

The Enduring Scandinavian Party System

Jan Sundberg*

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The Setting

The main political actors in the Scandinavian democracies (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) are organized around three poles: labor (social democratic parties), capital (conservative parties), rural periphery and urban center (agrarian parties = center parties) (Rokkan 1987, 81–95). As these three pole parties, supplemented with liberal and communist parties, the latter still vital in the 1960s, reflected old societal cleavages from the 1920s, Stein Rokkan found them frozen (Lipset & Rokkan 1967, 50). In addition, Rokkan was concerned with how it was possible for these old parties to have survived fascism, world wars and profound changes in the social and cultural structure. Thirty years later, after economic, social and political changes such as the collapse of the Soviet Union and the entrance of Finland and Sweden into the European Union, we are still concerned with whether the party system is frozen or whether it has been replaced by new cleavages and parties. In a European perspective, the frozen Scandinavian model, if still alive, is unique. More new nation states have emerged in Europe during the 1990s than any other period in the twentieth century (Lane & Ersson 1996, 2–5). The increase in number of nation-states and the collapse of hegemonic blocks have supported a voluntary development of interconnectedness and interference in national politics and economics (Wessels 1996, 57–69). This is certainly true for the EU, of which all Scan-

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dinavian nations are members or in close cooperation. The uniqueness of a frozen party system is perhaps even more pronounced in the EU, where state autonomy has been partly replaced by interdependence.

As indicated above, the main actors are deeply anchored in their social bases: class differences have been a more important determinant of party loyalty in Scandinavia than in other West European democracies (Rose 1974, 3–25; Uusitalo 1975; Worre 1980, 299–320). However, the strong class orientation has not resulted in revolutionary acts, except in Finland. Agreements and compromises have been the main characteristics of Scandinavian political life, and were also fundamental for the foundation of the mixed welfare economy known as the Scandinavian model (Erikson, Hansen, Ringen & Uusitalo 1987, vii–ix). In addition, openness towards plurality and cooperation between parties place the Scandinavian party systems close to the ideal type defined by Lijphart as consensus democracies (Lijphart 1984, 21–36). The consensus concept entails close cooperation between parties, in spite of deep cleavages. Leaders feel a commitment to maintain the unity of the country as well as to democratic principles. As leaders must be tolerant of their competitors, they must also retain the support of their own followers (Lijphart 1977, 53–55). All this cannot be fulfilled without a mode of political moderation and cooperation, well known from the Scandinavian experience.

The Scandinavian democracies are commonly described as five-party systems (Berglund & Lindström 1978). Initially, the liberal parties were among the most influential, but their former strength has faded due to weak organization and internal splits. Nevertheless they are included as one of the five parties. Except in Finland, parties to the left of the social democrats have never been included among the established parties. In addition, the variety of left parties is large, as it includes old communist parties (orthodox and non-orthodox) and different left-socialist parties with a social democratic heritage which appeared in the early 1960s. Only the communist parties are included in the five-party model.

The five-party system is not complete, as many other parties, old and new, could be included. Among these parties are ethnic parties in Denmark and Finland, and the small Christian parties. From the early 1970s, a wide variety of new parties have emerged in the electoral arena in Scandinavia. Given the change within parties and in their environment, the old five-party system is no longer a good conception of the party system in the four democracies. Doubts have been raised as to whether the frozen party hypothesis is still valid. In a recent study comprising 18 European democracies, Lane & Ersson assert that the hypothesis has lost its validity and should be replaced by a new theory about the interaction between parties and the electorate (Lane & Ersson 1997, 179–96). Comparative studies by Dalton reached the same conclusion:

If party systems were ever frozen (Bartolini & Mair 1990), it is clear that they are no longer so. Contemporary electoral politics are now characterized by a greater fluidity in the vote, greater volatility in electoral outcomes, and even a growing turnover in the number and types of parties being represented. The gathering winds of electoral change that first appeared in the early 1980s have now grown in force (Dalton 1996b, 338).

The Scandinavian party systems are no exception. They follow the same trends as many other West European multi-party systems, where the number of parties in elections has increased, and the system is characterized by instability (Lane & Ersson 1994, 174–92).

The freezing hypothesis is not dismissed that easily. Its defenders argue that the frozen party system hypothesis is misunderstood. According to Mair, a transformation of a frozen party system can only be determined by changes in the cleavage system and not by electoral volatility or the like. The change of cleavage system and not the degree of electoral stability or instability is the very essence of the freezing hypothesis (Mair 1997, 45–66). As a result, Mair argues that the West European party systems is still frozen despite studies claiming the opposite. Since new voters have not been incorporated into mass politics to any significant extent the old parties that devised the rules in the first universal elections are still favored. The major parties also have the capacity to isolate their supporters from competitors, insofar as the categories of voters retain a sense of collective identity (Gallagher, Laver & Mair 1995, 215–19).

