 2000:154).

\textsuperscript{15} This seems to be fairly recent development; as late as 2008 the Nordic agrarian parties were all described as uninterested in the pro-integrationist views of the ELDR (Hanley 2008:119)
alike enough to cooperate in the European Parliament and between their national organisations, but also different enough from various left wing parties on the continent to maintain a separate transnational organisation (Nordic Green Left). It should also be noted that the different histories of these parties, except for the Finnish party, are mostly to be found before 1970,\(^{16}\) even so maybe the left parties can be said to express some sort of convergence.

The conservative and the social democratic/labour families are in many ways the easiest families to deal with, they are both represented in all countries, and their political and policy positions tend to be similar. They are also all members of their respective transnational organizations. Petersson does point out that the Icelandic Independence Party originally is a merger between a conservative and a liberal party and thus is more similar to centre-right catch-all parties such as the German CDU or the British Conservatives (Petersson 2005:38). However, the Independence Party is, as is the CDU, member of the same international grouping as the right-wing parties in the other Nordic countries. However, considering their international affiliation and also that the Swedish Moderate Party has recently accepted the welfare state (to some extent) maybe the conservative parties show some sort of adaption to their European partners in the EPP which have been more accepting towards a welfare state (Hanley 2002, 2008).

Finally, this selection includes cases from all five states and each party family at every time period. Inclusions of more party families would – with the possible exception of the liberals as mentioned above – result in “empty positions” in the grid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party family transnational affiliations</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Iceland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative IDU/EPP</td>
<td>Conservaive People’s Party (C)</td>
<td>National Coalition Party (Kok.)</td>
<td>Independence Party(^1) (D)</td>
<td>Conservative Party (h)</td>
<td>Moderate Party (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarian LI/ELDR</td>
<td>Venstre (V)</td>
<td>Centre Party (Kesk.)</td>
<td>Progressive Party(^2) (B)</td>
<td>Centre Party(^2,3) (sp)</td>
<td>Centre Party (c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social democratic SI/PES</td>
<td>Social Democrats (A)</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP)</td>
<td>Social Democratic Alliance (S)</td>
<td>Norwegian Labour Party (ap)</td>
<td>Swedish Social Democratic Party (s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist left ~/NGU</td>
<td>Socialists People’s Party (F)</td>
<td>Left Alliance (Vas.)</td>
<td>Left-Green Movement (V)</td>
<td>Socialist Left Party (sv)</td>
<td>Left Party (v)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The names of the parties are to the best of my knowledge their own chosen translations to English. Within parentheses is the official abbreviation. Notes: 1 Not a member of the EPP. 2 Not member of the ELDR. 3 Not member of the LI.

To sum it all up: the Nordic party systems are similar enough for a detailed comparison, but dissimilar enough that this comparison might result in new knowledge. In particular in this

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\(^{16}\) The socialist left parties are considered to be similar already in 1967 by Lipset and Rokkan (1967:55).
case, since they have different positions vis-à-vis the European Union and their party systems appear to become more and more distinct from each other.

In practice then, the aim of my thesis is to examine what effects the process of European integration has had on the five Nordic party systems during the period 1970-2010, and if this process of Europeanisation can explain some of the change in these party systems.

**Existential research**

As far as I can tell from a literature search it seems that there is a relative dearth of comparative studies on the European impact on national party systems. There are a great number of articles studying Europeanisation or the European impact on various areas, but as Gherghina writes “scant attention has been paid to the effects generated by European integration on national political parties, party systems and elections” (2009). One might add that Europeanisation of political parties is a comparatively new field of study, indeed according to Ladrech “[s]tudies regarding the Europeanisation of party politics have recently begun to focus on national parties”. (2007)

Furthermore Ladrech argues that this new interest in national political parties has hitherto mostly focused on “a) manifesto and programmatic/ideological change; b) the emergence of new euro-sceptic parties; c) internal division or factionalism in established parties; and d) patterns of party competition”, but there are no studies on the (eventual) Europeanisation of the politics/ideology on a national level and it seems also that there are no studies on the European effects on the party systems. Concerning the study of political parties and Europeanisation Ladrech (2002a) claims there are two "camps": either studying the transnational party groups in the European parliament (Hix & Noury 2009; Hix, Noury, & Roland 2007; Raunio 1997) or studying how individual parties react to European integration and also adds that none of these two camps study a dynamic process or perceive of the parties as actors. There also seems to be no one paying attention to the party systems.

