

Nordic Cooperation in the Seventies: Trends and Patterns

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Introduction

Theories of integration are to a large extent based on experiences from the EC. Consequently, they are not immediately applicable to the special kind of regional cooperation which takes place between the five Nordic countries. Many scholars have stressed the differences between the Nordic way of cooperation on the one hand and the EC model on the other. Modifications have been offered and it has been suggested that Nordic cooperation should be treated as a unique case (Etzioni 1965, Anderson 1967, Andrén 1967, Lindberg 1971, Örvik 1974). We regard it as obvious that the Nordic cooperation model is different, but a more interesting question is in what respects and to what extent this case deviates from established models or conceptions about regional cooperation. We think that the differences are smaller than is often assumed and that similarities between the Nordic and the European Communities might be found. Therefore, it seems to us that Nordic cooperation ought to be analyzed within the realm of established integration theories.¹

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Introduction

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some authors. Empirical weaknesses and inexactness can be found (Nielsson 1977). We wonder if the motives, purposes and conditions of the Nordic cooperation process are fully understood by Etzioni (1965), Solem (1977), Hill and Wallace (1979). Other examples could be mentioned. It is unfortunate that the general level of information on Nordic cooperation is so low that factual mistakes and sweeping generalizations can pass unnoticed. See e.g. the critical reviews of Solem's book by Sundelius (1977b) and Wiklund (1978).

If we are to profit theoretically from studies of Nordic cooperation, it is not sufficient to use a generally applicable theoretical perspective. More important is factual information on what is really happening in the area. General conclusions, comparisons with other regions or even building of new models of integration must be founded on empirical research. Without this, studies of Nordic cooperation will be of limited value theoretically.

Our intention is to review some major trends in post-war cooperation between the Nordic countries. We shall offer some comparisons with the EC and also discuss how the Nordic strategy can be fitted into neofunctionalist theory. Further we shall try to analyze some interesting features of the Nordic cooperation process during the 1970's. Finally, we shall try to summarize some characteristics of Nordic cooperation which might be useful as tentative hypotheses for continued research.

1. From Comprehensive Plans to Sector Solutions

During the post-war era, there have been three different major attempts at long-range, comprehensive cooperation between the Nordic countries. In 1948 an effort was made to establish a Scandinavian Defense Alliance composed of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. These negotiations ended early in 1949 as it became clear that an agreement could not be reached on the relationship between this Scandinavian Alliance and the larger Western Alliance (Wahlbäck 1973, Haskel 1976). Instead, Denmark, Iceland and Norway joined NATO, Sweden remained non-aligned and Finland concluded a treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance with the Soviet Union. This result left a sense of disappointment in the hearts of leading statesmen in the Nordic region.

In 1947 a further idea floated was that of a customs union between the Nordic countries. Negotiations continued off and on for twelve years, finally ending in failure with the creation instead of EFTA in 1960. How-

ever, Finland did not participate in these discussions until 1956. The Icelandic involvement was rather sporadic. The customs union negotiations are analyzed in Haskel (1974) and Haskel (1976).

At the annual session of the Nordic Council in Oslo in February 1968, a further proposal about expanded economic cooperation was surprisingly put forward by the Danish Prime Minister, Hilmar Baunsgaard. Intensive negotiations followed for nearly two years. Detailed plans for the creation of a Nordic Economic Union (NORDEK) was presented in the report 'Expanded Nordic Economic Cooperation' (1970). Again, the effort failed as developments within the EC made the NORDEK alternative less attractive to some countries and more threatening to others. These negotiations are analyzed in Haskel (1969), Wiklund (1970), Nielsson (1971), Archer (1971) and Floryan (1978). This outcome is an example of what is often called the impact of centrifugal forces on Nordic cooperation.

Following each of these three setbacks there were efforts to launch other, more limited cooperation schemes. The interest was renewed in creating a Nordic Council in 1951.² Considerable influence could be traced to the recent failure of the Scandinavian defense negotiations. (See, for instance, Herlitz (1962) and Anderson (1963).) When the plan to establish a Nordic Customs Union in the 1950's was overtaken by the broader European alternatives of the EFTA and the EEC, representatives of the Nordic countries concluded that a more encompassing alternative – EFTA – was more attractive than a limited Nordic arrangement. The problem of Finnish participation was overcome by the creation of FINEFTA in 1961.

What had been impossible to accomplish during twelve years of negotiations over a Nordic Customs Union – trade expansion – had suddenly been reached within a broader European perspective in less than a year (Støre 1968). Again, when it became apparent that NORDEK would be stillborn, efforts were made to expand Nordic cooperation in other areas. For example, though Finland rejected NORDEK, it emphasized at the same time that its substantive objectives might be attained in a more piece-meal and gradual fashion. During the following years a Nordic Council of Ministers with two independent secretariats was established.³ A Treaty on Nordic Cultural Cooperation was signed in 1971 and a Nordic Transportation Treaty in 1972.