Given the discussion above, we prefer first to focus on how well the three core pole parties have managed to retain their electoral dominance after World War II, the electoral strength of the remaining two categories of parties in the five-party system, and the success of the old and new challengers in the four Scandinavian democracies. Our ambition is to discuss whether the freezing hypothesis is still valid for the three pole parties, the very core of the party system in the four Scandinavian democracies. First, the frozen party hypothesis cannot be rejected unless electoral instability is total. If the three pole parties have managed to retain a stable dominance while the rest of the party system is fluid, the very essence of the original party system mentioned by Rokkan is still alive and well. Second, given that the freezing hypothesis includes more than a narrow reflection of class cleavage and party, it seems likely that adaptation and the struggle for new categories of voters explain the dominance of the three pole parties in the party system.

How Unstable Are the Scandinavian Party Systems?

Electoral instability and an increased number of parties have, for years, been indicators of change in the party system (Pedersen 1979, 1–26). This

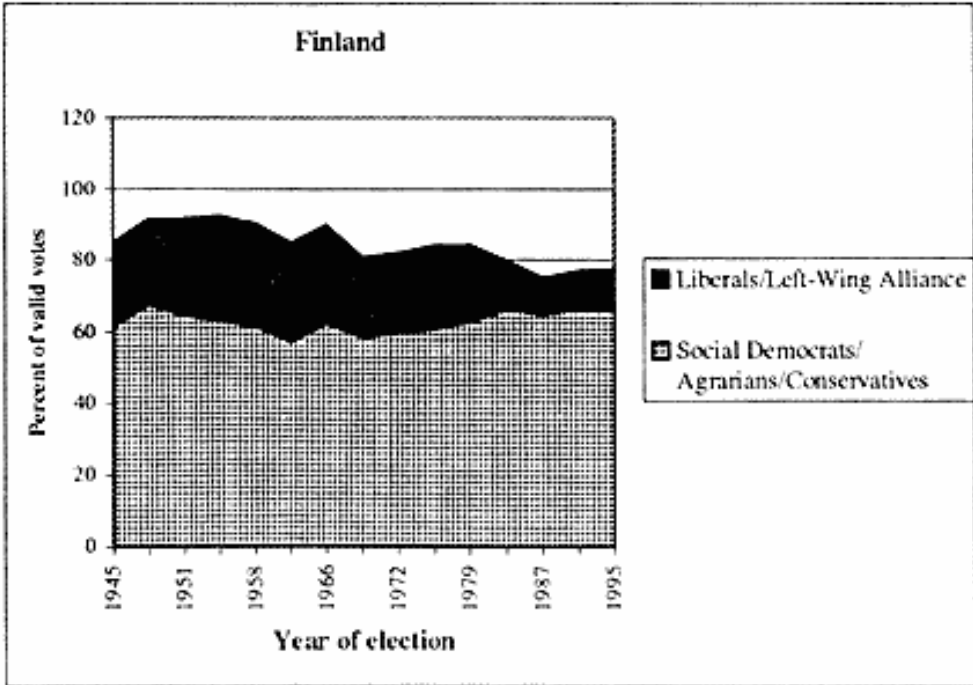
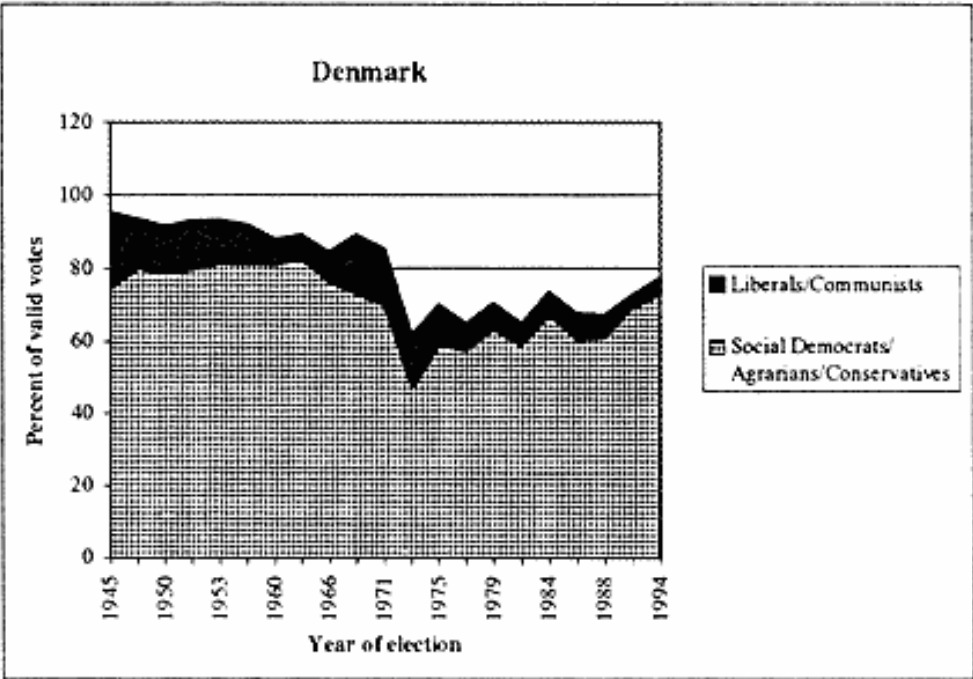
indication has also been adopted as a measure to refute the freezing hypothesis. Studies show that net volatility was low during the 1950s and 1960s and changed rapidly with the turbulent elections in Denmark, Finland and Norway in the early 1970s. Since then, net volatility has, on average, remained at a higher level in Finland and Norway. Since the turbulent 1973 election in Denmark, volatility has decreased to a level from before the 1970s. In Sweden, net volatility remained unchanged until the 1991 election, which seems to mark a new and more volatile era.

