

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES IN SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The Paradox of Openness

*Transparency and Participation
in Nordic Cultures of Consensus*

Edited By

NORBERT GÖTZ AND CARL MARKLUND

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The Paradox of Openness

International Studies in Sociology and Social Anthropology

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Norbert Götz and Carl Marklund

Stockholm and Helsinki, June 2014

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List of Abbreviations

ACTA	Anti-counterfeiting Trade Agreement (EU)
ALMP	Active Labour Market Policies
Attac	<i>Association pour la taxation des transactions financières et pour l'action citoyenne</i> (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and for Citizens' Action)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (US)
CISPA	Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act (US)
CLD	Centre for Law and Democracy (Canada)
COSAC	Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
ECHR	European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
EEC	European Economic Community
EP	European Parliament
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency (US)
EU	European Union
EVA	<i>Elinkeinoelämän valtuuskunta</i> (Finnish business think tank)
FGJ	<i>Föreningen Grävande Journalister</i> (The Association for Investigative Journalism in Sweden)
FOI	Freedom of Information
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act (US)
FOSS	free and open-source software
FRA	<i>Försvarets radioanstalt</i> (National Defence Radio Establishment (Sweden))
G8	Group of Eight
G20	Group of Twenty
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GJM	Global Justice Movement
GRECO	Group of States against Corruption
HS	<i>Helsingin Sanomat</i> (the largest and most influential Finnish newspaper)
IB	<i>Informationsbyrån</i> (The Information Office, Information Bureau (Sweden))
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICT(s)	Information and Communication Technologies
IFI(s)	International Financial Institution(s)
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund

IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
IPSAS	International Public Sector Accounting Standard
IRE	Investigative Reporters & Editors (US)
IT	Information Technology
KEPA	<i>Kehitysyhteistyön palvelukeskus</i> (Service Centre for Development Cooperation (Finland))
LO	<i>Landsorganisationen</i> (Swedish Trade Union Federation)
MP(s)	Member(s) of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO(s)	Non-governmental Organization(s)
NPM	New Public Management
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OGP	Open Government Partnership
OKD	Open Knowledge Definition
OKF	Open Knowledge Foundation
OSI	Open Source Initiative
ÖVP	<i>Österreichische Volkspartei</i> (Austrian People's Party)
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PG-EDEM	Project Group E-democracy and E-participation (Austrian interministerial group of external experts lead by the Centre for E-Government at the Danube University Krems by order of the Federal Chancellery)
PG-UI	<i>Projektgruppe Umweltinformation</i> (Austrian project group for environmental information)
PIPA	PROTECT IP Act (US)
RSP	Revolutionary State Party (of Tanzania)
RTI	Right to Information
SAP	<i>Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti</i> (Swedish Social Democratic Workers' Party)
SDI	Spatial Data Infrastructure
SDP	<i>Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue</i> (Social Democratic Party (of Finland))
SIGINT	Signals Intelligence
SOPA	Stop Online Piracy Act (US)
SOU(s)	Statens Offentliga Utredningar (National Inquiries (Sweden))
SPÖ	<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs</i> (Social Democratic Party of Austria)
SSP	State Secrets Privilege
TSL	<i>Työväen Sivistysliitto</i> (Workers' Educational Association (of Finland))
TV	Television
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
US	United States (of America)
WTO	World Trade Organization

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Introduction

Norbert Götz and Carl Marklund

When Karl Popper published his famous work *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945) there was evidence that representative democracy did not imply the end of history. Majority rule, despite being mediated by the principle of representation, had been blatantly misused and allowed for the persecution of various minorities, while constitutional checks and balances often proved insufficient for controlling political leaders. Moreover, the democratic system in Weimar Germany and many other places had failed to shield itself against authoritarian usurpation. At the close of World War II, it was clearly understood that if democracy was to be more than a formal system for aggregating popular will, it must be capable of protecting individuals and groups from the powers vested in the state by the majority, that is, by ‘the people’. As a consequence, representative democracy has been increasingly complemented – and to some extent even sidelined – by what scholars call ‘monitory democracy’ (Keane 2009) or ‘audit society’ (Power 1997; Ivarsson Westerberg and Jacobsson 2013).

In Western societies of today, there is a consensus that power should be publicly scrutinized and held accountable with regard to both universal principles and local norms. While still opposed by numerous public actors worldwide, both within and without the West, this consensus is rapidly evolving into a broad ‘universal’ ideal as well as a programme of specific precepts for global policy change. Media and civil society organizations increasingly exercise this function, and have become significant forces in the operation of modern society. As a consequence, today statehood and good governance is closely associated with various forms of external and internal control: ‘open government’ is the order of the day for managing national affairs and international relations. Openness on the part of power holders is meant to facilitate the transparency that enables monitors and auditors to do their job. Electronic network media of the traditional type, such as broadcasting and the rapidly evolving Internet, lend strong support to the global spread of the ideal of openness. Nevertheless, a digital divide may still remain within and between certain countries, in addition to new modes of deception and surveillance that challenge the emerging ideal of open and accountable power.

While openness continues to proliferate as an ideal, its numerous paradoxes are also becoming increasingly visible. In particular, there is a tension between

openness as an intrinsic social value, and openness as an instrument of governance (Heald 2006; 2012). This results in a degree of reflexivity between the instrumental and intrinsic elements of openness. However, the current elitist reformulation frames openness as a feature of modern leadership and reduces it to a tool of governance doctrine. Thereby, the intrinsic values of openness – and the multi-vocal, culturally diverse, and often conflicted debate about competing aims of openness – gets obscured by the fixation with the instrumental aspects of openness as set forth in the global transparency discourse. This book seeks to shift the focus from the theme of efficiency toward that of responsiveness. However, rather than presenting a one-sided view, supplanting one imbalance by another, it aims at a synthesizing and historically grounded perspective. It begins with two assumptions: (1) Openness is a revealing trait of political culture, and (2) the limits and paradoxes of openness are as instructive as its positive promise of an accessible, free, and responsible political and economic order. This becomes apparent when we examine its recent transformation from legal principle to universal ideal.

The Nordic countries, in particular Finland and Sweden, are the empirical focus of this volume for several reasons. Those states are committed to a political culture that is often expressed by common reference to a principle of ‘Nordic openness.’¹ They are able to discuss a range of issues in a comparatively uniform context, and in an environment with particular affinity to the idea of openness. The Nordic dedication to openness is based on the principle of public access to official records that dates back to the Swedish Freedom of Information Act (*tryckfrihetsförordningen*) of 1766, the first such act in the world.² A second pillar is the political process connected to commissions of inquiry that prepare public policy in close interaction with stakeholders. This plays a prominent role in Sweden, but is also relevant in the Finnish and Norwegian context (Pedersen and Lægreid 1994, 253–257). Already in the

1 The respective terms are *nordisk öppenhet* (Swedish), *pohjoismainen avoimuus* (Finnish), *nordisk åpenhet* (Norwegian), and *nordisk åbenhed* (Danish). In these cases the ‘Nordic’ is used interchangeably with the respective national attribute. The principal scholarly works are those by Erkkilä (2010; 2012); see also his contribution in this volume.

2 Engl. translation: ‘His Majesty’s Gracious Ordinance Relating to Freedom of Writing and of the Press’. For background articles, see Mustonen (2006). The Act was also in force in what later became Finland (see further Anderson 1973). The second freedom of information act was the *Código de Organización Política y Municipal* of Colombia (1888). Otherwise, freedom of information legislation has been a post-war phenomenon, although it has been discussed in Denmark and elsewhere since the nineteenth century (Knudsen 2003, 70). For a genealogy of freedom of information acts in Western countries, see Erkkilä (2010, 8) and for their spread to the Global South, see Darch and Underwood (2010).

nineteenth century, when suffrage was not general, corporatist policy making allowed the participation of broader groups within society (Rothstein 1992, 82). In most Nordic countries, this longstanding tendency towards including civil society organizations, political opposition parties, and stakeholders in the policy making process was further institutionalized through the system of government-sponsored state committees (Weir and Skocpol 1985; Wagner, Wittrock, and Whitley 1991). The state-induced scholarly power investigations are a recent innovation in the field, with an emphasis on monitoring the use of power (Elmgren and Götz 2013). The institution of the ombudsman, an Old Norse word for a 'commissioned person' who hears and investigates complaints, is another feature mediating between the state administration and the concerns of citizens that originated in Sweden (al-Wahab 1979; Kucsko-Stadlmayer 2008).

In the European Union (EU) the Nordic countries are known for their pioneering role in assuring that government operates transparently (Globaliseringsrådet 2008, 69f; see Grønbech-Jensen 1998; Bunyan 1999, xii). Due to the Nordic countries' reputation as model societies with regard to welfare politics, their conduct of international relations, and their populations' value systems, there is also general interest in their approach to openness (Christiansen et al. 2006; Götz and Haggrén 2009). However, rather than try to synthesize a pan-Nordic model, we wish to analyse, contrast, and compare. Therefore, the perspective on political culture is balanced by a deconstructive approach highlighting contradictions, limitations, and paradoxes. In particular, the essays in this volume explore the coexistence of seemingly contrasting ideals and institutions of consensus and openness in Nordic political culture, studying how these elements have contributed to the formation of a particularly 'Nordic' form of openness. In some ways the latter diverges from the global discourse on transparency, although it fits into the broader universal ideal of openness.

It is our hope that this book will illuminate issues related to openness from a multitude of scholarly perspectives, including history, political science, sociology, media and communication studies, law, and European studies. The majority of the contributions focus on the Nordic countries, Finland in particular, but in many cases they examine European and global connections. A case study on Austria is also included, as well as articles of a theoretical nature. Issues addressed concern institutional matters, politics, and the discourse about openness in various settings.

In the following chapter Norbert Götz sketches the conceptual history of openness from the Enlightenment until the present day, with a focus on scholarly suggestions and political discourse. Despite being held in high

esteem, the concept of 'openness' plays a surprisingly insignificant role in current discourse. It is suggested that this is the consequence of openness being truncated to its fashionable dimension of transparency and efficiency, leaving aside its politically transformative potential as a societal bottom-up receptor. The chapter discusses the global dissemination and transformative power of ideas of openness, as well as the tensions and contradictions inherent in the concept, offering examples from the Soviet Union and the Nordic countries.

In Chapter 3, Johanna Rainio-Niemi examines the intriguing coexistence of openness and consensus – which might be seen as a form of closure – as characteristic features of Nordic political culture, institutional structure, and corporatism. In looking at Finnish and Swedish experiences, Rainio-Niemi singles out the system of state committees as a key component of the Nordic neo-corporatist political system (see also Rothstein 1992). By including representatives of civil society in such committees, the policy making process seeks to take stakeholder interests into account and render decisions more legitimate. Civil society organizations may also make the implementation stage more efficient by bringing their specialized knowledge and practical experience to the table. However, Rainio-Niemi also tracks how state committees have recently declined in both countries, primarily as a result of the growing number of policy issues in need of speedy processing. The committee system has also been weakened by an overall decline in citizen engagement in civil society organizations, and by the presence of the 'audit society', with its emphasis on monitoring power, which has taken the place of the participatory post-war neo-corporatism.

In the fourth chapter, Lotta Lounasmeri and Tuomas Ylä-Anttila show how during the 1990s the political elite in Finland embraced 'globalization' – understood as adaptation to transnational governance and EU norms for open markets in the face of global economic competition and neo-liberal policy convergence. The traditional consensualism of Finnish political culture and media patterns tended to exclude the otherwise vocal and successful alter-globalization movement in Finland. Lounasmeri and Ylä-Anttila point to the inherent tensions between, on the one hand, primarily economic and, on the other, mostly political interpretations of openness. Free market liberals frequently imagine politics as closed and the market as open, while the alter-globalization movement champions openness as a political ideal. Dictates of economic openness may shut down debate about political alternatives, while at the same time raising the threshold of social services, running the risk of increasing social exclusion, and limiting the reach of democratic politics globally as well as locally.

In the fifth chapter, Tero Erkkilä probes the complex and sometimes contradictory relationship between Nordic and EU discourse on openness in government, especially with regard to accountability and transparency. By analysing ideational transfer between Finland and the EU, Erkkilä explores how the primarily democratic and political motivations for transparency in Finland in the past have recently shifted towards liberal economic concerns as a result of the Europeanization of Finnish institutions. Although the Nordic countries are still reputed to be 'more open' than similar states such as Austria, this self-identification may be challenged on a number of points. There are numerous conflicts between differing aims, aspects, interpretations, and reference objects of openness in the Nordic countries, as there are elsewhere, too.

Political and social openness can be challenged by counter-reactions to economic openness, as Ainur Elmgren observes in Chapter 6. Populist parties – notably the Finns Party – have addressed the lack of political influence felt by a substantial segment of the electorate as a result of the perceived rolling back of the welfare state. Elmgren shows how the Finns Party has adapted its rhetoric to the recently established Finnish national ideal of openness. This ideal has been skilfully used to challenge the political elites on their own ground by portraying the elites' promise of openness as a betrayal by its own advocates. The rhetoric of the Finns Party is at the same time troubled by and yearning for the Finnish national tradition of consensus. The party frequently returns to a conception of 'true' openness that would allow an honest, disinterested discussion of the consequences of globalization, Europeanization, and above all immigration. Elmgren shows how public debate can appropriate the notion of openness in order to challenge its claim that it is an expression of cosmopolitanism, solidarity, and mobility.

In the seventh chapter, Johannes Kananen discusses how welfare state restructuring during the 1990s in three Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, and Sweden – often coincided with the 'depoliticized' advance of marketization, privatization, and the introduction of new public management (NPM) in welfare state administration. Under the pressure of economic crisis, this process largely failed to take popular opinion into account. As a consequence, the policy making elite could promote market solutions over those welfare state solutions preferred by the electorate without facing much opposition. While formal procedural transparency was duly observed, the momentous shifts in Nordic politics that took place were not accompanied by political openness. The limits of democratic responsiveness to Nordic policy making processes are portrayed in outlining the rift between the social visions of the political elite and those of the citizenry.

In the eighth chapter, Carl Marklund examines different usages of the concept of openness in Swedish public debate during the twentieth century, identifying its present employment as a uniting and widely accepted social metaphor for Swedish society. Over time, openness has variously meant sincerity, disclosure, democracy, safety, and naiveté, in addition to its place in the perennial debate about the boundary between private and public. Across these different applications of the term, a tension has unfolded between openness as information (or truth) and openness as communication (or freedom). Marklund argues that the contemporary attractiveness of the term lies in its promise of a system of legitimate governance and public debate that is both democratic and efficient, while lacking any explicit disciplinary elements. The paradoxes of openness result from the inherent dilemmas of combining the goals of efficiency and legitimacy.

In Chapter 9, Ylva Waldemarson observes that the combination of institutionalized procedural transparency and close social networks characteristic of Nordic neo-corporatist political systems has made the political decision making process in Sweden difficult to reconstruct. Ironically, the longstanding tradition of public access has contributed to the evolution of an oral policy making culture which to some extent annuls the prescribed openness. Crucial decisions are poorly documented, resulting in open, yet often 'empty' archives (Ahlenius 2004). Waldemarson explains how the lack of knowledge about alternatives not taken, proposals not pursued, and the role of tensions in the corridors of power, limits our understanding of the political process. Elite oral history is suggested as a possible approach to filling in some of the archival lacunae. There appear to be two kinds of openness: openness as formal, accountable, traceable relationships; and openness as informal, intangible, flexible contacts. Both aspects play distinctive roles in ensuring efficient and legitimate governance. However, in political practice and public life, they often conflict – one of the numerous paradoxes of the promise of openness.

In Chapter 10, Ann-Cathrine Jungar shows how Nordic parliaments have developed special instruments for controlling policy making processes on the EU level, thereby seeking to ensure democratic oversight. Nordic countries have self-consciously exported specific instruments of openness to the EU, in addition to promoting their own images as modern, open, knowledge-based societies.

While global demands for transparency and Nordic norm-entrepreneurship accords with the universal ideal of openness, its promotion may sometimes conflict with more restrictive information cultures. In the eleventh chapter, Peter Parycek and Judith Schossböck track how the Austrian government has worked toward fulfilling EU requirements for public access and administrative

accountability through new notions of e-democracy and open government. In pursuing administrative reform, the government's adoption of principles of openness clashes with the restrictive information culture of old. This poses a problem for the Austrian democracy that highlights the tension that may arise in the openness discourse: What if the electorate does not embrace the ideal of transparency?

The chapters of this book explore the numerous tensions and paradoxes within the openness discourse. Several of the contributors examine the conflicted relationship between the Nordic neo-corporatist openness of the past and the trend toward global neo-liberal transparency of the present. This tension is further analysed by Carl Marklund in the final chapter.

The essays that follow address what 'true' or adequate openness might be, as opposed to 'false' or inappropriate openness, given the many aspects and meanings of this ubiquitous term. How, for example, can we know whether a given policy making process has been truly open or not? In specific cases it might seem easy to determine this. By asking ourselves whether policies of openness and instruments of transparency have made it easier or more difficult for various actors to avoid public scrutiny in a concrete situation, we should be able to determine whether openness has lived up to its promise or not.

But as the contributions to this volume seek to demonstrate, this question cannot be answered with any finality and must continuously be posed. Even highly institutionalized forms of openness – as implemented in the Nordic countries and eagerly promoted elsewhere – should not entitle us to be complacent or off guard. Neither should the purported imperfections of institutionalized openness make us paranoid. Scepticism towards openness does not mean dismantling our conviction that openness is a more desirable social condition than secrecy, exclusivity, or ignorance – as long as it allows for the open-minded analysis and critical deliberation of its own precepts.

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The Concept of Openness: Promise and Paradox

Norbert Götz

The Master said, My friends, do you believe I have secrets from you? I am without secrets. There is nothing I do that I do not share with you, my friends. That is who I am.

CONFUCIUS, ANALECTS



A key concept that epitomizes the current imagination of the world is openness. Human innovations and historical trends like democracy, capitalism, civil society, post-modernity, globalization, and the Internet all draw on it. Yet, despite its significance as a structural precondition of present-day societal dynamics the word ‘openness’ plays a minor role in political and scholarly discussions. It contributes to the grandeur of other fashionable concepts, but remains in their shadow. For example, placeholders with a more operational quality like transparency or accountability are often given preference over it in the discourses of our time. Advocates of ‘lean administration’ have purposefully truncated openness to fit their new public management (NPM) agenda that has permeated social thought for the past three decades. The worship of efficiency as the sole promise of openness loses sight of its other aspect, being responsive to initiative from below. In mainstream present-day thought, the idea of a bottom-up reconfiguration of structures and decisions that is inherent in the concept of openness has been abandoned. Instead, openness has been colonized by a technocratic functionalism that sustains the democratic deficits of our time.

The genealogy of openness as a fundamental societal norm is debatable. Max Weber analysed the ‘open society’ (*offene Gesellschaft*) as a business structure already existing in the Middle Ages. He used the term for a specific technical arrangement without broader implications (Weber 1924). The rise of Hamburg as a global marketplace in the seventeenth century and the corresponding decline of Lübeck has been attributed to the former’s character as an ‘open city’, encouraging immigration and wider economic participation, and the latter’s character as a ‘closed city’ defending the privileges of a few old-established families (Lindberg 2008, 642, 652, 657).

The modern world with its opening ‘horizon of expectation’ brought about a fundamental change of mentalities (Koselleck 1985). The enlightenment doctrine of free trade, the abolition of guild coercion, and the assurance of economic freedom established openness as a general norm. The Swedish–Finnish freedom of information (FOI) principle of 1766 and its champion, Anders Chydenius, emerged from this context (Chydenius 2011; Virrankoski 1986; Manninen 2006). In *The Wealth of Nations* Adam Smith considered opening foreign markets and domestic ports to trade as the two elementary operations that enhance economic development, thus making the word ‘open’ a key concept (1776, 24, 85). Challengers of Smith’s teaching included Robert Malthus (1798) with his concern for the world as a limited ecological system and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1800), who advocated a ‘closed commercial state’ (*geschlossener Handelsstaat*) to attain congruence between national legal domains and the business sector. Despite such objections, modern capitalism gave precedence to the principle of openness with its recourse to money as the principal regulative medium of economic activity. In the Age of Imperialism, where openness was not accepted on its own merits (in China or Japan, for example), it was forced through at gunpoint (Fay 1997; Conrad 2003).

Just as the capitalist economic order, the emergence of the modern public sphere was essential for remaking society at large (Hölscher 1978). The latter allowed the open rational debate that is crucial to both the understanding of Karl Popper and Jürgen Habermas (Hacohen 2000, 4, 515). The significance of openness is keenly expressed in Kant’s reflections on the harmony of politics and morals, culminating in the doctrine that “All actions relating to the rights of other men are wrong if the maxims from which they follow are inconsistent with publicity” (2010, 46).¹

The relocation of social interaction from courts and private clubs to more accessible forms of association at the turn to the nineteenth century, a development synonymous with the emergence of contemporary civil society, opened the public sphere to the middle, and eventually the lower, classes (Götz 2011a). The spirit of the age was reflected by the rules of the London Corresponding Society of 1792, which stipulated “that the number of our members be unlimited” (Stenius, 2010, 30f). In the Euro–Atlantic area, voluntary civil society association and a public account of activities (encapsulated in terms like ‘subscriber democracy’ or ‘people’s movement democracy’ [*folkrorelsedemokrati*]), fostered the establishment of democratic political systems (Morris 2000; Therborn 1988).

1 “Alle auf das Recht anderer Menschen bezogene Handlungen, deren Maxime sich nicht mit der Publicität verträgt, sind unrecht” (Kant 1795, 93).

After World War I, the quest for openness was extended to foreign relations and diplomacy. The war was widely perceived as a corollary of secretive culture, resulting in irresponsible decision making. As British labour politician Arthur Ponsonby expressed the new ideas at the time:

The stuffy hot-house atmosphere of diplomacy must be cleansed by the fresh air of publicity. The spiders of intrigue which have woven undisturbed their tangled webs in secret must be chased out of darkness into the open light of day.

PONSONBY 1915, 114

The first of Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points for post-war recovery specified "open covenants of peace, openly arrived at" (Link 1984, 536.). The idea of 'open diplomacy' was thus born, with multilateralism, parliamentary surveillance, broad recruitment of the civil service, and civil society involvement as its main dimensions (Götz 2011b).

The philosopher Henri Bergson introduced the term 'open society' to scholarly debate in the early 1930s as a concept of cosmopolitan brotherhood that was a utopian project. However, in his evaluation, the League of Nations had already obtained more results "than we dared to hope" (Bergson 1954, 248). Had he been alive today, he would have endorsed the United Nations and particularly what is discussed as global civil society.² According to his understanding, nation states (or any other sort of primordial or quasi-primordial affiliations) were closed by nature. They were to be supplanted by a morality embracing all of humanity and, thus, lead to what he called open society. In principle, Bergson regarded the ideal of democracy as an inclusive force conferring on mankind inviolable rights, which presupposed individual compliance with universal standards of behaviour. Drawing on the philosophy of Rousseau and Kant, he distinguished modern democracies from "false democracies, those cities of antiquity, based on slavery, relieved by this fundamental iniquity of the biggest and most excruciating problems" (Bergson 1954, 242).

Karl Popper, author of *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, the most renowned scholarly work on the concept of openness, was of a different opinion. In contrast to Bergson's spiritual approach, he traced the origins of the open society to ancient Greece. Writing at the time of World War II, he tied the idea of an open society to the notion of empire. As evidence he referred to what Pericles stated in his funeral oration in 431 BC:

² Another term for global civil society has been 'the greater United Nations' (Pickard 1956).

[O]ur city is thrown open to the world, and we never expel a foreigner or prevent him from seeing or learning anything of which the secret if revealed to an enemy might profit him. We rely not upon management or trickery, but upon our own hearts and hands.³

THUCYDIDES 1900, 128

Thus, the strength of classical Athens was explained by pointing to the spirit of the citizenry as necessary pre-condition or correlate of openness. For Popper, the essential lessons from Greek democratic thought were insight in the contingent, man-made character of human institutions, the creed of a universal empire of men, and a Socratic faith in human reason and criticism (1945 I, 162). By highlighting the development of the universalistic tenets of anti-slavery and anti-nationalism in ancient Greece, Popper approached Bergson's view. An affinity between the principle of universalism and an almost universal empire also links their thought. For Popper, openness was even more tied to democratic politics than for Bergson, but he agreed with the latter that democracy should be a form of government that facilitated openness rather than just a synonym of the open society (1972, 16). Ultimately, the concept of openness figured as a tool of democratic improvement for both thinkers. As George Soros, a pupil of Popper and sponsor of the Open Society Foundation points out, the open society resembles liberal democracy, but it constitutes an epistemological, not a political concept (2006, 43).

The extent to which the expression 'open society' actually functions this way depends, however, on how it is used in discourse. The 'open society' in Popper's sense was a commonplace in Western debates at the time of the Cold War and has remained so up to this day. It has generally been applied as a political tool to delineate one society from another, not been thought through as a project in its own right. The polemical overtones of the concept can be traced to Popper, who seems more interested in unmasking the enemies of openness than in describing the 'promised land'.⁴

Due to the affinity of openness to Western capitalism, society, and politics, the concept has especially been on the political agenda in countries trying to emulate the West. The classical example of this is Japan. In the second half of the nineteenth century, and again after World War II, the word *kaikoku(ron)*

³ The quotation is partially cited by Popper (1945, 163).

⁴ As an anti-utopianist, Popper does not promise more than an "imperfect society" (1976, 116), but similar to his bogeyman Marx, who did not spend much effort envisioning the classless society, Popper prefers to write about what he dislikes. Soros (2006, 45) also points to Popper's modest interest in the concept of open society as such.

denoted '(the doctrine of) opening the country' (Joos 2002). *Gaige kaifang* (reform and opening up) became the key concept of post-Maoist China, resembling the 'open door' approach at the turn to the twentieth century (Liu 2004; cf. Xiaoping 1995; Xiaoping 1989). As is more generally known, in the late Soviet Union the term played a major role on the official political agenda. In the second half of the 1980s it became "a powerful weapon," as then Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev maintains in his memoirs, for the restructuring (*perestroika*) of Soviet society, giving currency to the Russian word for openness (*glasnost*) (1995, 207).⁵ At the same time, Gorbachev described democratization and openness as not merely a means of *perestroika*, but as the ultimate goal to be aimed for, namely, "the essence of socialism" (1988, 7). Unlike Japan and China, where openness referred primarily to foreign trade, the concept in the Soviet Union was applied to internal conditions, particularly media and public debate. This contradicted Popper's view that regarded the Soviet Union as a disciple of Plato, Hegel, and Marx, and as the most prominent example of a closed society in the era of the Cold War (Naylor 1988).

Evidently, the Soviet turn from historicist teleology to openness had greater transformative momentum than ever conceived by the politicians who initiated it (Gorbachev 1995, 210, 250). Openness was intended to serve socialism, but triggered instead a liberalization of Soviet and Russian society, a loss of power for the Communist Party, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. While the openness programme might have been a socio-economic necessity for the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s, it was also a choice with dramatic consequences. It enhanced political freedom and options, although Russia still does not have a liberal society – in fact, less so today than twenty years ago. More profoundly, it precipitated the full sovereignty and enhanced freedom of many other peoples in former satellite states and some former Soviet republics. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the destruction of the Iron Curtain became the foremost symbols of a closed world breaking free, opening itself to democracy as well as to new international partnership and integration.

The Soviet openness initiative stood at the beginning of this liberation, thus becoming a turning point in history. It was an instant success and had a revolutionary impact as viewed from the outside. From the endogenous power perspective of the political elite that adopted the openness programme, the aim was the improvement of the Soviet system and the consolidation of its power. The actual consequences were unintended and were regarded as devastating. From an insider's point of view, openness was the

5 In the memoir, *glasnost* is mainly translated as "transparency," according to the Western political jargon of the time.

catalyst of internal and external disempowerment, a Trojan horse benefitting the country's Cold War adversary. The authoritarian tightening of the ranks in the Russian Federation is a direct reaction to this perception of self-destruction through openness, halting a rapid national nomenclature and international power decline.

The Soviet Russian example around 1989, while it shows that openness matters, is not an appealing model for power holders elsewhere. It can be seen as a disturbing proof of Popper's acknowledgement that "open societies are not very stable" (1972, 14). In *The Open Society and Its Enemies* he pointed to contestation and vulnerability as major challenges for openness. A cautious statesman would avoid the risk of unrest from below (including voices for secession), while also seeking to prevent an open flank to external enemies. In 1975, for example, a US commission on CIA activities, still reeling from the Watergate scandal, updated Pericles' statement as follows:

In an open society such as ours, the intelligence opportunities for our adversaries are immeasurably greater than they are for us in their closed societies. Our society must remain an open one, with our traditional freedoms unimpaired. But when the intelligence activities or other activities of other countries are flourishing in the free environment we afford them, it is all the more essential that the foreign intelligence activities of the CIA and other intelligence agencies, as well as the domestic counterintelligence activities of the FBI, be given the support necessary to protect our national security and to shield the privacy and rights of American citizens from foreign intrusion.

COMMISSION ON CIA ACTIVITIES 1975, 7f

Yet, the problem of an open society's vulnerability might be exaggerated. Countries such as the Soviet Union or Russia could be described as 'opening societies' for a brief period of time, but they did not develop structures that would qualify them as open societies. The Russian example teaches a more subtle lesson. It demonstrates that the promise of openness might be deceitful for those seeking to instrumentalize it for the purposes of power politics. Openness resists cooptation when it becomes a general principle. Since openness is impartial by nature, the path from a closed to an open society is filled with difficulties. All this is a problem of transformation. It does not imply that openness cannot deliver on its promise in a society with a functioning normative and institutional framework for it.

The process that culminated in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), held in Helsinki 1975, originated from the

Soviet Union's quest for a security arrangement with the West. The Western goal in this process was seeking a "more open world – open to closer cooperation and to greater contacts among people, as well as to a free interchange of ideas and information" (US ambassador in Finland Val Peterson, quoted by Makko 2012, 148). In retrospect, the Helsinki Final Act with its agenda of openness is regarded as a starting point for the dissolution of the Eastern bloc. Likewise, US President Obama's (2009) call for "an unprecedented level of openness" to promote democracy and efficiency – in a memorandum issued on Transparency and Open Government on his first day in office – emerges from a context radically different from the Soviet political milieu. It shows that the quest for openness is a never ending challenge also within Western societies.

In the twenty-first century, jihadist terrorism and certain forms of dress – in particular the burqa (the complete body veil worn by some Muslim women) – have become symbols of a closed society that stands in contrast to Western openness. After the Cold War, the notion of closed and open society has been reconfigured to fit the 'great dichotomy' between traditional and contemporary society presupposed by modernization theorists or the 'othering' discerned by post-structural approaches. As orientalism is characterized by its lack of openness to the Orient (Said 1979, 222), the stereotyping of closed and open societies during the East–West bloc confrontation reappears as a broader clash of East and West. Uprooted traditionalists and a suppressive Muslim culture are perceived as clashing with permissive European fashions.

An exemplary battle for the 'open society' has been fought in the Nordic countries in recent years, although there are significant national differences as evident in the controversy over Danish newspaper cartoons in the *Jyllands Posten* in 2005 that depicted the Prophet Muhammad as a terrorist. Representatives of the Danish government asserted it was not possible for them to denounce such publication without compromising the principle of the freedom of the press. Thus, they gave the impression that they shared the anti-Islamic and anti-immigrant mindset expressed by the cartoons. Compared to the Danish discussion, the political debate was moderate in Finland, Norway, and Sweden, although in Norway the cartoons were republished in a small Christian magazine, and in Sweden another copy-cat artist sought attention with further provocations. While the press in the Nordic countries did not generally endorse the idea of printing anti-Islamic cartoons, it tended to urge politicians to abstain from commenting on publishing decisions (however, in Finland and Norway, leading politicians apologized for the publication of the cartoons on the Internet) (Kunelius et al., 2007). A call to comply with the

principles of the ‘open society’ was often heard when media’s unidirectional demand for acquiescence was raised.⁶

In the aftermath of the Oslo bombing and Utøya massacre in July 2011 by a Norwegian right-wing Christian fundamentalist, openness was reaffirmed as a core Nordic value. Not only was the incidence interpreted as an attack on the open society, but reliance on openness was also pledged as the most appropriate reaction. In a widely quoted speech held in the cathedral of Oslo, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg proclaimed that Norway’s answer to the assault was “more democracy, more openness, and more humanity” (2011a). In another speech, Stoltenberg requested improved sensitivity in the use of language and a “more decent dialogue” (2011b). The leadership of the populist Progress Party (which the assassin previously belonged to) expressed regret for their earlier confrontational verbiage and pledged reform (Skarvøy et al. 2011). Even fervent advocates of the principle of freedom of speech in Scandinavia wondered publicly whether Islam-bashing had not created an atmosphere that encouraged some anti-Islamists to become violent (Tännsjö 2011; cf. Kjöllner 2011). Thus, reflections on unfettered freedom of speech, responsible public debate, and self-restraint became part of the mainstream discourse. Openness as tolerance was held high after the massacre just as openness as permissiveness for intolerance was called into question. Antipodes of the open society were suddenly discovered among those confronting the stereotyped representatives of the ‘closed society’.

The assassin’s participation in right-wing and anti-jihadist social media draws attention to the role of the Internet. A Google search in May 2014 produced more than seven times as many hits for the technological expression ‘open source’ than for the word ‘openness’. The term ‘open access’, signifying the demand for free access to scholarly publications via the Internet, was also better represented than ‘openness’.⁷ The indifference of the Internet to content in combination with its enormous potential for dissemination poses a challenge for politics and law enforcement. As an open communication channel the Internet can become a menace if employed in destructive ways. It might be used or restricted because of its instrumentality for collective will-formation,

6 In the British House of Commons’ Culture, Media and Sport Committee’s hearing in connection with the phone hacking scandal that led to the termination of the tabloid *News of the World* in July 2011, media tycoon Rupert Murdoch defended himself by claiming “that investigative journalism, particularly competitive, does lead to a more transparent and open society” (House of Commons 2011).

7 Results were dependent on the media surveyed. For example, a corresponding search in Google Books established that the word ‘openness’ could be found far more frequently than both other terms.

as in the Arab uprisings 2011 or the web surveillance by Chinese authorities. Moreover, the Internet can be a means for the dissemination of child pornography or the incitement of violence, raising the issue of effective control – although here the borderlines are obscure and armed resistance to usurped state force may be considered legitimate. The release of confidential government or business information through forums like WikiLeaks, although problematic for the persons and institutions concerned, contributes to the horizontal distribution of knowledge in a democracy and is hailed by third parties. The paradox in this connection is that WikiLeaks – operating in a legal grey zone and needing to protect its sources – is dependent on concealment on its own behalf. The extent to which the opaque culture around this website compromises the insights it publishes or the programmes it supports, such as the Icelandic Modern Media Initiative, is a question for debate. It remains to be seen whether competing platforms like OpenLeaks will honour the promise of ‘transparent openness’ (cf. Domscheit-Berg 2011).

Involuntary openness may be a contradiction in terms; perhaps it should be understood as exposure or disclosure. This would comply with the dominant positive connotations of the term ‘openness’. However, such a view disregards the meaning of openness as a lack of control and a condition of vulnerability. In both Pericles and Popper these dimensions are interrelated. The outcome of their conflict is dependent on civic determination and the firmness of a society’s commitment to positive openness. Hence, openness of the input and output of the political process must be maintained in order not to weaken democratic legitimacy (Scharpf 1999; see also Carl Marklund’s Chapter Eight in this volume). Compromising open government means fostering anomy and abuse of power instead of enhancing civic cohesion and overall system performance. As noted by a survey in conjunction with a roundtable organized by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD):

[R]obust legal, institutional and policy frameworks for access to information, consultation and public participation in policy making contributes to better public policy, the fight against corruption, and greater public trust in government.

OECD 2003, 9

A Danish panelist, responding to the question of when political victories were declared and how citizen involvement functioned in such a case, stated in what sounds like a popularization of Popper’s concept of piecemeal engineering:

My answer would be no, we could never say that we will have a victory. All issues that we discuss are a process. You keep working and trying. It's like a marriage that goes in a positive direction, then you get a problem and you go a little bit back and then you go forward again.

OECD 2003, 53, quoting Birgit Lindsnæs

This statement can be seen as an expression of the 'principled pragmatism' that is characteristic of Nordic political culture (Heclø and Madsen 1987). In this context even Popper's anti-utopian perspective has been modified by the working concept of 'provisional utopia' as a necessary piecemeal guide to political action (Wigforss 1980).

One implication of this culture is that the concept of openness is not regarded as an accomplishment once and for all, but as a social achievement that requires continuous upkeep. Thus, as a reaction to the electoral success of the populist and perhaps xenophobic 'Finns Party', the Finnish government programme of June 2011 was presented under the title "An Open, Fair and Confident Finland" (where openness primarily refers to socio-cultural diversity) (Government of Finland 2011). The 'Open Sweden Campaign' conducted between 2000 and 2002 was a reaction to the claim that neither politicians, civil servants, nor the public were sufficiently aware of the prevailing legal situation. Other reasons for the campaign were the necessity of adapting the country's practices to the use of modern information technology and "make the Swedish public service a prominent international example of 'openness'" (Sundström 2003, 88).

Nordic representatives have shown themselves increasingly active as spokespersons for openness in international affairs. The Danish government played a major role in the adoption of the Aarhus Convention in 1998, a landmark international agreement granting access to environmental information and participation in Europe and Central Asia (Wates 2005, 177). The Finnish presidency of the EU in 1999 was announced with the slogan "A Strong and Open Europe into the New Millennium" (Summary 1999). When Sweden held the EU presidency in 2001 it was guided by "the vision of a more open Union" (Programme 2001). Transparency and openness were again key issues on the agenda of the Finnish EU presidency in 2006. As a result of this (and a decision the European Council had made prior to it), 76 per cent of the ministerial discussions on legislation under the Finnish Presidency in the second half of that year took place in open sessions, whereas the corresponding figure for the first half of the year had been 17 per cent. The Council sessions were made available as direct webcasts on the internet, ensuring their accessibility for a transnational audience (Government of Finland 2007).