Those few studies that do exist tend to either focus on one party family (For example Batory & Sitter 2004; Bomberg & Carter 2006) or are case studies of specific countries (For example Baun et al. 2006; Kritzinger, Cavaorto, & Chari 2004; Raunio 1999) or just comparison of certain aspects of the parties themselves (For example Poguntke et al. 2007). There seems to be no comparative studies, especially over longer time periods. There are some exceptions, such as the above-mentioned article by Dorussen and Nanou (2006) and also the above-mentioned thesis by Binnema. It seems that there today is a tendency to assume that the relative political positions of parties and the party system itself has not been affected by the

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17 It may perhaps be prudent to add that this is quote is taken from a review of The Europeanisation of National Political Parties, Power and Organizational Adaptation (Poguntke 2007). However, this book focuses on the internal organization of the parties themselves.

18 But see Bornschier (2010) for an interesting article concerning a new potential cleavage in some European party systems, though in this case it is not necessarily a consequence of Europeanisation.

19 I should also mention Nanou’s thesis European integration and electoral democracy : how the EU constrains party competition in its member states (2009) which has a promising title, unfortunately, the Essex University seems to regard theses as something precious which shall not ever leave the university itself. Hopefully I will get hold of a copy within a few months.
European integration, but there really are not that many empirical studies. Since European integration obviously has had an impact on the various member states – at least judging from the vast amount of studies – it is a reasonable assumption that the party systems themselves has been somewhat affected. As argued above, if European integration has affected the range of policy positions, party systems should be affected as well.

Furthermore, those studies of Europeanisation of national parties’ manifestos that do exist tend to all be quantitative analyses (Baun et al. 2006; Carter & Poguntke 2010; Dorussen & Nanou 2006; Hooghe, Marks, & Wilson 2002; Kritzinger, Cavatorta, & Chari 2004; Pennings 2006), which may be said to be based either on “the sort of crude, but easily accessible data provided by expert judgements” (Mair 2007b:162), or word counts which really give no more than an index of what words appear where in a manifesto.20 It should not be impossible to imagine the usage of the word “Europe” in an election manifesto without it being a sure sign of an Europeanisation process. As Pennings remarks, a word-count approach also misses all implicit references to Europe (2006:261). Additional problems with this sort of data has been pointed out by Hansen (2008) who claims that at least the Danish part of the dataset of the Comparative Manifesto Data is very problematic. Not only are there “…large variations in the number of coded sentences across time and parties” and “nearly a third of the content … is deemed impossible to code” but also “the large variation in the length of the manifestos across time suggests that the information derived from them is not readily comparable.” (Hansen 2008:201) In fact Hansen suggests that “…it might be an idea to comb through the entire CMP dataset and weed out any faults and flaws in other countries” (2008:215). Warnings and concerns of a too great reliance on the Comparative Manifesto Database has also been raised by Benoit, Laver and Mikhaylov though they also remediying the problem by using statistical error correcting models (2009). These remarks should not be taken as a complete downgrading of quantitative textual analysis, but rather as an indication that it may not always be the best available method; as Budge and Hofferbert writes “[a]nalyzing texts one way does not preclude investigation from other points of view” (Budge & Hofferbert 1996:84).

As mentioned above Dorussen and Nanou argues that EU constrains policy competition between parties and that “[v]oters are asked to choose between the personalities and managerial abilities of the candidates rather than their policy platforms” (2006:6). It seems to me that this argument might make the same fundamental mistake as the earlier proclamations on the death of ideologies: just because once contested positions are accepted by most or all parties it does not follow that political competition is dead. If it were so, most municipal or county elections should not show any kind of political competition since municipalities and counties generally do not have autonomy on a scale even comparable to the European states within the European Union. Furthermore, Dorussen and Nanou claims that “[i]f parties have a real chance of winning office, they are more constrained by European integration. In contrast, extreme or protest parties can gain votes by simply (and strategically) ignoring the reality of European politics” (2006:6). Is this really that different from the pre-European integration perspective? Have not extremist and protest parties always “ignored realities” and have not parties aspiring to government positions always been constrained to some extent?21 It is,

20 Again there are exceptions, for example Bomberg (2002), though she examines a European party family (the Greens) through four cases and not a national party system. Mair (2007b) also list some other examples, but basically my criticism echoes his.