The defeat of specific proposals for Nordic cooperation have generally been followed by substantial achievements in other areas. The failure of the Scandinavian Defense Alliance in 1949 contributed to the establishment of the Nordic Council in 1952. The possibility of a Nordic split vis-à-vis the EEC in the early 1960's led to a major expression of Nordic

unity in the form of the Helsinki Agreement, which is a treaty of cooperation between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The Helsinki Agreement provides a statutory basis for Nordic cooperation mainly in the fields of law, culture, social affairs, economics, transport and communications and, later, environment. The NORDEK incident led to the establishment of a Council of Ministers and several cooperation treaties. Finally, the division created by the expansion of the EC in 1973, when Denmark became a full member, has been compensated for by a large number of activities in the form of cooperation programs in the various sectors.

Using neofunctionalist terminology, the apparent spill-backs in Nordic cooperation in 1949, 1959 and 1970 could at a closer examination be categorized as spill-arounds. It is a matter of discussion if the list should also include 1973.⁴ New efforts were not obtained within the *intended areas* of cooperation. In fact, there were considerable setbacks in relation to the anticipated results. However, a task expansion occurred to compensate for unfulfilled expectations. In many cases this involved major innovations in other areas of cooperation. Thus, the end result has been that the cooperation process seems to spill-over from one sector to another, in line with neofunctionalist thought. However, and that is a remarkable difference, in the Nordic case it is *failures* which have induced successes, but in other sectors.

Today, it would appear to be politically impossible for Nordic governments to launch comprehensive plans of the NORDEK type. Instead, one can note an intense sector cooperation within distinct areas. In 1972 the Swedish Prime Minister, Olof Palme, raised the idea of a Nordic Action Program concerning industrial-, regional- and environmental policy. The following year, the Council of Ministers presented a rather detailed program outlining specific objectives in each of the three policy sectors for the Nordic Council (Nordisk Råd, 1973). By 1979 several cooperation programs have been put forward to the Nordic Council by the Council of Ministers. There has been an intensive flow of new projects.⁵

The expansion of joint Nordic policy in the 1970's has been coupled with a significant growth of institutional resources. A network of secretariats, committees, institutions and councils has been built up. Before 1970 the Nordic Council, an advisory parliamentary assembly, which also included members of the Nordic governments, was the only important Nordic institution. Since then, close to one hundred intergovernmental units have been established in the region. A listing of these institutions is found in Nordiska samarbetsorgan (1978).

The increased institutionalization of Nordic cooperation has received some criticism recently. It has been said that too many 'nordocrats' waste too much paper and time on too unimportant issues. Compared to the situation in the 1950's and the 1960's it is clear that an important change has taken place. At that time only a handful of persons were involved in Nordic cooperation on a full-time basis. The creation of large and independent Nordic secretariats was not considered desirable. Instead, it was preferred to maintain informal and direct contacts between cabinets and central administrations. Nordic issues were handled as a form of domestic policy and the use of international secretariats and institutions was seen as an unnecessary complication. Naturally, the lack of sufficient administrative support contributed to a very drawn out policy-making process with a long interval between the initiation of a proposal in the Nordic Council and its final implementation by national authorities. Even so, in an international perspective the size of the new Nordic institutional structures is very modest. While the central institutions of the EC employ more than 10,000 persons, the three major Nordic secretariats⁶ and the secretariats of the national delegations of the Nordic Council make up less than 150 persons. If one adds those working in joint permanent institutions and boards, the total figure comes to about four hundred people. At least half of these Nordic staffs are primarily engaged in policy-making functions.⁷ The implementation of Nordic policy is still carried out directly at the national level. In contrast, a major portion of the staff of the sizable EC Commission is devoted to the implementation and administration of established EC programs. The marginal size of the joint Nordic bureaucracy is further accentuated by the compartmentalization of the structures into smaller units scattered throughout the region. The largest single secretariat, in Copenhagen, consists of about 50 persons.

The institutional expansion in Nordic cooperation during the 1970's has mainly taken place within the sphere of ministerial cooperation. This could perhaps undermine the traditionally important and active role of the Nordic Council. The latter can no longer claim a monopoly of expertise and devotion to Nordic cooperation.

The Nordic Council performs primarily an initiatory and advisory role, while the Council of Ministers is responsible for decisions, implementations, investigations and – to some extent – initiatives. In addition, the Nordic Council has recently begun to emphasize its controlling functions and thus established a Budget Committee in 1975. This committee meets regularly twice a year with representatives for the Nordic Council of Ministers to discuss the total amount of the common Nordic Budget and

priorities between the different sectors.⁸ Several of the Nordic cooperation treaties also prescribe that the governments ought to consider the views of the Nordic Council before taking final decisions on matters of major importance. The Cultural Cooperation Treaty even grants the appropriate organ of the Nordic Council – in practice its Cultural Committee – a permanent role in the budget-making process in this area.

If the Council of Ministers continues to expand the scope of Nordic cooperation, the initiatory role of the Nordic Council can be less crucial. Projects previously launched within the Nordic Council are now often presented as part of a more encompassing ministerial action program. The Nordic Council could easily come to play a more passive and increasingly controlling role than in the past. This would leave the initiative and promotion of new ideas to the ministerial side with its larger staffs being able to turn cooperation ideas into detailed proposals. On the other hand, these ministerial secretariats are more closely tied to national administrations. The latter can relatively easily stop undesired or sensitive proposals at an early stage as all proposals must be handled by the appropriate committee of senior officials.