Ulrich Beck (2003, 254) has stated that “radical openness” is a defining characteristic of the European project, resulting in a cosmopolitan continent. Similarly, prominent EU officials such as the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso make the bold claim that “for Europe openness is a ‘congenital condition’” which has been “an integral part of our values” since the beginning of the integration process (2007). Such statements refer only to the idea of an open market and not to political decision making and implementation. Only the Declaration on the Right of Access to Information, annexed to the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, began a process following the principles of open government. Openness became a basic principle of the EU when the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam amended the first article of the Treaty on European Union with the stipulation that union decisions were to be taken “as openly as possible”. Regulation 1049/2001 on public access to European Parliament, Council, and Commission documents established this principle. The development of the policy, which rose out of a wish to build confidence between European institutions and the general public, owes a great deal to the priorities of the Swedish government at the time (Miles 1998; Manninen 2005, 19).

The Nordic culture of openness has its drawbacks. Auditor General (and later Under-Secretary-General for the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services) Inga-Britt Ahlenius has criticized what she called “the myth of Swedish openness” (2003; see also 2004a). She claims that the written documentation of decision making processes was systematically avoided in Sweden, particularly in regard to significant issues. She also quoted the Prime Minister of Iceland’s comment on the changes resulting from the introduction of a generous freedom of information act in his country: it simply resulted in a shift to informal decision making. Ahlenius contrasted this with her experience as a member of the European Parliament’s Committee of Independent Experts, which had examined the EU Commission’s dealings with fraud, mismanagement, and nepotism. She was overwhelmed by the abundance of files that became available once the secrecy of the documents had been suspended. Moreover, “in this way the closed Commission itself supplied all the material that made it possible for us to submit a report that led to the Commission’s immediate fall”. Ahlenius’ conclusion was that, paradoxically, a certain measure of confidentiality safeguarded insight and ultimately accountability (as well as ex-post-scholarly reconstruction).

In a follow-up article on “the right to examine empty cabinets” she explored the self-defeating effects of Swedish openness (Ahlenius 2004b). She was seconded by an archivist showing how people circumvented the principle of free access to public records: classification, weeding, non-registration, non-documentation, and personal extraction – all said to have had a long tradition

(Wallberg 2005). According to another archivist, a significant decrease of commitment to the preservation of public records occurred around 1980, when a generation of welfare state pioneers was succeeded by modern technocrats (Norman 2004). A culture of oral decision making has now emerged in Sweden that leaves power holders largely unaccountable (Östberg and Eriksson 2009, 123). It is also at odds with the rule of law, the desire for institutional memory, and rational bureaucratic practice – what Weber (1922, 126) has called *Aktenmäßigkeit der Verwaltung* (documentariness of administration). The Swedish example demonstrates that power is more elusive than any principled openness can guarantee (see also the final chapter in this volume).⁸

Despite striking differences between legal frameworks, administrative cultures, and the mentality of their inhabitants, the question remains whether the Swedish situation resembles what Nietzsche (1973, 157) once contended about the German soul:

And just as all chronic invalids, all dyspeptics, have an inclination for comfort, so the German loves ‘openness’ and ‘uprightness’: how comfortable it is to be open and upright! – Perhaps it is the most dangerous and successful disguise the German knows how to use today, this confiding, accommodating, cards-on-the-table German honesty: it is his real Mephistophelean art, with its aid he can ‘still go far’!⁹

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8 How this unintended consequence of openness can be counteracted is a difficult question. A more secretive practice is usually considered neither possible nor desirable. The provision of oral history records as conducted by the Swedish Institute of Contemporary History at Södertörn University is a useful compensatory measure, at least for scholarly analysis (see Ylva Waldemarson’s contribution in this volume as well as Waldemarson 2007; Harvard and Nilsson 2011, 173).

9 “Und wie alle Gewohnheits-Kranken, alle Dyspeptiker den Hang zum Bequemem haben, so liebt der Deutsche die ‘Offenheit’ und ‘Biederkeit’: wie bequem ist es, offen und bieder zu sein! – Es ist heute vielleicht die gefährlichste und glücklichste Verkleidung, auf die sich der Deutsche versteht, dies Zutrauliche, Entgegenkommende, die-Karten-Aufdeckende der deutschen Redlichkeit: sie ist seine eigentliche Mephistopheles-Kunst, mit ihr kann er es ‘noch weit bringen!’” (Nietzsche 1886, 211).

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A Nordic Paradox of Openness and Consensus? The Case of Finland

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A distinctively Nordic model of political culture and democracy suggests a combination of consensus and openness. Such consensus generally refers to a historically stable, well-rooted system of democracy, distinguished by its undramatic style of policy making, where disputes and conflicts tend to be solved pragmatically. In the Nordic context it is thought that shared notions of the common good facilitate compromise and mutual agreement in place of zero-sum games and a winner-take-all attitude. These characteristics have been described in a large body of literature ranging from analyses of ‘consensual democracy’ (Lijphart 1999; Elder, Thomas, and Arter 1988) to charting of the variations of ‘democratic corporatism’ (Schmitter 1981; Katzenstein 1985). Social and economic well-being are the prominent features in descriptions of Nordic political culture, history, and society (Sørensen and Stråth 1997). Sweden, in particular, has been known as the model for consensus-oriented, open, rational, and deliberative policy making since the 1960s (Johansson 1992; Anton 1969; Ruin 1969; Meijer 1969; Trägårdh 2007).

Openness, on the other hand, points to features such as transparency, accountability, and accessibility of public decision making that equally belong to the image of a Nordic model of society (Erkkilä 2012). In a broader historical perspective, it can be seen to refer to a close, mutually empowering interaction between the state and the rest of society. The state in the Nordic countries has typically been open to its people and has allowed remarkably wide participation by societal interest groups in the drafting of public policies. In Lester M. Salamon’s and Helmut K. Anheier’s (1998) comparative analysis of the social origins of civil society, the Nordic model stands out for the high degree of responsiveness by the state and by the incorporation of different demands into state structures through citizen organizations. The basis for this has been the high number of voluntary associations and degree of citizens’ participation in them in Nordic societies (Alapuro and Stenius 2010; Kuhnle and Selle 1992; Jepperson 2002; Rothstein and Trägårdh 2007).

Despite the apparently unproblematic coexistence of consensus and openness in history and present images, a critical debate has emerged more recently. Over the course of the past two decades, the established post-war cultures of

political consensus and the incorporated practices of openness have become challenged from within the Nordic countries and from the outside. Academics have pointed out the democratic deficits of consensus-driven and corporatist tendencies in policy making, and the public mood has turned increasingly critical. The fundamentals of the 'old' cultures of consensus and corporatism have been questioned from several perspectives – from left and right as well as from positions beyond party politics. Whether from the viewpoint of academic democracy studies, new social movements, neo-nationalist populists, or neo-liberals who advocate less government and regulation, the critics have seen consensus as being synonymous with bargaining among the elites behind closed doors, outside parliament and the democratic processes. Seemingly unresponsive to the needs of the common people and detrimental to dynamics of civic democracy from below, consensus has become a virtual opposite of openness, and the two concepts have started to point in contradictory directions.

Contrasted with the tensions of today, yesterday's allegedly relaxed cohabitation is no longer self-evident and evokes new historical questions, such as on which terms consensus and openness have co-existed in former times and what the most critical recent changes are. This chapter tackles these issues by examining how consensus and openness have co-existed in a historical perspective and through the histories of state- and nation-building, democratization, conflict-regulation, and consensus-building in Finland. The key to understanding the Nordic combination of consensus and openness and the recent trend of their disentanglement is the state–society relationship. The following discussion of Sweden and Finland draws attention to traditions¹ of state-centredness and national inclusiveness that illuminate the premises of the Nordic combination of consensus and openness. The institution of the state committees (*det statliga kommittéväsendet*, *valtion komitealaitos*) is brought up as a concrete illustration. The latter part of this chapter focuses on

1 The concept of tradition points to the invocation of the past in order to organise the understandings of the present. Traditions refer to the past but are not intended to represent history as such. Traditions are not about preserving the past as such, but about the reconstruction of selected parts of it in order to address questions and anxieties of the present (Giddens 1994). The selected traditions need to resonate with the layers of collective memory, but even so, the ability to evoke sentiments and to resonate with present-day concerns is more important to the relevance of traditions (and of myths) than is their strict historical accuracy. Traditions are most powerful when they are not perceived explicitly as 'historical traditions', but rather live on and are reproduced as aspects of everyday life, as routinized, mostly tacit notions about the ways in which things have 'typically' been done and as 'lessons' from the past. Traditions are alive as long as they are meaningful in and for the present.

Finland more explicitly. It examines how the initially common Nordic features of the relationship of state and society and the related traditions of state-centredness and inclusiveness have evolved and been shaped in this national context.

Finland is not the most typical of the five Nordic countries, but nevertheless offers a good case for studying the varying appearances of the 'pan-Nordic elements' in history (Stenius 2010). Most of the key characteristics of the state-building and societal formation processes in Sweden's history apply to Finland as well: the territories of Finland were integral parts of the Kingdom of Sweden until 1809, and the legacies from the Swedish era were carefully cultivated in the years 1809 to 1917 when Finland had an autonomous status within the Russian Empire. The resulting political culture was distinctively Nordic, yet incorporating elements of the multinational imperial rule that framed the intensifying political and social life across the Eastern and Central Eastern European countries. This merger created a political culture which makes it difficult to categorize Finland (Alapuro 2004; Kettunen 2004).

As for Finland, the inherently Nordic qualities of the relationship of state and society and the meanings attributed to the related traditions of state-centredness and inclusiveness have turned out to be sources for the formulation of conflict-regulation and consensus-building strategies. In intra-Nordic comparisons, the case of Finland has stood out for its relatively high level of domestic conflict and instability and for the strong role of the state. However, as this chapter points out, state agency in Finland has always been in line with its distinctively Nordic origins, and these Nordic qualities have proven their value at many critical points of history. To a great extent, they are the features that have set Finland on a separate, Nordic development path in comparison to most of the other Eastern European countries.

The Nordic State-Society Relationship

Expressed in terms of political theory (Evans, Rueschemeyer, Skocpol 1985; Skocpol 1985; Lange and Rueschemeyer 2005), the Nordic model of state-society relationship postulates a strong state and a strong society that have merged to form a mutually reinforcing whole. Historically, such a constellation is not typical. Yet it is one of the central characteristics of Nordic political cultures, and has been described in an extensive body of research literature (Rokkan 1999; Alapuro and Stenius 2010; Stråth 2004; Sørensen and Stråth 1997; Hilson 2008; Trägårdh 2007; Kuhnle and Selle 1992; Hernes 1988; Elder, Thomas, and Arter 1988).

Michael Mann's (1986; 1989) distinction between infrastructural and despotic power provides further help in understanding the traditional Nordic relationship of state and society and the way in which both entities can be seen as strong within it. For Mann, the main question is how state power is exercised by the elites in order to uphold the state's autonomy and capacity vis-à-vis groups in society. While despotic power signifies the range of actions that elites are empowered to undertake without conducting institutionalized negotiation with civil society groups, infrastructural power refers to the state's capacity to implement policies and engage societal groups in policy making. In this respect, despotic power is power 'over society' and infrastructural power is power 'through society'.

Infrastructural power requires that the state secures its access to social, economic and ideological sources of power embedded in social networks. For that access, the state needs the approval and legitimacy of its agency by the groups in society, and thus infrastructural power can have a strong enabling influence among such groups. A strong, autonomous state may be free from any societal, democratic, or parliamentary control, but in the long run, those regimes with a greater capacity to act in coordination with society seem to be more successful in establishing continuity and stability.

Centralized state structures emerged early in the Nordic countries. More effectively than elsewhere, these state-building processes utilized the Lutheran Reformation to add legitimacy to the new rule, and to generate public support from landowning peasants against the resistance of the nobility or the Catholic Church. In the Kingdom of Sweden, the Reformation was forcefully pushed through as a revolution from above. Properties held by the Catholic Church were confiscated, and contact with the Vatican cut off. Simultaneously, social groups whose help was essential for state-building were supported (see also Karonen 2008). First, the Reformation gave rise to a powerful local clergy that was loyal to the King. The new church was closer to the common people because of the use of national languages and the provision of basic education in reading and writing as well as the organization of social welfare in local communities. In exchange, loyal groups, independent peasants, and the clergy were given more opportunities to participate in public matters. The peasants' position in the four-estate diet was also improved. As a result, a fusion of sacral and secular authorities occurred, and a close, loyal relationship was created between the central state (the King) and the widely self-governing communal power holders (the Lutheran clergy and the peasantry) (Rokkan 1999, 164; Karonen 2008).

The sense of agency and responsibility that fell upon such groups characterizes democracy and civic engagement in Nordic societies (Stråth 2004; Sørensen and Stråth 1997), while, simultaneously, all local and associational

activities remained within one nationally coordinated sphere (Stenius 2010; 1988; Alapuro et al. 1989; Liikanen 1995; 1988). The state's simultaneous openness and control towards people and associations also served as a pacifying strategy that pre-empted conflicts and opposition. The centralized state and the active civil society, with its communal self-governance around the parishes, evolved together and were bound by the bonds of mutually beneficial exchanges. This pattern was also reflected in the way in which democratization and popular mobilization took place in Nordic societies in the nineteenth century. Instead of opposing the state, voluntary associations cooperated with it in order to advance the common good.

An operational precondition for such a close relationship between the state and civil society is having well-established mechanisms and channels of intermediation between the two (Hernes 1988; Sivesind and Selle 2010; Kuhnle and Selle 1992; Jepperson 2002; Alapuro 2010). Nordic political cultures have traditionally been rich in such networks and mechanisms. These have provided the basis upon which consensus-seeking and accessible governance has been built. From the strategic alliances between the King, the clergy, and the peasants, through the rise of nineteenth century popular movements, to the neo-corporatist structures of the post-war welfare states, formal and informal intermediation mechanisms have bound the state and civil society together. Consensus has been built by engaging the relevant groups while keeping procedures and participants under firm control. As the interaction has become routinized, it has shaped the modes of interaction as well as the parties involved, pushing them towards consensus-seeking and compromises through a sort of regulated openness.

The State Committees

In order to analyse the uniquely Nordic state–society relations the pivotal boundary zone where the state meets other actors in society needs to be examined, that is, the operational level of networks of interaction, intermediation, and legitimacy-building. The state committee, a key institution in the history of governance and policy making in both Sweden and Finland, provides a concrete illustration of what the Nordic pattern of state–society relationships has meant in practice. Most notably, it shows how institutionally facilitated consensus-seeking and regulated openness have supported one another. State committees are also the institution that is often found behind the general descriptions of Sweden as consensus-orientated, open, and rational model of decision making (Anton 1969; Ruin 1969).

The state committees in Finland and Sweden have common historical roots in sixteenth- to seventeenth-century state-building projects in the Kingdom of Sweden (Tuori 1983; Hesselén 1927; Meijer 1956). Since the breakup of state unity between Finland and Sweden in 1809, that common heritage has diverged into two separate streams. Hardly any major public policy reform in Sweden or Finland up until the 1990s took place without the involvement of one or more committees of this type (Helander and Johansson 1998; Premfors 1983; Rainio-Niemi 2008; 2010; Trägårdh 2007; Huuska 1970). Typically appointed by the government or by a ministry to investigate a matter of pressing public concern, they prepare government bills for parliament and are thus separate from the parliament's own committees. Many such state committees have generally been at work covering almost all possible issues of public policy in modern society. Their policy recommendations have traditionally enjoyed great favour and have usually been accepted with only minor modifications. Disagreements in the committees have tended to be fundamental in nature and have often led to major public debates (Premfors 1983; Helander and Johansson 1998).

In a wider international perspective, the state committees stand out in two respects: First, despite their role in the preparation of bills and statutes, they have always operated outside formal ministerial and administrative hierarchies. In Finland, for example, state committees have been nominated by ministries and the government, while the role of the MPs has always been more modest, also in comparison to Sweden (Helander and Johansson 1998). Secondly, over the years, the state committees developed into central meeting places for the state authorities and representatives of a wide variety of civil society and voluntary associations (Rainio-Niemi 2010).

This type of openness in the preparation of laws stands in contrast to procedures in most other European countries. There, similar issues are handled within the administration by ad hoc working groups that may include external consultants but do not routinely involve representatives of associations. Taking a longer perspective, the existence of such a channel for participation has undoubtedly encouraged societal groups to organize themselves. This, in turn, has increased the general level of civic participation and has also served to reproduce the associations' strong representative functions as main intermediaries between the state and civil society – a tradition that has been identified as a main feature of Nordic associational life (Jepperson 2002; Sivesind and Selle 2010; Alapuro 2005; 2010). One aspect specific to Finland is that here the state committees continuously provided a main platform for neo-corporatist type of relations between the state and the main labour market groups throughout the post-war decades (Rainio-Niemi 2008; see also Tuori 1983; Myllymäki 1979).

The institution of state committees illustrates how consensus-orientation and openness have cohabited in Nordic political cultures and endured over time. For decades, this distinctive institution enshrined the pattern of mutually advantageous exchanges between state and society in Finland and Sweden and contributed to the practically trademarked, internationally admired ability of their governance to produce widely resonating, smoothly implemented public policies. From a government perspective, the incorporation of the key groups increases the accuracy of policies. The pre-involvement of key groups helps to resolve conflicts in advance and increases the likelihood of smooth implementation. For the representatives of various associations and interest groups, the state committees have been a major channel for participation, influence, and networking. State committees embody many virtuous qualities of the 'Nordic model of governance' and are also a case for 'regulated' openness serving the purposes of consensus-building and effective governance. They are a concrete example of the "rigid, but effective practices of inclusion" that Henrik Stenius (2010, 31) has considered to be a main source for the "weak notions of opposition" that characterize Nordic political cultures.

After World War II, the state committees in Sweden and Finland were instrumental for forging the compromises that welfare state policies required (Helander and Johansson 1998; Trägårdh 2007). Increased use of the committees was interconnected with the rise of neo-corporatist tendencies. In Sweden, committees had been a location for corporatist policy making since the 1920s. In Finland, where both the welfare state and the structures of 'democratic corporatism' (Katzenstein 1985) developed late, the state committees were an even more crucial locus for cooperation. After the breakthrough of neo-corporatism in the late 1960s, the state committees continued to play a major role in incomes policy (Myllymäki 1979; Kyntäjä 1993).

The role of the state committees illustrates the comparatively strong role of the state within the operational structures of neo-corporatism in Finland. Sweden, by contrast, has often been seen as a textbook case of 'societal corporatism' (Schmitter 1981; Pekkarinen 1992; see also Rothstein and Bergström 1999; Rothstein and Trägårdh 2007), where the emphasis is on two-partite arrangements between the labour market parties, the state not being explicitly involved. Finland's stronger emphasis on the state's agency is more broadly illustrative of the different directions into which common historical legacies evolved after Finland's and Sweden's separation. A key explanation for this ambiguity is provided by the state-society relationship which, in the case of Finland, evolved into a state-dominated direction, whereas Sweden took a more society-driven course.

Traditions of State-Centredness and Inclusiveness in Finland after 1809

Finland's traditions of state, nation, and democracy are connected with two greater northern European powers, Sweden and Russia. Over the course of the eighteenth century, parts of Eastern Finland were lost to the rising Romanov Empire and, in 1809, Finland in its entirety passed over to Russia.

The country's long history as part of the centralized, Lutheran Kingdom of Sweden was significant for the new Finland in many ways. The official language continued to be Swedish and the status of the church and the privileges of all four estates, including the landowning peasants, were left intact. The last point formed a strong contrast to the feudalist traditions that prevailed in Russia. Moreover, unlike in Sweden, where the constitutional degrees of 1772 and 1789 were abolished in 1809, in Finland the new autonomy was created upon these laws that had restored the King's power on the one hand and strengthened the peasantry on the other. In terms of its internal governance, the Grand Duchy of Finland could thus be presented as a sort of constitutional monarchy where the power of the ruler – now the Tsar of Russia – resembled that of the King of late eighteenth century Sweden, even though the Tsar, one of the most unlimited autocrats of the time, was not bound to these interpretations by any other means than good will. The Grand Duchy's elites were aware that the ruler's good will was necessary for Finland's peculiar autonomy and were not only among the most autonomous elites within the empire, but also among the most loyal ones.

Slightly paradoxically, it was the heterogeneity and indirectness of rule which characterized all great European empires that allowed Finland to strengthen its distinctively Nordic model according to its own national terms. The cultivation of Nordic traditions also gained meaning as a marker of Finland's cultural distance and difference from the East. Nevertheless, all of the major processes of modern nation-building, including popular mobilization and democratization, were decisively shaped by Finland's connection with the multinational Russian Empire.

The distinctive features of this constellation became effective in connection with the 'nationality question' that swept across the great European empires from the mid-nineteenth century. The Grand Duchy's elites viewed their nation in terms of its constitution, that is, in terms of the laws that were inherited from pre-1809 Sweden and had been used to cement the existing societal and administrative order, which differed considerably from the Russian one. Its constitutional laws, it was argued, made Finland unique when compared to other culturally autonomous or non-autonomous nationalities within the

Russian Empire. Because of its 'constitutional' order, Finland could claim a place among state-nations instead of being a 'mere' cultural nation (for the differences between these concepts see Meinecke 1911; Breuilly 1993).

These points were directly reflected in the Fennoman national movement whose 'holistic national' legacies for Finland's political culture were considerable (Liikanen 2003; 1995; 1988; Hyvärinen et al. 2003; Pulkkinen 2000; Stenius 2010; Alapuro et al. 1989; Alapuro 1988). The movement provides an illustrative example of the ways in which traditions of state-centredness and inclusiveness developed in post-1809 Finland. The national movement was initiated by a group of initially Swedish-speaking people in the mid-nineteenth century and turned into a popular mass movement by the 1880s. Under the banner, 'Swedes we are not, Russians we do not wish to become, let us therefore be Finns', the movement's leaders promoted the use of the Finnish language and the inclusion of mainly Finnish-speaking people in public life, in order to strengthen autonomy from within. The autonomous state was seen as the most valuable asset of Finland and its people and as a symbol of its people being a nation.

The Fennoman 'national awakening' was a Nordic type of state-guided popular revolution from above, once again offering something in exchange for the loyalty and support of pivotal groups. It aimed to strengthen the state and stabilize society by involving the people and empowering them locally. The Fennoman movement was embedded in the structures of communal life and built upon and through a network of voluntary associations covering almost all sectors of social, political, cultural, and economic life. It was highly loyal to the local state administration and to the Tsar (although not the Russian imperial administration). This state-orientated status quo ethos distinguishes the Finnish national movement sharply from similar movements in the Russian Empire's Baltic provinces, for instance, where the German-speaking elites remained as an isolated upper class with little contact with the wider population, and the national movements mobilized the people into liberation movements against repression by local elites and the ruling power. In Finland, the language issue politicized people, but the conflict remained at a comparatively low level (McRae 1999; Huxley 1990; Alapuro 1988; 1999).

By the late nineteenth century, reforms to centralize the imperial administration started to diminish Finland's autonomy (Tiihonen 1999; Savolainen 1999; Jussila 1999; Polvinen 1996; Selovuori 1999). The national movement mobilized in the defence of the autonomous semi-state, its social and legal order. These were also the most critical years for democratization, and the defensive logic of popular mobilization made the political parties share a common national vocabulary irrespective of their particular demands (Kettunen 2004; 2001; Hyvärinen et al. 2003; Alapuro et al. 1989; Alapuro 1988; Huxley 1990).

The national campaign for Finland's autonomy reached its peak in the years 1905 and 1906. The Tsar, burdened by serious unrest elsewhere in the empire, withdrew many disputed acts that had threatened to reduce Finland's autonomy. The Grand Duchy's elites responded by introducing yet another state-guided, inclusive revolution from above: the old four-estate diet was replaced by a unicameral parliament whose members were elected by universal suffrage, including women. In an international perspective, the reform was radical. In one stroke, an entity, formally a part of an autocratic empire, introduced a regional parliament that was a democratic forerunner (Jussila 1999; Klinge 1996; Polvinen 1996; Lindman 1968).

In Finland, the breakthrough of democracy was inherently intertwined with a demonstration of national unity and of loyalty to the own 'constitutional' state. This process successfully integrated the nation but left an inherently narrow space for any legitimate articulation of difference (Kettunen 2004). While the new parliament was expected to give a face to Finland's internal unity vis-à-vis imperial integration demands, in accordance with the logic of democracy, it also automatically brought to light divisions within society, within the preferably unanimous 'nation'. At the same time, the local political life remained in the hands of the local elites including civil servants, clergy, and landowning peasants.

When Finland claimed its full state sovereignty in 1917, it was in a far better position than many other new states that emerged from the dissolving Habsburg and Romanov Empires. Finland had relatively well-established administrative structures and its own parliament, and its people had been mobilized politically and integrated under the national banner. The administration knew the size of its population and the approximate boundaries of its territory, and the basic structures of a national economy existed (Engman 1989; 1994).

However, the elimination of an overarching imperial structure left behind a power vacuum at the top of the state. When it came time to put supreme state authority into practice, there were many conflicting ideas, agendas, and expectations (Roshwald 2001; Wank 1997; Alapuro 1988; 2002). In late January 1918, Finland, the country that has often been seen as the most successful of all successor states to former European Empires, plunged into a civil war between non-socialist Whites and socialist Reds.

Formally, the conflict concerned the constitution of the new state: the Whites had their powerbase in the government cabinet and administration, the Reds in the parliament. The war ended with the defeat of the Reds in May 1918 – just as the German navy landed on the shores of Finland to aid the Whites. The White revenge on the defeated Reds was hard, and the prison-camp death rates multiplied the wartime losses. As a consequence of the war,

the political left split into social democrats and communists. Furthermore, in early October 1918, the White parliament convened to elect a German prince, Karl Friedrich von Hessen, as the King of Finland. However, after the defeat of Germany just some weeks after the election, the King had to withdraw. With the collapse of the Reds' and then the monarchist Whites' vision of Finland, the momentum passed to the centre forces. Finland approved a republican constitution in July 1919.

Finland's post-civil war constitution was an exception to the ultra-parliamentary constitutions of many new states because of its dual nature. It was presidential and parliamentarian at the same time – quite in line with the traditions of state-centredness and inclusiveness. The parliament continued to be single-chambered and based on universal suffrage. Simultaneously, the constitution authorized the president to use strong means for the protection of the state against all destabilizing influences, whether they originated from within or without. The president's power was especially strong in matters of foreign and defence policy, which had previously been under the King's and then the Tsar's authority. The duality gave Finland's constitution flexibility, and it proved to be the most long-lived of the constitutions written after World War I, enduring through the authoritarian pressures of the 1930s, World War II, and the challenges of the Cold War (Kastari 1977; Nousiainen 1971). During the Cold War, the president's power was at its maximum under Urho Kekkonen's rule (1956–1981), and it was not until 2000 that the president's role was narrowed (Jansson 2000; Hallberg et al. 2009).

National Re-unification and Regulated Openness

While the state's legal structure had been preserved, society remained divided by the civil war. However, faithful to the ideals of national unity, its restoration soon became a political priority. With the civil war as a concrete reminder of where internal disputes could lead, the restoration project was thoroughly dominated by the winning White side. Among the Whites, however, considerable differences between 'exclusionist' and 'integrationist' strategies prevailed. The exclusionist conservatives wished to uproot the socialist political ideology altogether. The centrist political forces promoted a re-unification of the social democratic party, which was still the largest party in parliament. The social democratic leadership distanced itself from the civil war after 1918 and expressed its commitment to the new republic and to cooperation with non-socialist parties. The social democrats participated in parliamentary elections in 1919 and formed a minority government in 1926–1927 (Alapuro 2002;

Alapuro et al. 1989; Hentilä 1999). The communists, the other side of the left, operated from Moscow, where the party had been founded in 1918. The party itself was illegal in Finland since its inception, but communist candidates were able to run in parliamentary elections under the banners of different electoral alliances until 1930.

The two strategies for the restoration of Finnish national unity – one more exclusionist, the other more integrationist, competed throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The competition created tensions but also balanced the two strategies, as they were never represented in two clear-cut blocs. An example is the response to the populist-authoritarian challenges of the 1930s. In 1930, all communist activities were outlawed and paramilitary civil guards returned to public life. These restrictions to democracy were tacitly approved by the rest of the political parties, including the social democrats and, by these means, the centrist political forces were able to halt a further drift toward authoritarianism (Alapuro 2002; Sahlström 2000; Alapuro 1998; Hentilä 1999). Finland formally retained its democracy and constitution, unlike most other new states that had emerged after World War I.

The integrationist drive strengthened from the mid-1930s. The deteriorating international situation underlined the urgency. A main symbol for the conclusion of the interwar re-unification project was the 1937 coalition government of the agrarian union and the social democrats, which was replaced by an all-party government in 1939 when war broke out between Finland and the Soviet Union. The war did not disrupt the social democrats' admission into national political life: they were committed to the common war effort, holding key positions in wartime cabinets (Majander 2004).

Set against the memory of the civil war, the unity of the Winter War was widely perceived as a miracle. The internal cohesion created by the war became a new link in the narrative chain of national unity. Within the wartime unity, the social democrats were equals throughout and it created lasting bonds between them and the rest of the non-socialist parties. The memory of the Winter War remained bright and enduring, indicating a path towards a new type of national unity that many saw as also being applicable to post-war Finland.

However, as interwar ideological confrontations turned into Cold War ideological confrontation, the wartime national unity became problematic because of its anti-communist and anti-Soviet undercurrents. The Interim Peace Treaty with the Soviet Union in 1944 re-legalized communists in society, and for the post-war political leadership, the supreme priority to ensure Finland's survival as a sovereign, democratic country was improving Finland's relationship with the Soviet Union. The world being seen to be dictated by the big powers, national unity for the sake of the state's 'survival' gained a new meaning (Rainio-Niemi 2008).

After 1945, one of the main questions around 'national unity' and integration concerned communism inside Finland. Communist candidates regularly gained around 20 per cent of votes in parliamentary elections from 1945, making them one of the three largest parties, together with the agrarian union and the social democrats. Such a sizeable party was hard to ignore in a democracy or without provoking the Soviet Union. In the first two post-war decades, several alternatives were proposed for managing the 'problem' of communism inside Finland without endangering the country's sovereignty and democracy or the friendly relations to the neighbouring super power. Cold War anti-communism seemed a tempting strategy for many. In the end, however, the view prevailed that a small state bordering on the Soviet Union with considerable domestic support for communism could not afford to be involved in Cold War anti-communist crusades. The integration of communists into the nation's social and political life came to be known as the second national re-unification.

By the mid-1960s, after an intense campaign to dismantle anxieties concerning domestic communism, the integrationist strategy took hold. Once more it was propelled by centrist-liberal forces. Because of the specific political relevance of the question to the Soviet Union, the state's top leaders, including the president, backed the communists' integration. In a speech 1962 President Kekkonen noted:

I make no difference between Finnish citizens and I think each one of them has the right to be treated equitably and equally by their president. We are all Finns. There was a time in the 1920s and 1930s when wide circles of political power holders did not think that the social democrats were patriots. Times have changed now and today it is appropriate to say that Finland is the fatherland even for those Finns who support communism. Their political and economic doctrines might be objectionable but, regardless of that, they are Finns just like all of us are.

KEKKONEN 1967, 234

The communists, in turn, were expected to agree on rules of democracy and the preservation of Finland's national sovereignty. As during the interwar period, such a state-guided inclusion strategy divided the far left: the majority of communists yielded to the terms of accommodation, while a small minority rejected them.

After the spring 1966 elections, the representatives of the majority of the communists participated in coalition with the two other large parties, the social democrats and the agrarian union. Having a decisive majority in parliament, this coalition launched reforms that led to Nordic welfare policies and

neo-corporatist incomes policy cooperation (Kettunen 2004, 299–301; Pekkarinen 1992, 302–306, 323–331; Rehn 1996, 215–272; Arter 1987, 165–230).

From National Inclusiveness to Societal Disembeddedness?

Over the course of the past twenty-five years, the trends of globalization and European integration have contributed to the dissolution of the concept of the ‘nation-state’ into its components – the state and the nation. This development, implying an import of models of governance, has decisively shaped the context in which the traditions of state-centredness and national inclusiveness have operated. The potentially most fundamental impact of European integration on the Nordic model of governance concerns the ways in which the former will be allowed to alter the Nordic model of state–society relations. Many of these changes may escape attention, and even happen largely unintentionally, but, nonetheless, they have notable implications for the very basic premises of the Nordic model and, in a way, ‘hollow out’ its ground-level, sustaining operations without any noticeable, drastic changes on the surface.

In addition, in Finland, the country’s integration into the EU and its remarkable eagerness to reform the public sector (Harrinvirta 2000) has altered the dynamics of intermediation in the pivotal zone between the state and society. The transformations have influenced the mechanisms of policy preparation in particular. A new pivotal and highly demanding boundary zone has emerged where the national administration meets the European administration (Government of Finland 2006; Lampinen, Rehn, and Uusikylä 1998; Raunio, Saari, and Kari 2006; Tiihonen 1999). This raises the question of whether public administration resources are sufficient for tackling both boundary zones – the state–society zone that has traditionally been crucial to the Nordic model of governance and the new national–European one.

The de-institutionalization of the state committees within a few years in the mid-1990s is a case in point. In contrast to the hundreds of committees at work annually in the 1960s and 1970s, the number decreased from forty-seven to six between 1990 and 1999 (Helander and Johansson 1998, 246, 248). The state committee statute was repealed in 2002, and since then the committees have been replaced by a selection of policy preparation instruments such as working groups, appointment of pro tem state investigators, etcetera (Tala and Litmala 2006; Rainio-Niemi 2010). Compared to state committees, the new practices are more flexible, and less costly and time-consuming. They produce clear-cut recommendations instead of ‘watered-down’ compromises, as many relevant actors have observed (Temmes 2001). On the other hand, there has

been growing public and administrative concern over the eroding quality of policy- and law-preparation in Finland.

The rapid dissolution of the state committee institution is but one example of the removal of a well-established channel of participation for organized groups in society. Irrespective of whether or not the state committees were the most effective or democratic way to organize this participation and interest representation, they were nevertheless a main way for this to be done. The new forms of policy preparation also include consultation with groups and associations, such as public hearings and comments on draft proposals, but the connections are looser, less systematic, and less transparent.

Openness, in this context, is no longer a regulated, institutionalized openness but arbitrary and ad hoc. At the same time, only the most powerful organizations (mostly business and labour market organizations) have the capacity and resources to follow and influence policy preparation at all levels of multi-layered EU governance. The same groups also continue to stay in direct contact with the national government. An illustrative contrast to the de-institutionalization of the state committees is the recent reestablishment of the government's economic council. The council provides a site for policy coordination, consultation, and exchange of information between the key ministers and the main business and labour market organizations and may also invite members from such private sector firms that are considered particularly important for Finland's economy (Finlex 2010; Leppänen 2009; Government of Finland 2010).

The de-institutionalization of the distinctively Nordic instrument of policy preparation and state–society communication is illustrative of the incremental and low-profile changes that transform the state–society relationships. Simultaneously, the rhetoric calling for national unity in order to safeguard Finland's international standing has not lost its appeal. Drawing directly from the state-centred rhetoric of the past, political elites have persuaded 'Finns' to join forces for the economic success of their country in Europe and the new globalized world. The prime rationale for this consensus-building has been the economic competitiveness of the state (Kantola 2006; 2010; Kettunen 2004; Koivunen 2012; Heiskala and Luhtakallio 2006).

Finland's EU membership has long enjoyed exceptionally sound domestic support (Raunio, Saari, and Kari 2006; Raunio and Tiilikainen 2003) and has been used for pushing through reforms that have been deemed necessary for linking Finland with the European Union (EU) and global markets. While the linking has been successful as such – as evidenced by Finland's recurrent ranking at the top of various international indexes of economic competitiveness, quality of governance, etcetera – popular support has been on the wane more recently (Jokela and Korhonen 2011). Throughout the 1990s and beyond,

Finland's EU membership was widely regarded as a symbol of Finland's 'return' to Europe after the Cold War (Harle and Moisio 2000).

Today, the EU is no longer the collective identity project that it used to be. The difference is that Europeanization and globalization have started to shape citizens' everyday lives in more concrete ways, modifying old and generating new conflict lines in domestic society. These conflicts touch upon issues that were not topical, or recognized by the post-war domestic consensus-builders, such as citizenship, nationality issues, ethnicity, gender, religion, local effects of economic globalization, unbounded business, and atypical work. New conflict lines require novel strategies for conflict-regulation and for the maintenance of social cohesion. An updated version of what the Nordic model of state–society relationships and exchanges means is needed in the new, Europeanized and globalized society.

While the political rhetoric calling for national consensus in order to ensure that 'Finland' survives in the face of external pressures, not least economic ones, has gradually been detached from the time-consuming practices that characterized the state-guided consensus-building and regulated openness of the post-1945 period, the nation is also redefined. Across Europe, neo-nationalist populist parties define the nation as the natives, as the 'forgotten majority' that has been neglected by the elites in their rush for European integration and globalization.

The neo-nationalists' call for national unity differs from the historically established pattern of Nordic and Finnish consensus-building in two respects. First, their longing for consensus is built on the idea of exclusion rather than inclusion. Aiming to restrict openness to the point where multiculturalism, globalization, and federalist EU integration begin, this rhetoric overlooks the *de facto* diversity and heterogeneity that characterizes present-day societies, not only because there are more immigrants than before but among 'native' citizens as well. Secondly, by emphasizing the nation and nationality in their rhetoric, the neo-nationalists in Finland neglect the central role played by the state's official interests, the notions of the state-nation (instead of a 'mere' nation, or even a nation-state) in Finnish history. In an EU member state, ideas of what constitutes a state's interests have changed, and so have those of consensus and openness, of state-centredness and national inclusiveness.