Gross volatility is systematically at a higher level, and to some extent it covariates with net volatility. The long time series from Sweden shows that gross volatility increased in the 1970s. The same is true for Norway. Since the late 1980s, Denmark, Norway and Sweden have followed identical high patterns of gross volatility. Studies show that most vote shifts take place within the non-socialist block, and that the new challenging parties score high volatility measures. Moreover, studies from Denmark, Norway and Sweden show that the block barriers have opened during the 1990s. Votes have begun to float in both directions between socialist and non-socialist parties (Borre & Goul Andersen 1997, 162–65; Aardal & Valen 1997, 69; Gilljam & Holmberg 1995, 31–36). This is partly explained by the rapid electoral swings among the new challenging parties. A number of voters identifying with the Social Democratic Party have been attracted by populist appeals. Many of these voters have returned to the social democrats again, although this is not always the case.

These indications support Lane and Ersson's findings of how increasing instability in the electorate is melting the frozen party system. However, in Figure 1, the parties are grouped in the three categories discussed earlier: the three pole parties, the remaining two parties in the five-party model, and 'others.' This categorization is made to control what effect the increasing instability has had on each category of parties. Party support is measured in all four Scandinavian democracies from the late 1940s to the mid-1990s.

The figure clearly demonstrates a remarkable stability among the three pole parties in all four countries and long-term success from one election to another. In addition, support for the three pole parties was higher in the last elections than in the first elections fifty years earlier, except for Denmark where the share of votes was almost unchanged. Their share of votes in the mid-1990s ranges from 57 percent in Norway to 75 percent in Sweden (Denmark 73 percent and Finland 66 percent). As a result, only between 25 and 43 percent of the votes are left to the remaining two parties in the five-party model and to 'others.' The big losers in this 50-year period are the remaining two parties in the five-party model. In Denmark, they got 20.6 percent of the votes in the mid-1940s, compared to 4.6 in 1994. The figures in Finland were 23.5 percent in 1945 (29.5 percent in 1954) and 11.8 percent in 1995. In Norway, they won 25.7 percent of the votes in 1945 and 4.5 in

Figure 1. Share of Votes for the Scandinavian Five-Party Model in Scandinavia, Mid-1940s to Mid-1990s.



1997. The trend is similar in Sweden, where they won 29 percent of the votes in 1948 and 13.4 percent in 1994. In Finland and Sweden, their support has been halved, while in Denmark and Norway the support has almost disappeared. It is the parties in the category 'others' that have taken advantage of the electoral instability. However, only occasionally have the three front parties suffered in the competition with the others, which have more or less taken over the electoral space from the remaining two parties.

To be accurate, we must also investigate how the separate parties in the three pole party category and the remaining two-party category have succeeded in the electoral competition over time.

The figures in Table 1 show that each of the three pole parties have retained the electoral strength during the entire period. Small national variations are visible. In Denmark and Finland, the changes are almost non-

Table 1. The Challenge to the Scandinavian Five-Party System, the Mid-1940s to the Mid-1990s (Percent)

Election year	Denmark								
	Three pole parties				Remaining two			Others	
	S	A	C	Total	Lib.	Com.	Total	All	N
1945	32.8	23.4	18.2	74.4	8.2	12.4	20.6	5.0	2
1947	40.0	27.6	12.4	80.0	6.9	6.8	13.7	6.3	3
1950	39.6	21.3	17.8	78.7	8.2	4.6	12.8	8.5	2
1953	40.4	22.1	17.3	79.8	8.6	4.8	13.4	6.8	3
1953	41.3	23.1	16.8	81.2	7.8	4.3	12.1	6.7	3
1957	39.4	25.1	16.6	81.1	7.8	3.1	10.9	8.0	3
1960	42.1	21.1	17.9	81.1	5.8	1.1	6.9	12.0	4
1964	41.9	20.8	20.1	82.8	5.3	1.2	6.5	10.7	6
1966	38.3	19.3	18.7	76.3	7.3	0.8	8.1	15.6	4
1968	34.1	20.4	18.6	73.1	15.0	1.0	16.0	10.9	6
1971	37.3	16.7	15.6	69.8	14.3	1.4	15.7	14.5	6
1973	25.6	12.3	9.2	47.1	11.2	3.6	14.8	38.1	6
1975	29.9	23.3	5.5	58.7	7.1	4.2	11.3	30.0	6
1977	37.0	12.0	8.5	57.5	3.6	3.7	7.3	35.2	7
1979	38.3	12.5	12.5	63.3	5.4	1.9	7.3	29.4	6
1981	32.9	11.3	14.5	58.7	5.1	1.1	6.2	35.1	7
1984	31.7	12.1	23.4	67.2	5.5	0.7	6.2	26.6	7
1987	29.3	10.5	20.8	60.6	6.2	0.9	7.1	32.3	9
1988	29.8	11.8	19.3	60.9	5.6	0.8	6.4	32.7	6
1990	37.4	15.8	16.0	69.2	3.5	–	3.5	27.3	9
1994	34.6	23.3	15.0	72.9	4.6	–	4.6	22.5	5
Change	+1.8	–0.4	–3.2	–1.5	–3.6	–12.4	–16.0	+17.5	+3
Mean	35.9	18.2	16.1	70.2	7.3	2.8	10.1	19.7	