21 As an example, the Swedish Conservatives were obliged not to push their low-tax agenda during the non-socialist government 1979-1981 and eventually they abandoned the government because they could not accept these constraints (Möller 2007:208-210).
however, important to point out that Dorussen and Nanou do complicate the picture by stating that the convergence forced by European integration is not necessarily towards a common European standard. In the end they find that “…European integration reduces the range of party policy positions, and the constraining effect increases with the number of years the EU has gained policy competency in a given issue area” (Dorussen & Nanou 2006:248) and even more interesting that “…European integration particularly influences the convergence of Eurosceptic parties in EU member states” (ibid. 2006:235). However, this convergence does not take into account new questions or cleavages, and it is also at least partly contradicted by other studies (Binnema 2009:174-177).

At any rate, none of the above mention studies are actually based on reading and comparing the manifestos. Probably this is at least partly caused by significant amounts of time and effort a comprehensive study would require (Mair 2007b:162), and also the problems of comparison between various national party systems. A comparative study of the Nordic party systems should be able to alleviate these problems, if not completely avoid them. Thus a qualitative, comparative text study will in my view add to the existing knowledge which, as mentioned above, mostly consists of quantitative analyses. I am not sure whether this would necessarily be called a small-n study per se, since it does include 20 parties from five states over a period of 40 years, all in all a fairly large material, but it is definitely more manageable than a full survey of all parties in all European member states.

Tentative model of analysis

In Yin’s terminology this would be a multiple-case design with multiple units of analysis (2009:46) which means the units of analysis are distinct from and includes several data-bearing units each.

Units of analysis: The party systems (and their change) (5 party systems)

Data-bearing units: The individual parties during each and every election (20x appr13)

This means that there will be five case studies of the Nordic party systems which will then be compared. However, I believe there is much to be gained by comparisons both between different parties of the same families and also between individual parties at different points in time. So in the end there will be three parts of the study:

1. One system over time (approximately 60 = 5 x 13). This is the main research interest.
2. One party family on various occasions.
3. One party over time

Numbers two and three are included in order to check what effects, changes and happenings are individual, familial or systemic. There are some elements of causal explanation since the general aim is to examine a process of Europeanisation by looking at changes in manifestos, but this aim is not really to examine the causal mechanism in itself, but rather to examine the effects of such a process. As mentioned above, there remains a problem of causality with a study such as this one. Or to put it slightly differently: naturally there has been political change in the Nordic countries during 40 years; to what extent has this change been an Europeanisation? Has the conflict between parties been Europeanized? By comparing parties

22 Rather few parties had any kind of position on file-sharing on the Internet twenty years ago.
of the same party family and of very similar party systems, where the states joined the European Union at different times and had their debates on joining at different times, there should be a enough variation in order to isolate a European effect. The increased cross-border contacts and the europarties open up new possibilities of influences originating outside of the system, regardless of the possible constriction of policy range. Thus the actual comparing will be done both spatially and longitudinally, what Gerring calls “dynamic comparison” (2007:157-160).

One of my main points of departure is that the political conflict is not dead, merely different.\textsuperscript{23} It should be noted that the “death of ideologies” or the end of political conflict have been proclaimed before. As of today, those earlier proclamations seem to have been mistaken. Möller points out that there has always been an oscillation between consensus and conflict in Swedish political life (2007:144). I do not believe this to change profoundly or other systems to be drastically different. Membership in the European Union, or indeed the very existence of the European Union might of course limit or change political competition, but I doubt it should extinguish competition completely. Budge and Hofferbert mentions lists as one of the main findings of the Manifesto Research Group that parties may have been converging ideologically all over the west since World War II, but also that this is neither necessary nor irreversible (1996:87).

Since my primary data-bearing units are the manifestos, these will be treated as one statement in itself. This means that the manifestos will not be divided into chapters or areas of interest. What division of manifestos might eventually be made will be driven by the model of analysis and not the internal structure of the manifestos. Following this line of thought it seems reasonable to consider the argumentation-as-it-is and not try to figure out “hidden motives”. Here again the cultural proximity and the similarities of the political systems of the Nordic states is an advantage, one can reasonably argue that the perception of these manifestos to the parties themselves and to the surrounding world should be more similar between the Nordic states than between other states. Considering the manifestos-as-they-are also means one could plausibly ignore the difference between what parties say they want to do and what they actually do.