At the same time, the question remains where and what actually is 'the state' in the current Europeanized, globalized circumstances. This question will require attention from all sides, not least in Finland, where the state has traditionally held a particularly pronounced role in politics, society, and culture.

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Ruptures in National Consensus: Economic versus Political Openness in the Globalization Debate in Finland

Lotta Lounasmeri and Tuomas Ylä-Anttila

There is a strong belief in Finland, expressed in academic texts and the wider public debate, that consensual decision making and consensus-oriented public debate are central features of Finnish political culture. Along with the other Nordic countries, Austria, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, Finland has been categorized as one of Europe's small consensual states (Becker 2003). The globalization debate at the turn of the millennium marks a break in this tradition of consensus and an attempt at remaking it.

We will show that in comparison with the media debates on globalization in other countries, two features of the Finnish debate stand out. First, in Finland the Global Justice Movement (GJM) got exceptional attention in the debate. Second, in Finland the debate went on longer and got new dimensions. Elsewhere, the peak of the globalization debate coincided with mass demonstrations of the GJM, especially at the Seattle World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in 1999. The use of the word 'globalization' steadily declined after this peak (for the US, see Rauch et al. 2007; for France, India, and Bolivia, see Beyeler and Kriesi 2005; for the Associated Press global coverage, see Marks, Kalaitzandonakes, and Konduru 2006). In Finland, a second, even more heated phase of the debate occurred in 2004 and 2005. Here, national elites, divided into a pro-regulation camp and a pro-competitiveness camp, engaged in a debate over appropriate national political responses to globalization.

Paradoxically, the economic elite that promoted further increasing economic openness had a tendency to suggest that open public debate on globalization should be contained in the national interest. They focussed their argumentation on forging consensus around the idea of national competitiveness, a concept that has been more influential in Finland than in the other Nordic countries. Instead of open debate, this segment of the elite called for strong leaders who would rely on experts and not pay too much attention to public opinion.

In some ways Finland, like the other Nordic countries, has been an open society both in economic and political terms for most of the post-war period (Katzenstein 1985). However, until the neoliberal turn of the late 1980s, economic openness was limited to trade openness and politically a 'regulated

openness' prevailed. Starting in the 1980s economic openness increasingly favoured the structural power of global capital. Up to that point economic openness had concerned only the trade of goods, while capital and services were provided domestically, often by the state. Now foreign ownership was first deregulated and then strongly encouraged, and trade in services opened up to global competition. The role of the state in both sectors diminished. As a consequence, the leverage that the political system and trade unions had held over business interests decreased, for better and for worse.

Politically, up to this turn, a kind of regulated openness had prevailed. In international comparison, citizens had relatively strong institutional channels of political influence. This influence was organized through civic associations that had wide memberships, hierarchical structures from the national to the local levels, and internal systems of democratic decision making. In this sense, associations represented citizens towards the state, to which they had relatively open access through institutions like the state committees (Ylä-Anttila 2011). Political openness in terms of open contestation in the public sphere, on the other hand, was rather limited. A silent consensus prevailed according to which certain things about the opposing blocs of the Cold War and Finland's position in relation to them were better left unsaid for the sake of national unity and security. Journalists maintained close relationships with politicians and civic associations tended to wield political influence through the regulated channels behind the scenes rather than by engaging in open public contestation (Kantola 2011).

Our argument is that the globalization debate at the turn of the millennium reveals a tension between the new economic openness that had become established by that time, and a new form of political openness. The GJM initially succeeded in open public contestation of what they saw as threats to democracy and justice as a consequence of the new economic openness. The business elite, while advocating increased economic openness, still upheld the idea of consensus about shared national interest and saw open public debate on economic matters as a threat to this consensus. For them, the appropriate response to economic openness was a kind of political closure.

The present analysis of the globalization debate in Finland is based on the 1,826 articles mentioning the word 'globalization' in the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* (*HS*) between 1992 and 2004. *HS* is the biggest newspaper in the Nordic countries, with a circulation of about 340,000 (in 2012) in a country of 5.4 million inhabitants. For example, the well-known French daily *Le Monde's* circulation is smaller than that of *HS*, while the second largest paper in Finland, *Aamulehti*, had a circulation of about 120,000 copies. *HS* is also widely read by the elite and is a powerful agenda

setter of public debate in Finland. It sets standards and gives direction to other media. When acting in defence of consensual values it serves as a forum for powerful actors who need to communicate in the public and also legitimate their actions. The tendency of the paper to back those in power has been strong. However, in the course of the globalization debate, the public sphere opened up and dissident voices began to be heard. Even if this was only a phase in the debate, it did shake the foundations of consensus and caused the elites to show marked differences of opinion publicly. This could be taken as a sign of change in the Finnish culture of public debate.

Background and Inception of the Globalization Debate

The context in which the public debate on globalization developed in Finland in the new millennium is defined by a few key economic and political developments in the prior two decades. Following a global trend, the liberalization of the capital markets in Finland began in the 1980s. This rapid and largely uncontrolled liberalization led to a speculative bubble that burst at the same time bilateral trade with the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, plunging the Finnish economy into the most severe depression since World War II. The political response to these events resulting from failures related to increasing economic openness was what we may term the consensus of the 1990s. Dramatic cuts in government spending were made. Rather than calling for open public discussion to find solutions, the elite saw it necessary to act swiftly and in unison. As a result, the adoption of neoliberal policy reforms in line with the global trend was more rapid and thorough in Finland than in most other European countries. The Nordic welfare state model was quickly being replaced by the model of the 'competition state' (Alasuutari 2006; Kantola 2006). Thus, the consensus of the 1990s marked a kind of closure of the public and political arena in the name of acting in unison in an emergency situation. This consensus remained through the 1990s despite the change of government leadership from the Centre Party to the Social Democratic Party (*Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue*, SDP) in 1995.

In the meantime, the concept of globalization slowly began to make its way from academic debate to the mainstream public sphere. Until the end of 1998, however, it had little impact. The term globalization was mentioned 159 times in *HS* in the years 1992 to 1998. In 1999, the concept became the object of an intense debate and was highly politicized as a result. A dispute over economic policy making that had long been characterized by a relative lack of public discussion was opened and the 1990s consensus challenged.

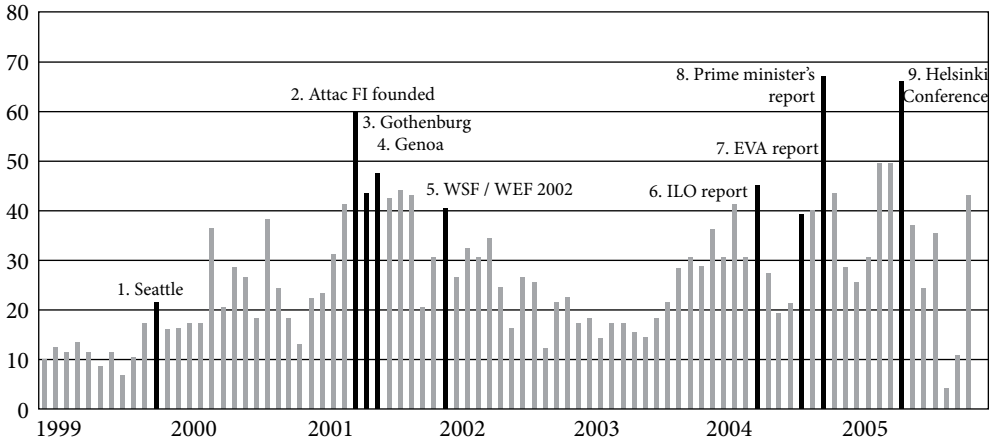


FIGURE 4.1 Monthly occurrences of term 'globalization' in Helsingin Sanomat and key events of globalization debate.

In Finland and around the world, public debate on globalization began with the mass demonstrations known as 'the Battle of Seattle' around the meeting of the WTO in 1999. The coalition of trade unions and various civil society organizations from consumer NGOs to environmentalists that effectively stopped the WTO meeting soon became known as the Global Justice Movement (Della Porta 2007). It appeared under various names and forms in different countries. In Finland, as elsewhere, it was initially referred to as the *globalisaation vastainen liike* (Anti-Globalization Movement), but soon the term *globalisaatiokriittinen liike* (critics of globalization), following the German *Globalisierungskritik* and Swedish *globaliseringskritiska rörelsen*, was adopted.

Figure 4.1 shows the two phases of the debate and nine key events that stand out as monthly peaks in the coverage of *HS*. The first phase ran from 1999 to 2002 and was mainly centred on the GJM. The second phase, 2004 to 2005, was characterized by conflict between two national elite groups, one supporting and one opposing the ideas introduced by the GJM. The following sections describe the unfolding of these two phases and the two features of the Finnish debate that stand out: the initial strength of the GJM and the subsequent renewal of debate reflecting elite conflict.

The Initial Role of the GJM

During the four years of the first phase of the debate 1999 to 2002, altogether 1,116 occurrences of 'globalization' were found in *HS*. This is seven times the

amount that appeared in the press coverage over the previous decade. In the peak year of 2001, globalization was mentioned in 419 articles (Lounasmeri 2010, 69). This can be traced to three key events: a) the founding of the national chapter of the French GJM organization, Attac,¹ in Finland; b) demonstrations at the EU summit in Gothenburg; and, c) demonstrations at the Genoa Group of Eight (G8) meeting. Although the second World Social Forum and the World Economic Forum in 2002 occasioned less debate than the events of 2001, they still constituted the high point of the respective years and kept the talk about globalization at levels well above Seattle.

In describing the intense debate that preceded the founding of Attac Finland, *HS* asserted: “There is excitement and idealism in the air again: heated public debate has returned. The magic word is globalization” (*HS*, 1 May 2001). The initial strength of the GJM in Finland was shown by its high media visibility, the number of members and allies it attracted, and the spread of the idea that economic regulation can serve the ideal of global justice. The comparison with Germany, a country where the GJM was quite successful (Rucht, Teune, and Yang 2007) illustrates the movement’s strong start in Finland. In Germany, Attac, the most important organization of the movement in that country, attracted one thousand members during its first month of existence in a country of 82 million people. *Der Spiegel*, a news magazine known as an agenda setter in the German public sphere, gave the movement broad coverage. In Finland, the start was much stronger: In a country of 5.4 million, more than 2,500 people signed up immediately for Attac, and *HS* mentioned it in 34 stories before it was even launched.

By the time of the demonstrations at the Gothenburg EU summit in 2001, the GJM had become a powerful force. Many top level politicians, journalists, and experts seemed to share this view. The ministers of Finland’s rainbow coalition government, from members of the conservative National Coalition Party to the Left Alliance, called for dialogue with the activists. This does not, of course, imply that they would necessarily agree with the movement’s demands – but they did feel they could not ignore them either.

The movement quickly gathered influential allies. An Attac chapter was founded within the Finnish parliament in conjunction with the establishment of Attac Finland. Every fifth parliamentarian joined, including Erkki Tuomioja (SDP), the minister of foreign affairs. In a poll in 2001, Attac’s demand, a currency transaction tax, was supported by seventy per cent of Finnish parliamentarians.

1 *Association pour la taxation des transactions financières et pour l'action citoyenne* (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and for Citizens’ Action).

By 2004, when the second phase of the debate took place, the GJM was no longer very visible. Instead, its arguments were taken up by a part of the political elite, led by President Tarja Halonen (SDP) and the minister of foreign affairs. Two events spurred this adoption of the idea of global social justice. The first was the publication of *A Fair Globalization: Creating Opportunities for All*, a report produced by the International Labour Organization (ILO) World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, chaired by the President of Finland together with the President of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa (Revolutionary State Party, RSP) (World Commission 2004). At the press conference Halonen stated "It is clear that globalization must change its course. Its present form is unsustainable, both ethically and politically" (HS, 25 February 2004). The report demanded globalization governed by more democratic institutions, more equal distribution of wealth, decent work for all, and commitment to the UN millennium development goals.

The second event was the Helsinki Conference on Globalization and Democracy, chaired by Foreign Minister Tuomioja and his Tanzanian counterpart, Jakaya Kikwete (RSP). It was the final conference of the Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy that had gathered representatives of governments, civil society, and businesses from all over the world since 2002. The stated objective was to bring together the civil society organizations associated with the World Social Forum and the business leaders associated with the World Economic Forum to discuss proposed reforms of global governance (Helsinki Process 2005).

There was a strong global dimension in both of the above events. Solutions to global problems were sought in processes conducted in cooperation with countries of the Global South. Tanzania co-chaired the Helsinki Process, and participants came from dozens of different countries. Events were organized in Dar es Salaam and Mumbai, among other places. International institutions also participated. Central terms of reference for the process were the UN millennium development goals. The report by Halonen and Mkapa was commissioned by the ILO and unveiled at an event held in London.

The adoption of the movement's arguments was a step toward a more activist Finnish foreign policy on the part of long-standing social democratic politicians. The identification of Finland as a possible moral leader on the world stage accorded with the vision of Finnish politicians who were critical of economic globalization, but not those in favour of more *Realpolitik* who demanded national consensus on competitiveness.

The Finnish Social Democrats were not alone among European centre-left parties in adopting some of the GJM's arguments. The head of the British Labour Party, Prime Minister Tony Blair, raised Africa's problems as the number one

issue of the Gleneagles G8 meeting in 2005 (Anheier, Glasius, and Kaldor 2005, 10), which seemed to sustain the globalization debate in Finland as well. The practical importance of the massive media attention to the accompanying Live 8 concerts and the limited debt cancellation decided upon at the meeting can be debated, but their symbolic value was indisputable.

Nevertheless, the GJM also encountered significant opposition. Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen (SDP) called members of the group 'street terrorists'; one conservative MP demanded the revocation of support from the ministry of environment to Friends of the Earth Finland because they participated in the Gothenburg demonstrations; and the Minister for Trade and Industry Kimmo Sasi (National Coalition Party), fiercely opposed the movement's claims publicly. Moreover, despite the fact that *HS* did recognize the GJM as newsworthy, the newspaper's editorial team remained firmly committed to free market ideas combined with notions of consensual national unity, as we shall see below.

What is remarkable about the GJM, then, is not that it managed to turn everything around; but that it did manage to challenge the political closure represented by the consensus of the 1990s and politicize the question of globalization. A debate on the consequences of increasing economic openness, now termed 'globalization', began.

The Success of the Global Justice Movement and Its Allies

There are at least two factors explaining the initial success of the GJM, and both have a national and global element. The first success factor was the Finnish political context at the emergence of the movement, and the second was the movement's repertoire of action that matched the habits of Finnish political culture very well in some ways, while at the same time challenging it in others. The spending cuts and austerity measures of the 1990s had been passed under emergency conditions and were not subject to much debate. The GJM's slogan 'Another world is possible' fell on fertile ground. Explicitly formulated to counter the idea that politics can only follow market forces and not control them (memorably expressed by Margaret Thatcher as *TINA*, 'There is no alternative') the GJM slogan was what many of those dissatisfied with the consensus of the 1990s were waiting for. The sense that something exciting was happening in the world and that these events were now finding their way to Finland was evident.

The GJM took the opportunity to challenge the prevailing consensus. Their combination of expertise with media-friendly direct action was very effective

in Finland. However, neither of these components alone would have sufficed. Expertise is highly valued in the Finnish political culture (Luhtakallio 2010). Globally recognized expert authority was provided by economist and Nobel laureate James Tobin. The movement chose the currency transaction tax developed by Tobin in the 1970s as its number one demand, wishing to curb what it saw as excessive use of power in globally transferring capital in contravention of democratic decision making by states (Tobin himself, however, distanced himself from the movement). The stance taken in support of the GJM by the respected paper, *Le Monde diplomatique*, probably convinced many that this was not just a group of random activists. For several years, the movement also had organized counter-summits to coincide with the meetings of international institutions and provide a forum for those experts who disagreed with mainstream economic and political thought. Attac France had a scientific council that supplied the movement with research information.

Academics in Finland also took part in the movement. GJM was built on networks of associations promoting solidarity with the Global South that had been engaged in advocacy, but also worked on the ground in developing countries together with local civil society organizations. Its members, therefore, had first-hand experience of the local conditions of those countries where the failure of structural adjustment programmes introduced by international financial institutions had done the most damage.

On the other hand, direct action and civil disobedience is a form of activity rarely seen in Finland since the violent civil war of 1918 in which around 37,000 people died. Instead, it has been historically typical for new movements to quickly institutionalize themselves as formal associations and use their relatively open access to the state to exert influence. This being the case, the new carnivalesque repertoire of action imported by the GJM was seen as provocative in public. The then President of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, had a pie thrown in his face when giving a talk in Finland; activists dressed up as the leaders of the G8 countries danced around, playing ball with a globe in a carnival procession across Helsinki; and others in Robin Hood costumes campaigned for the currency transaction tax.

The practice of dressing up in heavily padded white overalls and pushing against the lines of riot police, originally developed to defend squatters in buildings in Italy, produced spectacular visual news material: riot police in heavy black armour on one side and citizens demanding justice and democracy in their white overalls, on the other. A unique event in Finland was the appearance of the white overalls in front of the presidential palace on Independence Day, hijacking what has been considered as the holy day of Finnish nationalism, and turning it into a stage show for global justice. Since

the Independence Day reception hosted by the president and transmitted live by the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation is still the most viewed TV programme of the year in Finland, media attention was guaranteed. Although not all of this attention was positive, this event known as ‘the citizens’ gate crashing party’ was important in directing journalists’ attention to the movement (Lindström 2010).

Later, the protest activity that had guaranteed the movement’s visibility became an obstacle. As demonstrations at the global summits began to turn violent and following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, forceful police measures were used to oppose or criminalize protesters (Tarrow and Hadden 2007) causing some participants and allies in Finland to turn away from the movement. This was especially true of the trade unions, some of which had quietly expressed support for the movement behind the scenes. Although no violent demonstrations ever occurred in Finland, the unions were frightened away and no real alliance was ever formed. Holding on to the power that they still have, the unions avoided being publicly associated with protesters whose tactics were scorned upon by many in the political elite.

The same was true in Sweden, which had strong unions that were accustomed to influencing policy makers through institutional channels, rather than on the streets (Sörbom 2006). The situation was in contrast with countries where unions are less powerful, such as Brazil or the US, where key events of the GJM like the Seattle demonstrations and the World Social Forums were the product of an alliance between the unions and the new social movements.

A further reason for the GJM’s success in Finland may have been that some members of the political elite, after having lost ground in the 1990s, saw this as an opportunity to gain political momentum for their ideas. Particularly the globally minded left wing of the SDP was involved, but also people from the Left Alliance, the Greens, and even the peripheral Communist Party. The 1990s had seen SDP following the trend of ‘third wave social democracy’ that brought parties starting from Tony Blair’s New Labour from the left towards the political centre to compete for swing voters. This move towards the right was eagerly embraced by the party leader Paavo Lipponen, who led the two rainbow coalition governments that cemented the 1990s consensus, and was a strong supporter of economic globalization during the debate. When Attac Finland was formed, globally minded social democrats, including parliamentarians and staff from organizations like the Workers’ Educational Association (*Työväen Sivistysliitto*, TSL) and the Service Centre for Development Cooperation (*Kehitysyhteistyön palvelukeskus*, KEPA) were elected to the Attac board. The support given by President Halonen and the minister of foreign affairs, Tuomioja, to the idea of global justice, and the more active role they wanted

Finland to play in promoting this idea in world politics was not much appreciated in the media debate. Moreover, the President's position was often questioned during her term in office by the pro-competitiveness camp.

The Business Elite Responds with Support from *Helsingin Sanomat*

In 2004, a few months after Halonen's ILO report had restarted the globalization debate, economic elites struck back with reports of their own on globalization. These were presented as national survival strategies for Finland in the face of increasing competition in the global marketplace. The first report was produced in 2004 by the business think tank *Elinkeinoelämän valtuuskunta* (EVA), founded in 1974 by business organizations to develop cooperation between politicians, representatives of business, academics, and specialists in different sectors (Jakobson 1992, 123). The organization has since sought to influence the development of Finnish society and it has taken an active role in public discussion. The report, entitled *Suomen menestyksen eväät* (A Recipe for Finland's Success), set the competitiveness of Finland in the global marketplace as the country's number one goal. The means to achieve this goal, it was argued, was to increase the market-driven character of domestic policy. Lower taxes, less government spending, incentives for businesses, and strong leadership unswayed by public opinion were seen as elements of success. "It is not enough to follow the polls. Politicians must be willing to make decisions even if they are unpalatable to the public," as the editor of the EVA report, Tapani Ruokanen, told *HS* (6 October 2004). Since the report was based on interviews with Finnish business leaders, it may be said to reflect the opinions of that sector more generally.

The second report, *For a Skilful, Open, and Changing Finland*, was commissioned by the new centrist-conservative Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen (Centre Party). The formula was similar to the one proposed earlier by EVA, although more moderate. The word 'open' in the title referred to economic openness of Finland towards the world: attempting to attract more foreign capital and foreign expert workers by tax breaks and like means. How open the Finnish society is, or should be, in terms of political participation and public deliberation, was not discussed.

While Halonen's ILO commission and the Helsinki Process were global undertakings whose participants came from countries around the world as well as international institutions, the economic globalization reports were a national affair. International institutions, however, did legitimise these reports. The competitiveness reviews of the World Economic Forum were often referred

to, and EVA's report was supported by a similar one from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The latter report was also based on interviews with Finnish business leaders and came to similar conclusions. The editorial team of *HS* strongly supported the EVA report:

It is easy to agree with the report's basic message: a successful business sector is what creates the necessary means for income redistribution. [...] The most important thing is that doing business in Finland should be made as simple and unencumbered as possible. Corporate taxation must be unequivocal and set to a level that makes Finland an appealing country for businesses.

HS, 6 October 2004

In fact, so many editorials, op-eds, quotations from other newspaper editorials, and commentaries by journalists were published in support of these two reports that journalists became the largest group of voices during this part of the globalization debate. The views of the business elite were expressed more strongly by journalists (particularly the editorial team of *HS*) than by themselves.

Free Markets and National Consensus according to *HS* Editors

As we have seen, *GJM* was initially given much space on the pages of *HS*. However, while the legitimacy of the movement's claims was recognized by the editorial team with regard to the democratic deficit of global institutions, the newspaper's position was clear: free trade was good for all countries, especially for export-oriented economies such as Finland's. Those arguing otherwise were seen as perhaps well-intentioned, but emotional; they were described as not necessarily representing the opinion of the world's poor and not always understanding the complex workings of globalization:

Those demonstrating on the streets of Washington want to deny the poor the same method which made themselves rich; well meaning but silly people try to protect the poor from the same development that led to their own prosperity. While doing what they believe to be right, they cause a lot of harm.

HS, 20 April 2000

Defenders of the ideas of global justice and democracy did get their say, but no editorials or columns by journalists supported their views. When presidents

Halonen and Mkapa published an op-ed highlighting the results of their report for the ILO, Risto E. J. Penttilä, chairman of EVA, responded:

The actions of the president in restructuring the debts of developing countries might make Finland more appreciated in those countries and increase Halonen's popularity among the NGOs, but the effects are quite different in those capitals of importance for Finland – Washington and Moscow.

HS, 25 April 2004

News reporters did give a voice to Halonen, Mkapa and their supporters. Two front page items reported a minister for environment and a professor of international politics denouncing Penttilä's critique of the president. A long interview entitled "A Fair Trade President" in the Sunday section gave Halonen herself a voice, and the paper also commissioned a debate defending Halonen. The exchange between EVA and some academics who supported the president continued for a while. At the same time, the newspaper's editorial team continued to oppose Halonen's world political response to globalization, advocating the national advantage of Finland first: "Instead of embracing the whole world, what is needed is good old style foreign politics – concentrating on those issues most essential to the nation" (*HS*, 14 December 2004).

The editorial team used two strategies to promote its position. On the one hand it presented globalization as inevitable, and on the other it advocated for the notion of a single national interest that must be built by consensus. The argument about the inevitability of globalization was often paired with the view that small countries have no choice but to adapt: political action to change global processes can only be undertaken by big players. This small country argument has been a significant building block of national consensus in Finland, much as in Austria, another small country that has made great efforts toward consensus building (Rainio-Niemi 2008). Finns have often been called to adapt to changes with the warning: we will have a crisis if we do not act swiftly. Thus the editorial team of *HS* suggested:

What is now needed is simply political commitment to the reforms and change. In reality there are no great differences of opinion about the direction to be taken among experts and decision makers. The more time passes by without decisions, the greater the crisis Finland will face. Every year we spend quarrelling among ourselves will make adapting to the major changes in the world economy more difficult. Waiting too long will only make the coming decisions harder.

HS, 10 November 2004

The editorials in *HS* conveyed the impression that the paper had taken upon itself the task of morally rounding up the nation and telling it to work together to solve its problems. This line of rhetoric has been typical of Finnish political culture as part of building consensus (Kantola 2002a; 2002b). The paper took a political stance, but at the same time tried to appear neutral. It also presented its own position as the only 'reasonable' alternative. Consensus was regarded as the highest good and political alternatives dismissed as not viable. This relegated conflicting views on globalization to a less legitimate position (Lounasmeri 2010, 153). Thus, the stance of the *HS* lent political support to the core argument of the pro-globalization elites; namely, that the only way Finland could retain its national sovereignty in the face of corporate globalization would be – quite paradoxically – to give it up. In the editorials, globalization was depicted as inevitable, not as a political choice but as a kind of natural process to which nations must adapt.

The GJM's critical views on globalization could have been pursued as a new kind of awakening of civil society. Instead, the reporting concentrated on describing activists as engaged in a spectacle. When parliamentarians from the leftist parties and the Greens tried to take a stand with the civic movement, or expressed views in conflict with globalization policies, their judgment was questioned by the editors. The demonstrations and other civil actions were not seen by the newspaper as relevant to the nature of a democratic system. The paper's policy, instead, was to emphasize the representative nature of democracy. Elites were seen as fundamentally different from the general public: they were well informed, farsighted, and acted reasonably for the common good, while the populace was seen more as ill informed, shortsighted, selfish, and guided by emotions (Büchi 2006, 10f). Commenting on civic action, the paper's statements reflect the historical role of the Finnish media: educating and civilizing the people (Nieminen 2006).

In order to understand the way the paper framed the public debate on globalization one must look at the role of this particular newspaper in Finnish society. *HS*, first established under the name *Päivälehti* in 1889, has a long tradition as a liberal paper that has engaged in nation building and encouraged public discussion, but always in the spirit of cultivating unity and finding consensus. During the course of societal upheavals, crises, and wars the paper has had a policy of trying to keep the country together by constructing national cohesion, building bridges between different social groups, emphasizing legality and parliamentary government. (Rytkönen 1940; 1946; Juva 1966; Klemola 1981; Kulha 1989; Tommila and Salokangas 1998; Manninen and Salokangas 2009). *HS* has always advocated stable social development and refrained from stirring up conflict (Klemola 1981; Pietilä and Sondermann 1994; Lounasmeri 2010).

The editorial staff of *HS* has long had close ties to decision makers and leaders in Finnish society. As a result, the paper has remained well informed on everything going on within the country and its foreign policy (Kulha 1989, 212, 238, 438). In a recent study, *HS* represented one of the three most important media in the eyes of Finland's decision makers. Their links to prominent journalists, who were considered part of the elite, were solid, even if their interaction with journalists did not aim at common political goals (Kunelius, Noppari, and Reunanen 2009).

The role of editorials has changed in mainstream Finnish newspapers as they have relinquished direct political affiliations. A paper's policies used to reflect those of a political party or ideological orientation, but today the nature of editorials is much more unclear in the Finnish context. Still, the form and positioning of editorials do give them a special weight. Finnish decision makers interviewed by Risto Kunelius, Elina Noppari, and Esa Reunanen stated that they continue to feel a strong connection between the editorial line and the rest of the paper. They also said Finnish newspapers may publish one or two opinions that differ from their own agenda, but a vigorous discussion of contradicting viewpoints is not favoured (Kunelius, Noppari, and Reunanen 2009, 297f).

The Regulation Camp versus the Competitiveness Camp

Although the globalization debate was a conflict between two opposing camps, it would be an oversimplification to label these groups anti- and pro-globalization. The GJM, clearly, is not against all forms of globalization. It probably has more global links than any other movement before it, and it advocates for more democratic global governance. The same holds true for the representatives of the Finnish elite who supported the movement. They also called for stronger global governance and worked together with international institutions such as the ILO, and the UN, as well as with governments and NGOs from different parts of the world. From the early stages of the debate, the GJM and its supporters profiled themselves not as anti-globalization, but as the supporters of an alternative globalization. It would also be misleading to label the business elites and the paper's editorial team who opposed the GJM simply as pro-globalization. Although they promoted the benefits of economic globalization, the speakers were exclusively Finnish and the focus of their argument was Finland's national interest and the importance of consensus around the objective of competitiveness (cf. Kettunen 2008, 65). The dividing line is rather between those who advocate more political regulation of the global economy

and those who want less of it. These two opposing camps in the globalization debate may be termed the regulation camp and the competitiveness camp. In the following, we shall discuss the main arguments of each.

With the rise of the GJM, those who considered unregulated global economy harmful to economic equality and denounced the undemocratic character of the institutions of global economic governance (the WTO, World Bank, IMF) gained support. These arguments escalated to a demand that global markets need 'rules of the game' that are democratically agreed upon. The expression 'rules of the game' then became the focal point for different parties trying to find common ground. It was adopted by politicians sympathetic to the GJM, and in 2001, when the GJM was at its strongest, also by some on the opposite side, such as the business lobby International Chamber of Commerce:

Businesses do not want to see deregulation leading to savage markets [...] the liberalization of world trade must continue, but in an internationally regulated and controlled manner. The WTO and UN are examples of institutions which can develop common rules of the game.

Timo Vuori, Head of the Finnish Branch of the International Chamber of Commerce, *HS*, 27 May 2001

The disagreement at the time seemed to be over who should set the rules and what they should be, rather than whether there should be more rules or less. As Green Party MP Heidi Hautala said from her perspective, "Our goal is to create global rules of the game that curb the restless movements of capital and the unemployment and insecurity that these movements create" (*HS*, 26 September 1999).

The regulation camp consisted of the GJM; the two leading figures of the internationally oriented wing of the SDP, President Halonen and Foreign Minister Tuomioja, Social Democratic, Green, and Left MPs; some state officials, primarily from the ministries of labour and environment; the trade unions (although they remain marginal in this discourse); and social scientists. The competitiveness camp, on the other hand, consisted of several cabinet ministers from the right-wing National Coalition Party and the formerly agrarian Centre Party; and some more right-leaning Social Democrats; politicians from right-wing parties; leading state officials in Finland and the EU; and businesses, think tanks, and employers' organizations. The main argument of this camp was paradoxically a nationalist response to economic globalization as well as the crisis in the Finnish consensus that the GJM had provoked.

The GJM defended those who had suffered from economic globalization, seeing no conflict of interest between nations but between the haves and the

have-nots. The response of the business elite, in contrast, strongly relied on the idea of competitiveness of Finland against other nations. Supported by editorials of *HS*, they argued that the national interest of Finland in the era of globalization was best served by more market-oriented policies at home. The world was increasingly run by market logic, and, according to those defending this view, it was futile to question this trend. As globalization was assumed to have fundamentally altered the playing field, the survival of Finland as a competitive welfare society seemed to require changing old social structures. Thus, the best way to cope would be to adapt.

Finns have repeatedly demonstrated level-headedness and persistence, traits that have raised us to the ranks of the wealthiest nations on earth. In the face of the changes ahead, Finland can, once again, emerge as a winner. But this requires that we can, once again, adapt to the circumstances.

HS, 10 November 2004

In the same way that Finland adapted to living under the pressure of the neighbouring Soviet Union during the Cold War, the country now had to adapt to the limitations imposed on domestic policy by global markets. The editorial pages of *HS* asked for national commitment to reforms that were to be decided on 'together' and called upon decision makers to stop arguing over their differences. At the same time an image of Finnish society was created where there were no major confrontations and everyone shared the same interests. Rapid action was needed to reform societal structures and avoid crises, it was argued.

Such argumentation contrasts with the debates in larger countries such as the United States and France. Competitiveness has been an argument in these countries as well, but it has also been legitimate to refer to pure national interest (like the Bush administration did in the US when it rejected the Kyoto Protocol in 2001 and imposed tariffs on imported steel in 2002) and cultural traditions being threatened by globalization, like many farmers' movements did in France (Ylä-Anttila 2010, 194f). In Finland, arguments for protecting the national interest by tariffs, or arguments referring to cultural traditions, did not seem to work. Perhaps this is because Finland is a small, export-oriented country dependent on its powerful neighbours, in contrast to France and the United States. A discourse emphasizing inevitability and political 'realism' has been typical in Finnish discussions of 'national survival' in the face of economic recession or security issues.

The globalization phenomenon and the rise of neoliberalism has affected the position of many members of the elite in Finnish society. The elites holding formal power in society were divided: A positive, unquestioning view of

globalization was typical of those who had a strong institutional position, exercised real power, and felt a need to legitimize their position. Those more critical of globalization were less influential and had less voice in national political decisions. The Global Justice Movement did have important allies – the President and some important figures in the Social Democratic Party. The power of the President in the Finnish political system, however, is increasingly symbolic, and the SDP's leadership at the time of the globalization debate tended to side with the competitiveness camp. Legitimization of power could be seen as one explanatory factor behind the positions different players took in the globalization debate and the support they received from *HS*. This does not suggest that the paper would not criticize the political elite or government at all. However, the paper's tendency to back those in power has been strongest at times when questions of national interest have been at issue.

Conclusion: The Erosion of Consensus?

We have considered the public debate on globalization in Finland as a process of questioning and rebuilding national consensus. The GJM and its allies challenged the 1990s consensus on neoliberal policy reform by demanding more internal political openness and discussion of alternatives in economic policy. With support from *HS*, the elite pro-competitiveness camp responded by attempting to formulate a common national interest in order to generate consensus around the idea of competitiveness.

The tradition of consensus politics in Finland has been explained in different ways and varying time frames. Henrik Stenius (2010) traces the roots of consensualism to Lutheran conformism in the eighteenth century. According to a widely accepted interpretation by Risto Alapuro (1995), the nationalist movement leading up to independence in 1917 needed the wide support of the people and had to show unity in the face of the Russian Empire. The unity thus created and the continuing pressure from the Soviet Union until the 1980s reinforced this unity and discouraged any public signs of discord. Thus, episodes of political violence like the Civil War of 1918 and the fascist Lapua movement of the 1930s, once overcome, reinforced the Finnish somewhat forced unity rather than breaking it. Alapuro suggests that the politically turbulent first decades of independent Finland's existence produced a combination of unity and disagreement (1995, 196). After independence the main dividing line in Finnish society was between the workers and the bourgeoisie – roughly corresponding to the Reds and the Whites of the Finnish Civil War. Unity between the two sides was only found when facing external aggression. The Soviet attack in 1939 brought

about what is still called 'The Spirit of the Winter War'. The elites continue to appeal to this spirit when calling for a united country. In the public sphere, the peace agreement with the Soviet Union also brought about the phenomenon of self-censorship that the political elite encouraged (Salminen 1996; Lounasmeri 2013). Anything related to the Soviet Union was handled with extreme care. This historical experience, along with the fact that Finland has been ruled by one of the two neighbouring great powers for centuries (by Sweden until 1809 and by Russia from 1809 until independence in 1917) has made the country prone to adapt to external pressure in order to hold on to its sovereignty.

The integration of the communists into the government in 1966, the absorption of the student movement of 1968 by the parliamentary system, and the first general agreement on income distribution and working conditions between trade unions, employers, and the government in 1969 were proof that strong consensualism had developed. It was characterized by agreement on economic policy, especially income levels, and a firm policy of neutrality in foreign affairs. President Urho Kekkonen (1956–1981, Centre Party) kept a firm reign on internal politics and developed confidential relations with Soviet leaders. This produced accusations of Finlandization in Western Europe especially in the 1970s, a decade of considerable self-censorship in Finnish public discussion (Salminen 1996; Lounasmeri 2013).

At the same time, international ideas of a more open and competitive economy began to spread to the heavily state-led Finnish system. The Finnish political and business elite adapted to the demands of corporate globalization with relative ease in the 1990s, perhaps as a result of Finland's handling of the oil crises in the 1970s. Close cooperation between the then newly formed EVA and the more right-leaning Social Democrats was key to the Korpilampi conference in 1977, where in the name of consensus and national competitiveness, tax cuts on corporations and suspension in pay raises for workers were agreed upon (Saari 2010, 475). An important memo on competitiveness was produced for Korpilampi in 1977 by an official of the Ministry of Finance, the Social Democrat Raimo Sailas, who went on to draft the welfare cuts in the 1990s. Thus, the alliances and concepts that built the 1990s consensus were already established in the 1970s. However, the idea of competitiveness as a common national interest and the basis for the country's consensus has been part of Finnish politics even longer. Pekka Kosonen has argued that the idea of competitiveness has structured the Finnish welfare state model since the 1950s more strongly than in any other Nordic country (1987, 183–186).

Neither the national survival strategy of the 1970s nor that of the 1990s was a Finnish innovation. Rather, in both cases, Finland followed a worldwide

trend. In the 1990s, this trend was the global Washington Consensus. In the 1970s, it was the move from Keynesian to monetarist economic policy that began in the US and Britain, and was followed – along somewhat differing national paths – by countries as diverse as Chile, Mexico, and France (Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb 2002). In Finland, deregulation coincided with a period of intense economic growth that lasted most of the 1980s and permitted the continuing expansion of the welfare state. But the ideological foundations and the necessary alliances were already in place to carry out the shift from the welfare to the competition state when growth came to a full stop in 1990.