It appears to be vital for a continued expansion of Nordic cooperation that the Nordic Council retains its initiating role as a valuable complement to the programs of the Council of Ministers. In addition, public discussion and a broad political debate of new cooperation projects can best be accomplished at the sessions of the Nordic Council. The latter also has an important controlling function in ensuring that accepted programs and proposals in the form of recommendations lead to practical results within a reasonable time period. Similarly, priorities between several possible projects can best be determined by the elected members in the Nordic Council.

The Nordic cooperation process has emerged from somewhat of a tradition of working with comprehensive plans to a situation in the 1970's where the cooperation proceeds sector by sector. It seems unlikely that package-deals of the NORDEK-type will emerge in the foreseeable future. As a basis for comparison with other strategies of regional cooperation, it might be appropriate to point to some advantages and disadvantages of the sector technique of cooperation.

An obvious advantage is that the scope of Nordic cooperation can expand gradually but persistently, without any serious risk of spill-back. By using Committees of Senior Officials representing the five countries, some assurance is given that plans and programs will in fact result in concrete governmental action on the national level. Also, any possible

disputes or set-backs in one sector would have little impact on others, as both the action programs and the Committees of Senior Officials are very loosely connected. Each sector is to a large extent independent, and issues are handled on their merits and not as part of larger political package-deals. One can also observe that new and important areas for cooperation have been included in the joint policy-making process during the 1970's, for example tourism, civil rights, equality between the sexes, occupational environment and consumer questions. This has been accomplished by an undramatic and inconspicuous expansion of the work of the Council of Ministers. This type of low-key international cooperation is often less threatening to outside forces. For the Nordic countries, which have chosen different solutions in the field of security policy, this is of great importance. Using on the other hand comprehensive program strategy, defense and foreign policy dimensions can easily come to dominate the picture. In contrast, the sector process allows the Nordic countries to cooperate without antagonizing either domestic groups or concerned neighboring states.

The major disadvantage of this type of sector cooperation is that trade-offs between policy areas, including the presentation of package-deals, are not encouraged. The cooperation process is neatly compartmentalized into distinct issue areas. It is difficult for a national representative to give up some tangible benefit in his own area in order to save a project in another seemingly unrelated sector. To overcome this tendency, one might consider expanding the jurisdiction of existing Committees of Senior Officials rather than creating new ones. Each sector should be broad enough to allow for meaningful trade-offs within its own area of competence.

The decentralized decision-making structures, in combination with the fairly autonomous position of each Committee of Senior Officials, can lead to stagnation within the various sectors. Once initial problems are overcome to mutual advantage, there might be a few issues left which can be solved within the narrow perspective of each policy area. Therefore, it could perhaps be easier to expand the scope of Nordic cooperation than to intensify it in already existing cooperation sectors. This weakness can best be overcome by an active political involvement in the cooperation process. If political pressure is placed on the national representatives, they are more likely to find acceptable compromises. A political commitment to renewed negotiations combined with broader perspectives across policy sectors could speed up cooperation. Perhaps the area of resources and energy policy would profit from such a political approach. Appar-

ently, the Nordic sector strategy necessitates political leadership and commitment to uninterrupted cooperation to generate a continual expansion of joint policies.

2. Politicalization of Regional Collaboration

In the early 1970's one could note a trend toward increased politicalization in the work of the Nordic Council. Earlier, the regional cooperation process had been characterized by the absence of formal transnational party activities. Indeed, a tradition of broad consensus building through multi-party sponsorship of proposals had dominated the work of the Nordic Council ever since its origin. Anderson (1967) has shown that during the first eight years of operation – 1953–60 – only 11 of the 151 member proposals in the Nordic Council were introduced by authors sharing the same political affiliation but from differing nationalities. If we look at the member proposals which have been treated at the last five sessions of the Nordic Council – 1975–1979 – we find that 22 proposals of a total of 125 were introduced by members from the same political grouping. That means that the proportion of member proposals with an image of politicalization has gone up from 8 per cent for the period 1953–60 to 18 per cent for the period 1975–79. The proportion of politicalized proposals in 1975 was 8 per cent while it was 27 per cent in 1979.⁹ Thus, during the last five years a new trend has emerged. An increased awareness of political and ideological differences as well as opportunities for trans-Nordic party strategies has developed. By the concept of politicalization we refer to the tendency among the political parties represented in the Nordic Council to coordinate their organizational activities, develop joint programs, co-sponsor proposals, cooperate in committee deliberations, and vote similarly at the annual sessions.

The event that sparked such ambitions, primarily among the social democratic parties, was a fundamental disagreement over continued harmonization of national laws. At the 1973 session in Oslo the social democratic party members differed substantially from their center-liberal-conservative colleagues over the future of Nordic marriage laws. There was also a split in the social democratic group which was resolved after a conscious coordination effort. Since that time the ideological and political bonds among similar parties in the Nordic countries have been strengthened. Not least the social democratic parties have made a concerted effort to pool their resources and develop a more pronounced political profile in the Council.