During May I did a study of Swedish election manifestos from 1994 to 2009, covering both European and national elections. Though incomplete\textsuperscript{24} the study has convinced me that there is something worth examining. Of course any reasonable textual analysis should be completed with context and I do not believe it is advisable or necessary to exclude any type of material at this stage. One solution might be to start tentatively with the manifestos and work inductively in order to see what further data should be helpful. The main data would still be the manifestos; as Pennings puts it “[c]onsidering that Europeanization is a process, the strongest argument in favour of using manifestos as a data source is that they enable comparisons and analyses to take place over time” (2006:259). Another reason to study manifestos is that these are still approved by party congresses and not some sort of party elite\textsuperscript{25} (Aylott 2007:174) and

\textsuperscript{23} This would be true even if the range of available policies is severely constrained, though the political opposition would be against polity instead of policy (Mair 2007a).

\textsuperscript{24} All material wasn’t available at that date, and still isn’t. Hopefully I will be able to complete the study within a relatively short period of time.
thus should be representative of what the party really “thinks”. If there is a Europeanisation, they should also be the most explicit way in which it is observable (Ladrech 2002a:396); manifestos are also a concise compilation of a party’s ideas (Hanley 2002:464).

Manifestos are also interesting because these contain what the parties choose to publicly present via written communication to the electorate, mass media, other parties and the rest of the world. It is not necessarily important whether these manifestos are created on the basis of ideological position taking, rational voting maximization or even pure chance.26 The crucial point is their function of communicating the party’s views and it is the content of this communication which will be examined. Whether it is ideology, policy or strategy is thus not really interesting, since this can all be part of the conflict within a party system. It may here be important to add, inspired by Vedung (1977:22), that this should not be understood as revealing any specific qualities of the manifestos, but is a point of view which is external to the manifestos. Beckman makes the obvious, but necessary, comment that theories and analytical tools are precisely that: the tools of the researcher (Beckman 2005). It is a necessary complement to sort out and view patterns in one’s material. Without some sort of analytical tools it is not possible to combine observations into meaningful categories (Beckman 2006). In fact even the reasonable assumption of any causality what so ever or of the possibility of making correct empirical observations can be seen as nothing but metaphysical propositions. This does not mean that science is arbitrary in nature, but rather points to the importance of making it clear what one is looking for and explain each step in the analysis for the reader.

In essence, what I will be looking for is trends of change, convergence or divergence, across national systemic and party familial lines and how these develop over time. It may, for example, be in the form of reaction to penetration of Europe or the institutionalization of Europe, or it may be in a more subtle form through ideological influences. In this latter case it would of course be more difficult to establish a causal link. However, if European integration constrains the range of policies, this should be visible when a state enters the union and this should then be a visible change in the party manifestos. Additionally, if this goes hand in hand with a more instable party system there will be at least some support for the idea of Europe as a threat to national party systems.

It will be important not only to study what is said in these manifestos, but also how it is said. Some sort of measure of relevance or intensity of the held positions must be developed. According to Budge and Hofferbert, the amount of text devoted to various issues “is a good clue to party purposes” (1996:86).

Some earlier research (Hix, Noury, & Roland 2007:103; Treib 2010:121) has found a significant amount of government-opposition dynamic in voting patterns and action on the European level. That is, a party that is currently in government on the national level will be more supportive of European legislation already passed by the Council, than a party in opposition, and will also pursue “blame-avoidance” to a greater extent whereas a party

25 I find it a bit unclear just what is meant by “party elites” in this literature. At any rate they seem to be understood as opposite to congresses or the common party member, some times even party councils or the parliamentary group. See for example Carter and Poguntke (2010); in some cases MEPs are also mentioned as opposite of “party elites” (Scully 2002).

26 It has also been shown that parties generally strive to fulfil their promises in their manifestos. See for example Naurin (2009) whose thesis Promising Democracy also lists a number of other studies.
currently in opposition at the national level will be more likely to pursue its ideological goals at the European level. By studying election manifestos (and probably even more so party programs) some of these “strategic actions” will hopefully be filtered out, at least the ones occurring at the European level.

As for a more detailed model of analysis, I am not yet ready to construct one, but I find the model employed by Helbling, Hoeglinger and Wüest (2010) most intriguing. Their main point is that we must not merely analyze the *positions* of political actors, but also consider how these actors *problematis*e European integration and *why* they favour or disfavour integration: “[i]n other words, we are interested in how political actors *frame* the issues of integration – how they define a particular problem and which justifications they relate to which positions” (Ibid 2010:497).

Two final comments from Yin and Aguilera de Prat may be suitable for concluding this (all too incomplete) brief discussion on the model of analysis: ”a helpful starting point is to ‘play’ with your data” (Yin 2009:129) and “…in the end the analytic evaluation of the researcher is the key” (Aguilera de Prat 2009:92).

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