The period of *glasnost* in the 1980s and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 removed the external reason for setting limits to public debate. Still, the culture of public restraint that had developed over time made it possible to react to the economic difficulties before the new millennium without much public ado and forge the consensus of the 1990s across the political spectrum, especially since socialism no longer seemed a viable alternative.

Another great political change toward supranational political integration took place in 1995 when Finland joined the European Union (EU). But even this move in the direction of political openness was taken with relatively little public discussion, since most of the political elite thought it might hinder the course of the admission process. Heikki Heikkilä states that the prime objective of the political leadership was to sustain national unity and continuity by controlling the public debate (1996, 69). In critical situations conflicting viewpoints were neutralized and potential conflicts were played down. Ullamaija Kivikuru has observed that the ‘new political culture’ remained merely a slogan in emphasizing the significance of the people’s decision making. In the end, the system needed citizens only to vote ‘correctly’ in order to legitimize the exercise of political power (Kivikuru 1996, 172f, 393f). The political closure of the 1990s was primarily one in the public sphere, made possible by the long tradition of Finnish consensual culture. The nationalist response to the demand for more democratic global governance, evidenced in the globalization debate in 2004, was an effort to reinstate this consensual atmosphere.

Pushing for a consensus on how Finland would achieve economic success in the globalized world, an influential part of the business elite did not see open public debate having intrinsic value. The quest for efficiency – highly valued in Finnish political culture – led members of the elite to downplay the value of responsiveness to initiatives from below that might shake the consensus but also bring fresh ideas to the table. For them, the new ways of action and demands of civil society in the globalization debate seemed to represent a threat rather than a revitalized democracy. What, then, has been the role of ‘openness’ in Finnish ideas about globalization? In the discourse of those elites

backing the traditional, consensual ways of doing politics in Finland, it has been about openly embracing and adapting to those economic circumstances affecting the Finns from the outside, rather than actively and openly discussing the different directions for the future of the nation.

As years have passed since the heated debate, many of the ideas that shook the economic consensus of the time have persisted. For one, the global financial crisis that began in 2008 has questioned the wisdom of deregulating financial markets. It has also brought back the Keynesian idea of stimulating the economy through government spending and put new regulatory measures, such as the transaction tax that was promoted by the GJM in the early 2000s, on the agenda of the European Commission, the Group of Twenty (G20), and even conservative governments like those of Nicolas Sarkozy in France and Angela Merkel in Germany. On the political front, more dissent has emerged. A truly anti-globalization movement in the form of the populist Finns Party has gained access to mainstream politics after receiving over 19 per cent of the vote in the 2011 parliamentary elections. They oppose economic as well as cultural integration of Europe and the world. Together, the financial crisis and the rise of the Finns Party make it more difficult for the economic elite to promote a combination of neoliberal economic policies and the rhetoric of national competitiveness in order to forge a national consensus in which this combination is presented as being in the interest of all Finns alike. The long tradition of consensus-minded public communication may be eroding. How this will affect the ways of carrying out political debate in the Finnish public sphere remains to be seen.

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Nordic Openness in Finland: European Integration, Ideational Transfer, and Institutional Traditions

Tero Erkkilä

Access to information has become a global concern during the last two decades. The collapse of the Soviet Union, new demands for economic transparency and calls for participatory governance have brought this idea forward in various countries (Bennett 1997; Fung, Graham, and Weil 2008; Knudsen, 2003; Lord 2006; Rodan 2004; Rose-Ackerman 2005). The relationship between Nordic and global discourses on institutional openness suggests that the Nordic countries have had a distinctive institutional trajectory in accessing government information. But amid the global drive for transparency the Nordic constitutional principle of openness has been reinvented in these countries and is now cherished as an economic and political tradition of governance. This has involved transnational ideational exchange, uploading and downloading of ideas on national and European Union (EU) level. This chapter analyses the reconceptualization of openness in Finland and the related transnational communication, including perceptions of institutional traditions.

Openness is often regarded as a central characteristic of Nordic societies and the principle of openness has contributed to the firm democratic governance and rule of law in these countries. Access to government information is also increasingly viewed as an element of economic efficiency and international financial institutions such as the World Economic Forum have praised the Nordic countries for their transparency (Lopez-Claros, Schwab, and Porter 2006). This is indicative of a paradigm shift from a democratic understanding of access to government information to the economic one, where global markets rely on information about countries as potential investment environments (Stiglitz 2002).

While there does not have to be a contradiction between the economic and democratic 'use' of information access laws, problems arise when the economic ideas pervade the legal principles of access to information, replacing an earlier democratic understanding of institutional openness with an economic one. This may lead to a shift in the accountability system that emphasizes outcomes over process (Dubnick 2005; Erkkilä 2007). On a system level, the new drive for transparency has made openness and public deliberation elements of performance management that seek effectiveness of policies but do not

necessarily provide opportunities for control of government. Moreover, the pursuit for budget transparency and performance has created pressures for privatization of public information, limiting its public access (Erkkilä 2012).

In assessing how the above changes come about, it is illuminating to consider a case like Finland in a transnational context. Finland was one of the first countries to adopt a law to grant access to government information in 1951 (Act on the Publicity of Government Records). But the political discourse of openness and the narrative of Finland as an open 'Nordic' society have only been in the making since the 1990s. While the official discourse on Nordic openness suggests a long institutional tradition, the actual institutional practices regarding openness have changed in the last two decades. The Finnish Act on the Openness of Government Activities passed in 1999 drew insight from the global discourses of good governance and performance management. These policy scripts (Meyer et al. 1997) have been most notably promoted by organizations such as the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), aiming to enhance the efficiency of governance (Drechsler 2004; Zanotti 2005; Erkkilä and Piironen 2009). Transparency has been at the heart of these transnational policies.

On the EU level, the member states try to influence European policies (from the bottom-up) but are themselves adopting ideas from European sphere of governance (from the top-down). This exchange of ideas is strongly influenced by the global scripts of governance. When global policy discourses are adopted they tend to take nationally appealing forms that resonate with institutional practices and public values (Schmidt 2006). This often leads to the invention of traditions through which policy makers try to evoke ideas from the past in response to present challenges (Hobsbawm 1987). The narrative of Nordic openness in Finland has accommodated new global ideas of good governance and economic performance by inventing traditions that embrace the ideas of transparency that are entering the Finnish debate.

Openness first became a legitimizing argument in Finnish governance after the Cold War when Finland was seeking EU membership. In this process, the EU was viewed as secretive, in contrast to the 'Nordic' tradition of openness in Finland. The process of constructing the EU as a secretive 'other', together with the international emphasis on transparent government, reinforced the collective memory of a Finnish open tradition of governing. Openness and transparency have served as themes for the Finnish EU presidencies in 1999 and 2006, and Finland has remained a strong advocate of openness in the EU. However, the above understanding of Nordic institutional history has its limitations. The Cold War in Finland is often described as a period of Finlandization, referring to self-censorship and limited public debate on foreign politics. Against this

backdrop, the discourse on Nordic openness has helped to reframe Finland as an open Nordic society (Erkkilä 2010).

The discourse on Nordic openness has also allowed a conceptual shift in the Finnish understanding of access to government information. Although openness is now widely regarded as a Nordic idea of Finnish governance, it has become intertwined with many new and potentially contradictory transnational notions. Traditional Nordic institutional openness has allowed citizens broad access to government information and decision making venues. It has been embodied in the constitutional principle of openness and served as a state information strategy in consensual political culture and collaborative governance. The new economic ideas of transparency assess institutional openness primarily from the perspective of effectiveness of administrative output and stability of market environment (Erkkilä 2012).

Openness has become a domain of political struggle, where different institutional ideas are contested. In Finland the legislation on good governance and better regulation has been drafted in the context of EU policies. In this process Finland has adopted ideas from the EU but also promoted new ideas of performance management in the EU. The ideational transfer is particularly interesting as it purports to fuse Nordic traditions of openness with transparency. Concepts not only reflect changes in society but also may act as an 'engine of social change' as commending concepts such as openness are used in political debates to legitimize action (Skinner 1999, 61, 63). Before exploring how openness was debated in Finland from the 1990s on and how new ideas of good governance and better regulation were exchanged between Finland and the EU, we may briefly consider the relationship between institutional change and invented traditions.

Ideas, Institutional Change, and Invented Traditions

Institutional openness is often described as a historical feature of governing, similar to path dependence thinking (see Knudsen 2003), which is based on an idea of deterministic historical sequences leading to certain outcome. Thus, a historical process can be seen as self-reinforcing and reproducing "a particular institutional pattern over time" (Mahoney 2000, 51).¹ However, during times of

1 Path dependence literature can be roughly divided into two main approaches, sociological and economic or rational choice oriented. The latter uses the concept of path dependence more instrumentally as avoidance of the supplementary cost of change that increases over time. Thus, once a certain path is taken it becomes more difficult, or costly, to depart from it as time passes (Pierson 2000a; 2000b).

political crisis and turmoil, the ideas underlying institutions may change rapidly, causing changes in institutional practices (Schmidt 2006; Marcussen 2000). For new institutional ideas to be adopted, they must resonate with existing traditions and values. Here, history becomes a category of institutional change, as the new ideas are examined against those of the past, to see whether the new institutional ideas fit the established context. This may lead to the outright invention of traditions, an attempt – either conscious or unconscious – to portray the new institutional ideas as part of a historical continuum that would make their adoption more acceptable. This can be observed in policy discourses that are formulated to correspond to an alleged past (Kettunen 1999; Hobsbawm 1987).

As global governance leads to increasing comparisons of public institutions in different countries, it also draws attention to institutional trajectories. Consequently, public institutions on the national level are increasingly being reformed to meet the demands of economic globalization. The current debate on Nordic openness can be understood as invention of tradition.

The key turning points in drafting Finnish legislation on institutional openness took place in the beginning of 1940s; during the years of general politicization and the Cold War of the 1970s, including the close but tense Finnish–Soviet relations; and finally, in the debates leading to the adoption of 1999 law on the openness of government activities (Erkkilä 2012; Konstari 1977). By the early 2000s the ‘openness’ or ‘transparency’ of politics became a legitimating discourse in Finnish politics and EU policies. It was part of a larger discursive shift, in which practices of access to government information were reconsidered and renegotiated in Finland (Erkkilä 2012). However, public access to government information was not discussed in open parliamentary debate before the 1999 law was drafted. Instead, debates over pending legislation and related institutional practices, if they occurred at all, took place in committee meetings and among bureaucrats. The information access law was mostly perceived as too complex a matter for lay people.

The above change, in Stephen D. Krasner’s (1984) terms, was brought about by punctuated equilibria as a result of several factors, including the end of the Cold War and globalization, which affected the Finnish political vocabulary. The concept of openness was first spoken of by Finnish governments in the 1990s, when Finland was entering the EU. Nordic openness has been linked with virtues such as low corruption and high national economic competitiveness. This has made the Finns take a new interest in their history as members of an open society. However, while the citizens have rediscovered a democratic institutional tradition, the subject of reform has characterized it as an economic institution, in agreement with the ideas of market transparency.

Reflexivity over national history is in itself a mechanism of policy diffusion (Kettunen 2008, 124–126): paradoxically, awareness of a long tradition paves the way for its change, as awareness of the existence of an institutional practice also renders it a subject of reform. The above reflexivity involves historical narratives and references to traditions, which, while not always factually coherent, are responses to novel situations (Hobsbawm 1987, 1–4). Moreover, when ideas of governance change, public values and narratives also tend to alter and vice versa (Somers and Block 2005).

According to Benedict Anderson, the modern states are imagined communities that have been constructed by symbols and common historical narratives (1991; see also Cubitt 1998). Nordic countries are often described as societies with consensual relations, a high degree of trust and a solid democracy. In the 1990s these features of governance were considered aspects of social capital. Openness as a social institution or practice is generally associated with the above Nordic characteristics.

Furthermore, trust and collaboration are often based on collective memory of institutions (Douglas 1987).² This has a legitimizing effect, which makes such ideas acceptable to a collective. In this sense, institutions are not only social conventions, but 'legitimized social groupings' whose claim for legitimacy depends on how they fit the social reality surrounding them (Douglas 1987, 46f). Moreover, institutional change can originate from changes in the value base and belief systems inside and outside of political institutions (March and Olsen 1989; see also Rothstein 2005). This also involves a process in which individuals and organizations try to make sense of their history, giving it order and meaning, often in favour of their present situation.

In addition, institutional change involves ideational and conceptual change (Skinner 2002; Koselleck 2004), often amounting to changes in discourses and institutional arrangements (Schmidt 2006). When one looks at Finnish administrative history, it becomes apparent that the now predominant perception of openness as a key characteristic of Finnish society might be a rather recent construct. In fact, the talk on Nordic openness is an instance of the transnational discourse on transparency that has reframed it as an economic principle with unintended institutional consequences.

2 Rothstein has analysed this phenomenon in Nordic countries, Sweden particularly. In *Social Traps and the Problem of Trust* (2005) he tells of a Russian tax official who finds it impossible to believe that 98.7 per cent of taxes due are paid by Swedes. Rothstein argues that Swedes pay taxes because they expect others to do so as well. Changing perceptions of underlying norms or values are said to lead to unethical behaviour such as corruption (Maesschalck 2004), that is, we tend to be corrupt (or incorruptible) if we think that others are acting the same way.

Openness and the European Union in Finnish Political Discourse in the 1990s

The European context is relevant for understanding the Finnish debate on transparency and openness. As Finland was entering the EU in the mid-1990s there was a growing concern among the Finnish political elite that their access to government information might be compromised by EU membership. The country had had information access legislation since 1951, which, combined with a consensual political culture, had led to the broad circulation of government information. There were fears that this institutional practice might be discontinued because traditional access to government information was undergoing significant changes due to the new demands of knowledge economy and European integration (Erkkilä 2012).

When Finland adopted its first information access law in 1951, it became the first country to do so since Sweden established such legislation in 1766. The 1951 law had already been drafted in 1939, but World War II delayed its passing. The launching of the law followed the general Finnish trend since gaining independence in 1917 of adopting Swedish political institutions and constitutional principles. In the years from 1809 to 1917 Finland was a part of Russia, but having been previously a part of Sweden, Finnish administrative tradition was mostly Swedish and remained largely intact during the period of Russian rule. This institutional trajectory was actively followed in the early decades of Finnish independence and also led to the adoption of the Act on the Publicity of Government Records (1951).

Studies of the historical development of the access law in Finland have underlined the persistent reluctance to redraft the law of 1951, which first took place in 1999 (Konstari 1977; Hynninen 2000; Wallin and Konstari 2000). There were also political controversies involved, which included the leaking of documents during the Cold War (see Holopainen, Högnäs, and Jokela 1973). Up until the 1980s the Finnish governing was criticized for being secretive (Takala and Konstari 1982), which was particularly the case for foreign political information.

The debates on the practices of institutional openness took primarily place within state committees in the 1970s. Most notably, there was an Information Systems Committee that tried to revise the legislation at the time when the computerization of public administration was slowly beginning. The committee failed to reach an agreement on the draft legislation, as there were severe tensions among its younger leftist members and the representatives of banking and credit-ing. The committee produced a single broad memo (Tietojärjestelmäkomitea 1974) but then its work was abandoned for several decades.

Some minor changes were made in the 1980s and 1990s, but a major revision of the law was first conducted in the late 1990s, as the regulations were becoming outdated due to information technology and shifts in the system of government brought about by marketization and new standards of governance. The revision of the Finnish law was part of changes in global governance in the early 1990s, as international financial institutions such as the World Bank were drafting codifications of good governance containing the virtues of transparency and openness.

In Finland, first openness and then transparency entered the discourse of government programmes, in the 1990s, particularly due to concerns about the openness of the EU. The Finnish entry into the EU was thereby legitimized. The same discourse on Nordic openness also appears in the parliamentary debates on the 1999 Act of the Openness of Government Activities and its related laws, such as the Personal Data Act and the Administrative Procedure Act. Along with the acceptance of the 1999 law, citizens' right to access official documents was acknowledged as a civil right in 1995 and as a constitutional right in 2000.

The 1951 access law was adopted without public debate and as there were no major revisions to it in the years that followed, the first wider parliamentary debate on the matter of openness in Finland occurred in 1998 when the new draft law on the publicity of activities of government was presented to the parliament. The revised law generally aimed at taking into account the structural changes in the Finnish governance system in the 1990s. Digitalization of public information and the emerging knowledge economy were also determining factors. The actual debate was somewhat unfocused, but some MPs were concerned that by joining the EU Finland would be allying itself with a more closed, secretive organization and turning its back on its own system of open 'Nordic' governance. Such a view disparaged the state of institutional openness in the EU while making a claim for Finland as an open country. It made 'openness' appear to be a national trait with no variation between levels of government or sectors of the administration. On the other hand, the idea of Nordic openness showed that Finland considered itself a guardian of openness in the EU.

However, the parliamentary debates over EU politics also provided a benchmark for Finnish domestic governance. While the government was demanding increasing openness in the EU, it could look back to its own access legislation from the 1950s. The activities of the first European Ombudsman, Finnish politician Jacob Söderman, were also referred to in the debates as a positive example of the demand for more openness (Parliament of Finland 1998a; 1998b).³

3 Jacob Söderman from Finland, the first European Ombudsman, was largely responsible for establishing this institution (Magnette 2003; cf. Söderman 2005). One of the first tasks of the

Moreover, the adoption of a new law in Finland was seen as a matter of national credibility following Finland's calls for increasing the level of openness in the EU (Parliament of Finland 1998c). Generally speaking, the rise of openness in the EU was a result of the loss of credibility of the European Commission through cases of corruption (Cini 2007; Shore 2006; Lodge 2003; Héritier 2003; Gammeltoft-Hansen 2005).

The Finnish Internet law database, Finlex, offers a glimpse into the linguistic change of affairs. Here, the actual legal texts contain few references to the terms 'transparency' (*läpinäkyvyys*) or 'openness' (*avoimuus*) during the years 1992 to 2006.⁴ However, when one looks at the government bills (draft laws), there is a clear ascending trend. In 1992, the first year that is searchable online, the term 'transparency' was to be found in two bills, one of which referred to the use of glass in construction work, and similarly openness was referred to twice. References to both terms have since risen steadily and in 2006 thirty-six bills contained the term 'transparency' and fifteen referred to 'openness' (out of a total of 280 bills).

The references are almost without exception to international relations or regulations from institutions of global governance that affect Finland. This conceptual shift has also led to changes in Finnish perceptions of openness. As it is now coupled with economic performance, it becomes problematic from the perspective of accountability: the civil service is increasingly made responsible for outcomes, rather than simply running the process of government. There is a general shift from understanding openness as a democratic principle toward transparency in which access to information is only valued enhancing economic results.

With regard to the legal and financial steering of Finnish government, the information laws of the 1990s contain economic directives leading to the marketization of public information (Korhonen 2003). Openness is seen as a precondition for effectiveness, which becomes apparent in new programmes on public hearings and better regulation. Performance management schemes that build on budget transparency have pervaded every domain of governance, making politics an input–output activity that builds on planning rather than conflict. The Nordic consensual culture has become an element of national competitiveness. Moreover, the rule of law has been subsumed to market principles, governed by regulation schemes that assess

newly elected Ombudsman was to define maladministration and good governance, where openness and transparency played a significant role.

4 The search term used was 'läpinäky*' and the search results thus contained both references to 'läpinäkyvä' and 'läpinäkyvyys'.

legal systems from the perspective of market forces, not democracy (Erkkilä 2012).

Good Governance, Better Regulation, and Transparency

Transparency plays a central role in the exchange of ideas between Finland and the EU. However, while Finnish public discourse has promoted openness in the EU, the international codifications of good governance have reached Finland in a top-down movement of ideas that the EU adopted from the World Bank. On the other hand, Finland has been an advocate in the EU for internationally circulating ideas of better regulation and performance management. These are late addendums to Nordic institutional practices, but are nevertheless portrayed as elements of 'Nordic openness'.

Downloading Good Governance

In EU policies, transparency and access to information have become new norms for responsible governance in the 2000s. Most notably, the European Commission's White Book on European Governance (COM 2001/428) has introduced the notions of transparency and accountability to the institutional discourses and practices of the EU. The White Book essentially contains all the virtues of good governance identified by the World Bank, building on the prior performance-enhancing programmes of new public management (NPM) (see Shore 2006; Zanotti 2005).

The global codifications of good governance entered the Finnish debate through European policies. In 2003, the new Administrative Procedure Act was passed, a bill grounded on notions of good governance and rule of law, but also regulating quality and productivity (Finlex 2003). Referring to the European Commission's White Book on European Governance (European Commission 2001), the background document of the Finnish government draft of the Administrative Procedure Act cites five components of good governance (Finlex 2002). The draft laws of the 2000s contain comprehensive country comparisons.⁵ Similar to international codifications of good governance, the draft law stresses the performative aspects of governance. The government is primarily responsible for the efficient running of the administrative process; openness becomes an instrument for enhancing performance.

⁵ The draft law presents summaries of development of similar legislation in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Germany, Switzerland, France, Netherlands, Spain, and Portugal.

Finnish attempts at revising the information access law at home and promoting openness in the EU have coincided with global concerns over corruption and transparency. Since the late 1990s the World Bank has been active in drafting new codifications of good governance, including accountability and transparency (Drechsler 2004). These were later adopted in the EU White Paper of European Governance as an antidote to the crisis of governance after cases of corruption in the European Commission (Cini 2007). There are also ideas of NPM and performance management that build on the ideas of transparency and accountability in increasing the performance and effectiveness of governance. These policy scripts are most notably promoted by the OECD.

There were also internal policy dynamics and reform agendas that led to the politicization of openness and transparency in the EU (Lodge 2003; Héritier 2003). Moreover, the EU policies on transparency drew ideational input from the World Bank's discourse of good governance, leading also to the establishment of the Ombudsman institution (see Gammeltoft-Hansen 2005).

In the EU context Finnish MPs and civil servants have joined countries such as Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands in promoting more open practices of governance (Stasavage 2006, 171). Individuals such as the European Ombudsman Söderman and Member of European Parliament Heidi Hautala, have gained a reputation for promoting openness in the EU. Thus, the mid-1990s saw a bottom-up movement of ideas concerning institutional openness. The EU and Finnish–EU relations became a key reference when nationalistic talk on 'Nordic openness' emerged.

While the Finnish tradition of governance has had little difficulty in adjusting to the changing practices of the EU, there have been cases where the EU has set the standards for Finnish institutional practices. For example, during the Finnish EU presidency of 2006 the Estonian EU Commissioner, Siim Kallas, pointed out that Finland was one of the few countries in the EU that had not published the recipients of EU farming subsidies. Moreover, recent debates on electoral funding and corruption in Europe have led to a political crisis in Finland, revealing alternative interpretations of institutional traditions. Since Finland adopted the transparency standards outlined by the Council of Europe and promoted by the EU, there have been several cases of misconduct that have come to light including criminal cases against prominent politicians, some leading to convictions. These incidents caused turmoil in Finnish politics in the late 2000s and damaged the self-image of Finns. The Eurobarometer survey shows significant and rapid changes in the understanding of the state of corruption in Finland in 2009 (European Commission 2012, 8, 12). While there was a recovery in the survey results of 2011, the Finnish understanding of Nordic openness was to some extent compromised.

While Finland had opening up the EU as its goal when joining in 1995, there has also been ‘downloading’ of ideas with regard to good governance from the EU to Finland. While this has had a positive effect on the transparency of electoral funding in Finland, it has also shifted the focus of transparency to financial issues and effectiveness of governance.

Uploading Better Regulation and Performance Management

There has also been Finnish ‘uploading’ of ideas, but these have not always been of Nordic origin as the case of better regulation and performance management shows. In Finland, good governance as an addendum in the tradition of Nordic ideas of institutional openness has since been joined by practices to enhance efficiency and economic performance, such as a performance management scheme undertaken in Finland in 2004 (Ministry of Finance 2003) and a Better Regulation Programme that was adopted in 2006 (Prime Minister’s Office 2006a). Both initiatives drew from international ideas of good governance and economic competitiveness. The Finnish performance management reform was even preceded by an OECD peer review on the topic, making suggestions and giving policy recommendations (OECD 2002, 25). Following the peer review process an International Public Sector Accounting Standard (IPSAS) was adopted for Finland.

The Finnish government promoted the above programmes in the EU during the Finnish presidency in 2006. References to Nordic institutional traditions were given to support the newly-adopted policy scripts. The key topic of the Finnish presidency was “how to create a more transparent Union.” The transparent design of the Finnish presidency logo was said to symbolize “the Finns’ open and direct way of going about things” (Prime Minister’s Office 2006b). The mission statement of the Finnish presidency claimed that “the best way of demonstrating the need for the EU is through effective legislative work and efficient management of the Union’s other business.” Accordingly, the objective of the Finnish presidency was defined as “a transparent and effective union” (Prime Minister’s Office 2006c).

During the 2006 Finnish EU presidency, Finland promoted its new performance management system in the EU context (see Ministry of Finance 2006). The Better Regulation Programme was also on the Finnish agenda (Prime Minister’s Office 2006a). Despite referencing a tradition, the performance management system and Better Regulation Programme were new ideas whose adoption in the Finnish context was influenced by the OECD. Finland’s high rankings in indices, such as the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International also become encapsulated in the perceived Finnish tradition of openness. The new ideas were not only of relevance in Finland but internationally as well,

since the Finnish system of performance management was presented abroad, carried on by the policy narrative of openness as Nordic and Finnish traditions.

Though the issue of performance management was a late addition to Nordic openness, it has since become a part of this 'tradition'. Finnish civil servants have embraced this image in their international appearances. The principle of openness is seen as a foundation of the newly-adopted performance management system, which, at its core, is a public sector adaptation of the corporate accounting standard. An excerpt from a press release on a presentation in the Council of Europe in 2007 by the head of the Finnish National Audit Office makes this clear:

The principle of openness and its understanding as the active communication of the aims of public action and the degree to which they are achieved creates an effective incentive for affecting and improving the efficacy of activity. At the same time, this sort of openness about goals and results, as well as the non-accomplishment of goals, is an important modern administrative value. Citizens are entitled to know what the goals of public activity are and how they are carried out. The publicity of the Finnish state's economic administration is by international comparison implemented extensively and in a modern manner.

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The emphasis of accountability is now on the outcome and not on the process of governing, which has been the traditional concern of the Nordic principle of openness. Nevertheless, the above quotation ties the new performance management system to the Nordic institutional tradition. The new ideas of performance management promoted by Finland reduce governance to an input–output model that consists of the logical components of input, process, output, effect or outcome. In order to reach the desired results the performance has to be managed by setting goals and measuring their achievement. Performance measurement thus requires the quantification of operational results. Here the Finnish policy is also guided by the international initiatives for using governance indicators (Ministry of Finance 2005).

Since their adoption, the new ideas performance management and budget transparency have caused unintended consequences for accessing government information in Finland, and in fact have had outright negative consequences for institutional openness (Erkkilä 2012, 220–229). The discourse of Nordic openness has come to accommodate ideas that stand in contradiction to the principle of openness, for instance non-public circulation of confidential information among policy actors and commodification of public registry

data (Erkkilä 2012). Moreover, the invented tradition has even allowed Finland to promote new performance-driven ideas of transparency in the EU. Although this ‘uploading’ of ideas is done as part of a discourse referencing institutional history, the policy ideas are novelties to the Nordic tradition; politicians seek to find analogies in the past in their attempt to make sense of the present and future (Hobsbawm 1987; Koselleck 2004).

While the Finnish advocacy for openness in the 1990s was largely motivated by the feared clash of administrative cultures, the exchange of ideas between Finland and the EU in the 2000s has been characterized more by global scripts of good governance, better regulation, and performance management. While the European Commission helped the prescriptions of good governance, accountability, and transparency enter the Finnish debate, Finland offered similar policy feed few years later during its EU presidency in promoting budget transparency and accountability. Both Finland and the European Commission tried to take credit for these new policy ideas, but they can be traced to the World Bank and OECD. Hence, there was a diffusion of global policy prescriptions on transparency and the references to institutional history and traditions facilitated that policy transfer.

Conclusions

We have seen how the notion of ‘openness’ in Finnish EU relations is a concept of political legitimation whereby discourse communicates shifting policy ideas. When Finland joined the EU in the mid-1990s it served to legitimize Finnish politics in the internationalizing of governance. Finland, along other Nordic countries, has been acting as an advocate of openness and transparency in the EU, leading to a bottom-up diffusion of ideas regarding openness.

In the 2000s, the exchange of ideas between Finland and the EU has mostly centred on global scripts of ‘good governance’, ‘performance management’, and better regulation. As openness and transparency are becoming more firmly established in the agenda of European governance, we are witnessing a top-down effect, in which the new European standards are changing practices in the Nordic context, as the downloading of codifications of good governance demonstrates. On the other hand, Finland has continued to promote its tradition of openness that now comprises novel ideas of budget transparency, performance management, and better regulation that subsumes legal systems under economic principles, assessing the rule of law merely as a market condition.

Noteworthy in this ideational transfer are the actual sources of ideas, which derive from international organizations such as World Bank and OECD. The discourse of Nordic openness has come to accommodate these new ideas, both in Finland and in the EU, where the Finns have endorsed policies that have no particular Nordic roots but are nevertheless incorporated into this invented tradition. The long institutional pedigree has also lent credibility to the activities of the Finnish government, both at home and in the European context. With regard to institutional change, the case of 'Nordic openness' shows how narratives on institutional traditions as part of national heritage may facilitate the diffusion of ideas regarding global governance, where these global scripts are tied to pre-existing institutional solutions and values.

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The Nordic Ideal: Openness and Populism According to the Finns Party

Ainur Elmgren

What is the True Finn party? In my opinion, it is a humane union of people, a people's movement defending the human being, built on the foundation of liberty, fraternity, and equality [...] Openness and honesty, internationalism in the right sense.

HEISKANEN 2008



The relationship between openness and populism in the political rhetoric produced by the Finns Party (previously known as the True Finns) is ambiguous. The party won a record number of seats in the 2011 parliamentary election, becoming Finland's third-largest party, with thirty-nine of the two hundred seats: thirty-four more than in the 2007 elections. This success has compelled scholars to focus on the genealogy of protest parties in Finnish politics. Finland has been described as "one of the strongest footholds of European populism" because of fifty years of continuous activism, beginning with the Finnish Rural Party, a protest movement from the 1950s growing into a coalition member in the 1980s, and continued by the Finns Party, founded by a spin-off group of the former in the 1990s (Jungar and Jupskås 2011, 29f).

The self-descriptions of senior members in the Finns Party organ *Perussuomalainen* (The True Finn) reveal identification with the former party, which claimed to represent the 'forgotten people' of rural Finland (Ruostetsaari 2011, 107). The decline in popularity of the Finnish Rural Party after the fall of the Soviet Union has been explained as a consequence of participating in government and thus losing credibility as a protest movement. The extended depression of the 1990s raised new support for a reinvented version of the party (Jungar 2011). It was not an immediate success. Founded in 1995, it did not gather broad support until the approach of the 2008 recession, which coincided with an electoral financing scandal that tainted the reputations of several major parties. While Finns Party members have previously resisted the populist label, the party adopted a self-defined brand of 'populism' as its

ideology in the parliamentary election programme of 2011 (henceforth referred to as the '2011 programme').

This chapter analyses the connections between populism as self-identification and the increasing demands for openness (*avoimuus*) directed by party activists against the government. Critics often claim that the Finns Party promotes a closed society. I argue that openness as a concept in their political ideology, now self-defined as populism, rests on an essentialist view of the nation state and elements of xenophobia, and is used as a tool for exclusion. Exclusion as a political strategy is not unique to the Finns Party in Finnish politics. It is their choice of terms, intended to differentiate themselves and emphasize their innovative character, which sets them apart, not their political goals.

The source material for this analysis is the party organ *Perussuomalainen* from 2004 to 2011, as well as election programmes and published manifestos from 1995 to 2011. The party organ, a tri-weekly newsletter, contains contributions by activists, interviews, and presentations by candidates in municipal and national elections. Although the party's share of public communication funds increased to three million euros after its success in the 2011 parliamentary elections, the publication still only employs two part-time editors (Kallionpää and Räikkä 2012). However, the party intends to revise its homepage into a new forum for open debate and renew its newsletter with the help of Matias Turkkila, one of the founders of the anti-immigration Internet forum Hommafoorumi (Rantanen 2012). The paper lacks a public editorial policy, but one may assume that it directly represents the party leadership's communication with members and constituents. It can be used to investigate the role of various interpretations of openness in creating a party line based on its version of populism.

Voter turnout in the 2011 elections reflected distrust of the establishment, particularly the political or media elite, and occasionally big business as well. Many voters must have found the 2011 programme appealing and credible, although it is difficult to determine how many actually read it. The media, however, focused on xenophobic, racist, homophobic, and sexist statements by party members, depicting the Finns Party political agenda as exclusive and isolationist. The party has been described as "nationalistic, tough on immigration, and highly sceptical of the European Union" (Bartlett, Birdwell, and Littler 2011, 28). It supports a strong welfare state and egalitarian social policy, but many of its supporters are also vocal opponents of same-sex marriage and adoption rights for homosexual couples (Jungar and Jupskås 2011, 52; Bartlett, Birdwell, and Littler 2011, 107f). Despite of this, the current understanding of populism within the Finns Party is that it does represent a unique and more efficient means to achieve openness. Openness has been proposed as a cure for disillusionment with democracy, and the methods advocated by the Finns

Party do not differ much from those suggested by many liberal, social democratic, and conservative-led governments in the Nordic countries during the last three or four decades: increased transparency, participation in government, and support of citizens' initiatives.

Several leading members of the Finns Party have participated in research on populism and protest parties. Timo Soini, party secretary of the Finnish Rural Party from 1992 to 1994 and chair of the Finns Party since 1997, distinguished between populism as a political ideology and populism as a derogatory label in his master's thesis in political science (Soini 1987, 2). In this thesis, Soini accepts at face value Peter Wiles's definition of populism as any "article of faith or movement" based on the main premise that virtue dwells in simple, ordinary people, who constitute the majority of the people, and their collective traditions (4f). Soini presents a mixed bag of populism quotations by scholars such as William H. Riker, and sums up: "For populists, the voice of the people is the voice of God [...] Populism is listening to [the] inner voice [...] Populism is something existent, it is a part of everyday life and its routines" (*ibid.*, 6). Soini's populism does have some unchallenged universal traits, such as the need for a strong and charismatic leader such as Veikko Vennamo of the Finnish Rural Party, the party in which Soini himself started his political career (*ibid.*, 27, 45). According to Soini's analysis, the Finnish Rural Party managed to turn derogatory attacks against it to proofs of its authenticity (*ibid.*, 35). He presents the Finnish Rural Party as unquestionably populist while decrying its opponents who used the same word with a different meaning, but it was not until 1992 that the party literally mentioned 'populism' in its programme (Ruostetsaari 2011, 97).

According to Soini's early definition, populism does not claim to possess enlightenment or attempt to educate its voters: it is an 'open' ideology, conveying the people's wishes. If a small group wishes to take advantage of this idea, it must use easily recognizable slogans and demands of openness representing the grievances of the people, but still allow for flexibility in actual policy making. Ernesto Laclau calls this phenomenon the discursive emptiness of populism (2005, 98, 106). This definition is purposefully broad, intending to show that populist methods are intrinsic to democratic practices and politics. Therefore there is no contradiction between the Finns Party's ambition to represent the people and to embrace the formerly denigrating label of populism.

Ilkka Ruostetsaari has studied Finns Party populism by defining the universal elements of populism, then comparing this ideal model to the Finns Party and their predecessor, the Finnish Rural Party. The latter claimed to address the concerns of the rural population left behind during Finland's industrialization in the late twentieth century (Ruostetsaari 2011, 108). Because of social and demographic developments, the Finns Party has developed new strategies to

address concerns of citizens in suburban and urban environments, neither identifying with the 'right' nor the 'left' on the traditional scale of political spectrum. The recent successes of protest parties in Western Europe have been linked to voter disenchantment in declining welfare states (Ivarsflaten 2008, 3f) rather than ideological commitment to a party line (Bartlett, Birdwell, and Littler 2011, 43f). Some aspects of the Finnish welfare state – such as its agrarian origins, the role of the municipalities in implementing social policies, and the moral authority of the Lutheran church – have all been cited as enduring factors in cementing trust in the state (Jokinen and Saaristo 2006, 119). An economy that relies heavily on trade and policies designed to keep the export sector competitive leads to interest mediation and corporatism while stifling public debate and hurting disadvantaged parts of the population (Kosonen 1993, 49f).

The Finnish Rural Party and the Finns Party arose during continuous public debates about the crisis of the welfare state in post-war Finland, which has been described as a state of permanent crisis, in contrast to the more distant past, imagined as harmonious and homogeneous (Jokinen and Saaristo 2006, 126f). Research on the socio-economic transformation of Finnish society in the post-war era has noted that the political elite identified crises and initiated reforms independently of public debate and outside of the democratic process (cf. Kalela 2008, 260–263; Kananen 2011, 235f). If the Finns Party protests against neoliberal reforms that attack the welfare state, one might ask why the Finnish Rural Party failed to gather votes in the early 1990s, when the full impact of public spending cuts hit the municipalities, although the voters expressed support of the welfare state. The party was able to reorganize in 1995 as the 'True Finns' but did not gain momentum until further reforms had been carried out by broad coalition governments between 1995 and 2003 (Kananen 2011, 237f). Parties across the spectrum implemented these reforms in Finland without much regard for the wishes of their voters, something that, according to Johannes Kananen, indicates "a larger gap between the political and bureaucratic elite and the general public" than in some other Nordic countries (2011, 259).