Later in 1973 the political parties began to caucus regularly before committee meetings in the Nordic Council in order to adopt common positions on the issues on the agendas. Party sponsorships of member proposals, as mentioned above, is also becoming more common. Still the proposals sponsored jointly by representatives from the far left to the far right dominate. In addition one can observe that in some important issues the role of cross-national party proposals has been significant during recent years, for example, on the questions of establishing an investment bank, a common energy policy, increased international development assistance, a North European nuclear free zone, and how to control multinational corporations more effectively.

The social democratic parties have also developed a Nordic party program, which outlines their major objectives and priorities for Nordic cooperation. The social democrats have a long tradition of contacts on a trans-Nordic basis. The first Nordic Labor Congress was held in Gothenburg in 1886 and similar meetings have taken place regularly ever since. In 1913 they established a permanent committee for the exchange of ideas and information. Building on this history of regional cooperation, the parties in 1976 agreed on a Nordic Social Democratic Program, which was also accepted by the labor unions in all countries except Iceland. The program outlines those issues which should be given priority in the work of the Nordic Council. It also presents the social democratic position in such areas as energy and industrial policy, multinational corporations, environmental and regional policy, occupational environment, social and family policy and the assistance to international development. The intention is that the program should be used as a basis for more detailed social democratic proposals.

At the 27th session of the Nordic Council in Stockholm in February 1979 the Christian parties presented a Nordic party program. It was sponsored by the parties from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. The Swedish Christian party is, however, not represented in the Nordic Council. Other party groups have frequently coordinated strategies in the Nordic Council on an ad hoc basis, but so far have refrained from any formal commitments. The more partisan approach to Nordic cooperation of the labor movement is in line with its tradition of international cooperation in the Socialist International and similar organizations. Until other political groups also adopt more unified postures, it is hard to characterize the Nordic political arena as one dominated by transnational party politics.

The EC countries hold direct elections to their parliamentary assembly 7-10 June 1979. This decision has raised the question of holding direct

elections to the Nordic Council.¹⁰ So far, no general agreement or even sense of urgency in the matter has been felt. Interestingly enough, one of the Nordic countries will participate in the EC elections in 1979. Possibly, this experience will have an effect on the political attitudes toward a Nordic direct election. Some observers have argued that direct elections would further politicalize the work of the Council and, hopefully, help vitalize it. Greater public interest and increased party cooperation across state boundaries would place the Nordic Council at the center of political debate and activity. Others have pointed out that one of the greatest strengths of the Council has been the active participation in its work by leading Nordic politicians. Advisory resolutions of the Council have had great political impact as they are supported by the major party leaders. For example between 1952 and 1970 60% of the Council's recommendations were implemented by the national governments.¹¹ Direct elections might weaken the important link between the Council and the national parliaments as the most outstanding politicians might not run for Nordic office. Regardless of the pros and cons of direct elections and their possible effects on the future role of the Nordic Council, the question will most likely not be settled for some time.

It appears to be general sentiment among observers that increased politicalization of Nordic cooperation is a positive development. Particularly leftists, but also some Danish conservatives, have pointed to its possible vitalization of the Nordic Council. Some of the political debates and conflicts dominating national politics would be transmitted to the regional level and make for more interesting and relevant discussions. Possibly, both the general public and active politicians would find the work more interesting and valuable as direct links could be made with national politics. Hopefully, new ideas and proposals could be generated by this wider involvement; in turn this would make Nordic cooperation more directly relevant to the Nordic electorates.

It would also be easier for individual parliamentarians to take a position on regional issues as explicit programs and guidelines would be available. So far, the politicians have had great freedom to pursue their individual interests and convictions in the Council without much guidance from the national party organizations. In the future, priorities between different programs and solutions to conflicts might be determined in a more ideologically conscious manner. In brief, the Nordic political system would increasingly resemble the national political arenas.

The potential drawbacks of the increased politicalization have been less obvious. One important disadvantage is that positions on issues could

become fixed by partisan considerations at a very early stage in the decision-making process. This could result in political stalemate in the Nordic Council. In particular, this would be the case if nationally controversial questions were frequently transmitted to the Nordic arena. The traditional emphasis on broad compromise and accommodation could be replaced by more sharply defined partisan differences.

In turn, such a development could make for decisions based on narrow or temporary majorities in committees and plenary sessions. The broad bipartisan support which has so far given the Council resolutions great political weight would be missing. It could also be questioned how the Council of Ministers would react to receiving recommendations reflecting partisan majorities. It might prove very difficult for a minister to agree to a project which has been used by his national adversaries as a political weapon. The Council of Ministers bases its binding decisions on the principle of unanimity. So, within this group compromise solutions must be found regardless of the temporary political constellations in the Nordic Council. Seemingly, the most effective way to ensure acceptance of a proposal by all Nordic governments is to muster broad multiparty support for it.

Partisan proposals in the Nordic Council, in fact, appear to be defeated more often than multi-party proposals, most simply because none of the approximately six party groups represented in the Council can hope to constitute a majority. For example, of all member proposals processed during 1973–1978 only 16% of those having multi-party sponsorships were defeated by the Nordic Council. In contrast, 44% of the partisan proposals failed.¹² An increased politicalization of Nordic cooperation might slow down the passing of new resolutions. Perhaps it would even contribute to a stagnation in the cooperation, measured in terms of new policy results. At the very least, we cannot categorically assume that the new trend will exclusively enhance the regional effort. One must also be aware of the potentially negative effects.