Note: S: Socialdemokratiet (Social Democrats); A: Venstre (Agrarians); C: Konservative Folkeparti (Conservatives); Lib.: Radikale Venstre (Social Liberals); Com.: Kommunistiske parti (Communist Party).

Election year	Sweden								
	Three pole parties				Remaining two			Others	
	S	A	C	Total	Lib.	Com.	Total	All	N
1948	46.1	12.4	12.3	70.8	22.7	6.3	29.0	0.2	–
1952	46.0	10.7	14.4	71.1	24.4	4.3	28.7	0.2	–
1956	44.6	9.5	17.1	71.2	23.8	5.0	28.8	0.0	–
1958	46.2	12.7	19.5	78.4	18.2	3.4	21.6	0.0	–
1960	47.8	13.6	16.6	78.0	17.5	4.5	22.0	0.0	–
1964	47.3	13.2	13.7	74.2	17.0	5.2	22.2	3.6	3
1968	50.1	15.7	12.9	78.7	14.3	3.0	17.3	4.0	3
1970	45.3	19.9	11.5	76.7	16.2	4.8	21.0	2.3	2
1973	43.6	25.1	14.3	83.0	9.4	5.3	14.7	2.3	3
1976	42.7	24.1	15.6	82.4	11.1	4.7	15.8	1.8	3
1979	43.2	18.1	20.3	81.6	10.6	5.6	16.2	2.2	1
1982	45.6	15.5	23.6	84.7	5.9	5.6	11.5	3.8	2
1985	44.7	12.4	21.3	78.4	12.4	5.4	19.6	2.0	1
1988	43.2	11.3	18.3	72.8	12.2	5.8	18.0	9.2	2
1991	37.7	8.5	21.9	68.1	9.1	4.5	13.6	18.3	3
1994	45.3	7.6	22.4	75.3	7.2	6.2	13.4	11.3	3
Change	+0.8	–4.8	+10.1	+4.5	–15.5	–0.1	–15.6	+11.1	+3
Mean	45.0	14.4	17.2	76.6	14.6	5.0	19.6	3.8	

Note: S: Socialdemokraterna (Social Democrats); Centerpartiet (Agrarians); C: Moderata samlingspartiet (Conservatives); Lib.: Folkpartiet Liberalerna (Liberals); Com.: Vänsterpartiet (Left Party).

existent when the first and last elections are compared in the tables. The 1973 election was an exception in Denmark when the three pole parties lost more than 20 percent of the votes, which gave fuel to speculations that the frozen party system was melting. However, our Danish data show that the pole parties have almost managed to recover to a level prior to the 1973 backlash. The realignment has proceeded from one election to another, quite regardless of what the figures of volatility might indicate. Borre and Goul Andersen assess that since the breakdown of the five party system in 1973, the old parties have recovered considerably. However, voter loyalty has never been fully reestablished (Borre & Goul Andersen 1997, 162–65).

The Conservative Party in Sweden has almost doubled its strength during the past 50 years. This is the main reason why the three pole parties as a total have successfully maintained their electoral strength. Only the relatively small agrarian Center Party has lost elections systematically since the early 1970s. Also in Norway the three pole parties have managed well, except for the 1973 and 1997 elections. In 1973, the Labor Party suffered considerable losses because of its pro-Common Market stand which was turned down in a referendum. The same issue more than doubled support for the agrarian Center Party in the 1993 election. After the referendum in 1994, when the Common Market was once again rejected by the Norwegian

people, the platform for an anti-EU party had faded. The Center Party lost the election and came down to a 'normal' level. However, there are no indications that this electoral result will last. In contrast, it is more likely that the 1997 election will be an exception like the 1973 elections in Norway and Denmark.

The big losers were the communists who have practically disappeared from the electoral arena since the late 1980s in Denmark and Norway. In the 1960s, the Communists were one of the three big parties in Finland. Now the party has reorganized into a green socialist party with approximately half of its former electoral strength. Only in Sweden has the former Communist Party succeeded in retaining unchanged electoral support. In addition, also the liberal parties in all four democracies have suffered heavily. The liberal parties in Norway and Sweden were once among the big parties in the non-socialist block, and now they are among the small parties. In Finland, the liberals are in danger of disappearing from the electoral arena.