The Finns Party initially refused to be associated with other parties on any ideological scale, keeping in mind the negative effects of the Finnish Rural Party's participation in coalition governments with the same parties who promoted the 'competition state paradigm' to motivate welfare cuts. An important part of a protest party's image is the "open, the spontaneous, and the becoming," in contrast to the perceived isolation, rigidity, and formality of established parties and parliamentary politics (Hartleb 2004, 70). The late Jörg Haider described the Freedom Party of Austria as a 'civil rights movement' that, unlike traditional party structures, promised "more openness and equality of opportunity [for] ambitious, decent, cosmopolitan [*weltoffen*, literally 'open to the world'] citizens"

(*ibid.*, 70, n. 179). Haider was admired, for example, by member of the Finns Party, Olli Immonen, who expressed sorrow at Haider's death and joy at the electoral victories of Haider's party (Jutila and Sundell 2011, 72). Haider's transformation of the formerly liberal Freedom Party of Austria was a success story that showed how new ideas could revitalize an older movement that had lost traction.

In trying to define several emerging political movements in Europe that are outside the confines of established parties, one is caught between the self-designation of the groups themselves and labels applied by their political opponents, who often use the term 'populist' in a pejorative sense, while those on whom it is applied tend to reject it (Canovan 1981, 295f). Scholarly definitions of populism have been criticized for arbitrarily including or excluding aspects of the term and thus making any political rhetoric appear to be populist if it appeals to 'the people' and calls for opposition to elites (Laclau 2005, 3, 7, 10). For example, Matti Wiberg lists a variety of issues that populists apparently resist, including 'intellectuals' and 'tolerance' (2011, 16f), in apparent contradiction of the fact that many Finns Party politicians do not hide their academic credentials and support higher education (Ruostetsaari 2011, 115, 136).

Soini's master's thesis is to a large part a critical analysis of the Finnish Rural Party's political history from the point of view of a political strategist. He shows how an adaptation of the term populism, despite (or in fact because of) its negative connotations, can work in the favour of the Finnish Rural Party or a successor movement. Piggybacking on Margaret Canovan's analysis of populism as 'radical democracy', Soini suggests that the Finnish Rural Party consider how "true and real democracy" cannot be anything else than populist (1987, 37f; Canovan 1981, 173). He defends populism against those who would misrepresent it as an un-ideological movement or merely a protest movement (Soini 1987, 83, 85). If the Finnish Rural Party is to thrive again, Soini argues, it must return to its radical populist roots; the party was able to win those elections where it had successfully set the agenda and had invented the most popular themes of the election campaign (*ibid.*, 94, 96).

The concepts of 'the people' and 'the will of the people' are central to populist movements (Canovan 1999, 3; 2005, 65f). 'The people' can be defined in different ways, according to political needs: on one hand as citizens, as the political community; on the other, as an organic body, sharing the same historical and cultural background; or as the common people without mandate (Wiberg 2011, 19). In democracies, the will of the people gives legitimacy to the prevailing political order, and parties compete to represent it. When the relationship between collective subjectivity and traditional ways of political action is undone, 'a populist moment' is unleashed, creating the critical mass necessary for a protest movement (Puhle 1986, 46f; Goodwyn 1978, 295). Populism

may be seen as a political strategy rather than a coherent ideology. However, a populist moment can be created by a political movement with its own ideological narrative, based on familiar tropes of threat, crisis, heroism, and salvation that resonate with the voters. The Finns Party may have learned this from the Finnish Rural Party's failure to respond to the populist moment brought about by the economic crisis of the early 1990s.

The Finns Party now emphasizes openness and inclusiveness towards anyone with a grievance. When the word openness initially appeared in texts produced by the Finns Party members, it was connected to personal moral values such as honesty, ambition, and hard work. Some texts explicitly defined populism as a defence of morally sound values; in one case, Finns Party activists were encouraged to become populists in the sense of 'defending the people' (Utria 2004, 4). References to openness as a political demand, as opposed to a personal character trait, begin to appear no earlier than in 2008. The Finns Party usage of the word 'populism' became more precise when it was linked to the concept of openness as political action. Its usage increased and culminated in the 2011 programme, which was the most ambitious intellectually to date. The sixty-nine page programme explains openness as an attribute of a functional democratic society, but asserts that it has not yet fulfilled its potential. It depicts the established parties as enforcing closure by concealing the decision making process. The programme dismisses existing systems of collecting citizen feedback and enabling participation as mere customer satisfaction surveys with no effect on actual legislation or administration. "The feedback never reaches the decision makers, but gets caught in the cogwheels of bureaucracy," the election programme claims. The credibility of politicians is undermined if they appear to prefer secrecy and dishonesty (Eduskuntavaaliohjelman 2011, 15). The programme assumes a conflict of interest between the people and a hybrid elite consisting of the political establishment, international capitalist profiteers, and intellectuals out of touch with reality. A stronger political narrative goes beyond stating such specific oppositions – it constructs two absolute opposites, the suppressed majority and the usurping minority, and is used to mobilize supporters for direct action (Budgen, Kouvélakis, and Žižek 2007, 79). This dualist narrative links particular local grievances to a greater picture. The elitist enemy that the Finns Party describes does not simply ignore the opinion of the people; it fears and attempts to stifle it, promoting openness only as a smoke screen. Refusal to discuss subjects that the Finns Party leaders deem important is seen as proof of such insidious obfuscation (Virtanen 2011; Elo 2011). The elite adversary does not find growing differences in income a problem unless the figures are made 'openly' visible (Eskelinen 2010). The 2011 programme has been called a conspiracy theory based on the image of the elite as

a single-minded enemy and the elitist definition of democracy as rule by experts (Ruostetsaari 2011, 114).

The Finnish political culture of consensus is cited as an example of the elite invoking the national interest to stifle dissent and encourage self-censorship. The Finns Party, much like the Finnish Rural Party, presents itself as the leading forum for such dissent. Ernesto Laclau claims that post-industrial populism is a political performance that criticizes the current order without offering alternatives. Protest politics can therefore be seen as an expression of openness in action: "Is not the 'vagueness' of populist discourses the consequence of social reality itself being, in some situations, vague and undetermined?" (Laclau 2005, 11–17). However, some preconditions representing closure, such as an internal antagonistic barrier separating 'the people' from access to power, enable the emergence of 'the people' as a political actor (ibid., 74). The leader of the True Finns, Timo Soini, gradually revealed his view of populism as a double-edged sword that could be used to create a feeling of unification against an external enemy. At a 2005 party rally, Soini claimed that the Finns Party was being "denigrated as populists by using the foreign word as an insult," but at the same event, he announced his support for populism, "that is, the defence of the people" (Soini 2005a; *Perussuomalainen* 2005). Nevertheless, dissent within the party over the use of the label 'populist' continued until 2007 (Soini 2006; 2007; Oinonen 2006; Muurinen 2007). As Finns Party activists increasingly identified themselves as populists, they sometimes accused their political competitors of being 'false populists' (Laakso 2007).

What Laclau describes as the openness inherent in populism may be compared with the openness of democracy itself, according to Pierre Rosanvallon's definition of it as the political in a field open to tensions and uncertainties (2009, 19). The problem of defining a *demos* to represent and mobilize cannot be solved definitively; democracy is a continuous process of negotiation and struggle. Utopian political programmes, however, present 'final' solutions built on permanent demarcation and exclusion. Laclau considers populism the very soul of democracy because of its openness and flexibility. In contrast, Rosanvallon denounces populism as a "perverted inversion of the ideals and methods of democracy" (2006, 269f). While the rise of populism is linked to the crisis in representative democracy, populist suspicion stigmatizes political power until it becomes abhorrent – "a force completely alien to the citizen" (ibid., 273). The political narratives of the Finns Party show traces of such pessimism toward the powers-that-be, but the party programmes express a positive belief in change. This resembles much more closely the kind of 'counter-democracy' that Rosanvallon praises as a vitalizing force in politics. Here we witness how 'populism' is used as a derogatory label disconnected

from the actions and movements it describes. Instead of using a term that has been emptied of meaning and redefined so many times, we would do well to focus on openness instead, as its specific quality.

The concept of openness appears in contradictory senses before the 2011 programme. It had only been mentioned sporadically as a political demand in the party's previous official programmes (*Eurovaaliohjelma* 1999; *Kunnallisvaalijulistus*, 2000). The term appears in the party newsletter from 2004 onwards, but initially was used only to allude to positive character traits or negative political issues, such as 'open borders' that invite terrorism and trafficking in drugs and human beings, as propagandistically enforced by the European Union (EU) (Purho 2005a; Saarakkala 2005g). The 'open society' concept appeared in an article about Sweden written in 2005 by Vesa-Matti Saarakkala, who would later define populism as a political method for the party's purposes. In his travel account of a visit to Stockholm in 2005, he describes the culture of political debate in Sweden as "more open than in Finland;" however, the openness permeating Swedish society is seen as problematic because it has allowed immigration. Despite this, he finds certain advantages to openness; Swedes in general "are friendly to Finns and otherwise seem to appreciate them quite a lot" (Saarakkala 2005e). Apart from that, openness as a specifically Nordic quality attracted only sporadic attention in the party organ (e.g., Sormo 2005; Männistö 2007).

In the political narratives of the Finns Party, openness is a characteristic of an ideal society, but is not yet typical of Finnish society. However, the desire and even demand for openness may be a typically Finnish characteristic. In 2004 party secretary Hannu Purho referred to openness several times in his editorials, either as an unfulfilled promise or as a hope that new generations would overcome the oppression of previous ones (Purho 2004a; 2004b; 2004c). Demands of openness as transparency directed at political institutions appeared in conjunction with the elections to the European Parliament and the debate concerning lack of popular support for the EU constitution (*Perussuomalainen* 2004a; 2004b; Andersson 2007). Such demands were often expressed as futile hopes (Kinnunen 2005; Purho 2007). The public service media channels were accused of doing openness a disservice by spreading propaganda (Saarakkala 2006d; *Perussuomalaisten nuorten hallitus* 2007).

If Finnish society at present does not fulfil its promise of openness, the True Finns have to demonstrate that they have the means to change it. To reinforce its image as a democratic alternative, the party emphasizes inclusiveness and invites the public to join a party that is "open to all honest and constructive forces" (Soini 2004). Care is taken to extend the message to educated people as well as the youth (Soini 2007; Valpas 2007). While there is some evidence of a

reverent attitude towards the party seniors, respect for hierarchy is combined with openness as a personal quality. “Guidance will surely be available if you determinedly follow the tried and true True Finn path while keeping your ears and mind open” (Huru, Mäenpää, and Jalonen 2009). The media is framed as the outer enemy, trying to sow dispute with rumours but ultimately failing because of the united movement of the Finns Party (*ibid.*). It is not the media that conveys openness, but the party members themselves. The original name of the party, ‘True Finns’, becomes part of the performance of authenticity, a conscious choice to open up the distinctions between the party, its leaders, and the people at large.¹

Openness to the wishes of the public is also mentioned as a prerequisite for becoming an activist in the party (Kaunisaho 2011). Openness is an idealized character trait in the aforementioned testimonial-style statements. Celebratory articles on noteworthy party activists mentioned openness and honesty as desirable attributes (Aho 2006; Kalmari 2007; Jalonen and Laiho 2009; Männistö 2009b; Lehto 2010; Liukkonen 2011). Openness and honesty may also be linked to control, not only of decision makers, according to the transparency ideal, but also of immigration, through open debate (Kuusinen 2011). Desirable immigrants are described as open, and they may laud the Finns Party for their openness in return. In a speech in the 2009 elections for the European Parliament, Belgian-born candidate Freddy van Wonterghem described himself as an ‘open discussion partner’ who was familiar with different European cultures of debate, able to promote his cause without insulting his opponent, and armed with ‘clear Finnish language’ to defeat the ‘techno-babble’ prevalent in EU discourse (2009).² A Vietnamese-born Finns Party supporter was introduced as an ideal immigrant, a hard worker concerned with the welfare of the elderly. She was praised for her open and friendly attitude, while on her part she said she appreciated the party for its “frank and straightforward” speech on social problems (Terho 2009). Open mind and open speech serve as proof of an individual’s honest character, and the party’s as well.

Beyond unfulfilled promises, threats to security, and positive personal characteristics, mentions of openness as transparency and accountability were made in the context of municipal politics and decision making processes (Männistö 2008b; Huru, Mäenpää, and Jalonen 2009; Nurmo 2011). Finns Party politicians registered their initial successes and gathered their first experiences

1 Perussuomalaiset is still the official Finnish-language name of the party, despite the English moniker ‘Finns Party’. The prefix *perus* carries several meanings, including basic, base, cardinal, comprehensive (in education), elementary, essential, primary (Hurme 2002, 531).

2 Van Wonterghem was convicted of hate speech a few years later (Koivisto 2013).

of policy making on the municipal level. In city and municipal councils, newly-elected representatives declared their intention to promote “active and open politics” (Herranen 2009) according to their election promises and create “a new open decision making culture” (Kataja 2009). As they gathered valuable experiences for future parliamentary elections, Finns Party activists placed great importance on the self-determination of the municipalities and resisted the trend toward municipal mergers by arguing for administrative transparency (Valpas and Jääskeläinen 2011; Nurmo 2011). Lea Mäkipää, a municipal politician, declared herself a supporter of openness as an integral part of cooperation for the common good with her ‘unconditionally open’ working method (Kukkonen 2009). We find several examples of such reconciliatory discourse in the municipalities, compared to writings on government politics. In municipal elections as well as on the national level, individual candidates have to ‘perform’ openness through such public testimonials as the one above. Declaring one’s political ideals and goals and reaching out to the public in a personal gesture demonstrates purported ability to represent ‘ordinary people’ or ‘the silent majority’. This can be expressed in political statements and communication styles, or through lifestyle and social and cultural habits (Jungar 2011).

The Finns Party has not been the only one to appropriate the concepts of openness and transparency. Some of the opinion pieces in *Perussuomalainen* protest and ridicule other parties’ claims of advocating openness. There is an ongoing political struggle over the concept and the right of certain groups to use it and even define it. Disillusionment has led to valid demands for an open and democratic society. Openness is also utilized as a means of controlling those in power. Pirkko Ruohonen-Lerner, chair of the Finns Party parliamentary group 2011–2014, has been an eloquent advocate of openness as transparency. “Are we going to coddle those in power, or are we going to dig up occasionally painful and shameful truths, which will also be told to the people?” she asked, referring to the duties of a political activist (2011a). Ruohonen-Lerner’s call for openness attacked the informal, illegitimate control exercised by big business on ostensible partners in municipal and state-level decision making systems (cf. the interviews in Männistö 2008a; Lappalainen 2012). She demanded a working implementation of the principle of public access in state administration and criticized the Katainen government for use of the openness concept in a programme entitled “Open, fair and courageous Finland.” According to Ruohonen-Lerner, the preparation of this programme was anything but open. Representatives of the media, and thus the whole Finnish people, were excluded from the negotiations, she claimed (2011b). Here the media that sometimes also appears as an adversary of the Finns Party is granted the status of representatives of the people.

Openness can become a tool for differentiation and exclusion. Populists exercise their democratic right of demanding openness, but the reaction is often to paint them as enemies of openness. Slavoj Žižek mocks this reaction as “one of near panic [...] at a parochial rejection of openness and liberal multiculturalism” (Budgen, Kouvélakis, and Žižek 2007, 77). According to him, such liberal ‘openness’ belongs to the privileged, who disregard the real socio-economic issues behind the political actions of voters. A blatant use of openness in this sense can be seen in the editorials of Finland’s leading newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* when the city council of Helsinki rejected a proposal from the Guggenheim Foundation. The editorials lumped together the Finns Party with all the more or less organized groups resisting the Guggenheim proposal in a dour image of a provincial nation closing down on itself (“Helsingin seu-dulla...” 2012; “Helsinki ei tarvitse...” 2012). A guest editorial pointed out that the main lesson of the Guggenheim dismissal might be the need to increase openness in the decision making process (Heikka and Siivonen, 2012). The conflicting matter of openness and power has not been ignored by populism scholars such as Margaret Canovan, who has noted that greater opportunities for citizens to participate in policy making make democracy less transparent because the decision-making process becomes increasingly complex (cf. Canovan 2005, 84f). The 2011 programme inverts this observation by blaming the complexity of the system for decreasing possibilities of democratic action and suggesting that the solution is to simplify it (Eduskuntavaaliohjelman 2011, 7). Rosanvallón describes the citizens’ reaction to this deficiency of the system as an ‘unspoken goal’ for keeping power in check and weakening it with demands of openness. The 2011 programme goes on to demand a “transparent system of decision making” that would improve a citizen’s possibilities of understanding and controlling it (ibid., 7). While Rosanvallón describes several ways to utilize the surveillance functions of citizens to the advantage of democracy, he warns of what may happen if responsibility is replaced by the ephemeral concept of transparency and thereby displacing the concrete goal of the common good. The new utopia of openness becomes a force for perpetuating disappointment in an uncertain world, although it was supposed to conjure it away (Rosanvallón 2006, 261f). Openness, used as a slogan by elites, may be met with justified suspicion, but populist attempts to reach the previously inaccessible do not guarantee success.

The word ‘populism’ appeared in a positive light initially among a very limited group of contributors to the True Finn newsletter. In 2005, the chairman of the party’s youth organization, Vesa-Matti Saarakkala, found much common ground between what he defined as European right-wing populism and the Finns Party, except in economic and social policy, and predicted an even closer

alignment in the future if certain problems in society were to increase (Saarakkala 2005a). This apparently scholarly article, based on a graded paper written by Saarakkala during his political science studies at the University of Jyväskylä, provoked a senior activist to accuse Saarakkala of promoting the agenda of a right-wing fringe (for subsequent discussion, cf. Uski 2005a, 5, 14; Uski 2005b, 7, 15). After becoming vice-chairman of the party, Saarakkala began to develop a definition of populism more suitable to its needs, going as far as selling t-shirts with the word 'populist' printed on them and promoting his definition of populism as a political ideology built on the basis of his university studies (Saarakkala 2005c; 2005d; 2005f; 2006b; 2009; Eerikäinen 2006). Other contributors struggled with the concept, calling rival parties 'closet populists', 'silly populists', or 'billboard populists' (Purho 2005b; 2006).

Timo Soini now revealed his familiarity with the positive interpretation of the concept. Populism in its positive sense meant discussing questions of interest to the people that had been avoided by the 'old parties' (Soini 2005b). Before the 2011 programme, populism had appeared only rarely in connection with openness in the party newspaper, in one instance as a twist of its derogatory sense. Translating bureaucratized Finnish to everyday speech was ironically called populism, so that to 'speak populism' was to promote openness (Purho 2005c; Orre 2009). Those who would use the word populism in a negative sense were seen as employing language to obscure their aims, mislead the people, and profit thereby. However, they were considered to have failed in every case, even the financial one, and fearing disclosure had to continue lying to hide their failure. Saarakkala recalled the heritage of the Finnish Rural Party and its resistance to the enforced consensus of the post-war era, a period of appeasement towards the Soviet Union, when people dared not to speak out to defend themselves or their allies openly (2006d). This could be interpreted as an outreach to the veterans of the Finnish Rural Party who still thought of populism as a denigrating concept.

Openness became an explicit political goal in the 2011 programme in the same context where the party was identified as populist. Saarakkala acted as chairman of the working group in charge of the programme, and his influence can be clearly seen. One has only to compare his statement that "populism means acting in a position of trust like one's own voters would act" (Saarakkala 2005b) with an excerpt from the 2011 programme, where populism is described as a system of governance, the goal of which is to introduce transparency in order to simplify a complicated system:

In populism, the citizen can identify those who use power on different political levels, and thus as a voter hold the policy makers responsible

[for their actions]. [...] Unclear political systems are apt to feed oligarchy and bureaucracy. The more complicated the system, the less democratic it is. The worst abuse of power is faceless power. A prerequisite of a functional democracy is a transparent system of decision making that is easy for the citizen to comprehend and to follow.

EDUSKUNTAVALIOHJELMA 2011, 7

Saarakkala had detached openness from its previous context of EU propaganda and liberal multiculturalism, and had integrated it into a positive self-identification as populist (2006d). Openness as access to information and the transparency of public administration is part of the reformulated populism concept whose most eloquent definition was published in *Perussuomalainen* five years before the 2011 elections:

How, then, can one know how those voters would act? By speaking as a candidate in a populist way on issues, that is, comprehensively in the popular tongue, whereupon everyone voting for a populist knows what they are voting for. [...] Politicians with an elitist notion of democracy often brag about their ability to resist popular opinion and to make so-called hard decisions. Elitism has one problem, however: because elitist politicians do not speak comprehensively, but in a roundabout way, they can never be held accountable for their decisions [...] they can always claim that they were misunderstood.

SAARAKKALA 2006b

The stereotype of the dishonest elite is contrasted with an organic notion of society, which explains why popular opinion is always deemed to be correct. In the 2011 programme, openness and moral values appear intertwined, but the hierarchy is clear: Strong moral values are the foundation of social policy and health care and require that citizens be kept informed of society's obligations and their rights and responsibilities. The social system "must constitute in the eyes of the citizen a clear whole, which comprehensibly communicates to the individual what the majority of the citizens want in a democracy" (Eduskuntavaaliohjelma 2011, 20). According to the 2011 programme, decisions in the past have not been made according to principles of democratic openness, thus undermining citizens' trust in their peers and civic institutions. However, methods to enhance openness that are introduced by government officials are met with apprehension. The notion that the government is deliberately withholding information from the citizens is repeated in the party organ in connection with EU policy and the social consequences of economic policy

(Soini 2005c). On the pages of *Perussuomalainen*, the ‘fat cat’ or ‘parasite’ image of the elite is projected not on the financial leadership, but the political elite:

The rich get wealthy in Finland while the poor voter accepts the crumbs that fall from the tables of fat members of government as they sit under crystal chandeliers and in the back seat of black government limousines where ministers munch on caviar sandwiches.

LINDELL 2011C

The caricature implies that the true representatives of the people would not act that way if they occupied the same seats. Openness is thus not a precondition of certain policies, but rather the desired outcome. Before there can be openness, there has to be trust between different levels of society – trust that, according to this narrative, has been systematically undermined. The goal is to open up power by putting the right people in the right positions, which implies a basic trust in representative democracy despite alleged abuses.

Researchers measuring civic trust have used the term ‘generalized trust’ to describe the ability of an individual or group to participate successfully in society, for example, through various social networks. The European Values Survey has stated that the ability to trust people unlike oneself is necessary to make individual civic engagement possible, and it has attempted to measure this ability. The survey analysts noted that the citizens of the Nordic countries displayed higher levels of generalized trust than the European average (Bartlett, Birdwell, and Littler 2011, 69–74). Finns Party supporters expressed slightly less trust in the police and the army than the national average, considerably less trust in the judiciary but more than the populist and even the European average. They showed less trust in the government, the EU, and in mainstream media – precisely those institutions associated with the disingenuous elite in the Finns Party narratives (Bartlett, Birdwell, and Littler 2011, 80f). The existence of the educated elite has been an ideological conundrum in the historical development of Finnish nationalism, which has emphasized social egalitarianism and the virtues of the common people since the late nineteenth century. Early Finnish nationalism, however, was conceptualized by Swedish-speaking public servants and intellectuals under the aegis of the Russian emperor (Jokinen and Saaristo 2006, 34f). The elite claims to work for the common good, but its loyalties are questioned by rival groups because of its ambiguous position ‘above’ and yet ‘within’ the people (Elmgren 2008, 168, 182, 218).

The Finns Party’s disillusioned views on the corrosive effects of power contrast with the members’ belief in the moral qualities of their own organization.

If the old elite has become corrupt, what guarantees that the new one will fare better? “Because,” a supporter responds, “True Finns are honestly for [the] Finnish cause, and don’t conform [to] other parties’ consensus policies” (Bartlett, Birdwell, and Littler 2011, 51). According to the 2011 programme, the unique national qualities of the Finnish nation guarantee solidarity among its members and ensure its success in international competition. Therefore the national interest should always be placed first (Eduskuntavaaliohjelma 2011, 33f). The programme maintains that populism is not a universal ideology; rather, it is connected to culture and the national mentality. In his writings on populism 2005 and 2006, Saarakkala had not yet made an explicit connection between cultural nationalism and populism, but this development had already been predicted in Timo Soini’s master’s thesis: “Populism is always national and must be interpreted through its national premises” (Soini 1987, 14). This factor makes it possible for Soini and Saarakkala, among others, to reject undesirable political influences as un-Finnish and therefore anti-populist. The 2011 programme does not discuss the possibilities of civic nationalism based on constitutional rights and duties, but insists that homogeneity in the cultural sphere ensures the protection of even the weakest citizens, in contrast to “supra-national politics that force individuals to move across borders” (ibid., 7). Immigration is seen as the result of undesirable processes: undemocratic decisions imposed on a vulnerable society with the potential to become harmonious and internally open.

Finns fear the effects of immigration on the economy and culture more than average Europeans. The comparison is especially striking with regard to other Nordic countries, which have significantly higher proportions of workforce immigration and refugees (Kestilä 2005, 369f). According to Statistics Finland, 279,616 persons ‘of foreign origin’ lived in Finland in 2012 (i.e., 5.2 per cent of the population). This number includes individuals both of whose parents, or the only known parent, were born abroad. The majority of this group, 59 per cent, was of ‘European background’, including the largest immigrant groups that originated from the Soviet Union, Russia, and Estonia (Suomen virallinen tilasto 2012). However, the media debate on immigration often specifically focuses on Muslims and immigrants of Middle Eastern and African origin, the largest relevant groups being people of Somali (approx. 14,600) and Iraqi background (approx. 10,700 in a population of 5.4 million) (classified according to the native country of one or both parents, ibid.).

Finland has been characterized as a country of emigrants rather than immigrants, mainly in the form of workforce migration to the United States and elsewhere in the early twentieth century and to Sweden in the 1950s to 1970s. After an early refugee wave of tens of thousands escaping the Russian

Revolution, Finland adopted a strict line against political refugees (Salmio 2000, 22). Finnish immigration officials in the post-war era generally chose to interpret the Geneva Refugee Convention of 1951 in the strictest possible way (Salmio 2000, 24). From the mid-1980s, refugee policy changed to adopt humanitarian goals, and a refugee quota was introduced (Sagne et al. 2007, 101). Workforce immigration has also increased over the last three decades, which accounts for a sizable proportion of the immigrants from Russia and Estonia (Sagne et al. 2007, 106). When labour immigration is discussed in the media, public opinion is polarized between those who view it as necessary to replenish an ageing population and those who fear the consequences for the local labour market (ibid., 109). Because of the low starting levels, the increase of the immigrant population has been among the fastest in Europe, although the total percentage is still among the lowest (Saukkonen et al. 2007, 7). According to one interpretation, there has been a transition from external (Soviet) compulsion to internal pressure to limit refugee reception and immigration. Increasingly, immigration is seen as a threat to internal security, instead of as a threat to foreign relations (Salmio 2000, 25).

The 2011 programme of the Finns Party addresses this fear with suspicions directed at the hidden interests supposedly benefitting from the flow of migration. The potential voters are told that trust is not built on social and legal contracts between the citizens and the state, but on the ethnic and cultural ties that have been used in the past to appease conflicts between social classes. As the English summary of the 2011 programme puts it, "citizenship must be a reward" (*Fit for the Finns* 2011, 4). Solidarity, as a willingness to pay taxes, is seen as only possible within a homogeneous community (Eduskuntavaaliohjelmä 2011, 46f). According to this view, multiculturalism leads to citizens' loss of trust in the welfare state, and this is to the advantage of those who profit from its destruction.

This view is not exclusive or endemic to the Finns Party. The widespread narrative of immigration as an abnormal phenomenon in Finnish history reinforces the belief that ethnic homogeneity is the normal and even desirable state of Finnish society, and this belief is shared by a much larger section of the population than the Finns Party and its supporters. Even Finnish welfare state scholars have claimed that Finland has been able to implement progressive social policies because it has not experienced serious conflicts connected to ethnicity or nationality (Anttonen and Sipilä 2000, 46f; repeated by Jokinen and Saaristo 2006, 119). Historian Jyrki Loima has refuted this harmonious narrative by recalling the conscious efforts in independent Finland to overcome the trauma of the Civil War of 1918 (2006, 203f). One wonders on what basis the judgement is made that ethnic or national differences are more difficult to overcome than class conflict escalating to actual bloodshed.

A prerequisite for active political organization despite distrust in power is that trust in fellow citizens and legal means of activism is still preserved, whether because of the still functional democratic society at work, or because of the belief in sharp distinctions between 'us' and 'them'. This may explain the prevailing trust in institutions seen as closer to the 'people', such as the army and the police. Institutions patrolling the borders in a literal or figurative sense are highly valued in the discourse of the Finns Party, but enemy stereotypes based on the antagonists of the police (criminals) and the army (foreign powers) may become conflated with political opponents.

While anti-immigration parties have been accused of being against openness in the liberal sense of open mobility and open markets, the definition of openness as employed by some Finns Party activists is their motivation for limiting overall immigration. For example, the board of the Finns Party's women's organization has claimed that immigration policy has failed in Finland and that an open debate is of vital importance to the country's future. The precondition for such an open debate was to accept the statement of failure as a fact, that is, openness within limits was employed to repair the damage caused by indiscriminate openness (*Perussuomalaiset naiset ry* 2008). Consistent with his criticism of Sweden as a different kind of 'open society', Saarakkala warned of the consequences of Western openness toward Muslims. According to him, the integration of Islam was not possible, since it seemed to be "closer to its roots and therefore stronger than Western culture" (Saarakkala 2006a). From this perspective, Western openness appears to be impossible to defend without closing it off culturally and geopolitically.

Before the 2011 elections, a declaration by the so-called immigration critics within the Finns Party was made public in a conference on populism organized by the youth organization of the party, with Saarakkala and anti-immigration blogger Jussi Halla-aho among the main speakers. This "negative election manifesto" ("*Nuiva vaalimanifesti*" 2010) was signed by thirteen Finns Party municipal politicians including Saarakkala, Halla-aho, van Wouterghem, and Olli Immonen, who promised to promote its causes if they were elected to Parliament. 'Negative' refers to the signees' attitude towards supposedly 'uncontrolled' immigration as a "blatant abuse of Finnish naivety." The manifesto was also published in *Perussuomalainen* and caused a furore in the media. The connection between reclaimed populism and an exclusive and protectionist definition of the nation state became apparent. The manifesto expressed little concern for the popular openness-as-transparency issues in the discourse of the Finns Party. 'Openness' was only used to mean regulation and control, rather than accountability or civic participation. The electorate was reassured that a Finland under the Finns Party would be kept "open to immigration with

neutral or positive effects” (‘Nuiva vaalimanifesti’ 2010). This platform influenced the section on immigration from the 2011 parliamentary election programme (Eduskuntavaaliohjelma 2011, 40f). In previous elections, the party had made immigration an openness issue by explicitly describing the immigration of cheap labour force as a method used by certain transnational powers (‘international capitalism’) to clandestinely lower wages and destroy Finland’s supposed advantage of having cultural homogeneity in international competition (*Perussuomalaisen EU-vaaliohjelma* 2009, 3f; Eduskuntavaaliohjelma 2011, 42).

This narrative resembles the populist conspiracy theory model described by Mark Fenster (1999, 63–67). A conspiracy theory gains in political value the more vehemently it is denied. In the discourse of the Finns Party, the authorities’ unwillingness to debate certain issues such as immigration policy and related problems on the Finns Party’s terms is translated into denial caused by fear of openness as accountability. Populist demands of increased openness in policy making and administration may be the public face of pessimist conspiracy theories articulated within an inner circle of outwardly open populist groups. They put forward the image of “an unwitting and unwilling populace in thrall to the secretive machinations of power” (Fenster 1999, 63). The 2011 programme refers to older nationalist tropes of Finland as a small but inherently virtuous nation defending itself against overwhelming external aggressors, a narrative based on historical experience, but also perpetuated in popular fiction. The use of this grand narrative is not limited to the Finns Party. It is familiar to Finnish citizens through the literary canon and popular culture of the last two hundred years. Reasons for internal conflicts of interest are sought outside of the nation in order to (re)unify it. Those who disagree with the proposed solutions are then associated with the ‘outside forces’, the enemy. They are symbolically expelled from the national community in order to maintain ideal unity. This ideological purification process is self-perpetuating, because total homogeneity can never be achieved (Elmgren 2008, 179, 220, 232–241).

However, there is no lack of cautionary examples of the opposite. The EU according to the Finns Party is a failed creation of civic trust. Timo Soini, who served from 2009 to 2011 as member of the European Parliament, denounced it as an ‘impossible mix’, a ‘cocktail of peoples’ that could not function as a federation and had nothing to do with democracy because the essential trust would not be possible to create within a heterogeneous community (Soini 2010, 1, 10). Paradoxically, Soini describes the international contacts that he made in the parliamentary group Europe of Freedom and Democracy in positive terms. “Here you get along by working and being open to cooperation,” he states, before he warns against the EU’s coming ‘post-democratic society’ (ibid.). The core of the problem is seen as a lack of openness caused by the corruption of

morals that stems from the natural lack of solidarity between essentially different nations. Soini's solution is simple: the Finnish parliament ought not to back up any loan programmes in support of the indebted member states, but the unnamed "resources should be used to aid Finns in dire straits." The openness and honesty advocated by Soini consists in a refusal to participate in anything except taking care of one's own national electorate.

Because populism extolled as a morally sound policy is conflated with openness as a political demand for access to power, a lack of openness in institutions and administration can be explained as the result of moral corruption, rather than as an inherent complication of democracy (Nordlin 2009). The election finance scandal of 2008 presented an excellent opportunity to profit politically from the embarrassment of major parties (Männistö 2009a; Jutila and Sundell 2011, 69).

The secrecy surrounding the financing of election campaigns and the reluctance to give straight answers was a perfect example of the patronizing attitude of 'the old parties', who lacked 'humility and openness' towards their own voters. Although it was lamented that the reputation of Finnish politicians had been sullied at home and abroad, the whole debacle confirmed what the Finns Party had already known. The 'new and open' Centre Party was nothing but the old and closed party in a new guise (Elo 2011, 2, 6). The Social Democrats were attacked with indignation for their "rude selfishness, lies and inappropriate action" (Nieminen 2009). While the original law on party financing was supposed to guarantee transparency and neutral surveillance, it resulted in many parties concealing legally superfluous donations, even a considerable amount of public funds (Uski 2009). A proposed solution called for even more openness – radically opening up political financing and demanding information of investors before the elections, not afterwards. As public surveillance of the scandal increased and individuals were exposed, even *Perussuomalainen* expressed some unease over the uncomfortable topic, blaming the media for wearying the public with sensationalism (Männistö 2009c).

In the parliamentary elections of 2011, the Finns Party reaped a historical bumper harvest. After the first triumphant comments, a considerably more bitter tone was used by Harri Lindell, the editor-in-chief of the party newsletter, on an election success that did not translate into government participation (2011b). He berated the other parties and the Finnish media, not going so far as to accuse the media of actively trying to manipulate voters, but airing his suspicions as rhetorical questions that were left open to the interpretation of the reader. A vote for the Finns Party was a way of speaking up and contributing to future openness, despite past closure, but Lindell noted pessimistically that 'the light of reason' would not 'light up the darkness' in which the government

was wandering. The enemy – the establishment, the media, and the politicians in power – could not only be understood as acting in its own interest. Its behaviour could only be made comprehensible if it were depicted as rooted in ignorance, unable to admit the truth. Metaphors of stupidity, darkness, and disease were used. “What kind of openness can such a government carry out, if it is not even open and honest towards the voters?” (Lindell 2011c).

Strategies that would guarantee the honesty and trust to make the desired openness possible were needed. Some practical examples of citizens' initiatives were presented in the party paper. Calls for meetings and debates stressed open participation by all members of the public (Pihlman 2006; *Perussuomalainen* 2006; Haapanen 2010; Lindell 2011a). At such meetings there is always the risk of someone taking advantage of freedom of speech to spread harmful messages and damage the party's cause. It is difficult to enforce party discipline when a party's principles include freedom of expression and defiance of authority. Various media scandals and convictions after the 2011 elections have caused the party leadership to enforce disciplinary measures against some members (Ahokas 2012). Recent challenges have included renegade members defying the leadership with public demands of transparency within the party (Kammonen 2012; Seppänen and Miettinen 2012). However, a strategy for creating trust, formulated by the xenophobic elements within the party, has been the exclusion of those elements in society that can most easily be depicted as undermining the assumed 'natural' solidarity between the citizens. This strategy can also be used against dissenting elements within the party, a subject for further study. A challenge for the party may be brewing within the ranks of the youth organization, where Chairman Simon Elo has advocated a 'tax rebellion' and a 'national liberal' critique of the welfare state to attract middle-class voters, citing the flight of Gérard Depardieu to Russia to escape taxation in France as an example of the disastrous consequences of 'euro-socialism' (Elo 2013). This would re-define the populism of the Finns Party as the voice of the middle-class entrepreneur who is dissatisfied with the distributive policies of the welfare state. Recently, party leader Soini has also come out in support of cuts in social welfare and public health services (Salokorpi 2014).

The openness discourse in the 2011 programme denies the possibility of an open and fair welfare state or open policy making on any other basis than a nationally homogeneous people. Supporters of the Finns Party do not have to prove that they belong in it, but others – elites or minorities – however innocuous and compatible with liberal democracy, are interpreted as potential threats to the nation. Opinions and actions questioning a homogeneous national base and the mere existence of individuals or groups that contradict it are perceived as threatening the welfare of the nation. This idea enables an

environment where potentially inflammatory remarks towards minorities become more acceptable and may lead to outbursts of symbolic violence in the form of racism, sexism, and homophobia conveyed by tabloid headlines to the general public (Miettinen 2011). Similarly, the Finns Party may defend austerity policies if they are directed towards others than their potential constituents.

The label 'populist' was initially appropriated with some self-irony and later defined the Finns Party's political ideology. The populist demand for openness is rooted in grievances caused by disillusionment with consensus politics and a perceived lack of alternatives in the parliamentary system. However, there have been great individual differences in the use of the openness concept as well as in the solutions offered. The adoption of the label 'populism' for what is in fact cultural nationalism does not only coincide with the rise of openness issues. It may be the reason that demands for openness become more specific in the Finns Party's most recent election programme. Demands of openness in political discourse are demands for access to power – means and not ends. The civic demand for openness cannot be denied in a democracy. However, the civic model increasingly preferred by the Finns Party is based on ethno-cultural, not civic or constitutional, nationalism.