3. The Seesaw Position of Denmark

One of the intentions of the NORDEK plan of 1968 was to strengthen the bargaining position of the Nordic countries versus the European Community. If a Nordic Customs Union with far reaching economic cooperation was established before the countries faced the EC negotiators they could hopefully gain greater concessions from this group. In the end, a united front against the EC never materialized, and each nation concluded

a separate agreement with the EC. Only Denmark joined as a full member in January 1973, while the other countries worked out separate free trade agreements. These resulted in the establishment of free trade areas for most industrial goods by July 1977. In the case of Norway a final solution was not reached until a bitter political quarrel had torn the nation apart. Finland, also, had some initial difficulties with ratification of her trade agreement. These negotiations are reviewed in the special issue of *Scandinavian Studies* (1974) and *Scandinavian Political Studies* (1973).

The effects of Danish EC membership on her economy, political life and foreign relations have been widely discussed in the literature. A bibliography of this literature can be found in Nevald (1977). A recent study of Denmark and the EC is that of Lehmann Sørensen (1978).

In contrast, the impact of the new agreement on Nordic cooperation has been less often explored. Here two schools of thought can be identified. On the one hand, it is argued that Danish membership has not resulted in any serious drawbacks for Nordic cooperation, which has continued and even expanded more than ever since 1973. The threatened division of the region has stimulated a new political interest in keeping it intact. Subsequently, a major institutional strengthening has been combined with an expansion of joint policy undertakings. This view is presented in Sundelius (1977a).

Other observers have pointed out that the new situation involves far-reaching Danish commitments to the EC and severe restraints on Danish policy in several important sectors, making Danish participation in Nordic cooperation impossible in certain areas. This view is presented in Maigard (1972). Here, we cannot possibly explore the full ramifications of the Danish position in Nordic cooperation. Instead, we shall merely point to some illustrative situations. Hopefully, these cases can help clarify the extent to which Nordic cooperation is affected by the new Danish role.

Initially, we shall look at those areas where Nordic cooperation existed long before Danish entry into the EC. One of the most important cases is the 1954 agreement on a common Nordic labor market. Since 1973, the 18-day rule giving EC-citizens preference to job openings also applies to Denmark. In practice, this formal stipulation has not interfered substantially with the free flow of Nordic workers.¹³ However, if one wanted to revise this 25-year-old agreement to adjust some of the imbalances of recent years, it would without doubt raise some problems. Denmark would, then, probably need to seek permission from the EC before entering into any new commitments.

This issue was raised in 1974–75 by some groups in Finland who hoped

to adjust some detrimental effects of the labor market on Finnish society. The proposal was opposed on the grounds that the EC probably would have to be a party to any revised Nordic convention. Thus, the Nordic countries would apparently have some difficulties in updating existing agreements without involving the EC group. What has been accomplished in the past can in most cases remain intact, at least in practice. In contrast, it might prove more difficult to implement desired changes to accommodate new social needs.

Second, one can look at those areas where Nordic cooperation is a new undertaking. Among others, this is the case with environmental policy. At the end of the 1960's an initiative was taken to conclude a Nordic Convention on the Protection of the Environment. In 1974 this treaty was signed by the Nordic ministers. At that time, Denmark was already a member of the EC. In the early 1970's some groups within the Danish administration felt that the government had a primary obligation to wait for a position by the EC in this policy area. However, the Danish parliament ratified the convention together with the other Nordic countries.

In March 1974 the seven states around the Baltic Sea signed a Convention on the Protection of the Environment of the Baltic Sea. Denmark had three years later not yet ratified this document. The reason for the Danish delay was the necessity to clear this action with the EC. Some groups within the Community felt that the EC itself should become a signatory to the convention. No doubt, this would have raised problems for the Eastern European states, such as the Soviet Union, Poland and the DDR. The Danish government argued that the EC should not become a party to the treaty. This position was accepted by the Community early in 1977. Subsequently, Denmark could ratify the convention. Apparently, the new Danish position has meant that the conflicts of the European continent can more directly affect local North European cooperation schemes.

Perhaps, the single most important achievement of Nordic cooperation during recent years is the establishment of a Nordic Investment Bank in 1976. From the beginning, the Danish government was enthusiastic for the idea, despite the fact that a similar EC bank was already in operation. It is noteworthy that Denmark can still invest in such extensive cooperation projects, even in areas where the EC is already involved.

On the other hand, there are also sectors where existing EC policies would prohibit Danish participation in Nordic ventures. The Common Agricultural Policy is the most obvious example. However, this is an area where Nordic schemes have never been possible, and are not likely to succeed in the future. In addition, a common Nordic trade policy, as

practised during the final sessions of the Kennedy Round in 1966–67, would no longer seem possible. Today, Denmark is represented in the ongoing GATT negotiations by the EC delegation.