The five-party model typical for the Scandinavian party systems in the 1960s is no longer relevant. As the three core pole parties have managed to retain their electoral strength (with the exception of Denmark in 1973 and Norway in 1997), the remaining two parties in the five-party model have suffered when new challengers have appeared in the electoral arena. Given the stability of the three pole parties, the free space for new parties to compete in elections seems to be no more than 40 percent of the vote. Hence, the three core parties have only been threatened slightly by the new parties. Most of the votes have had to be won from the number of parties in the remaining narrow space.

The hypothesis that electoral instability melts the frozen party system cannot be verified with our data. Although the Scandinavian five-party model has vanished, the three original pole parties of the societal cleavage structure, originally emphasized by Rokkan, are still alive and well. The instability is more a phenomenon in the category of 'others,' as small parties tend to come and go, and their voters tend to be more volatile than large parties' voters. As the party system is crowded, the ideological space is narrow for all newcomers (Pedersen 1991, 95–114). Although the Danish, Finnish and Norwegian party systems have suffered backlashes, durability is more prominent and the old parties seem to be more enduring than suggested during the 1970s.

Class Cleavage as a Determinant of the Three Pole Parties' Success

The modern party system was formed when the work forces in the Scandinavian democracies were roughly divided into three visible classes:

farmers, workers and upper and middle-class white collar workers. All three pole parties were deeply anchored in one of these classes. A party formed the political will of a class, which gave it full support in elections. The mutual dependence paid off, as the class parties won influence in parliament and government. This was essential, as in turn it gave the parties the chance to offer collective public goods to the electorate. Already before World War II, it turned out that the largest of the three, the Social Democrats, could not win a majority of the votes with only working class votes. The deadlock was broken when all the Scandinavian social democratic and agrarian parties, between 1933 and 1937, signed a crises agreement (Karvonen 1991, 49–81). This compromise between workers and farmers in all four Scandinavian democracies was the starting point for the well-known welfare state, where all citizens were included in the redistribution of public goods. It deradicalized the parties and effectively undermined all attempts of massive fascist establishment. A culture of compromise and consensus won in a time when an aggressive fascism swept through central Europe.

Sweden was the leading nation of industrialization. The farmer class declined and the rural work force moved to the urban industrial centers. Finland was the last of the four countries to witness a strong migration from the farms during the 1950s and 1960s. During the war, about half of the population was still working in agriculture and forestry. The growth of the industrial work force culminated during the 1960s, first in Sweden, then in the less industrialized Denmark and Norway, and in the 1980s it was also noticeable in Finland (Alestalo & Kuhnle 1987, 26–29). Today public and private service is the largest employer, its dominance comparable to agriculture during the 19th century. The work force has grown rapidly through the inclusion of women in the service sector, and now women and men comprise almost equal shares of the working force. As a result, class differences are smaller than earlier, and size and composition of the classes have changed considerably during the past decades. No new clear-cut cleavages have emerged which would give birth to a new class party. The growth of the work force and the change in its composition gives fuel to new types of political alignments.

Studies show that the once strong class voting in Scandinavia has declined dramatically since the 1950s (Borre & Goul Andersen 1997, 120–25). Class voting is now approximately at the same low level as in Austria, Germany, The Netherlands and the UK (Lane & Ersson 1997, 179–96). However, according to electoral studies from all four Scandinavian democracies, the original social base is still important. Most farmers vote for the agrarian parties, most workers for the social democratic parties, while the middle and upper classes vote for the conservative parties (Borre & Goul Andersen 1997, 118–20; Sänkiahö 1996, 66–87; Aardal, Valen & Berglund 1995, 29; Oskarsson 1994, 36–76; Gilljam & Holmberg 1995, 98–105). How-

ever, the influx of voters from other social classes or categories has grown rapidly, and therefore a minority of the agrarian parties' voters are farmers and a considerable part of the social democratic voters are middle-class. Only the social base of the Conservative parties has grown, and class voting is, not surprisingly, highest among these voters. Partly, the changes are determined by how class is defined (Sainsbury 1987, 507–26). It seems, however, that the decline of class voting has developed into a working class phenomenon.

In Table 2, the employed by industry is divided into three categories, which include 1) agriculture, fishing and forestry; 2) manufacturing and construction; and 3) wholesale, retail trade, restaurants, hotels, transport, storage, communication, financing, insurance, real estate and business service, public administration and service. The three categories are abbreviated to 1) farming; 2) industry; and 3) service.

After years of expansion, the work force shrank in Finland and Sweden during the early 1990s as a result of the economic recession. Today, only a small proportion of the labor force are farmers and fishermen. The number of industrial workers has also declined during these two decades. The great majority of the contemporary work force is employed in the service sector, which has expanded rapidly during this period. This would not have been possible without the large number of women who joined the work force. More than 70 percent of women aged 16–64 are members of the work force today. A majority of the public employees are women. The strong expansion of service is very much due to comprehensive government investments in public service. A substantial part of the service sector employees are publicly employed.