This model is justified with the reasoning that democratic openness is only possible in a culturally and historically homogeneous nation state. Immigration can, according to this view, only lead to citizens' loss of trust in the welfare state, and this is assumed to be in the interest of those who profit by the destruction of public welfare. However, if the defence of the welfare state is dropped from the programme, the social pretext for criticism of immigration policies disappears. What Saarakkala and others call 'populism' is an unconstitutional, ideological limitation of the group that has the right to participate in the political life of the Republic of Finland. According to the rhetoric of this populism, openness is no longer a method of governance as a means to improve democracy. Openness becomes an ideal state of affairs in a closed utopia, the privilege of a select few.

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The Procedural Openness of Nordic Welfare State Restructuring

Johannes Kananen

Openness is a fundamental element of the democratic ideal, allowing citizens access to the realm of political power and giving them a role in its exercise. However, openness may be conceptualized and understood in many ways and more specific perspectives on openness are bound to vary. *Administrative openness* is perhaps the most straightforward way of understanding what openness is about: in a transparent and democratic society citizens ought to have access to information concerning the implementation of laws and regulations. This kind of openness is part of the Scandinavian and Nordic self-image, but this self-image may be delusive in many ways.

Another common notion is that modern societies are progressing towards ever higher degrees of openness. The fall of the Soviet Union and the success of the European Union (EU) to include new member states might lead to declarations of the final victory of the politics of openness and transparency. This notion may prove to be as delusive as the notion of openness as something essentially Nordic or Scandinavian.

The Nordic welfare state has been popular among its citizens and has gained international attention. The traditional post-war Nordic model included ideals of solidarity and equality that were put into practice through rigorously maintained public welfare policies. In the 1990s this welfare model became subject to restructuring as a result of major ideological changes in politics. At stake was the openness of the legislative changes that came about as part of the restructuring process.

Hence, *procedural openness* is another dimension of our theme. In the Nordic countries policy change typically involves legislative change as well. The Nordic countries follow the civil law tradition with its detailed regulation of both private and public life. We understand procedural openness as referring to the exercise of legislative powers and it includes the processes whereby political issues are debated publicly, power resources of political parties are decided, and legislation drafted by governments and decided upon by parliaments. This understanding of procedural openness draws on discussions of 'procedural democracy', a term sometimes used in order to refer to democratic ideals, such as effective participation, voting equality,

understanding of political choices, and control over the political agenda (Gordon 2001).

The chapter will proceed as follows: first the concept of procedural openness will be discussed in terms of the usage of power. Second, the case of Nordic welfare state restructuring will be analysed from the point of view of openness and the usage of power. Third, drawing on the preceding presentation, the concluding section will present the argument that the usage of power that emerged along with the restructuring of the Nordic welfare state significantly compromised the ideals associated with procedural openness of decision making.

Openness and the Usage of Power

Powerful elites may not always desire procedural openness, depending on the way power is used. Conventionally power may be seen as a means to maintain order. This is an obvious aspect since it affects most social encounters: society is dominated by rules which are enforced in various ways – ultimately by the use of physical force. However, there is a complementary aspect of power, namely, power as a means of implementing ideals. This is a particular feature of post-Enlightenment Western societies in which a form of power has emerged that is preoccupied with changing the existing order towards an imagined ideal. One can think of the motto of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, fraternity as a summary of such a utopia (Rahkonen 1996).

The common distinction between power *over* (domination) and power *to* (empowerment) also sheds light upon different uses of power (Haugaard 2012). Behind the distinction applied here is a question about how those in power intend to shape societies. Thus, domination may be the most efficient way to maintain order, whereas empowerment may be more efficient in guiding societies toward certain ideals.

Table 7.1 shows how the function and desirability of openness varies depending on the way power is used.¹ The distinction between power as maintaining order and power as implementing ideals is meant as a heuristic description of two sides of a concept. In abstract terms a balance between these two aspects

1 There is a venerable tradition in the social sciences studying power. Marx discussed both ideals and power struggles, Weber illustrated how administrative power worked, Foucault examined the subtle techniques of using power, and Habermas clarified some of the ideals associated with power, just to mention a few classic examples (Marx 1986; Weber 1968; Foucault 1997; Habermas 2001).

TABLE 7.1 *The two aspects of power*

	Power as maintaining order	Power as implementing ideals
Relationship between individual and society	Individual viewed as object of manipulation and control	Individual viewed as a resource
Communication of political key concepts	Defining boundaries by defining legitimate use of concepts	Eliminating boundaries through innovative use of concepts
Relation to legitimacy	Legitimacy equals continuity of existing power relations	Legitimacy equals moral justification of change
Relation to procedural openness	Openness seen as a threat to power relations	Openness seen as an end in itself

of power is required for sustainable socio-political development. Constant or too rapid change will probably result in uncontrolled chaos, whereas coercive control may lead to cultural decline. A normatively desirable use of power would contain elements of both order and progress; the relationship between these may depend on the socio-cultural context in which power is used.

As Table 7.1 shows, the two aspects of power can be distinguished in a number of dimensions. They differ in terms of their relation to the individual citizen. On the one hand, individuals may be regarded as objects to be controlled or manipulated in order to maintain existing hierarchies. On the other hand, if individuals are regarded as resources, they may be engaged in the process of implementing ideals and thus become agents of power.

Communication is crucial to the use of power (Castells 2013; Marklund 2010) and any order is expressed in terms of language. The stability of language and the use of concepts reflect the stability of this order just as conceptual shifts and new ways of viewing the world will likely change it. Political scientists have termed this a ‘paradigm shift’ (Hall 1993; Béland and Cox 2011; on social policy concepts, see Béland and Petersen 2014). The public and political usage of key concepts reflects the way power is used.

The two aspects of power also relate differently to legitimacy. If the aim is to protect the existing order, legitimacy is useful in so far as it secures continuity. In such a case the aim is usually to ensure that no acts of power can be contested in any court of law. Also, the search for legitimacy can seek to build elite networks of like-minded people who are initiated into controlling the reins of

power (cf. Heiskala and Kantola 2010). However, if those in power wish to implement ideals, legitimacy may involve gaining the moral justification for a programme of change. Legitimacy among the larger community thus becomes not a means to an end but an end itself. The public realm becomes vital for this kind of legitimacy.

In conventional understandings of democracy, procedural openness (last row in Table 7.1) is thought to be achieved by fair elections. For various reasons, procedural openness may, however, be obscured: if the power elites seek to maintain existing power relations without bringing about a utopia, procedural openness appears obsolete or potentially dangerous. If, on the other hand, power is used to challenge the existing order, procedural openness has a completely different function. It becomes an essential element through which citizens can achieve change in accordance with some utopia they may have. Thus, the procedural openness of policy making appears to depend on the way in which power is used.

The Era of Nordic Collectivism 1945–1990

Relationship between Individual and Society

During the post-war period redistributive social policies were instituted in the Nordic countries. One of their aims was to promote equality of opportunity in society. Wealth and income differences were not very great by international standards when modernization, industrialization, and post-war social policies began to create a more equitable order. The circumstances of one's birth played an ever decreasing role in determining an individual's life chances.

Equality of opportunity as a policy goal may be roughly equivalent to the ideal that all people should be able to realize their individual potential. Conversely, if social and economic opportunities remain unequally distributed, much human potential, in particular that of oppressed groups may be wasted. Thus, on an ideological level the goal of full employment accords well with the utilization of all the resources in society. Full employment was one of the goals pursued in post-war Nordic employment policy.

Nordic welfare state institutions were founded upon a compromise between conflicting interests (Kettunen 2006; Hilson 2008). During the early part of the twentieth century employers wanted to accumulate capital and assure a ready supply of labour. Workers, on the other hand wanted to increase their rights and social recognition. This led to worldwide conflicts and unrest. The post-war institutions that emerged in the Nordic countries reflect efforts to find a balance between the interests of the industrial partners. Since the agricultural

sector represented a great proportion of the economy during the early part of the twentieth century, compromises with agrarian political representatives were also necessary for reaching consensus (Hilson 2008, 33).

In Sweden, this 'class compromise' proceeded in a number of steps, starting with the historic Saltsjöbaden agreement in 1938, when employers and workers agreed on the rules for industrial action. Workers also abandoned radical socialist goals. During the 1920s and 1930s, the Swedish Social Democratic Workers' Party (*Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti*, SAP) moved toward an understanding of social democracy that was a compromise between capitalism and socialism (Åmark 2005, 63f). Leaders such as Ernst Wigforss, Per Albin Hansson, and Gustaf Möller created a sense of responsibility for the sustainable development of the entire nation-state, establishing the well known term *folkhemmet* (people's home) coined by Hansson (for a comparative analysis of the concept, see Götz 2001).

The compromises and the support for peaceful social reform paved way for the Nordic tripartite system of policy making. Public policies were drafted by seeking consent from trade unions, employers, and government. Labour market issues were often decided solely between the industrial partners. Not only had trade unions a role in drafting policy, but in implementing and administering policy decisions as well (Knudsen and Rothstein 1994). The established consensus allowed for the gradual development of a uniquely Nordic social insurance system that was to cover income loss in the case of sickness, old age, unemployment, and work injury. It was unique in the sense that it combined both Bismarckian and Beveridgean principles of universalism, targeting of those in need, and income replacement (Åmark 2005).

Swedish Social Democrats were in a rather hegemonic position during the post-war period with strong electoral support and a 40-year-period in government. The Swedish Trade Union Federation (*Landsorganisationen*, LO) and the SAP were entangled in their constituency as trade union membership automatically granted party membership. Such membership was an attractive option for workers because in accordance with the Ghent system, unemployment funds were administered by trade unions, and membership granted access to those funds (Edling 2006; Clasen and Viebrock 2008).

In Finland, societal relations were overshadowed by the civil war of 1918 and the delicate relationship with the Soviet Union after 1945. Communist parties were banned after the 1930s, but re-instituted after World War II as part of the peace treaty with the Soviet Union (Rainio-Niemi 2008, 264). In the shadow of the mighty neighbour to the East and strong presidents at home, post-war politics was dominated by a search for national consensus, as this was thought to ensure independence and autonomy. State committees based on a double-parity

principle, including representatives from the industrial partners and the parties in parliament were a significant element in the policy making process (Rainio-Niemi 2008). In public policy, Finland followed the Swedish example in many ways, such as in the area of social security, but in the timing of the legislation Finland lagged behind Sweden.

Post-war Nordic societies were collectivist in the sense that the place of the individual was defined from 'above'. Put crudely, members of these societies were never expected to exercise their own choice. They appeared as people belonging to a certain category with a given set of norms and standards for behaviour. From the point of view of social legislation, people were categorized as pensioners, unemployed, parents, refugees, etcetera (Sennett 2006; Kananen 2014; for a discussion of familialism, statism, and individualism in Nordic culture, see Trägårdh 1997).

In the Nordic countries collectivism had an evolving character. In connection with various modernization processes it helped establish a more meritocratic social order in which family background and socio-economic status to a decreasing extent determined the opportunities of individual citizens. Somewhat paradoxically, in the 1970s and 1980s collectivism turned into a constraint. The more individuals were able to determine for themselves the way they participated in social and economic life, the less likely they seemed to conform to the pre-defined collectivist categories (cf. Beck, Giddens, and Lasch 1994).

Communication of Key Concepts in the Nordic Welfare State

By the post-war years, modern natural sciences had gained a strong hold on Western societies. In the social sciences methods reminiscent of those in the natural sciences were being developed, and in the Nordic countries it was thought that politics also ought to rest on a scientific basis (Strang 2010; Marklund 2010). A distinction was made between values, which were thought to be outside the realm of science, and facts that were associated with objective inquiry. In retrospect, it appears that social democratic ideas provided a sense of direction towards which societal development was to progress, and the scientific method provided tools for finding efficient solutions in the pursuit of ideological goals.² However, this division of responsibility between ideology and implementation was not always clearly demarcated. The medical branch of eugenics that was influential in the early twentieth century combined managing population growth with their goal of racial purification – something that

2 Tage Erlander, who succeeded Per Albin Hansson as Prime Minister of Sweden in 1946, believed that ideology should give purpose and direction to concrete social reforms (Stjernø 2005).

had practical consequences in the Nordic countries in the form of enforced sterilizations (Lucassen 2010). Eugenic ideas were also associated with concerns about public health (*folkhälsa* in Swedish, *kansanterveys* in Finnish, Helén and Jauho 2003; Berg 2010).

As noted earlier, the Swedish understanding of social democracy developed away from orthodox understandings of both socialism and capitalism. An essential feature of this development was a refusal to blindly follow a certain theoretical or abstract way of reasoning, but to seek practical solutions that would work in the uniquely Swedish socio-cultural context. Early formulations of social democratic ideology were partly an effort to break away from the pursuit of particularistic interests, such as those of workers, and develop a concept of solidarity that would encompass the whole of society (Stjernø 2005, 114; see also Kildal and Kuhnle 2005). The Swedish social democrats had such an influential position that the modes of thinking they formulated carried great weight.

The search for all-encompassing solutions was further reflected in the 1950s when the LO established a comprehensive economic policy based on the ideas of Gösta Rehn and Rudolf Meidner. Part of this policy was an aim to maintain full employment under conditions of rapid economic growth. Rehn defined the causes of economic overheating not as high wages, but as high profits:

The cause of the tendency towards excessive wage increases does not lie solely in the strong bargaining position of the trade unions, which is the result of the elimination of unemployment. Full employment, and the certainty that it will be permanently maintained, must also tend to result in high profits and thereby give rise to fierce competition for the labour with the help of which the profits are gained. [...] Therefore, we must see to it that profits in general are so small that any exaggerated wage competition between firms is checked.

REHN 1952, 32f

Thus, the solution to the problem of overheating came to lie in profit capping and indirect taxes on investment goods – solutions which were prioritized over wage restraint. Rehn also argued that the goal of productivity increase in firms should be secondary to the goal of wage solidarity (1952, 40f). If productivity was low, the solution was not wage dumping. Instead, the goal of wage solidarity – meaning equal pay for equal work – was given priority. The Rehn-Meidner model of employment policy can thus be summarized into three main components: (1) restrictive fiscal policy to prevent economic overheating; (2) state measures to combat local unemployment that could result from the closing down of inefficient factories; and (3) wage solidarity (Sihto 1994, 88).

The goal of full employment resonated well with the overall welfare policies of the SAP. Another key idea behind the implementation of Swedish and Nordic welfare policy was that redistribution of economic resources was thought of as an investment rather than as a burden on the economy. In classical economics it was thought that the state ought not to interfere much with economic life, but Stockholm school economists, such as Gunnar Myrdal, argued that a redistributive tax-benefit system would be economically efficient in at least two ways. First, similar to Keynes's ideas, redistribution could be thought of as increasing aggregate demand. Progressive taxes and generous social benefits only resulted in a marginal reduction of consumption in high income groups, while considerably increasing the consumption of low income groups. Second, Myrdal argued that economic redistribution would be prophylactic by preventing social problems from arising in the first place. Minimal social problems implied minimal resources spent on dealing with them, and a maximal utilization of human resources (Myrdal 1973).

Legitimation

The concept of the 'people's home' was designed to appeal to the entire nation, which is typical of Scandinavian social democracy. Instead of trying to appeal to one particular group, established policy makers often saw themselves as statesmen representing the combined interests of all citizens. This phenomenon probably created a self-enforcing spiral: once certain policy makers had reached an influential position, they could claim ideological leadership, which in turn served to further solidify their position if they were successful. Judging from electoral outcomes the SAP in Sweden and the Kekkonen presidency in Finland could benefit from such a self-enforcing spiral of political and ideological leadership.

The ideas behind post-war economic and social policies had strong normative and moral connotations: the values of solidarity, universalism, and egalitarianism resonated broadly among the general public – perhaps partly because they could be accepted as moral or ethical choices, and partly because they did not remain without practical significance, as demonstrated above. Another dimension of these policies was their contribution to the kind of national unity that small nations with strong neighbours needed (Kaspersen 2005).

Although the post-war policies described above directly benefited the poor and vulnerable groups in society, those groups were not the only ones who could identify with the values mentioned. Pauli Kettunen has noted that as part of the compromises between conflicting interests, the needs and interests of the rich also gained a moral justification: if redistributive policies were in place, and if public care services were available for all, then capital

accumulation and private ownership could be acceptable – even if this meant that some groups remained wealthier than others. If economic growth could be sustained, social security policies were also legitimate from an economic point of view (Kettunen 2006).

In the 1950s in Norway the social democrats distanced themselves from the Marxist conception of solidarity. Instead, the Christian religion was now thought to be close to the values of the labour movement although the institutionalized church was not necessarily (Stjernø 2005, 122).

Electoral success may be claimed as evidence for the legitimacy of social democratic policies across the Nordic countries. However, there was a self-enforcing element in this legitimacy which is somewhat problematic. This becomes evident in the ways the concept of democracy was understood in the Nordic countries since the 1930s. When fascism and socialism were influential in Europe, the term democracy came to be defined in relation to those totalitarian phenomena, that is, all alternatives that were neither fascist nor socialist were considered democratic. For social democratic parties, democracy was not understood as a particular procedure in which reform programmes competed for electoral success, but instead as a reform programme that was promoted by the social democratic parties themselves. This conceptual track was consolidated in 1935 in Malmö, Sweden, when Nordic Social Democratic leaders gathered people to celebrate the Day of Nordic Democracy (Kurunmäki 2011). It could also be detected in the election manifesto of the Finnish Social Democratic Party in 1952, which suggested that democracy could best be promoted if the Social Democrats were in power (Hyvärinen 2003, 92). During the 1950s the Agrarian Party (*Maalaisliitto*) governed in various coalitions, which the Social Democrats joined in 1951.

Foreign policy was an area in which the hegemonic approach to ideological issues was in conflict with openness (Rainio-Niemi 2008). Nordic governments typically defined a specific foreign policy doctrine which could hardly be questioned, challenged or even discussed. This was not seen as problematic from the point of view of democracy because democracy was defined according to the interests of those in power (e.g., President Kekkonen's discussion of democracy in Hyvärinen 2003, 100–103; Koikkalainen 2011).

Use of Power and Procedural Openness

When assessed against the background of the conceptual distinction made between power as maintaining order and power as implementing ideals, many elements in the use of power in the Nordic countries during the post-war years were consistent with aims of implementing ideals such as equality and solidarity. The consensual style of policy making was acceptable to major groups in

society. It resulted in apparently legitimate decisions that were founded upon shared moral ideas. There was a sense in which the individual in post-war Nordic society was not merely seen as an object to be controlled, but rather as a resource to society.

Looking backwards, Finland appears not to have been a classic example of an open society, with its semi-presidential system of decision making and its timidity in catering to Soviet interests. Many challenges to openness may also be cited in the case of Sweden. Nonetheless, in terms of procedural openness as presented here, it seems as if power elites in post-war Nordic countries have not had cause to regard openness as a threat to their position. The role of the Nordic trade unions illustrates this. Trade unions included rank-and-file workers at the grassroots level and decision makers at the very top where legislation was handled. Outcomes were accepted throughout society – another essential feature of the ‘Nordic model of welfare’.

Thus, policy making in the Nordic countries may not have occurred in accordance with textbook definitions of democracy. For instance, it is questionable whether the Nordic tripartite system of policy making is compatible with a separation of powers in Montesquieu’s sense. In the Nordic countries, trade unions and employers are involved in all of the three powers of implementing (labour market policy), legislating (state committees) and maintaining justice through courts of law (labour market courts). At the same time, post-war Nordic societies were fairly equal societies reflected by narrow income distributions and relatively small differences between the rich and the poor.

The Renegotiation of the Post-War Social Order Since 1990

Relationship between Individual and Society

Since the 1990s Nordic societies have undergone major transformations that have affected the foundations of the Nordic welfare model (cf. Blyth 2002; Kantola 2002; Hvinden and Johansson 2007; Kettunen 2008; Petersen and Kettunen 2011; Kananen 2014). One aspect of these complex transformations may serve as an example of the changed relationship between the individual and society. In the area of labour market policy, legislative changes have been made that reflect attempts to create a new social contract after collectivist categories had failed to maintain the social order: in other words, a ‘renegotiation of the post-war collectivist order’ (Kananen 2014).

Changes in Danish labour market policy began with a 1994 reform in which unemployment benefits were divided into a ‘passive’ period of three years, followed by an ‘active’ period of four years. Previously, Danish unemployment

benefits had been practically unlimited since subsidized jobs could be used to renew eligibility (Jensen 2008). As Danish Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP) no longer functioned as a link to continued unemployment benefits eligibility after 1994, they were directed more toward the management of the labour supply. This involved a thorough redesign of the structures and implementation of these policies since, unlike Sweden, there was not a well-established tradition of ALMP in Denmark. Falling unemployment rates turned international attention to the seemingly successful Danish employment policy model. Most importantly, in 1993 sanctions for non-compliance were introduced in the area of social assistance legislation (Parliament of Denmark 1993). This implied a reformulation of the right to a minimum level of subsistence so that now people in need of social assistance had to show a willingness to cooperate by following administrative orders to retain their benefits. Sanctions were written into the law as part of a redefinition of benefit recipients' rights and obligations.

Sweden has been the most cautious of the Nordic countries in reforming its welfare institutions. The early 1990s were a critical point in the Swedish course of development, as this was the time when a severe banking crisis was followed by soaring unemployment rates. For a country renowned for its full employment policies, this situation represented a clear challenge. The level and duration of unemployment insurance was, however, left more or less intact throughout the 1990s. For several years ALMP remained the path to renewed benefit eligibility in an attempt to maintain the income of unemployed job seekers. However, Swedish institutions did not remain completely isolated from the impact of the new trend. In 1998 social assistance legislation was reformed so that social assistance could be withheld from those who refused an offer of municipal activation (Government of Sweden 1996). The Swedish post-war goal of full employment has had a lower priority in economic and monetary policy since the 1990s. It has been acknowledged that the goal of monetary policy is only to maintain price stability, not to control employment rates (Riksbanken 2008). At the same time, fiscal policy has been concerned with economic growth rather than the redistribution of resources, leading to tax cuts in the name of 'economic incentives'.

In Finland, unemployment insurance coverage was reduced in 1994. Sanctions were introduced in the area of social assistance the following year, and these were further elaborated and made more specific in another wave of reform in 1998 (Government of Finland 1995; Parliament of Finland 1997). Such reforms were effective in reducing the number of insured job seekers toward the end of the 1990s (unlike Sweden). However, unemployment rates remained comparatively high for a long time after the economic crisis of the early 1990s, which was even more severe than in neighbouring Sweden.

These institutional changes in the area of Nordic labour market policy may be interpreted as a dismantling of old collectivist structures. At the same time, the direction of labour market policy changed from full employment and redistribution of resources to creating work incentives and increasing labour supply. This implied an abandoning of a concern about social rights and a strengthening of economic goals and values. In Denmark and Finland social insurance lost much of its functions, which included income replacement in the case of unemployment and redistribution of resources among various income groups. Unemployment insurance in both countries now covers fewer people than before, criteria have been tightened and the focus of policy has shifted toward moving people back into the workforce rather than replacing lost income.

The changes have not been associated with a reduction of bureaucratic control, at least not regarding the lower end of the labour market. Since the renegotiation of the post-war order, new individual control mechanisms have largely replaced old collectivist categories as the source of social order. Control mechanisms exist throughout the contemporary labour markets (cf. Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Sennett 2006; Rantala and Sulkunen 2006; Julkunen 2008) but the lower down the hierarchy one goes, the more rigorous these control mechanisms become. For those in a marginal position in the labour markets the control mechanisms take the form of various activities upon which benefits are conditioned (e.g., labour market training and work programmes). This principle of work-for-your-welfare ('workfare') (Torfing 1999; Lødemel and Trickey 2001; Jessop 2002; Dean 2007; Blomberg and Kildal 2010) differs considerably from the approach toward work and social security that existed in the Nordic countries during the post-war period, and renders Nordic welfare policies more similar to pre-modern policies of maintaining social order and preventing 'idleness' (Kettunen 2004).

In recent years labour markets in the Nordic countries have tended to be organized in a hierarchical manner, so that the threat of being relegated to a lower position functions as a source of order for those on the next level. Thus, threatened sanctions in social assistance may force workers to accept low-paid jobs that they might otherwise have declined – had a more liberal social security system still been in place. Rigorous sanctions, especially those that have been introduced in Finland, signal distrust towards the individual job-seeker and her or his willingness to contribute to social and economic life. The implementation also signals that social rights have been subordinated to economic goals, such as the growth of GDP and the employment rate.

The Nordic turn from welfare to work-for-your welfare implies a fundamental shift in the premises of social policy. The policies indicate that the value of each individual is determined by her or his capacity to be economically

productive. The formerly inclusive and redistributive Nordic social policy has thus turned into an exclusive social policy which creates and maintains hierarchies between citizens. This exclusive social policy limits the openness of Nordic societies. Those at the bottom end of the hierarchy are more likely than before to feel alienated from the social and political life of the more privileged groups.

Communication of Key Concepts

In Denmark labour market challenges were labelled 'structural problems' in the early 1990s (Larsen and Andersen 2009). This rhetorical move follows the logic that economic problems can be traced back to rigid and inefficient labour markets, and the solution lies in 'structural reform'. The language associated with Danish policy documents in the early 1990s was only moderately affected by this new rationale. The committee that drafted Danish labour market policy reforms even debated the establishment of a citizens' income as a solution to the problem of unemployment (Government of Denmark 1993). As time passed, the language and rhetoric surrounding Danish welfare policy consolidated and became more assertive. A welfare commission appointed in the mid-2000s stated the following when discussing the unemployment insurance system and its conditionality:

In fact, sanctions should be stricter as a consequence of repeated non-compliance, and a kind of a ticket system could be applied, whereby a certain number of failures to show availability results in reductions in unemployment benefits. These principles are already part of the existing system, but they can be made stricter.

GOVERNMENT OF DENMARK 2005, 478

This shows that members of the Danish Welfare Commission of 2005 advocated sanctions for non-compliance with benefit administrators. In this way of thinking about welfare policy, sanctions constitute incentives to return to work and thus increase the labour supply.

New ideas gained a foothold in Danish politics along with welfare state restructuring – ideas that were in many ways contradictory to previous aims associated with Nordic welfare policy. The new ideas were part of a new international consensus on the relationship between states and markets that has been scrutinized by a number of scholars, such as Mark Blyth (2002), Kathleen R. McNamara (1998), Bob Jessop (2002), and Pauli Kettunen (2008). As there is no commonly accepted label for this consensus, it can be termed the 'international competition state paradigm' here. The paradigm is structured around a set of core imperatives:

- (1) income taxes should be as low as possible,
- (2) social security benefits should likewise be as low as possible,
- (3) employment protection legislation (rules concerning hiring and firing) should be as relaxed as possible,
- (4) wage negotiations should occur at the individual level,
- (5) the state should manage and increase the labour supply through administrative measures, and
- (6) the state should seek to maintain a balanced budget regardless of economic cycles (Layard, Nickell, and Jackman 1991; on the role of the OECD in defining the paradigm, see Kananen 2012).

The language accompanying economic and public policy in the Nordic countries has tended to follow the logic of the new paradigm. For example, as institutional reforms in Sweden were more moderate compared to other Nordic countries, this could also be detected in the language used. Expressions and formulations in the debate surrounding political reform were not much influenced by the international competition state paradigm. During the 1990s Sweden acted against the logic of that paradigm when ALMP measures continued to be followed by a renewal of benefit eligibility (in contradiction to points 2 and 5 in the list above). Still, Sweden eventually adopted the new paradigm as may be seen by subsequent communication of macro-economic policy goals (Riksbanken 2008).

In Finland policy reform was generally pursued along the lines of the competition state paradigm imperatives. However, political parties have paradoxically retained traditional Nordic welfare policy goals high on their agenda (Nygård 2006). This has, to some extent been typical of other Nordic countries as well. In Finland the strategy has limited the procedural openness of decision making as election debates have been insulated from administrative decisions and legislative reform. Those reforms have typically been rhetorically phrased as necessary, whereas election debates have generally concerned issues less relevant to legislation. In such a way competition state policies have been pursued with consistency, despite changes in the composition of the government coalition.

In a situation where many political issues are reduced to administrative matters, the Finnish Ministry of Finance has achieved a strong position in the government. As in Sweden, the Ministry has always been central to policy making, but since the 1990s it has transcended its traditional role of implementing policies, and has sought to justify many competition state policies with notions, such as 'competitiveness' and 'productivity' (Kantola and Kananen 2013; Kantola 2013; Kananen 2008).

Regarding the input of social science into political debates, the paradigm shift in government policies across the Nordic countries has long been neglected by social science researchers. This neglect may help explain the lack of open political debate on key issues of welfare state restructuring, such as the state's role in the economy (cf. Carlsson 2003, 306; on the lack of alternative visions in Scandinavian political culture, see Stenius 1997). A notable exception to this is Walter Korpi who almost single-handedly challenged the new economic ideas in Sweden in the 1990s (e.g. Korpi 1996; for a summary of the economic policy debate in Sweden during the 1990s, see Blyth 2002, 214–219).

Legitimation

By the 1970s, the Nordic welfare state experienced a serious legitimacy crisis (Petersen 2011, 174). In Denmark and Sweden the welfare state was criticized for being inefficient, standardizing, and regimented. The Social Democrats, the traditional defenders of the Nordic model, had to rethink their policies. In the late 1980s the cooperative committee of the Nordic Social Democratic parties and the trade unions, SAMAK, drafted a report on public sector reform and on developing a 'new Nordic model' (SAMAK 1990). The legitimacy crisis concerned the post-war collectivist order, which, as the SAMAK report suggested, had "created the basic security necessary for the greater freedom of the many" (Petersen 2011, 178). The collectivist order faced a crisis after it had successfully liberated individual potentials by creating more equality. However, looking at labour market policy and economic policy since the 1990s, it seems that none of the Nordic political parties have found a way to carry on with the traditional principles of equality and solidarity – principles that continue to be legitimate among Nordic citizens.

All Nordic countries include a set of social rights in their constitutions. Typically, these include the right to a minimum level of subsistence if a citizen has no other means of support. Nordic constitutions also specify certain general rights concerning employment. Details of the implementation and maintenance of these rights are provided in social legislation and negotiated in collective labour agreements. The renegotiation of the post-war collectivist order and the subsequent adoption of the international competition state paradigm involved considerable legislative reforms in the Nordic countries in the area of labour market policy. The legitimacy of these reforms in relation to constitutional social rights was contested in parliamentary procedures. The debate around legitimacy particularly involved so-called 'workfare' (work-for-your-welfare) reforms cited above whereby benefit seekers were sanctioned for non-compliance with directives given by benefit administrators. Reform

proposals included giving administrators the authority to deny or reduce the amount of benefit in cases of non-compliance.

Both Danish and Finnish parliamentary committees assessed the constitutionality of 'workfare' reforms when they were proposed at the end of the 1990s. Critics of the reform legislation held that the changes were incompatible with the constitutional right to a minimum subsistence. A contradiction was denied and the proposals were subsequently passed in the parliaments of these countries.

The arguments for non-contradiction merit attention in both cases. In Denmark, the reply of the Ministry of Justice to the query on the compatibility of proposed reforms with the constitution noted that the paragraph in question stated that there were obligations that citizens must fulfil if they claimed their right to the constitutional minimum subsistence. Historically these obligations had included limitations on the right to marry, the right to own property, and the right to vote. These limitations were later removed, but the principle of reciprocity was re-enforced along with workfare reform, which the Justice Department interpreted as obligations for which the constitution made provision (Parliament of Denmark, 1997a, 1997b). The Constitutional Committee of the Finnish parliament concluded that the right to minimum subsistence was only applicable if citizens in question could not support themselves through employment of some sort. According to the Committee, offers of workfare measures (e.g., training courses or subsidized employment) could be counted as a means of support. A person would continue to receive some additional benefit during participation in these measures. Thus, a reduction in the amount of benefit was not, according to the Constitutional Committee, in contradiction with the constitutional right to a minimum subsistence.

Hartley Dean (2007) has noted that the strongest discourses on workfare sit uneasily with the principles of the UN Human Rights Convention on right to work, which states that "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment" (United Nations 2014, Article 23 § 1).

The right to choose one's type of work may be compromised if refusing to participate in a particular employment scheme leads to a loss of the income needed for subsistence. It may be argued that a person presented with the choice between a job placement and reduced income support is in fact not in a position to make a free choice. This situation concerns all unemployed people currently participating in Nordic activation schemes founded upon the workfare principle. The compatibility between workfare reforms and the universal right to work was never assessed by the Nordic parliaments.

Use of Power and Procedural Openness

From about 1950 to 1980, political power in the Nordic countries was primarily used to direct the existing order toward a more or less consciously defined societal goal. During the post-war era there was a strong consensus in the Nordic countries to maintain a form of democracy that was distinct from socialist and fascist totalitarianism. Moreover, within this Nordic type of democracy, workers, agrarians, and industrialists were able to agree on the direction of societal change. This direction included the opportunity to widen the scope of social rights while maintaining private ownership and the possibility of capital accumulation through the pursuit of industry. The result of this kind of societal change has been summarized under the label 'Nordic welfare state model'.

The post-war social order grew out of collectivist social structures that defined the roles of individuals from above. In the Nordic countries collectivist categories maintained social order until the 1980s or 1990s, when the foundation of a new order was established. Since this transition political power has mostly concentrated on maintaining social order and the status quo in power relations, rather than guiding societies toward any predefined goal. Nordic political institutions seek to control the choices of individual job seekers. At an ideological level the international competition state paradigm has gained a dominant position as the source of political reform. The paradigm rests on a few assumptions about the causes of structural unemployment and the role of the state in relation to markets. It has proven difficult to challenge the hegemony these assumptions create in Nordic political life.

Nordic welfare state restructuring and the renegotiation of the preceding social order has significantly compromised the ideals associated with procedural openness. The rationales behind legislative reforms have not been transparently communicated to the general public by political parties as part of the processes of electing governments into office. Particularly left-wing parties have maintained a rhetoric of 'preserving the welfare state' but once in government they have cut benefit levels, reduced coverage, and introduced tight sanctions for non-compliance. Such reforms that weaken social insurance and cause inequality, accompanied by new hierarchies in the labour market have transformed the ethos of the Nordic welfare state model from emancipation to discipline (cf. Kananen 2014).

Discussing past Nordic policy reforms openly before implementation might have been fatal for the ruling parties. Survey data has consistently shown support for ideas associated with the traditional Nordic welfare model (Blomberg and Kroll 1999; Svallfors 1995; Muuri and Manderbacka 2010). As policy reform has proceeded according to a logic opposite to what most citizens support, elites have probably regarded procedural openness as a threat.

An open debate about ideas and future visions or utopias is a key element of procedural openness. The actors in the process of political decision making such as members of parliament, political parties, government officials, interest groups and lobbies, journalists, and researchers tend to form clusters and coalitions in different matters (Sabatier 1998). These coalitions decide upon policy reform together – often behind closed doors. Greater procedural openness would imply identifying these clusters of actors and communicating their goals more openly and efficiently in public. This would imply a gradual opening of the traditional tripartite style of policy making so that citizens would become more aware of what goes on behind the closed doors of political cabinets. This kind of openness could bring the public debate closer to the realities of political decision making. Administrative openness such as access to public documents may remain futile as long as procedural openness is lacking.

In the Nordic countries the renegotiation of the post-war collectivist order has occurred in a top-down manner where powerful elites have taken the leading role in defining the new order. It remains unclear to what extent national elections have had an impact on the direction of political reform during the last few decades in which the new order has been established. The political party composition of governments has not mattered very much for policy reform. Moreover, it seems that even the new order has failed to produce social and economic stability, mainly due to volatility in financial markets. Under such circumstances, it is no surprise that a wave of protest demonstrating increasing support for ‘populist’ parties is spreading across the Nordic countries, challenging notions of openness yet again.

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Open Skies, Open Minds? Shifting Concepts of Communication and Information in Swedish Public Debate

Carl Marklund

Nowadays it is attractive to be 'open'. Authorities, corporations, political parties, and even countries seek to associate themselves with this appealing adjective. In one recent example, a film entitled *Open Skies, Open Minds* makes the link between the country of Sweden and the concept of openness explicit. Commissioned by the Swedish Institute (2014) to promote Sweden abroad, the film seeks to visualize the 'core values' of the official 'image of Sweden' – identified as authenticity, consideration, innovation, and openness (Swedish Institute 2008).

Openness has increasingly become a globally circulated metaphor for a democratic liberal society, both as an ideal and a description. In the past few decades openness has gone from being one of several elements of democracy (together with liberty, justice, and equality) to occupying a central position in international discussions on democracy and governance. On the one hand, an expanding body of consultancy reports, research literature, and policy initiatives presents openness as a precondition for better government and deeper democracy, leading to a more accountable public administration and a revitalized public sphere (Hood and Heald 2006; Fung, Graham, and Weil 2007; Piotrowski 2007). On the other hand, the recent ascendancy of openness can also be linked to the growing importance of 'communication' and 'information' as instruments of power in an increasingly mediatised world (Castells 2007; 2011). As such, openness is not only a lofty emancipatory ideal or a practical tool towards better governance and market performance. It can also be used as an instrument of political rhetoric for detecting risks, framing political struggles as well as identifying and co-opting enemies. As such, openness is political, contested, and constantly in flux.

As the enthusiasm for openness and transparency spreads among NGOs, governments, and corporations alike, academics and activists have in turn become increasingly sceptical of the openness credo. Critics have begun questioning whether it can deliver on its promises, whether it is desirable under all circumstances, and whether it always promotes actual disclosure and public participation (Naurin 2004; 2006; 2007; Lord 2006; Etzioni 2008; Garsten and

Lindh de Montoya 2008; Fenster 2006; 2010). Scholars have recently noted how it can be put to use for generating political legitimacy (de Fine Licht et al. 2014).