The Nordic countries outside the EC are faced with a difficult choice in those areas where both the EC and Nordic governments are in the process of adopting new regulations and laws. They can either pursue an often domestically satisfactory, exclusively, Nordic approach, which would perhaps exclude Danish participation. Or try to influence coming EC legislation to help shape regulations which as closely as possible satisfy Nordic needs. This effort would be followed by adoption of similar rules in the Nordic countries. In this case, Denmark could join the other Nordic governments in lobbying the EC.

The argument has been made that Denmark serves as a valuable bridge-builder between North European desires and EC decision. This is analyzed by Amstrup and Lehmann Sørensen (1975). That Denmark not only represents her own interests, but also speaks for the greater Nordic region of 22 million people so to say. This way, Denmark could better retain her Nordic identity while increasing her otherwise very limited bargaining position inside the EC. If the second solution to the Nordic dilemma is used, the outcome would seem to be a gradual narrowing of the differences between the Continental and the Northern European experiments in regional cooperation.

This discussion can be concluded with the observation that since one of the Nordic countries became a member of the EC, Nordic cooperation has faced some new difficulties. In most cases, these have been overcome by pragmatic solutions. For example, Denmark could help establish an investment bank, while alternatively she had some difficulties with regional conventions. Most likely, the Nordic achievements of the past can be retained without EC interference. An expansion of Nordic cooperation into new areas where the EC is also active might prove more difficult. Seemingly, future Nordic relations are very much dependent on the future of EC cooperation. If this process should accelerate and involve new restraints on the members, the resulting limitations to Nordic cooperation might be severe. In contrast, a continuation of the present gradual European cooperation effort would not necessarily be a serious obstacle to a piece-meal-expansion of Nordic cooperation. It appears that Denmark can continue to safely ride on the fence for some time yet.

4. Ten Assertions in Need of Evidence

In conclusion, we shall present ten assertions about the characteristics of Nordic cooperation. These points can be seen both as a summary and as an invitation to further research. We opened by deploring the lack of detailed empirical research on Nordic relations, arguing that such an undertaking should be the number one priority. Subsequently, the following assertions are presented as working hypotheses. They are based on several years of research on different aspects of Nordic cooperation, but they are not verified in a strict scientific sense. Instead, it is our hope that they will stimulate others to help us explore their empirical validity.

1. Efforts to conclude comprehensive cooperation schemes, such as a Scandinavian Defense Alliance in 1948–49, A Customs Union during 1947–59, and the NORDEK episode of 1968–70, are seriously hampered by developments outside the Nordic region. External factors have often placed severe restraints on potential Nordic strategies, sometimes because exclusively Nordic solutions are too small to offset more attractive European or international programs. At times Nordic plans are affected by the continual East-West tensions in Europe, which have served as a divisive force in Northern Europe. It appears that far reaching Nordic projects are only likely in those situations where other, broader options are viewed as politically closed. Often, the Nordic alternative is seen by the participating governments as a second-best solution. The role of external factors has been discussed by Ørvik (1967 and 1974).

2. For the foreseeable future, comprehensive Nordic package-deals are not politically feasible. Instead, the 1970's have been characterized by a series of sector solutions. Detailed action programs for limited policy areas have been agreed upon and implemented for example in social and health policy, labor policy, environmental issues, industrial and regional policy, investment policy, educational, recreational and cultural policy. This strategy has permitted joint Nordic policy a wide scope. In fact, most areas covered by previous, more comprehensive plans have gradually been included.

At the same time, the intensity of Nordic policy might prove less far reaching this way. Comprehensive compromises across policy areas are not encouraged since each issue is negotiated on its own merits.¹⁴ Possibly, initial successes in finding mutually advantageous solutions in each sector might soon be followed by deadlock over more difficult problems. On the other hand, setbacks within one area do not necessarily affect negotiations in others, as linkages are not apparent. The sector approach

to regional cooperation would seem to involve potential stagnation in the long run but the absence of temporary crises in the short run.

3. The timing of major failures and achievements in Nordic cooperation seems to indicate the existence of a process of reversed spill-over or spill-around. On numerous occasions, disappointing set-backs have been followed by considerable successes in other areas. Temporary failures have not paralyzed the cooperation process. Instead, they have stimulated concerted efforts to overcome these potential threats to regional unity and have been followed by new, successful initiatives. Possibly, failures to agree on major projects have resulted in sincere disappointment among the political leaders of the region. Perhaps these have become anxious to compensate for this apparent lack of leadership ability, and so have promoted new schemes in areas where accommodation and results would prove easier. On the basis of the historical record, we can expect the Nordic cooperation process to fluctuate between great ambitions, serious setbacks and persistent but gradual accomplishments, which often fulfill the objectives of the previous plans.

4. Generally, Nordic results are reached only after lengthy investigations and deliberations. The policy-making process proceeds from detailed investigation to political decision. These are taken only after all the practical details have been worked out. In other regional cooperation efforts the dynamics have often been the opposite: first a political decision on the general principles is taken, and then these guidelines are transformed into concrete solutions. Due to the Nordic preference for knowing all the ramifications prior to undertaking a course of action, the cooperation effort has often appeared painstakingly slow, indecisive and even unsuccessful. Only a few exceptions to this general rule can be noted.¹⁵

The traditional Nordic policy-making style should not be used as an indicator of very limited commitments by the Nordic governments to joint ventures. Rather, the regional cooperation process is largely a reflection of the basic norms and values dominant in the national policy-making processes. For example, the Swedish decision-making style has been described as including long periods of deliberation on each issue by well trained specialists; comprehensive rational review of possible alternatives including an effort to obtain full information before decision-making; and consultation with all parties with legitimate interests in the outcome. The result of these features is a process which can be characterized as very slow, incremental and without the excitement of distinct crises or big decisions. See for instance Anton (1969). Not surprisingly, the regional cooperation process very closely resembles this picture.