Due to rapid growth, the service sector is now the dominant sector. This should give the conservative parties the best possible advantage. However, pay-off for the conservatives in Denmark, Finland, and Norway is almost non-existent. Only in Sweden have the conservatives managed to expand their electoral support during this process to a level which is almost equivalent to that of the three other Scandinavian conservative parties. This statement seems to support the post-materialists who have rejected the freezing hypothesis altogether. As Dalton puts it,

there has been a an erosion in the ability of social cleavages (and the social characteristics derived from these cleavages) to explain electoral choice. The weakening of class and religious alignments has been accompanied by an apparent erosion in long-term partisan commitments and enduring feelings of party identification (Dalton 1996b, 338).

Although our data come to similar conclusions about the eroding social class determinants, the outcome is different. Dalton and his colleagues strongly emphasize that the social cleavage erosion leads to electoral instability (already discussed in the previous section) and to a destabilization of

Table 2. Employed by Industry in Scandinavia 1960–1995. Percent

Year	Farming	Industry	Service All	Total in thousands
Denmark				
1960	18	37	42	2064
1970	11	38	49	2310
1976	8	33	58	2337
1979	8	30	61	2529
1982	7	28	64	2418
1985	7	28	66	2553
1988	6	27	66	2695
1991	6	27	67	2647
1995	4	25	71	2501
Finland				
1960	35	31	33	2033
1970	20	36	43	2118
1976	16	35	48	2337
1979	12	34	53	2134
1982	13	34	53	2377
1985	11	32	56	2437
1988	10	30	60	2431
1991	8	29	62	2340
1995	8	27	63	1912
Norway				
1960	19	36	44	1406
1970	12	37	51	1462
1976	9	33	57	1789
1979	9	30	61	1872
1982	8	29	62	1946
1985	7	28	65	2012
1988	6	26	68	2114
1991	6	23	70	2010
1995	5	23	72	2079
Sweden				
1960	14	44	42	3244
1970	8	40	51	3413
1976	6	35	58	4088
1979	6	33	61	4180
1982	6	30	64	4219
1985	5	30	65	4299
1988	4	29	66	4399
1991	3	28	68	4430
1995	3	26	71	3986

Source: Yearbook of Nordic Statistics vol. 16–34, Nordic Statistical Yearbook 1997.

the party systems. New issues and cleavages have emerged (materialist vs. post-materialist), and the established parties have failed to respond fully to these demands. As a result, the party system has increasingly been fractionalized, and the process has stimulated the introduction of new

parties and the break-up of the established parties (Dalton, Flanagan & Beck 1984, 7–11; Inglehart 1984, 25–69; Inglehart 1997, 131–59; Dalton & Wattenberg 1993, 193–218; Dalton 1996b, 319–42). New parties have emerged in Scandinavia, the number of parties in the parliaments is higher than in the 1950s, class as a social cleavage has faded, but the established three pole parties show no significant signs of break-up. In fact, our data reveal that instability is high among parties that lack a particular social cleavage base or that share the base with a stronger party.

Cleavages and Party Alignments

Class as a determinant of party support gives a narrow and one-sided view of the alignment between voters and party. As Kitschelt puts it,

How such social divisions translate into party alignments depends not simply on social developments, but also on the ability of elites to craft alliances and co-opt groups. It would be wrong therefore to see Lipset and Rokkan's analysis simply as a sociological modernization theory, applied to party formation, or as a 'sociology of politics' that treats political actors and institutions as the dependent variables (Kitschelt 1997, 132).

Thus, a societal cleavage includes more than a narrowly defined class cleavage, as it is defined as a lasting division between social or political groups (Rae & Taylor 1970, 1–21). As originally defined by Rokkan, cleavages from which the pole parties are derived are not based solely on class cleavages. In the Norwegian case (which fits well with the rest of Scandinavia), the cleavage system is based, according to Rokkan, on three basic economic dimensions, 1) the conflict between rural and urban economies, 2) the class struggle in the primary economy, and 3) the class struggle in the secondary/tertiary sectors (Valen & Rokkan 1974, 332–35). In the first case, class is not even mentioned, as the cleavage is concentrated to a conflict between center and periphery. The agrarian center parties are the defenders of the rural periphery. As farming has declined, the rural economy has become more vulnerable and migration to cities extensive. The center parties have responded by struggling to incorporate middle-class rural voters directly or indirectly, dependent on the agrarian economy. This struggle emphasized by Rokkan has not vanished. As a result, the agrarian parties have managed to retain their electoral strength without giving up the rural defense. In the 1994 EU referendum, the old conflict between center and periphery flared up, and the anti-EU response was massive in the Finnish, Norwegian, and Swedish northern periphery (Ringdal & Valen 1998, 185–88). EU membership seems to have given more fuel to the defenders of the rural north against the national capitals and the EU bureaucracy in Brussels.