While certain policies may be drafted to institutionalize openness, some societies are assumed to already possess a certain cultural or social predisposition in this direction. The metaphorical image of what could be called a culture of 'societal openness' includes notions of free enterprise, multiculturalism, progressivism, tolerance, and general sociability. This corresponds with the administrative and academic discourse on 'transparency' or 'institutional openness', which is concerned with the concrete institutions and regulations that maintain competition, freedom of speech, public access to documents, independent media, and public accountability.

Some countries, like Canada, the Netherlands, the UK, and the US are often considered open primarily due to their diversity, individualism, liberty, and freedom of enterprise. Others are characterized as open societies mostly because of their high levels of public trust, progressive social orientation, inclusive politics, and public access to documents, such as the Nordic countries. While the former societies are often faulted for their shortcomings with regard to institutional openness, the societal openness of the latter countries is far from self-evident.

One of the central problems for any analysis of social ideology, rhetoric, policy setting, or governmental process is the distinction between the formal rules and policies and the implementation of policies and the deeper structure of social relations, social norms, and social power. By providing a historical study of the concept of openness and its multiple uses in Swedish debate, this chapter seeks to open up the issue of a gap between formal aspects and substance as well as of uneven power distribution in the struggle over openness. The main problem of this chapter is to examine why promises of openness have been voiced, how shifting meanings of openness reflect rhetorical and political struggles, and how political contestants may be construed as the friends and the enemies of openness, respectively.

In so doing, the chapter highlights the tension between the dual aims at the core of openness discourse as a 'cybernetic' means of providing verifiable information about society and as a 'libertarian' policy for insuring the free flow of opinion within society. The chapter explores how these two goals mix in historical as well as contemporary accounts of openness, promising to deliver both more efficient governance and greater democracy at the same time, without clearly identifying any order of priority between these two goals of modern public life.

Security and Sincerity

The image of Sweden as particularly open has been strengthened by the rising international popularity of accountability and transparency as instruments towards improved democracy and efficiency in the exercise of public as well as private power. Here, Sweden has profiled itself as a frontrunner. The cornerstone of openness in Sweden include the principle of publicity and public access (*offentlighetsprincipen*),¹ ensuring citizens the right of access to public documents; and the protection of sources (*meddelarfriheten*),² intended to guarantee the anonymity of whistleblowers. Additionally, civil society representation in the policy making process, review of official government inquiries by stakeholders,³ parliamentary oversight of the government, a free press, and freedom of speech, are key elements of Swedish institutional openness (in addition to regulations on competition and public procurement).

These institutions have been seen as instrumental in generating the internationally high levels of public trust, democratic legitimacy, and public efficiency Sweden as well as the other Nordic countries enjoy. These factors are often cited as prime reasons for the comparatively low levels of perceived corruption in Sweden (Andersson et al. 2010; Rothstein 2003; Rothstein 2010; Rothstein 2011; Trägårdh 2009).

As such, the broader concept of openness has gained a wide application in the political and social vocabulary of Sweden. The concepts of *öppenhet* (openness), *insyn* ([public] control; insight), *transparens* (transparency), and *offentlighet* (publicity; public sphere) occur with increasing frequency in the main national newspapers and prioritized local press between 1981 and 2011 as can be seen in Figure 8.1.

Nevertheless, openness has a long history of pre-politicized (if not apolitical) usage (Hellquist 1939, 1462), distinct from the more institutional notion of 'public' (*offentlig*, German *öffentlich* and *Öffentlichkeit*, from *offen*, open) and

1 The Principle of Publicity is regulated in the Freedom of the Press Act (Tryckfrihetsförordningen), Second Chapter, Article 1. The Freedom of the Press Act is one of the four Swedish Constitutional Laws. It is published in the Swedish Code of Statutes (*Svensk författningssamling*, SFS) 1949:105 (consolidated version SFS 2011:509). The exceptions to this rule are regulated in the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act (Offentlighets- och sekretesslagen) published in SFS 2009:400, specifying what types of documents government agencies can keep secret, under what circumstances, and towards whom.

2 The protection of sources is regulated in the Freedom of the Press Act, First Chapter, Article 1.

3 The opinions and responses of concerned stakeholders on government proposals (*remissvar*) are an important part of the policy making process.

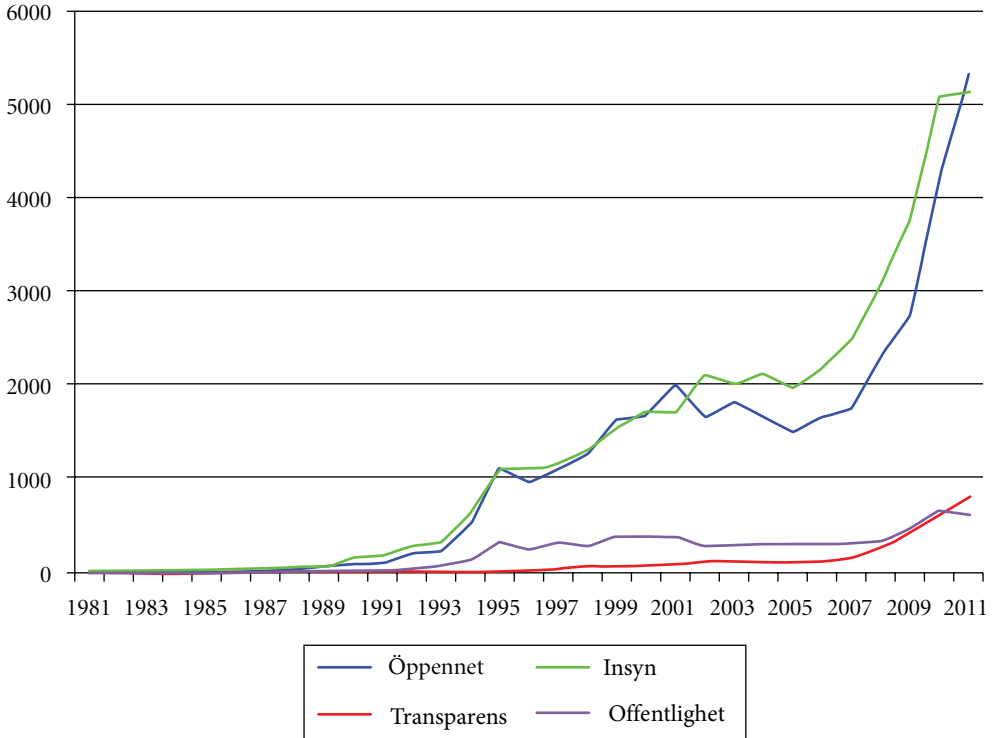


FIGURE 8.1 *The concepts of öppenhet (openness), transparens (transparency), insyn ([public] control; insight), and offentlighet (publicity) in Swedish capital press (i.e., main Stockholm newspapers) and prioritized local press (i.e., most important local press) for the period 1981–2011.*

MEDIEARKIVET, <[HTTP://WWW.RETRIEVER-INFO.COM/SE/TJAEENSTER/RESEARCH.HTML](http://www.retriever-info.com/se/tjaenster/research.html)> (15 JUNE 2011)

‘publicity’ or the ‘public sphere’ (*offentlighet*).⁴ While *offentlighet* is usually associated with the public sector and public debate, the Swedish concept of *öppenhet* is also etymologically linked with adjectives such as ‘obvious’, ‘manifest’, and ‘evident’ (*uppenbar*).⁵

This connection between openness and sincerity was at the centre of one of the earliest invocations of openness as a political resource in Swedish public debate. In 1934, at a critical moment in the establishment of the Swedish model and its specific form of compromise between labour and capital, the Swedish

4 The concept of *offentlighetsprincipen* is stated by the Swedish Academy as having been first recorded in 1931, although the legal institution dates back to 1766, and was gradually reduced from 1772 and onwards until new freedom of information legislation was passed in 1809. See “Offentlig” 1949; Hirschfeldt 1998.

5 “Uppenbar” 2011.

Social Democratic Workers' Party (*Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti*, SAP) successfully reoriented itself from a class-based to a nation-based 'people's party'. This reorientation required skilful political maneuvering in a political climate of class conflict following long-term labour-market tension, culminating in the Ådalen shootings in May 1931 and the disclosure of a volunteer para-military anti-communist unit – *Munckska kåren* – in September 1931.

In resisting this move, leading representatives of the right, including the leader of the *Allmänna valmansförbundet*, General Electoral Union, Arvid Lindman, repeatedly demanded "openness and honesty" from all political parties. They asked the Social Democrats to make their 'plans' for a future Sweden public, expecting that its socialist orientation would thereby be revealed (Lindman 1934). The leader of the Social Democrats, Per Albin Hansson, responded that the Social Democratic method for achieving socialism did not entail large-scale planning, but rather a reformist step-by-step approach that could never be presented as a comprehensive plan, but required ad hoc adaptation to changing circumstances (Hansson 1982 [1934]). Hansson thereby defended the fundamental openness of the democratic policy making process, emphasizing that change must not be made conditional upon some preconceived plan.

Openness also appeared in an entirely different sense during 1934. Swedish pacifist and women's organizations noted approvingly the success of their American colleagues in pressing the Roosevelt administration to establish a special commission to scrutinize the role of the US defence industry in bribing foreign officials to secure arms deals, thereby triggering an arms race. The idea of a commission to investigate the previously secretive international arms trade may have seemed "ridiculous" just a year before, as an unnamed Swedish reporter noted. Now, however, it was acknowledged that "the price for peace is full openness," thanks to the efforts of "a number of intelligent and industrious women" who have strived for "international peace," hunting down "compromising facts" about the arms industry, and presenting them to the US Senate. At the same time demands were made that Sweden, too, should establish a commission along the lines of the American model in order to clarify the role of Sweden as a weapons manufacturer and arms merchant (Anonymous 1934).

These two examples illustrate the duality of openness as communication and as information. In the first case, we witness a conservative demand for honesty for the orientation of the electorate. However, this request was also meant to communicate doubts about the true intentions of the Social Democrats, which in its turn allowed Hansson to underline the openness and pragmatic flexibility of the SAP political programme. In the second case, the disclosure of information would prove the complicity of the arms industry in destabilizing world politics. In both cases, the demand for openness for the

sake of information is ultimately premised by the intended usage of this information for the sake of political communication. If the demands for openness are met with silence, for whatever reason, the silent party will become politically discredited.

Secrecy and Privacy

“The first casualty when war comes is truth,” US Senator Hiram Johnson memorably asserted in 1917 (cf. Knightley 1975). Wars and open conflicts tend to close down communication as well as information in the interest of national security. Opposing this development on the eve of World War II, the liberal People’s Party introduced the concept of openness explicitly in its 1940 election manifesto, in one of its earliest usages in a formal political document:

The spiritual values upon which civilized society rests are under threat. Now, more than ever, democracy, law, and humanity need to be defended. In these serious times, it is necessary to strengthen the inner force that follows from the Christian worldview and is made manifest in a personal feeling of responsibility. Popular sovereignty is conditional upon free public opinion, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press. Infringements caused by the crisis in these must not be accepted permanently. The relationship between the state and the people should be characterized by openness and trust. Only then the necessary sense of community can be created and maintained.

Folkpartiets valmanifest 1940

Nevertheless, the increase in state censorship and self-censorship in Sweden during the World War II met with little opposition by the public or the media (Åmark 2011). The sense of emergency and the risks of espionage and sabotage contributed to a rather effective black-out of Sweden during the years of war preparedness (Boheman 1964; Lindal 1998; Lindal 2004). Much later, British author and Sweden-based journalist Kathleen Nott (1961) claimed that the capacity of Swedish authorities to suppress publicity in matters involving national interest and military security constituted a ‘mandarin’ mentality.

This mentality would gain some notoriety in the so-called rotten justice (*rättsröta*) scandals of the early 1950s, culminating in the complex Kejne and Haijby affairs. Here, suspicions proliferated about the existence of hidden networks of powerful individuals capable of bypassing the rule of law and avoiding

public scrutiny.⁶ In recurring articles in the syndicalist daily *Arbetaren* and elsewhere, liberal author Vilhelm Moberg (1953a; 1953b) argued that the affairs revealed how officials used public power to further private interests and, in this case, to protect a homosexual prostitution ring.

In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place: A Private View of Sweden*, Nott (1961) remarked that as a result of the so-called affairs of the early 1950s “a good deal of administrative corruption was revealed. On the other hand the Swedish press showed itself an excellent and noisy watchdog; there was a great will to incorruptibility and a great exhibition of public breast-beating.” Still, with the exception of the above-mentioned *Arbetaren*, Swedish media took a very cautious position when it came to fact-finding: Herbert Tingsten (1952), a prominent political scientist and the editor of *Dagens Nyheter*, the country’s leading liberal daily, explained that this reluctance did not mean the mainstream media wished to participate in a news black out. On the contrary, Tingsten asserted, mainstream media demanded “clarity and openness.” But, the press “appeared justified in waiting until a complete and reliable account is available,” as the Chancellor of Justice had begun to study the case. Expecting that the results of this inquiry would be made public in their entirety, Tingsten continued:

The interest of the state is served best when the public knows that the authorities and the press disclose what needs to be disclosed, present the facts people need to know, and attack those who have done wrong. This is the way in which dangerous tendencies are to be eradicated – not through a cover-up, which equals complicity in the crime.

TINGSTEN 1952

Tingsten gave no specific indication of how one may determine what the people ‘need’ to know. Instead, he stated that the press already was aware of the main facts of the case but chose to remain silent in order to allow the government to preserve the reputation of public administration. If, however, the reports in question were not released, Tingsten warned, the press would have to consider going public. While the press itself professed to care little for the sexual aspects of the case, it desired full disclosure of the public officials and their complicity in the alleged cover-up, the bribery, and the intimidation of

6 In the Haijby affair, the late King Gustaf V was alleged to have had a sexual relationship with a restaurant owner, Kurt Haijby, resulting in a bribery and blackmail scandal involving the Royal Court. The police participated in the cover-up after pressure from the County Administrative Board of Stockholm. Homosexuality had been decriminalized in Sweden in 1944, but prejudice lingered on. As a result, very few people would dare to come out as gay in the 1950s.

witnesses. In the end, however, the government waited out the storm by calling for the Chancellor of Justice to provide a study, and did not heed Tingsten's warnings as it only released the conclusions of the study and not the report in its entirety (SOU 1951: 21).⁷

Surprisingly, the press did not go public despite of this. Initially, the Swedish press had demanded full disclosure of the details of the case on account of possible abuse of power of public officials. However, when Tingsten was interviewed by Nott about these events, he dismissed them as "uninteresting" questions, mostly concerning private morals, claiming that the way in which the authorities had handled them could not possibly have affected public confidence in the state negatively (Nott 1961, 34–40). Tingsten had apparently changed his mind, now seeing it as an affair of outdated moral panic over homosexuality unworthy of public attention, rather than an issue of power abuse, hidden networks among public officials, and injustice. While full disclosure may not always be in accord with other values in a democracy, such as the right to privacy, the latter may at times be invoked by the authorities in order to avoid public scrutiny. Nott (1961, 40) commented drily that "washing one's dirty linen in public while hiding one's head in the sand is a common form of Swedish drill."

Information and Surveillance

From the late 1960s and onwards, the emergence of new media (such as television, video, and cassette recording), the growth of the public sector, and the expansion of the welfare state made improved 'social information' a new goal for public administration. While rising public demand for social services necessitated the expansion of the welfare state, the wider responsibilities of the public sector also had to be explained to the citizens. Replacing the 1940s concept of 'social enlightenment', a new 'information policy' took form as a result of the Information Inquiry, which delivered its report in 1969 (SOU 1969: 49). This report was followed by numerous official studies which highlighted the importance of information in Swedish society and politics, while the government's efforts to improve its ability to communicate with its citizens came under rising criticism as a potential form of propaganda (Kjellgren 2002).

7 In the report, the Chancellor of Justice stated that while Haijby's accusations against the King could not be proven, Haijby's blackmail of the Royal Court made it possible for the Court to press charges against Haijby. The rest of the report remained secret for 50 years, until 2002.

The intensified drive toward opening information channels between state and society, between authorities and citizens, suffered a blow when in May 1973 investigative reporters Peter Bratt and Jan Guillou, writing in the radical journal *Folket i Bild/Kulturfront*, exposed the activities of a secret intelligence service, known only by its acronym IB.⁸ With the help of a whistleblower within the organization, the two journalists showed that the Swedish military intelligence service had engaged in a number of illegal activities, including monitoring of suspected Communist sympathizers in trade unions, wire tapping foreign nationals suspected of contacts with Third World liberation movements, and infiltrating key radical organizations. In at least one instance, the IB had inserted an *agent provocateur* into a Swedish support network for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). It had also conveyed sensitive information to the Israeli Shin Beth security services and the American CIA, despite Sweden's official neutrality.

There was evidence that IB had been established with the support of leading circles of the Swedish Social Democratic Party and the Swedish Trade Union Federation (*Landsorganisationen*, LO). While the IB has later been linked to Operation Gladio and NATO's stay-behind networks and other clandestine resurgence operations, the IB additionally served to control the growing influence of the radical New Left within the reformist branch of the labour movement (Bratt 1973; Holmström 2011). Swedish peace and conflict researcher Ola Tunander (2009; 2012) has even suggested that IB formed part of a hidden security establishment, a "dual state" (Ganser and Deland 2010; Holmström 2011; see also Ahlenius 2013).

As Bratt and Guillou exposed the intelligence activities of the National Defence Radio Establishment (*Försvarets radioanstalt*, FRA) they were arrested together with their source within IB and charged with espionage. In the wake of the massive debate that followed, Bratt published a book entitled *IB och hotet mot vår säkerhet* (IB and the threat to our security, 1973). Bratt concluded that the secret activities of the military not only undermined public trust in democracy, but also constituted a direct threat to individual privacy as well as national security by compromising the country's traditional policy of neutrality. Many observers concluded that if the superpowers lost their confidence in Swedish neutrality they may be tempted to conduct a pre-emptive strike in case of global conflict (Bratt 1973; Elvander 1975). Writing from jail, Bratt demanded in the same spirit as Tingsten had done in the 1950s that the government should appoint a commission to publically inquire into the accusations (Elvander 1975).

8 Usually interpreted as *Informationsbyrån* (The Information Office), alternatively *Inhämtning Birger* ([Information-]Gathering Birger) after its director Birger Elmér (SOU 2002: 92).

At first, the Swedish government denied any knowledge about 1B. When finally goaded into making a statement, Prime Minister Olof Palme argued in *Dagens Nyheter* that the journalists were neither champions of freedom of speech nor democracy. Their ulterior motive, Palme claimed, was to undermine the reform efforts of the governing social democracy and to divide a peaceful and orderly Swedish society by spreading distrust and fear, in order to pave the way for revolution: "They are not primarily seeking openness," Palme claimed, "their enemy is our democratic, reform-oriented society, which they want to attack by any means they can" (Östberg 2009, 152). From that time onward, the Swedish press would not necessarily trust that the government would release full documentation, but possibly disseminate carefully redacted information, establishing a widening confidence gap between journalists on the one hand and politicians and public officials on the other.

Power and Democracy

Palme's reaction was motivated by the growing rivalry for the votes of the young between the reformist Social Democrats and the New Left, with its rising influence among traditionally Social Democratic voters (Östberg 2009). As the main architect of a more 'active' Swedish foreign policy, characterized by non-alignment and Third World solidarity, the 1B affair was also a deeply traumatic experience for Palme on both a personal and ideological level. Palme sought to wrest the demand for openness from the investigative journalists, turning their demand back unto themselves. To him, Swedish society was already an open and secure society, primarily due to its democratic setup. Demands for more openness directed at the institutions guarding this formal openness would only serve to undermine the already achieved societal openness of Sweden.

Palme's response to the 1B affair set off a far-ranging debate in the leading Swedish dailies on the shortcomings of 'formal democracy' in Sweden. Where the academic and political establishment assumed a well-functioning system of public scrutiny and democratic dissent – an open society – the youthful New Left criticized the so-called 'functional socialism' of the Swedish Model. While the economical and political establishment saw governmental information as well as business advertising as important means for enlightening the population, the New Left saw these policies as a kind of indoctrination, placing the allegedly neo-corporatist, unaccountable, and non-transparent Swedish socio-economic system beyond the scope of political debate (Palm 1968; Adler-Karlsson 1969; Ekecrantz 1975; Elvander 1975).

However, the IB affair also spurred an increased interest in critical communications studies in Sweden. In one of the more influential books on the topic, Jan Ekecrantz' *Makten och informationen* (Power and information, 1975), the author strongly criticized the government's drive towards improved information. Turning against the assumption of the Information Inquiry, namely, that "extended social information" equals "extended democracy," Ekecrantz emphasized how the government's new information policy concealed an apparatus of control under the cloak of communication (see also Marklund 2010). This assumption was based on 'primitive' positivism, Ekecrantz found. This positivism rested upon the mistaken presupposition that there is one best way to inform people about their interests as citizens, consumers, parents, and workers, and that there is a unity of interest between state and citizenry, producers and consumers, parents and children, employers and employees. The information drive actually served, Ekecrantz argued, to further bureaucratize, centralize, and concentrate the previously rather haphazard state information. While this strengthened state propaganda it also gave the citizens an opportunity to see inconsistencies and contradictions in the messages relayed, Ekecrantz surmised.

This state-produced knowledge, which mostly resulted from extensive government inquiries and their official reports (SOUS), did not only serve to cool down hot potatoes and to deflect political criticism as was often humorously suggested, according to Ekecrantz. It also fulfilled a more sinister role in creating an "information technocracy," he argued. This new technocracy did not only aspire to bring citizens into closer contact with the authorities, thus expanding the reach of the state's power. It would also serve to sanitize and depoliticize the public sphere, structuring the correct use of words and concepts, and limit public debate to particular social problems instead of the structure of production in capitalist society, Ekecrantz warned. In this critical view, the supposedly democratic information policy could then be seen as an instrument of corporatist control rather than as a tool for democratic deliberation and open critique, as the investigations on state information suggested. Openness as information should certainly not to be confused with openness as communication, this New Left critique of state information efforts forcefully claimed.

While these increasingly critical accounts of Swedish openness won adherents on the left, the established political parties began to use the concept of openness in parliamentary debates, party programmes, election manifestos, and legal prose more frequently.⁹ The Left Party first included openness in its

9 Since 1980, 16 laws have been passed which make reference to the concept of openness, 8 of which have been passed by the centre-right Alliance Government since September 2006.

party programme of 1967, claiming that openness should be the expected outcome of an active socialist cultural policy.¹⁰ Soon, the Liberal People's Party took up the thread it had already probed in 1940 by using the concept of openness in a more principled manner in the party programme of 1972. Here, openness was used for referring to freedom of movement, immigration, and tolerance as well as in support for increased publicity, increased accountability in both state-owned and private enterprises, in labour market negotiations, in the care sector, and in the cultural sector.

The new party programme of the Swedish Social Democratic Party of 1975 also made an early reference to openness. Noted for its explicit commitment to economic democracy and radical equality, the party programme stated in passing that "growing collective effort" would be needed to satisfy expanding human needs. This would place greater demands upon the public sector, not only for impartiality and efficiency, "but also characterized by openness, adaptability, and care for the individual person."

The Moderate Party, by contrast, began using the concept in a more general, metaphorical, and analytical sense – explicitly referring to Sweden as an "open and liberal society" and as such vulnerable and hence in need of a strong military defence – in the election manifesto of 1979 and in the party programme of 1984. Especially in the latter programme, which reflected a new sense of confidence in (neo-)liberal economics and conservative values, the Moderate Party activated the language of openness in a variety of ways: The public sector, although motivated by necessary concerns with security and welfare and ultimately still controlled through democratic elections, had expanded into a vast machinery, according to the party programme, which could pose a threat towards "the pluralism and openness of our society." Echoing the Social Democratic party programme of 1975, the Moderates went on to note that authorities require "openness, spirit of cooperation, and adaptability to rapidly changing conditions of life and society" to remain efficient. The Moderate Party programme also foresaw a role for openness in the relationship between individual people, especially within families and between generations, in order to combat "isolation."¹¹

10 The party programmes and election manifestos cited in the following are, with the exception of the 2011 party programme of the Sweden Democrats, available at Svensk Nationell Datatjänst 2014.

11 Smaller parties, such as the Centre Party, the Christian Democrats, and the Greens, followed suit by introducing the concept of openness in their party programmes in 1981, 1993 and 2001, respectively. The right-wing Sweden Democrats have not made use of the concept in their 2011 party programme (Sweden Democrats 2011), but make reference to it in their 2010 election manifesto.

By the late 1980s, openness had finally entered the permanent vocabulary of Swedish public debate. In what appears as a response to the eager adaption of openness as a core concept of the right during the 1980s, the Social Democratic party programme of 1990 limited its usage of openness to issues of multiculturalism and immigration policy as well as the relationship of Sweden towards the European Union (EU) and of the EU towards the wider world. The new Social Democratic party programme of 2001, by contrast, included openness in a variety of ways. Beyond the traditional Social Democratic reference of openness as an aspect of equality and as a means towards integration and multiculturalism, the Social Democrats now also saw openness – often paired with the concept of accountability – as an explicit alternative to market-logic and profiteering in the public sector, while openness and flexibility was seen as a means towards increased democracy and efficiency in production, just as the Moderates had done in 1984. The versatility of the concept is evident in these political applications. In particular, its capacity to allow its users to synthesize separate policy fields and connect rhetorically otherwise conflicting policy priorities emerges as a key political resource.

Sweden: An Open Society?

On the metaphorical level, however, the notion of Sweden as an ‘open society’ was severely shaken at the very same time the concept began to enter political vocabulary. The assassination of Prime Minister Olof Palme on 28 February 1986 was widely interpreted by Swedish media and political commentators as “the end of the open society” (Agrell 1990, 134).

The murder put an end to the notion of openness in the sense of a peaceful, idyllic, and harmonious society in which politicians and other prominent people could mix relatively freely with the general public. There was also a notion that the country and its inhabitants had been naive, yet blessed, in the absence of political violence and insurmountable social divides. Palme’s death contrasted symbolically the idyllic past with the increasingly uncertain and ungovernable present in another, more worrying aspect of openness – e.g., as a mediatized ‘new openness’ which masks real power while prying on the powerless, as noted by prominent public intellectuals Anders Ehnmark and Per Olov Enquist in the mid-1980s (1987, 348).

In the confusion which followed upon the murder, a kind of information power vacuum emerged. Swedish peace and conflict researcher Wilhelm Agrell (1990) has argued that media initially asserted its role as the main provider of information in this new power vacuum. Politicians and government officials

increasingly became the targets of public scrutiny. However, according to Agrell, the authorities quickly learnt how to act in and reflexively re-shape this new media-driven public space. The media proved unable to keep pace with the release of conflicting information from different officials and authorities. Due to their shortsighted competition for the latest scoop, the media became engaged in grinding out a continuous flow of information and disinformation, resulting in a bewildering “war of the leaks” (*läckornas krig*). The monopoly on authoritative information as once held by the state, in the sense that government-sponsored information was widely trusted by the majority of the population in spite of the concerns raised since the 1970s, was disrupted in the aftermath of the Palme murder. Yet, the media seemed unwilling or unable to take the place of the state as the source of authoritative information. A widespread sense of uncertainty and consternation was generated about the actual facts of the matter, until public apathy set in after numerous commissions and hearings in the parliamentary Committee on the Constitution. This consternation served as an incentive for the establishment of the Association for Investigative Journalism in Sweden (*Föreningen Grävande Journalister*, FGJ) in 1990, inspired by the Investigative Reporters & Editors (IRE) in the USA.

The national trauma resulting from Palme’s unsolved murder touched upon some of the most basic problems of democratic governance. The prevalence of leaks from the authorities and the perceived inability of media to evaluate and interpret the information thus made public reflected a mounting sensation that the borders between state and society were in flux. Those borders had not only become more porous (which could be seen as a move towards greater openness), but they had also become more unclear: it appeared increasingly difficult to ascertain to what extent private interests operated through public institutions and vice versa. The increased fuzziness of the divide between state and society and between public and private made it more difficult to assign responsibility for various wrongs (Pettersson and Hirdman 1985). Increased information did not always ensure increased public trust. On the contrary, under certain conditions it could also give rise to conspiracy theories and generate distrust. In some sense, this new situation appeared detrimental to traditional corporatist notions and institutions of openness, accountability, and public scrutiny, signalling a new, less clearly defined ‘semi-permeability’ between state and society.

Perceived lack of clarity and alleged decline of public trust had already played a role in the criticism of the welfare state from the mid-1970s on, long before the assassination of Palme. But it gained renewed actuality in the early 1980s, as politicians and social scientists begun to detect a gap between politics and the government administration, raising the question how society might be

made more open to public criticism while at the same time be made more open to political control. In the ambitious Power Investigation (*Maktutredningen*), a large number of (mostly) Swedish social scientists were given the task of analysing the shifting problem of democracy and power in an increasingly 'illegible' society (as opposed to a controlled, ordered, and legible society) where power and responsibility appear more and more diffuse (Scott 1998; Marklund 2013).

The final report of the Power Investigation – delivered in June 1990 and largely overshadowed by the final hearings on misconduct in the Palme murder investigation – concluded that 'social metaphors' often determine how politicians and citizens think of society and politics (SOU 1990: 44; Petersson 1989). Lacking a mandate to make direct policy recommendations, the Investigation suggested that the "mechanistic" image of the corporatist Swedish model had become largely obsolete in post-industrial society. The authors concluded that the metaphor of an 'open society', a term explicitly derived from Karl Popper's ideas (a Swedish translation of whose works were first published in 1980–1981) and related to the burgeoning liberal enthusiasm for 'civil society' would be more apt for understanding the complexities of contemporary Sweden (Popper 1945; Petersson 1989; Lundström 1991; SOU 1990: 44).

At the same time, the general concept of openness gained a wider application in social science. From early usages in drug rehabilitation and criminal care during the late 1970s, openness came into more widespread use as an analytical category in the anthropological, ethnographical, and sociological study of majority society as well as minority groups in the late 1980s with regard to their ability to integrate one another. During the early 1990s, openness was again appropriated as both a descriptive and normative element in the academic discourse on multiculturalism. In this new context, it did not concern particular institutions or practices but rather society as a whole. While the concept expanded to denote social behaviour in society-at-large as well as within specific social groups, it was also individualized as a category of psychological self-help discourse (Torstensson 1995; Östvall 1995).

Beyond these mostly academic and popular appropriations of the concept of openness, it also gained new economic and political currency in connection with the Swedish accession to the EU. In a series of research seminars arranged by the Swedish Intergovernmental Conference 96 Committee (*EU 96-kommitén*), Swedish academics, politicians, and public officials explicitly connected traditional Swedish institutional openness with the policy objectives of a free and open European market, while some journalists expressed fears that the principle of publicity and public access – widely seen as the basis of Swedish openness – would be weakened if Sweden joined the EU (Andersson 1993; SOU

1995: 130; SOU 1996: 42). The idea that Sweden, along with the other Nordic countries, possessed a specific institutional matrix for generating a political culture of openness took shape (Román 2001). Openness was presented as a particular Nordic contribution to EU cooperation, a contribution which would help the EU to counteract democratic deficit and rising distrust. Significantly, in 2001, openness was made one of the main themes of the Swedish EU presidency. Still today, the Swedish freedom of speech and freedom of the press legislation are sometimes described as being “hollowed out” by new EU legislation (Funcke 2014).

Questioning Swedish Openness, Past and Present

However, there is a complex relationship between openness as a characteristic of the institutional setup of a political system and openness as indicative of an ideal society with no inner borders and no secrets. Coinciding with the Swedish EU membership and the promulgation of openness as a core Swedish value, a number of previously obscured injustices were brought to the public's attention. One highly publicized revelation concerned discrimination and human rights violations directed against minorities during much of the twentieth century, in particular against Roma, Saami, and Swedish Travellers. Most notably, these violations included enforced sterilizations in the name of public welfare, but evidently often based upon racist and stigmatizing views (Tydén and Broberg 1991; Broberg and Hansen 2005; Tydén 2002; Zaremba 1999; Götz 2002; Ds 2014: 8). A second debate concerned the relationship between Sweden and Nazi Germany during World War II. Issues such as Swedish home-grown Nazism, unwillingness to accept Jewish refugees from Germany, exports of iron and steel to Germany as well as the acceptance by Swedish firms of gold confiscated from Jews by Nazi authorities, transit of German soldiers on Swedish railways, and alleged asylum for perpetrators of war crimes, much of which had been noted by the New Left in the 1960s, were now brought to wider attention (Boëthius 1991; Wechselmann 1995; Tydén and Andersson 2007).

A third problematic revelation revolved around an alleged ‘secret alliance’ between Sweden and the Western Bloc in apparent contradiction of Sweden's declared policy of neutrality and non-alignment during the Cold War. Swedish participation in Western economic warfare against the Soviet Bloc as well as espionage and surveillance of suspected Leftists were hardly unknown by the Soviets, but contrasted sharply with the neutralist stance Sweden adopted internationally and promoted in domestic public debate (Kronvall and Petersson 2005; Dalsjö 2006; Bjereld et al. 2008; Mattsson 2010; Holmström

2011). Still today, the Swedish security police, Säpo, prevent public scrutiny of its files on agents and collaborators of the Stasi security service of the German Democratic Republic active in Sweden during the Cold War (Almgren 2011; Andersson 2013). To these more specific affairs – regularly scrutinized by investigative journalists – can be added a long list of scandals in which public figures have been caught lying, but where it nevertheless remains unclear where to draw the line between fact and fiction (Hederberg 2008).

While post-war traumas generate doubts and cause demands for openness in most societies, the unresolved riddles concerning the Swedish submarine incidents during the 1980s, the Palme assassination, and the deregulation of the Swedish banking market – the so-called November Revolution – in 1985 have provided substance for numerous radical reinterpretations of Sweden's recent past which contrast with the idyllic notion of a past open society, now lost (Hermansson and Wenander 1987; Antman 1997; Tunander 2004; Nilsson 2010; Borgnäs 2011; see also Åsard 2006).

Many of these issues have been made the subject of long series of recurring official inquiries and government commissions, occasionally with overlapping mandates, which may illustrate the challenge these issues present to national self-identity as well as public legitimacy as an 'open society'. Functionally, if not substantially, these inquiries can be compared to the truth and reconciliation commissions of other countries dealing with post-conflict resolution. These commissions may be taken as evidence of Swedish openness, since various problematic issues have been uncovered, discussed, and investigated. Alternatively, these investigative practices can be seen as proof of earlier concealment in that these matters had been hidden from the public for so long. Concerning military intelligence and secret surveillance during the Cold War, for example, Prime Minister Göran Persson promised the release of all relevant materials from the archives for the benefit of research. However, the documents made available were later proven to have been carefully pruned by specialists from the security police and military intelligence (Bjereld and Demker 2006; Bjereld and Demker 2008).

These revelations concerning past injustices and cover-ups have made it increasingly problematic to project the image of Sweden as an open society unto the past. But it is not only secrets of the past that may challenge perceptions about Sweden's openness. Recently, there have been rising complaints about systemic faults in contemporary Swedish institutional openness. While noting the high levels of social trust in Sweden, researchers investigating Swedish corruption have also highlighted the widespread perception that corruption poses no great problem in Sweden. As a result, corruption has thus far been understudied, reinforcing the notion that it is not a problem (Andersson

et al. 2010; Rothstein 2011). Similarly, the sometimes lackadaisical application of the principle of publicity by various authorities has become more frequently noted as of late (Axberger 1984; Hirschfelt and Olsson 2009). There is an increasing awareness that the generally accepted image of Swedish institutional openness has a tendency to generate complacency about the challenges toward openness, possibly resulting in a lack of vigilance with regard to power abuse and cover-ups (Andersson et al. 2010; Hirschfelt and Olsson 2010).

From time to time, investigative journalists and auditors have charged that an oral decision making culture has evolved within the Swedish authorities in response to the principle of publicity, resulting in the problem of 'empty archives' (Ahlenius 2004; Abukhanfusa 2004; Naurin 2004). Other shortcomings of Swedish institutional openness concern the release by authorities of sanitized versions of archival material, the lax registration (*diarieföring*) of public documents (*offentliga handlingar*), and the widespread failure to deliver requested documents in a timely manner, as detected in a survey conducted by *Dagens Nyheter* in 2010 (Örstadius 2010).

Numerous aspects of Swedish media – such as the strong concentration of ownership among a few influential corporations and families with links to bourgeois parties as well as the primarily left-wing proclivities of Swedish journalists – have been cited as evidence that Sweden, while institutionally open, may be less so when it comes to public debate. On the one hand, conservative and liberal critics have turned against state support for the arts and for the press (*presstöd*). The argument is that some amorphous, yet decidedly leftist 'cultural elite' maintains a kind of 'politically correct' hegemony in Swedish public opinion. On the other, left-wing critics warn that private interests own most of Swedish media, alleging that a supposedly neo-liberal 'market-logic' has permeated Swedish society top-down, not the least in the media itself (Boëthius 2001). More recently, Swedish public service radio and TV which is obliged to observe rules of journalistic neutrality have received widespread criticism for having declined to work with politically outspoken media personalities, such as comedian Soran Ismail and filmmaker Stefan Jarl, in a bid to maintain impartiality in state media (Olsson 2014).

While this type of critique is often concerned with public perceptions and vague sentiments that are difficult to disprove or verify, a growing body of research is pointing to the concrete obstacles facing certain groups, especially non-Swedes, on the job market, giving rise to metaphors such as 'open and closed Sweden' (*det öppna och stängda Sverige*), 'the blue and yellow glass house' (*det blågula glashuset*), and 'the closed people's home' (*det slutna folkhemmet*), highlighting the 'structural discrimination' of various groups in Swedish society, not the least the Roma population, despite the officially

declared policy of multiculturalism (Runblom 1995; Arai, Regner, and Schröder 1999; Lindberg 2002; SOU 2005: 56; SOU 2010: 55; Ds 2014: 8).