5. The most important factor behind joint Nordic policy is the extensive and intensive interactions among various governmental elites across national boundaries. One important characteristic of these trans-Nordic networks is that they function across the national administrations and are not channelled through any single forum. Traditionally, Nordic issues have been treated more as an extension of domestic policymaking than as relations with foreign powers. Thus, this bureaucratic interpenetration is both broad in scope and reaches deep inside the separate national administrations. These transgovernmental relations have been compared to a cobweb of numerous delicate threads which together make up a net of considerable strength.¹⁶

6. Recently, Nordic cooperation has experienced increased institutionalization. The establishment of several separate Nordic secretariats during the 1970's is a clear deviation from the earlier situation.¹⁷ Although these institutions are very modest in an international comparison, they have brought important initiatory and mediative functions to the regional process. The secretariats of the Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council help promote Nordic solutions. They maintain a regional perspective during the negotiations, aid transgovernmental interactions, and ensure that political decisions are followed by concrete action within each national administration. Although considerable policy results had emerged from Nordic cooperation before this institutional growth, the new structures help give some permanency, stability, continuity, efficiency, and possible speed to the joint policy-making process. The existence of regional actors has also enhanced the possibilities for forming transnational coalitions on various issues. This way, the traditionally strong position of the national civil servants, representing a cautious attitude toward the cooperation process, seems to be somewhat weakened. Perhaps, the Nordic cooperation process has come to operate more similarly to other regional cooperation efforts by this creation of more independent regional institutions.

7. The absence of partisan conflicts has been a traditional hallmark of Nordic cooperation. Broad multi-party support for regional solutions has been the norm throughout the postwar era. All political parties have emphasized the virtues, values, and importance of continued Nordic cooperation. Indeed, it has sometimes been said that the principle of Nordic cooperation is a dogma which no party can afford to oppose. On the other hand, critics argue that once rhetorical support for the idea has been expressed, no party feels obligated to push for the implementation of concrete Nordic measures.

During the last five years one can note a trend away from placing Nordic cooperation above partisan politics. In particular, the social democratic parties in the region have increasingly pooled their resources and strategies to present a leftist alternative in Nordic policy. So far, this has resulted in a Social Democratic Party Program – and a Christian one – more transnational party proposals, and increased caucusing in the Nordic Council. The response from most of the non-socialist parties has to this point been weak.

If this new development intensifies and continues in the 1980's, it would represent a major change in the political climate of Nordic cooperation. No doubt, increased politicalization of the regional policy-making effort would have significant effects; for example, more heated debates and open disagreements could be expected. Possibly, greater public awareness of and involvement in the work could develop. Also, policy outcomes might be more dependent on temporary majorities in the national parliaments, and Nordic issues might be more directly brought into domestic partisan politics. Overall it might make for a vitalization of Nordic cooperation. However, it might also mean that major policy innovations will be harder to accomplish, as partisan conflicts will become more important.

8. There is a long tradition of cooperation among Nordic interest groups. In fact, nongovernmental activity preceded modern efforts to cooperate at the governmental level, going back to before World War II. Nordic governmental collaboration emerged partially in response to these activities at the nongovernmental level. Until recently, these transnational ties were not manifested in any permanent Nordic secretariats or united efforts to influence the regional political decision-making structures.

As a result of the establishment of several important Nordic public institutions in the early 1970s, the interest groups have also felt a need to increase their joint resources. For example, a Council of Nordic Trade Unions and a League of Nordic Associations, each with a secretariat, were activated to approach the new policy-making centers more directly. Today, these organizations together with several others are involved in the political process at the regional level. The objective is to supplement their far more important activities within each national system. Compared to the EC, the extent of interest group lobbying at the Nordic level is very marginal. These organizations continue to devote their major resources to the traditional centers of authority in the area, i.e. the national governments. In brief, one can note an interesting change during recent years, which could have a fundamental long-term impact on the cooperation process.

9. In line with most forms of international cooperation, the joint Nordic institutions, such as the Nordic Council and the Council of Ministers, are not in any sense supra-national. They cannot be seen as decision-making centers independent of the separate national governments. National authority is supreme and all-binding; substantive decisions are based on the principle of unanimity. Regional conventions and rules are not superior to national laws but are generally enacted through parallel national legislation. The emphasis is on intimate collaboration within the framework of voluntarism and continued national independence. In order to reach agreement, mutually satisfactory solutions must be found. Probably, the absence of a supra-national pretence generates some confidence and sense of security among the participating governments. These are clearly aware that they can at any time refuse to support a policy or simply withdraw from the negotiations without suffering serious political or economic consequences. At the same time, strong commitments to far reaching accommodations combined with the dominant norms of consensus formation and compromise induce governments to undertake sincere and generally successful negotiations. Although the cooperation process cannot proceed beyond what the least agreeable party is willing to give, the resulting decisions can be expected to be implemented with full force. Post-decisional politics in the form of tactical delays and bureaucratic resistance to adopted regulations would appear less important than in the EC. The important role of postdecisional politics in the EC is analyzed by Puchala (1975).