Most of the class struggle in the primary sector has vanished as the

marginal smallholders have disappeared after the large structural transformation in agriculture. The struggle in the declining secondary sector of today is focused on the conflict between the new populist right wing parties and the social democrats. Well-paid workers have been attracted by the populist appeal of low taxation and anti-immigrant stands. As our figures show, the struggle between social democrats and traditional communist parties is history today. Also, polls show that the non-socialist parties have won a small share of the working class votes since the first surveys conducted in the mid-1950s.

It is, however, the struggle within the vast middle class that has been the big challenge for the social democrats on the left, the conservative parties on the right, and, to some extent, the agrarian parties in the countryside. As the middle class is heterogeneous, the preferences among the different categories seem to diverge. This gives the class struggling parties a chance to incorporate these categories. Studies show that the middle class can be categorized in different ways. One is the division in old and new middle-class. The old middle-class is mostly self-employed, whereas the new middle-class consists of a heterogeneous group of salaried employees (Kerr 1990, 5–26; Kivinen 1989). Not surprisingly, it is in the new middle-class that the social democrats have won votes. The middle-class can also be hierarchically categorized in upper, middle, and lower level. Studies show that the conservatives are successful among the upper level voters and the social democrats among the lower middle-class voters (Borre & Goul Andersen 1997, 118–20; Sankiahö 1996, 80–83; Oskarsson 1994, 40–53), except in Norway where the Labor Party seems to attract both categories of middle-class voters (Aardal, Valen & Berglund 1995, 29).

The middle-class can also be horizontally divided into public or private employment, a relevant division in Scandinavia where a considerable part of the middle-class consists of public employees. In addition, most of the lower level employees are publicly employed, and a vast majority are women. Very few studies have been undertaken to systematically determine which party or parties are the main beneficiaries when public employees vote. In Denmark, the share of socialist votes is two times greater among non-manual workers in the public sector compared to those in the private sector (Borre & Goul Andersen 1997, 125–28). To a lesser extent, similar trends are visible in Norway and Sweden (Aardal, Valen & Berglund 1995, 29; Gilljam & Holmberg 1995, 105; Lindström 1991, 161–88; Lindström 1997, 53–76). There is no doubt among the voters that it is the main political actors (three pole parties) who decide the future of the public service sector. The social democrats are usually recognized as the founding fathers of the Scandinavian welfare system. Their defense of public service has successfully attracted those lower level public employees who are members of the labor union (LO).

It is the heterogeneity of the middle class that opens the gates to successful competition between the three pole parties. This would, of course, not have been successful if the three parties had frozen their class appeal. The agrarian parties would almost have vanished, and the social democrats would have been reduced to middle size parties. The conservatives would have been the only true class parties. They would have had no need to appeal to workers, and only a minor (regional) interest in attracting farmers.

In addition, between 30 percent (Denmark) and 47 percent (Finland) of the population in Scandinavia (ages 15/16–66/74 years) were not employed in 1994. This group includes unemployed, students, pensioners and people who are unable to work, housewives, conscripts, and others (Yearbook of Nordic Statistics 1996, 78–79). This vast category cannot be fitted into the three front cleavage structure. Like the middle class, this category is heterogeneous, and it has been very difficult for parties to integrate them.

Moreover, the electorate in Scandinavia has increased during the past 50 years by nearly seven million people, which is close to 39 percent. The national growth variation ranges from 33.6 percent in Sweden to 44.1 percent in Finland. It is not only seven million more people, but also new generations of voters have replaced the old, resulting in a nearly total shift in the electorate during these years. Given this fundamental transformation, it is even more remarkable that the three pole parties have managed to incorporate the majority of these new voters into the prevailing cleavage structure. However, as the whole electoral mass has expanded, it gives more room for instability between voters and non-voters and between voters who shift from one party to another. Still, it has not eroded the fundamental cleavage which is the base for the three pole parties.

Discussion

Our data partly support the findings of Dalton and Lane & Ersson cited earlier in this article. The Scandinavian votes are fluid, volatility has increased, and the turnover of represented parties is higher than in the 1960s. Data in our study show no significant evidence of a melting party system in any of the four Scandinavian democracies. New parties have emerged and old established ones have declined, but the bases of the cleavage structure and party formation are still working as if they were frozen. Our finding is partly a result of a different interpretation of the concept of cleavage and partly a result of a deviance in what parties to include when changes are expected to occur in the cleavage structure.

Starting with the latter, it makes sense whether we focus our study on the three pole cleavage parties originally emphasized by Rokkan, the well-known five-party system, or all parties represented in parliament after World

War II. Those who are critical of the frozen party hypothesis have not specified any categories in the party systems. All parties are treated equally, and electoral instability is seen as a result of a breakdown of the old cleavage structure. However, not all parties reflect the old cleavage structure. Some of them have, with some success (e.g., the Greens), established new cleavages unheard of when Rokkan made his observation about the frozen cleavage structure. It is, therefore, more appropriate to focus on those parties that are organized around the three front cleavages. These are, of course, the three pole parties, and the additional two parties in the five-party model.