10. The motive behind Nordic cooperation is a desire to keep up with social and economic change. Transnational forces constantly seem to erode existing conditions and make for undirected change leading to unknown outcomes. To avoid this uncertainty and potentially unstable situation, the political elites find it useful to engage in regional collaboration. There is a firm commitment to long-term cooperation and a realization of the mutual benefits possible from larger than national solutions. The political leaders of the region have no explicit ambitions for or hope of creating a future Nordic super-state. The process involves more a response to current needs than the building of a new community. Subsequently, there are no clear long-term targets and no uniform image of what the future should bring.

In terms of purpose and ambition, Nordic cooperation effort seems to differ fundamentally from the aspirations of the European Community. However, when looking more closely at these two cases of regional collaboration one is struck by the many similarities in practice. Gradually,

the Nordic experiment has adopted several features previously characteristic of the EC. At the same time, the European process seems to have moved in a direction more in line with the traditional goals and principles of Nordic cooperation. For example note the conclusions offered by Haas (1975), Busch and Puchala (1977) and Wallace (1977). This observation should not be very surprising as both cases represent cooperation efforts among Western, advanced, industrial states facing similar economic and social challenges. Yet, in the literature on regional collaboration the Nordic community has long remained misunderstood and hopelessly out of place among the theoretically more streamlined cases.

NOTES

- 1 To emphasize the impact of the neofunctionalist approach seems natural partly because of its great influence on integration theory in general, and partly because of its greater relevance to the contemporary cooperation between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.
- 2 Peter Munch, Foreign Minister of Denmark, put forward a plan to establish a Nordic parliamentary organization as early as 1938. The plan was dropped because of Norwegian hesitation.
- 3 In 1972 a secretariat for cultural cooperation was established in Copenhagen. The following year a secretariat for all the other cooperation sectors was established in Oslo.
- 4 The concepts of spill-over, spill-back and spill-around are discussed by Schmitter (1971).
- 5 The sectorial programs now include e.g. social policy (1977), occupational environment (1977), equality between the sexes (1978), and tourism (1978).
- 6 By the term 'major Nordic secretariats' is meant the two secretariats of the Council of Ministers in Copenhagen and Oslo and the secretariat of the Presidium of the Nordic Council (established in 1971).
- 7 This means that more Danes are employed in the EC institutions than the total sum of Danes, Finns, Icelanders, Norwegians, and Swedes employed in joint Nordic secretariats, institutions and boards. See Lehmann Sørensen (1978) for the EC figures.
- 8 The Budget Committee of the Nordic Council consists of ten members, two parliamentarians from each of the five standing committees. In 1979 the total sum of the two common Nordic budgets was about 120 million Swedish crowns. For cultural cooperation 59 million Swedish crowns was allocated and for the other cooperation sectors 61 million Swedish crowns. The sum that was spent on Nordic cooperation did not exceed 0.1 per cent of the national budget in any of the five countries.
- 9 The figures are based on a thorough examination of the official records of the Nordic Council for the sessions of 1975-79.
- 10 In 1978 the Socialist Peoples Party put forward a proposal in the Danish parliament for direct elections to the Nordic Council, but no affirmative decision was reached. During the last two sessions of the Nordic Council, elected members like Seppo Westerlund, Liberal from Finland, and Ib Christensen from the Danish Justice Party have proposed direct elections to the Nordic Council.
- 11 In addition 20 per cent of the recommendations were still under consideration at the time of the survey according to the study 'Nordiska rådets verksamhet 1952-70' (1971).

- 12 The figures are based on a thorough examination of the official records of the Nordic Council for the sessions 1973–78.
- 13 For the many escape clauses relating to the 18-day rule see Wendt (1972). During the first three years of membership in the EC, Denmark experienced a net outflow of migrant laborers. For example, the net loss to Sweden was 12,400 to Norway 2,400 and to Finland 200. The volume of the migration between Denmark and the other EC countries was minimal. Of course, this situation was mainly a result of the unfavorable Danish labor market during those years.
- 14 Similar norms seem to dominate U.S.–Canadian relations. See Keohane and Nye (1977) and Holsti and Levy (1974).
- 15 In 1966 the Nordic governments rapidly agreed to appoint a joint negotiator for the concluding session of the GATT negotiations. Similarly, in 1976, a Nordic Investment Bank was quickly established after firm political commitment by five Prime Ministers. In both cases the decision to cooperate was taken *before* and the investigations concerning the details followed *after*.
- 16 The cobweb theory was introduced by Andrén (1967). It was criticized by Haskel (1967). A similar argument about U.S.–Canadian relations is found in Keohane and Nye (1977) and about the EC in Scheinman (1966).
- 17 This change contrasts the North American case, where no such trend has been found. See Holsti and Levy (1974).

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