It is the five-party system, typical for the Scandinavian democracies after World War II, that has suffered from electoral instability. The traditional communist parties, on the one hand, and the liberal parties, on the other, have either disappeared or declined, whereas the left socialist parties have a better record. The cleavage structure has not melted, as the socialist and communist parties share the same class base as the social democrats. It is the collapse of communism internationally rather than the changes in the cleavage structure that has spurred the sudden retreat. Similarly, the liberals share the social class base with the conservatives, who have successfully managed to incorporate the liberal party platform.

The increase of the electorate and the weakening class ties, together with decreasing means to control the voters, have opened the political arena for new and old actors. Political protest against the established parties seems to be the main force behind the success of those parties who commit themselves to this agenda. Two types of protest parties can be distinguished. First, the populist parties which have contributed strongly to destabilizing the party system by electoral victories followed by electoral losses. All four Scandinavian democracies have experienced populist party success, beginning with Finland in 1970, followed by Denmark and Norway in 1973, Finland again in 1983, Sweden in 1991, and Norway again in 1997.

Second, Christian parties, which are relatively old, differ from the Central and Southern European norm, as religious cleavages lack a structural ground in Scandinavia. Therefore, their political agenda is more secular and directed against the established parties in moral terms. Still, the Christian parties in Scandinavia are predicted to lead a defensive struggle against increasingly difficult odds (Karvonen 1993, 25–48). The Norwegian Christian People's party managed to become the second largest party in Parliament together with the populist Progress Party in the 1997 election. Twenty years earlier, in 1977 and 1973, the party had good results in Norway. In Sweden, the Christian Democratic Coalition crossed the four percent threshold in 1991 and had its best election ever in 1998. So far, the predictions only seem to be fulfilled in Denmark and Finland.

Protest against the established parties seems to be important, but not the only fuel for electoral success. Environmentalism, pursued either by the

established parties or by green parties, as in Finland and Sweden, has been relatively successful, though these parties have failed to grow from small to middle-sized parties. As instability is much higher among old and new challengers, it would not be correct to call it a different five-party system or a new six-party system. It is more to the point to highlight the frozen part of the party system which, on average, comprises between 63 percent (Finland) and 77 percent (Sweden) of the electorate. The average in Denmark and in Norway is 70 percent. In addition, it would be incorrect to consider the remaining 37 to 23 percent melted, because they have never been totally frozen. On the contrary, as the electorate has increased considerably since the mid-1940s, more voters now support the three front parties than fifty years ago.

Much of the class base, which once was the social base of the three pole parties, has been transformed. Therefore, the three pole parties no longer solely reflect the conflicts of the past. New loyalties have emerged and the social bases of the parties are a mosaic of different categories and individual preferences. The parties would hardly have survived with their contemporary strength without an enlarged class base. This does not, however, imply that the cleavages have disappeared. Rather, it is the struggle between the competing three pole parties to incorporate new categories of voters which has increased. To a large extent, the discussion about whether the frozen cleavage structure has faded depends on how cleavage is understood. According to a narrow definition, cleavage is equivalent to class, religion or other social cleavages (Dalton 1996a, 165–95). Decreasing class voting and electoral instability are the visible signs of the fading cleavage structure. However, as the electoral strength of the three pole parties is intact and has remained so since the 1940s, it is too hasty to refute Rokkan's hypothesis on the basis of general electoral instability and on occasional setbacks for the three pole parties. In addition, the basic cleavages have always been well organized and controlled, whereas the new ones, such as right-wing populism, which cuts across the established political alignments and major cleavages (Listhaug 1997, 77–90), do not seem to be mastered by the three pole parties. Studies show that it is more likely that environmentalism can be linked to the traditional left-right conflict in society (Knutsen 1997, 229–62). Other cleavages are possible as those who are not employed are hard to incorporate, and the same is true for parts of the heterogeneous middle-class. Only if one of the old cleavages ceases to exist can a new situation emerge with serious consequences for the party system.

Conclusion

If cleavage is understood as originally assessed by Rokkan, i.e., a struggle between labor and capital on one hand and a struggle between rural and

urban economies on the other hand, the discussion in this article shows that the three pole parties, which were originally organized around these cleavage fronts, still dominate the electoral arena. Occasionally, left socialist parties (or former communist parties) as the Swedish Left in 1998, have had good results which, in this context, underscores that the cleavages still are alive. Only for a short period in the beginning of this century have the social democrats captured the labor front alone. The same is true for the conservatives in relation to the liberals. The agrarian center parties have, mostly alone, defended the interests of farmers and rural economies. As the number of farmers has decreased rapidly, the social class base for the agrarian center parties has been reduced. This may become a problem in Sweden and Norway where the agrarian parties have not succeeded as well as in Denmark and Finland in incorporating other categories of rural voters.

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