In these reports, there is a distinction made between open and hidden discrimination, including the prevalence of what may be termed ‘false openness’, as a specific form of simulated legitimacy which pretends to include immigrants in Swedish policy making processes and public life without actually doing so. In Swedish political parlance, however, these shortcomings are usually not associated with openness *per se*, but with socio-political categories such as ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ (*utanförskap*, see Davidsson 2010; Lindvall and Rueda 2012; Oskarson 2012).

Recurring OECD reports on rising income inequality and levels of relative poverty as well as declining school results are, together with the wave of Scandinavian noir crime fiction, often cited in today’s Swedish press as epitaphs of a deconstructed welfare state, implying yet another challenge to Swedish openness. Increasing socio-political divides are reflected in reportedly rising extremism, populism, and xenophobia. While threats and political violence against elected representatives remains relatively rare, with the exception of threats against Sweden Democrats (Brottsförebyggande rådet 2012), the Stockholm riots in May 2013, the right-wing attacks on anti-racist demonstrators in Stockholm in December 2013, as well as attacks directed at the Migration Board signal a higher level of political and social tension that contrasts with the classical notion of the open society as characterized by democratic deliberation and open dialogue (SOU 2013: 81).

Simultaneously, public debate is increasingly compartmentalized and moved out of the common public sphere. Anti-immigration voices tend to gather at websites such as *Avpixlat*, *Exponerat*, *Fria Tider*, and *Realisten*, while the possibilities for anonymous posting in online communities (such as fora, chat rooms, blogs, and Twitter accounts) are being curtailed with reference to pervasive online hatred (Bjurwald 2013; Schultz 2013; Sveland 2013). The underground character of anonymous Internet extremism (Statens Medieråd 2013) has led to new levels of monitoring of citizens by intelligence services, investigative journalists, as well as non-profit organizations such as Expo and Researchgruppen (2014). In March 2014, Researchgruppen was awarded by FGJ with *Guldspaden*, Sweden’s most prestigious prize for investigative journalism, for its exposure of the individuals responsible for the right-wing website *Avpixlat* in 2013, partly through using government documents made available by a news agency, Piscatus, catering only to the media. At the same time, the website Lexbase received strong criticism for making similar documents – however often demonstrably misleading – available for a small fee to the broader public and not only to journalists (Jansson 2014; Svahn Starrsjö 2014).

Conclusion: Cybernetic or Libertarian?

Today, Sweden is often described as an open society despite the numerous challenges and conflicts concerning various aspects of openness. Openness remains largely taken for granted, as the expected and normal state of affairs. It is one of the preferred metaphors used by political representatives, in particular of centrist parties. By 2012, for example, out of the parties currently represented in the Parliament of Sweden, the Liberal People's Party has made use of the openness in nine programmes and manifestos to date, while the Centre Party has done so in eight programmes and manifestos. The Moderate Party and the Swedish Social Democratic Party have both used it in four programmes and manifestos each, while the Left Party and the Christian Democrats has used it in three and two such documents, respectively. The Green Party and the Sweden Democrats have done so in one document each, confirming the notion that all political actors seeking respectability in Swedish public debate must align themselves explicitly with the concept of openness (Svensk Nationell Datatjänst 2014).

Mainstream Swedish political parties thus routinely present themselves as champions of openness. But there are numerous competing understandings and functions of openness that need to be explored if we are to evaluate these calls for openness. First, it does not only concern transparency with regard to public administration and public expenditures and the right to public access. Its different meanings range from calls for honesty and sincerity in politics to combating the secrecy and hidden power structures of politics, finance, and the security establishment. While the concept of openness is part of contemporary administrative ritual, often used in a vague and non-committal way, it is repeatedly put to the test and debated when it is either perceived to be lacking or when it is seen as under threat.

In the game of politics, then, openness has become a way of forcing other players to show their cards, as may be evidenced in recent debates on development aid, party financing, and trade union associations in Sweden. But openness can also be used to create perpetrators and victims, friends and enemies. Moreover, openness can serve as a blame-avoidance strategy, as when politicians use information policies to point out the limits of public power in mitigating social problems or when using conflicting, doctored, or redundant information to shape public opinion or diffuse public interest. It can be relied upon for dramatizing and politicizing complex issues as well as for the diffusion and depoliticization of pressing matters. Openness, from this perspective, is a language activated when the 'semi-permeability' of public and private is under negotiation, that is, when the degree of influence of public interests

upon the sphere of privacy and the extent to which private interests may be given access to the sphere of public power is at stake (Marklund 2012).

Openness may seem to be primarily about gaining access to information (Roszak 1986). Alternately, openness can be viewed as concerned with the possibility of communication (Castells 2007; 2011; Durham Peters 1999). These two aspects are deeply entangled. The free flow of information is usually seen as facilitating the free communication of different opinions. The implicit assumption is that some kind of balance and understanding between different interests will result thereby. Yet, there is a tension between openness as communication (when anything can be said) and openness as information (when everything can be known) which tends to surface when transparency policies are to be evaluated.

Supporters of openness as information are primarily concerned with seeing how well it improves the reporting of facts, which are then verified with regard to their accuracy and credibility (truth). In this 'cybernetic' conception of openness, openness is primarily an instrument of objectivity and rationality. Supporters of openness as communication, by contrast, are mostly interested in the latitude extended to conflicting perspectives and the ability of sustaining divergent views regardless of whether they are accurate or not (freedom). In this 'libertarian' conception of openness, openness is primarily an intrinsic value of subjectivity and liberty. This distinction is also reflected in the different bodies of law which regulate freedom of speech and freedom of thought (communication) and those which regulate freedom of information and public access (information). Analytically, these two aspects correspond to ideological and political dividing lines in the political struggle on openness; one of libertarian emphasis upon conflict, critique, and deliberation about public issues on the one hand, and one of cybernetic notions of control, consensus, and efficiency in implementing public policy on the other.

This relationship between openness as libertarian communication and openness as cybernetic information is complex. The contemporary transparency discourse is appealing in its promise to bridge these two aspects of openness. It holds out the hope of a communicative system of input legitimacy and output legitimacy which is both democratic and efficient by uniting science with politics and markets with social concerns (cf. Scharpf 1999; Marklund 2010). Seen in this way, openness cannot be reduced to either a libertarian or a cybernetic discourse, as both the ability to voice protest and demand change and the ability to act on protest and enact change are core elements of democracy.

In line with this observation, this chapter has sought to move beyond the succession of political affairs, public scandals, and investigative scoops where

Swedish openness has allegedly failed in one way or another. Instead, it has sought to show how notions of openness are continuously contested. In noting how the political usage of the concept of openness reflects the inner tension between the cybernetic and the libertarian promises, it also becomes clear that openness, instead of opening up a door which may otherwise be closed, is rather a set of keys that can be used to open up as well as close down political debate on sensitive issues (cf. Papakostas 2009). As such, openness is a powerful rhetorical instrument in the hands of political actors rather than a static condition or idealized characterization of any given society. The contested character of openness itself may perhaps be the defining element of the open society.

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Openness and Elite Oral History: The Case of Sweden

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Nordic politicians often praise the openness and transparency of their political systems. This openness is a significant element of the self-image that they present to the world. In Sweden, pride in political openness is closely linked to the ‘Principle of public access to official records’.¹ This principle has traditionally been viewed as a guarantee of political openness and transparency, but in recent years this view has been challenged. Some have even declared the principle of public access to be counterproductive, as it tends to decrease the willingness of politicians to preserve government documents.

For example, Inga-Britt Ahlenius, the former director of the Swedish National Audit Office, has publically criticized the principle of open access. In a contribution to the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* in 2004 she argued that vital political decision making processes have not been documented as a result of demands for government openness, even claiming that some political records have been actively discarded:

A central part of the Swedish self-image is ‘Open Sweden’. However, no one has tried to explain or describe the true meaning of this concept. It has become a kind of mantra that stands for everything that is good. An important part of the concept Open Sweden is our unique principle of public access, namely, the possibility of examining official records. The principle of public access is perhaps the holiest symbol of the Swedish model of public administration, and a praised export as well: “In our country everyone has access to what is happening. Come and have a look into the public rooms of our country.” [...] Yes, please do. And you will

1 The principle guarantees the general public, newspapers, radio, and television public access to official documents. It also guarantees freedom of expression and freedom to publish for civil servants and others. All citizens have the right to read official documents held by public authorities. However, documents may be classified as secret for reasons of national security or in other instances, such as relations with another sovereign state or international organization; national fiscal policy; supervisory operations carried out by public authorities; the prevention or prosecution of crimes; the economic interests of the country; and in matters of personal privacy (Government of Sweden 2012).

find that there is not much to be found. The documents that should have helped citizens examine the exercise of power no longer exist. [...] The principle of public access has undermined its own purpose.²

AHLENIUS 2004

A variety of observations support this conclusion. According to Benkt Konnander (2003), former civil servant at the Ministry of Education, government offices regularly purge their archives of informal records such as memoranda and notes, especially before elections.

Many agree that Sweden's political transparency is problematic, particularly because of document shredding. It is widely agreed that although the production of government documents is greater than ever, there are crucial blind spots in the public records (Waldemarson 2007). While the degree to which public access is to blame for this situation is debateable, there is reason to worry as also other factors have contributed to make public control increasingly difficult in recent years. For instance, the Swedish government conducts more informal proceedings than before. This shift was intended to speed up the handling of cases and thereby strengthen democracy, but as a result written minutes have become rarer, making the political decision making process less transparent (Konnander 2003; Svensson 1996; Waldemarson 2007; 2008).

While the withdrawal of political documents is not a completely new phenomenon, the problem is enhanced by other contemporary developments as for instance the new 'slimmed' mode of organization, an acceleration of the working pace, and the increased use of mobile phones. Moreover, the more independent position that is assigned to some groups of civil servants has made it more difficult to follow decision making processes (Johansson 2005, 28). The ongoing internationalization is also a challenge to political transparency. For instance, the routine of handling errands in the EU has made it more difficult to follow individual errands (Eiche 1999, 35). The possibility of gaining insight into government operations is further diminished because decision making processes tend to withdraw into informal networks. While the phenomenon as such is well-known, it has become more pronounced in recent years (Montin 1996; Strömberg and Elander 2001).

These obstacles make it more difficult to understand how political decisions are made, which in its turn may have a negative impact not only on democracy, but also on the study of politics. This is especially true of the discussions that precede formal decision making. Lacking information about rejected proposals, political alternatives, clashes of opinion, and tactical considerations, we

2 All translations from Swedish to English by the author.

are forced to draw conclusions solely from political decisions in their final form. Often, we do not know the underlying causes of an outcome and are led to believe that the chosen path was somehow necessary and uncontested. We also risk giving existing documents unwarranted importance. The lack of source material could thereby result in a simplified or misguided understanding of political history.

The Reconstruction of Politics

The question, then, is what to do to solve the troublesome state of the sources to modern political history. One way to compensate for the lacunae in the public records is by interviews with politicians. This chapter addresses the possibilities and the problems connected to this method as regards its potential to shed light on political decision making.

In 2004 the Institute of Contemporary History at Södertörn University conducted a pilot study, "Politicians as Sources of Contemporary History," to examine the extent to which such interviews could reveal new information about decision making processes, networks, and political culture.³ The project is committed to the scholarly tradition of elite oral history that uses verbal accounts of prominent politicians as source material. The Presidential Oral History Program at the University of Virginia, Miller Center of Public Affairs, which is conducting interviews with former US presidents and their staffs, inspired our choice of method.⁴

The scholars at the Miller Center rely on conversations rather than interviews.⁵ They pose open-ended questions and allow informants to bring up any subject they find important. The conversation is seen as part of the research process and is supposed to give rise to new angles and thereby inspire new and deeper questions. In this manner the school of hermeneutics influences the research process.

3 Since its establishment in 1999, the Institute of Contemporary History has explored new ways of oral documentation. In addition to interviews, seminars, and round table discussions the institute uses 'witness seminars' in which it brings together politicians or other political players to shed light on a certain issue.

4 I have been allowed the use of a 'Briefing Book', produced at Miller Center. My discussion about the Miller Center's approach is largely based on it, but as the lending conditions of this book stipulated that it was not to be circulated or reproduced, I have not quoted it directly.

5 I nonetheless use the concept of interview in this essay, partially due to the difficulty of drawing a distinction between for example a qualitative interview and a conversation when the aim is to gain information on specific matters.

At the Miller Center the informants may limit access to the recordings and transcriptions of their interviews. They may, for example, use ‘time locks’ to set the number of years that must pass before the material becomes available to the public. The informants of our project were not permitted to use such restrictions, which is in a sense paradoxical: our project was partly begun as a response to the problems of public access. But because the researchers in this project are civil servants, they were not permitted to restrict the access to the interviews, nor could they allow the informants to remain anonymous (Waldemarson 2007).

The situation was explained to our interviewees, but it is difficult to determine how it affected their willingness to discuss sensitive information. Although a time lock does not guarantee that informants will disclose things that are confidential, it may improve the chances of this happening. As our project focused on prominent politicians, it is likely that they hesitated to share information that could hurt the image of their political party or themselves.⁶ But at the same time our impression of the interviews we carried through, although hard to prove, was that our informants seldom seemed to withhold information. When this occurred it mostly concerned the private sphere of other individuals.

When planning our project we discussed whether the preoccupation of media with political scandals might make our informants more cautious to reveal sensitive information, as many of them have been prominent politicians. According to one hypothesis, an increasingly aggressive media has made politicians more reserved in their contacts with journalists. The influential Swedish political journalist Erik Fichtelius expressed the problem in this way:

We who report about political decision making get less and less insight in these processes. Politicians have become more and more terrified of journalists. This has made them less open and more inaccessible. In the prevalent journalistic dramaturgy [...] politicians are evil and journalists are good.

FICHELIELUS 2007, 15

However, the aggressive coverage and attitude by media seems to have had positive consequences for our project. Many of our informants contrasted the interviews we made with interviews done by journalists. What they seemed to

6 The pilot study is based on nine interviews with former cabinet ministers and government civil servants. Each interview lasted from four to nine hours, and the preparation work took one to four weeks.

appreciate about our mode of interviewing was that they were allowed to finish what they wanted to say. Some of them also explicitly mentioned that they enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on their own political acting in a quiet and open atmosphere.

Challenging the Monopoly of Interpretation

To create a source material by interviewing politicians is in many respects a delicate task, not least because it may influence how future historians are going to interpret the politics of today. This implies a need to discuss some substantial matters.

It has been questioned whether elite oral history genuinely belongs to the genre of oral history. This criticism reflects two different understandings of the concept of openness. The primary aim of oral history is usually described as giving a voice to those ignored by traditional history, either because historians have paid them little attention or because they have not left any written traces. For some of them who believe that oral history exclusively concerns 'history from below', elite oral history is seen as a waste of research resources. They find it unfair to pay more attention to those who are already prominently represented in the public record and who, moreover, have often produced their own written accounts in the form of diaries and memoirs.

However, one may also look at the issue from a different angle. It is possible just because political elites are over-represented in the written sources that interviews can offer a way to break these elites' preferential right of interpretation. In this sense elite oral history like traditional oral history can compensate for the systematic lopsidedness of the written record. Additionally, the most commonly articulated purpose of oral history, to gain information that could not be found elsewhere, is shared by elite oral history (Dunaway and Baum 1996; Kjeldstadli 1998; Perks and Thompson 2006; Thor 2006).

Sources produced by interviews are created in a verbal encounter between two or more individuals and thus depending of the interaction between informant and researcher. Consequently these sources are highly subjective. Among many other things this implies that one must be prepared that the information politicians' share is coloured by their biases. This becomes especially problematic when the informants are politicians in top positions: they are allowed to interpret political situations in which they were deeply involved. We can therefore expect them to exaggerate the importance of their actions. This presents us with a dilemma. Attempting to compensate for omissions in the public record by creating new oral sources, we risk replacing one lack of openness

with another. Thus the absence of sources is not the only challenge to openness. Even an abundance of information can result in a form of closure, particularly if the oral information documented is erroneous or false. In such cases we receive a twisted version of what happened, which might produce an even more distorted historical record.

Using Memories for Political Purposes

Interviews with politicians must furthermore consequently be treated as something considerably more complex than simply a collection of memories. The retelling of these memories often serves a political purpose, intentionally or unintentionally. The former Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander has articulated this strategy in an illustrative way:

The attempt to describe my experience as a politician becomes in a way a part of my political achievement. The picture of the past becomes itself a political act. The same driving forces that guide me so far have also determined my writing.

ERLANDER 1972, 16

The present debate about the political implications of the writing of history is definite worth taking seriously also regarding elite oral history interviews with politicians. This is not the least the case as regards the danger of doing a 'Whig interpretation' of the past. This term was first used to describe a writing of history overly influenced by liberal ideologies. Today it is also used to criticize historical accounts that present the past to justify contemporary political agendas:

Memory is about the presence of the past, and many historians today are calling attention to it by taking the present as their frame of reference for judging the meaning of history.

HUTTON 1999, 73

The danger of studying only those parts of the past that may be linked to the present is that it makes the present stand out as the logical consequence of the past. Such a writing of history runs the risk of becoming a history exclusively about winners. Political alternatives or proposals that never reached the political arena are relegated to oblivion. Since the interview project cited above focused on former members of cabinet, this caution is especially in order. Our informants have held political positions with considerable influence over the

political agenda. Silence is an effective weapon in preventing unwanted matters from appearing on this agenda or to hinder undesirable political ideas or proposals from being taken seriously or even discussed at all. Moreover, access to political influence may involve defining certain topics or conflicts as non-political, which might prevent potential conflicts of interests from becoming manifest (Waldemarson 1998). There is no reason to believe that politicians will reveal the political challenges they tried to conceal while they were in the midst of their political careers in later interviews.

When using interviews with politicians as sources of history one also needs to pay attention to the role history plays when collective memories are used to establish collective identities in order to motivate political legitimacy, as for example when a party is striving to stand out as the true upholder of certain interests. The striving for identity has a darker double that can be called 'history as legitimacy', to quote the historian Knud Kjeldstadli (1998). This process of legitimization often involves a need to establish an ideological framework of interpretation in relation to one's own history. Identifying with or parting company from political players or ideas in either the present or the past can construct such frameworks. Identification with the past is usually preferred when the aim is to create historical continuity. But when the past is seen as ballast, politicians tend to emphasize departure rather than continuance (Humlesjö 1999; Thörn 1997). This involves a need to be cognizant of the self-images politicians present in interviews. Such images are often constructed with an intent to say something about other players and the ideas those players represent. Conversely, when informants deliver strong opinions about others, such remarks may first of all have the purpose to accentuate certain aspects of their own personalities.

Constructing Gender

To construct a desired self-image by pointing out undesirable features in others is a strategy that has a distinct gender dimension. Gender-based dichotomies have often been significant for the construction of the ideal male. If he is to stand out as active, women must be constructed as quiet and passive and if he is to be characterized as logical and rational, women must be presented as emotional (Höjer and Åse 1996; Björk 2000). A contemporary example is expressed in an interview with former Prime Minister Göran Persson, where he describes one of his cabinet ministers, Mona Sahlin:

What she says is not particularly remarkable. Thinking is not her strength. Her strength is the way she mediates messages thought out by others. [...]

My own talent is strategic thinking and long-term reflecting as well as the capacity of taking action.

FICHTELIUS 2007, 140

On similar grounds political culture also is a highly gendered phenomenon. The non-spoken behavioural etiquette of politics is often differently constructed depending on whether the politician is a man or a woman. The former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karin Söder, illustrated this:

All these state visits [...] and all the things that were supposed to happen! The wife of the chief of protocol arrived and she gave us the agenda of all the places we were supposed to visit, and in the margin of the protocol she had written how I was supposed to be dressed: with a hat, without a hat, with gloves, without gloves, a long dress, a short dress. It was so bothersome and I was so pressed for time! So I had to rush around to shops to find something to wear. And when we finally arrived to the Netherlands, we stood at the quay waiting for our king and queen to arrive by boat. I still remember the journalist who later wrote the following: Karin Söder stood there at the quay with her big handbag and looked as if she would rather have gone to a meeting at the women's organization of her party.

SÖDER 2006

The frequent expressions of a gendered outlook on politics are not surprising. To be a politician has long been equated with being a male. As a result, it is still common to hear such linguistic distinctions used as 'politicians' and 'female politicians', which indicates that male politicians are regarded as the norm and female politicians the exception. The same phenomenon has also surfaced in our interviews. For example, in another memory, Söder recounts:

So I sat beside a chancellor of justice at the banquet and the first thing he said to me was, "in what capacity is your husband a part of the state visit?" I obviously had to tell him the truth: "My husband is unfortunately not a part of this state visit, but I am here myself in my capacity as Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs." It became suddenly silent.

SÖDER 2006

The gender perspective also has another connection to the discussion about the concept of openness. It seems to be an unwritten rule that highly-valued democratic concepts are presented as gender neutral. However, concepts are

mere human constructions and as such mirror the prevailing power structures. Hence the actual meaning of concepts is not to be found in policy documents, but in the way they are put into practice.

Memories and the Meaning of Life

Another reason memories must be handled with care is that oral memories often take the form of narratives. The way narratives are structured tends to influence the art of remembering, especially as they often are constructed to lending meaning to our lives. This pattern becomes particularly evident when the past is orally recapitulated in conversations. As a consequence of this phenomenon informants tend to reconstruct life in a way that stresses coherence and meaning on the behalf of mistakes, pitfalls, and misunderstandings. Narratives are also commonly based on a division between the present and the past. Everything was either better or worse in the past (Kjeldstadli 1998, 188–190, 270–281).

Memories also tend to stay with the unusual and unexpected and change is more often noticed than continuity. Thus narratives seldom tell us about the silent progression of everyday life (Kjeldstadli 1998, 209–211). Erlander has remarked on this as well: “the happy moments were displaced by the crises, scandals, and defeats” (Erlander 1972, 16). However, a historian must take into account the everyday life of politics. In our interviews, we therefore asked questions such as: “Could you describe an ordinary day at work?” Usually we were told that no such day existed. If we insisted, the answers became more nuanced and all the minor matters that a minister has to handle became visible. As former Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson (2005) told us: “We decided if the hedges should be cut or not [...] We sat every week at the Ministry and decided on matters like that.”

The present moral climate may influence how politicians choose to present their memories. What is counted as ‘politically correct’ today often colours earlier memories. Acts and statements that were considered rather conventional in the past could be conceived of far more critically in the present. Similarly shifts in values can also take place within individuals, leading them to try and adapt their memories to current standards (Kjeldstadli 1998, 189). Former Cabinet Minister Ulla Lindström particularly mentioned this dimension while reflecting upon her own political memories.

There is a certain risk at stake when situations in the past are filtered through the values of the present [...] One does not have to have lived too

scarred a life to be tempted to make oneself better and use rationalizations.

LINDSTRÖM 1969, 16

The predominant objections to oral sources are, as suggested above, that they have already been interpreted by the informants and consequently constitute highly subjective testimonies. However the problems of subjectivity can be overstated. Even some kinds of written sources, such as diaries, letters, and memoirs may be highly subjective as the authors are in charge of the interpretation and thereby decide what should be mentioned or not. In an interview situation, however, the researcher has the possibility to challenge the interpretation by asking questions. Public written sources also have their limitations: they may be diluted and certain matters passed over in silence. Thus the aspect of politics they reveal to us is a restricted view of reality. If we were to exclusively rely on such sources, our understanding of politics would be superficial. When historians confine themselves solely to archival material and historiography, they risk replacing the silence of the documents with their own speculation.

However, if sources will be perceived as problematic or not partly depends on the kind of knowledge we wish to gain from them. The information that is accessible in public sources will probably suffice for learning what happened, where it happened and when it happened. But understanding how and why something occurred may be limited. Thus, the openness secured through the principle of public access may be adequate for describing political matters and usually for explaining them as well, although these explanations often presuppose the support of additional written or oral source material. However, if one seeks to understand politics in depth and discern the underlying motives and forces that drive politicians, the openness guaranteed by the principle of open access is usually not enough.

Emotion and Reason in Politics

Some political features are also difficult to discern in the public record due to their special character: emotions, moods, and atmospheres can easily be missed. As a result only a limited part of the emotional milieu in which politicians operate is captured. This is partly a consequence of the way the history of modernity is usually narrated. This narrative has mainly focused on features such as rationality and efficiency, while feelings, dreams, and longing have been passed over in silence (Björk 2000). As a consequence, the political process has

been depicted as governed by rational intentions and well-reasoned purposes firmly based on facts (Waldemarson 2007). Whether we confirm this image or not depends to some extent on what kind of sources we use. If we exclusively employ public sources, we run the risk of producing a history in which the political players will appear far more rational and reasonable than they probably were in reality. Feelings, emotions, and even whims may have influenced the decision making process and, as Anne Ollila has written, “feelings and ritual expressions of emotion are themselves also historical events” (1999, 9).

Occasionally we may be fortunate enough to glimpse emotions at play in traditional written sources. This may be expressed in minutes, either as political quarrels or as fits of rage by individual politicians. However, in most cases feelings and moods, as well as the circumstances that give rise to them, are considerably subtler and consequently harder to detect.

Emotions are also often expressed in other ways than by speech. There are occasions when non-verbal expressions of anger, dislike, or resistance colour the atmosphere of a political meeting. To turn to a newspaper or begin paying attention to a mobile phone when someone starts speaking are examples of non-verbal expressions of disapproval. Even harder to detect is the practice of keeping silent in order to suppress a sensitive question – sometimes a more effective weapon than an openly negative response (Waldemarson 1998; 2000). Such non-verbal expressions are only rarely visible in written public sources. Here elite oral history may be a useful tool in making the invisible visible. In this case the subjectivity of the informants must be considered as an advantage, as it may facilitate disclosing the impact of feelings, emotions, and moods. The importance of this was brought out in an interview with former Deputy Prime Minister Margareta Winberg:

I could make a comparison with two other committees that I have had some experiences of and that I found horrible: the Social Committee and the Traffic Committee. But the Agricultural Committee was a different kind of committee. I think this could be explained by the fact that its members were peasants. They were not easily affected. On the contrary, they were very down-to-earth people. And we were having such fun together! [...] Everyone supports one another. I could compare it with the Social Committee [...] The social democrats in that committee told me: You should sit by the wall and just keep quiet. And by all means do not believe that your bill is of any value in this place. I remember that I went for a stroll in a natural setting afterwards and cried. It was so devastating! I thought they were disgusting.

WINBERG 2005

Political Culture

Oral sources can also shed light on political culture. By studying how memories are narrated it is possible to learn something about the cultures that these memories are part of. Anne Ollila has formulated this insight by pointing at the cultural specificity of memory and its reflection of “a culture’s characteristic modes of thinking and experience, its values, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings.” Oral memory, therefore, may show “how a particular culture articulates the surrounding world and assigns it meaning” (Ollila 1999, 14).

Elite oral history is also useful in revealing information about the informal political rules and patterns of behaviour that create a certain political culture. Such cultures can also be distinguished by unspoken agreements about what could not be said or done. The absence of interplay and social teamwork are also important features of a certain political culture. Politics, in the words of Margareta Winberg, is sometimes a lonely business:

We didn’t talk that much with each other. One has to understand the character of the work done in a government. You mind your own business. People always believe that there are important discussion meetings and that all opinions are ventilated and that there are a lot of votes and things like that. But that’s not the case. No, you don’t discuss your ideas. Anyway, I didn’t. I do think that only a few people do. Everyone minds their own business and takes care of that.

WINBERG 2005

Oral memory processes also produce knowledge about the interplay between individual politicians on the one hand and political institutions and power structures on the other (Erlingsson 2005, 182f). An interview in which former Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson recalls the procedures followed when Tage Erlander was prime minister (1946–1969) provides an illustrative example:

The prime minister’s office had no more than five people. That means that the Government Office Building was highly decentralized. The prime minister dealt with some of the most important matters and all other questions were left to the ministries, and this way of sharing duties was exactly in accordance with Erlander’s philosophy. He wanted a strong minister of finances, a strong minister of foreign affairs, and a strong minister of social affairs. When this was the case it was possible for him to travel as much as he wished. During some periods he really travelled a great deal. The situation also allowed him to be the one who formulated

political messages and the one that was in contact with the prime ministers of other countries.

CARLSSON 2005

Elite oral history is also a good lens through which to detect aspects of politics that are exercised outside of formal contexts. Gaining knowledge of such activities is vital in aiming at political openness. Interviews are a rewarding method for tracing informal contacts and networks, as for example between politicians and organizations of interest. As Ingvar Carlsson recollected:

As minister of education I had very close contacts with the central trade unions. I was in contact with all organizations that represented groups of teachers and scholars. I often had informal conversations with them. In the evenings we went out and had dinner and talked frankly with each other [...] When I think of it, there was an ongoing conversation between the central unions in Sweden and myself.

CARLSSON 2005

These contacts also tried to influence factual political matters. Carlsson continued:

Suddenly I had him in telephone and he said: You are going to make a huge mistake. I tell you that if you bring about this bill now and if your otherwise so competent co-workers do not understand this, you will have to encounter a battlefield [...] That was a most well-functioning network.

CARLSSON 2005

Gerrymandering about the appointment of investigative committees can also be made visible by elite oral history. It is no secret that setting up and staffing such committees may be a way of doing politics. But we often lack information on how this is done in practice and here interviews can be helpful. Former Minister of Family Affairs Camilla Odhnoff gave an illustrative example of how she used her networks to make the composition of an investigative committee coincide with her own objectives:

Yes, I used my networks in the appointment of investigative committees. I could phone the leader of the conservative party and say, "In this committee there is only room for one member representing the right-wing parties. But if you appoint X your party will be the one represented in the committee." This was not a formally accepted behaviour, but I believe

that the conservative party leader appreciated my offer. On the one hand, his party got the place in the committee, and on the other, which seemed equally important to him; the other right-wing parties were left without representation.

ODHNOFF 2004

Hence interviews turn out to be a good way to make political cultures visible, but only if one has an open understanding of politics and widens this concept to also embrace the social context in which politics take place.

Some Parts of History will be Lost Forever

Elite oral history is a fruitful method of gaining access to the world of politics. However, there is no guarantee that everything will be brought out into the light. Oral sources have their limitations as there will never be a situation in which politicians will give complete or totally honest answers to the questions asked by historians, nor are there any guarantees they will answer our questions at all. Not everyone is inclined to participate in elite oral history projects.⁷ We might also be left without answers to our questions because of the limitations time imposes on oral sources. Key politicians can depart this life without ever being asked about their political careers.

We must accept the fact that some parts of political history will always remain hidden to us. Thus there is a paradox in the frequent talk about the openness of the Swedish political system, since it tends to assure citizens of something that is only partly true. Nevertheless, the acceptance of limitations imposed by our sources can never be used as an argument against trying to reveal as much information as possible. It neither seems logical nor defensible to avoid using certain sources because of their subjective character. Moreover, one cannot determine the value of different sources without considering what we wish to achieve. In the end the true value of a source is determined by the questions we seek to answer: whether we want to describe, explain, or understand politics.

Despite the strong arguments in favour of the use of oral sources presented above, the concept of openness requires the historian to take certain precautions. There are undeniable problems when scholars try to compensate for the lack of 'natural' political openness by constructing it afterwards. As researchers

⁷ The elite oral history project discussed in this chapter did not include enough informants to be able to draw any reliable conclusions about whether factors such as age, gender, or political party influenced the informants' willingness to provide information.

they have the power to decide which parts of the past that are selected as of interest to history and which parts that are not. Depending on how we choose to define the nature of politics, different narratives of the political past will be created. If we are not willing to challenge traditional ways of defining politics, even the use of oral sources could produce a misleading image of politics. Hence the problem one faces concerns the lack of openness among scholars as much as it does the lack of openness of the public archives.

If strictly positivistic ideals of science guide the study of politics, the result of these studies would probably be a kind of knowledge that is easily and securely verified. But at the same time it will be a limited knowledge. If we are not ready to let go of the security of proof that this approach demands of us, we must accept that some important questions never will be asked because the answers are impossible to verify in an unchallenged manner. Still, the same questions often are able to bring out knowledge about the innermost motives of human beings. Although there is no answer book that these answers may be verified by, such questions are often rewarded with answers that give a deeper understanding of both the political players and the world of politics. We should not stop asking them.

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Exporting Nordic Parliamentary Oversight to the European Union

Ann-Cathrine Jungar

In 1986 Jacques Delors, the then President of the European Commission said that “the EEC [European Economic Community] has 13 members, the 12 Member States and the Danish EEC Committee” (Damgaard and Jensen 2005, 401). Compromises reached after lengthy negotiations within the European Council had to be first given approval by the Folketing’s European Affairs Committee (Europaudvalget, then called Markedsudvalget) in order for Danish ministers to be authorized to sign a decision. A widely held opinion among politicians at the time was that the Danish parliamentary control was a hindrance to the cabinet ministers, who must find support and receive a binding mandate before the negotiations in the Council. This made the parliament of Denmark an impediment to further European integration because of the control and veto power over its government.

However, by the beginning of the 2000s the Danish parliament was regarded not as an obstacle to European integration, but as its solution. The strong involvement of national parliaments, and the beginning of more transparent negotiations within the formerly secretive Council, was one of the recommendations to resolve the democratic deficit of the European Union (EU). Variations of a ‘Nordic model’ of parliamentary oversight that the Danish parliament promoted were welcomed by a majority of the new member states of 2004. Metaphorically speaking, the ugly duckling had turned into the white swan of the European ballet.

The puzzle in this chapter is to account for how this transformation came about. We shall see that the Danish parliament spent considerable effort trying to influence how other parliaments organized their EU oversight. Although national parliaments operating in international organizations are expected to share experiences, the Danish parliament went beyond that: Through its standing committee on EU affairs it waged an active campaign. Financial and human resources were invested and specific strategies elaborated to persuade countries of the benefits of a so-called Nordic model of EU scrutiny.

The Danish parliament constructed a Nordic model of a European Affairs Committee that supervises its national government. The three Nordic EU member states had stressed that EU policies are matters for the entire

parliament to consider. Both Finland and Sweden had an eye on the Danish model, but despite their similarities in parliamentary structures and party-systems, developed their own models (Ahlbäck and Jungar 2009; Raunio and Wiberg 1997). The Danish or 'Nordic' model stressed a specific way of democratic inclusion, involvement, and access to information: "Sweden, Finland and Denmark all give high priority to openness in the decision making process. Openness enables the public including the media to follow EU-affairs" (Eduskunta, Folketinget, and Sveriges Riksdag 2002, 14).

The process of European integration transfers legislative power from national parliaments to the EU and from national parliaments to the executives. Popular assemblies that have been democratically elected are often bypassed in EU decision making. The current European financial and budget crises is believed to have strengthened the trend of de-parliamentarization as financial and budgetary policies have increasingly come under the influence of actors within the EU legal framework and other international organizations (Benz 2012; Auel and Höing 2014). The national parliaments have not been equally involved in the EU crisis management: Institutionally strong national parliaments were able to assert or strengthen their position, whereas the weaker national parliaments remained marginalized (Auel and Höing 2014, 13). Hence, the organization of national parliaments is vital for the democratic influence and control of EU-policy making, and particularly so when the EU institutions develop and assume new competencies beyond the EU legal framework. This has been the case in the post-2008 EU development.

In examining policy activism in supranational and transnational settings we first consider theories of policy entrepreneurship. The Danish parliament spread their norms and model although its control of European affairs had previously been conceived of as a problem.

Strong National Parliaments as a Solution to the EU Democratic Deficit

National parliaments have delegated power to the EU, enabling the Union to pass decisions that are binding for the member states. Since governments negotiate and decide policies within the Council of Ministers or the European Council representing the member states, all parliaments of member states have developed oversight procedures for influencing and controlling the government activities in the EU (Maurer and Wessels 2001; Norton 1996). The role of national parliaments in the overall EU policy making gained momentum in debates in the late 1990s. In the Laeken Declaration of 2000 that listed the

priorities for subsequent treaty reforms the involvement of national parliaments in the EU policy making was one of four prioritized issues. In the European Convention that prepared the ground for the treaty revision there were working groups discussing how the national parliaments might take part in EU policy making. In this context the idea was formulated that national parliaments were key institutions for the subsidiarity principle, a principle later enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty.

The reason why national parliaments were regarded as significant institutions is that they are still considered to be the main providers of democratic legitimacy in the EU, despite improvement of the democratic structures of the European Union (EU) itself (Smith 1996). The debates on the democratic deficit in the 1990s resulted in greater transparency in EU policy processes and in the strengthening of the decision making competencies of the European Parliament (EP) (Lord 1998; 2004). Hence, solutions to the democratic shortcomings were predominantly formulated in relation to the EU institutions. Nevertheless, although the European Parliament as a directly elected body has gradually increased its power, the popular control of EU decision making is still mainly channelled through national parliaments. The latter had until 1979 a direct channel to the EU by sending delegates to the EP, but have thereafter only been indirectly represented in EU decision making through their governments. The design of the parliamentary oversight procedure is therefore not only crucial for the democratic rule within the member states, but for the overall democratic quality of the EU.

Well in advance before accession to the EU the parliaments of the ten candidate states of the 2004 enlargement round designed their parliamentary oversight institutions. During the accession negotiations the national parliaments were involved in translating EU norms to domestic legislation in accordance with the so-called Copenhagen criteria and the demand to harmonize laws with the *acquis communautaire*. For this purpose specific EU committees were set up in the candidate states' parliaments, as a rule as temporary organs. Several national parliaments regarded themselves as being side-stepped since the Commission negotiated with the national governments on which EU requirements needed to be fulfilled and how (Dimitrova and Mastenbroek 2005; Jungar 2009). While the general pattern resembled that of old EU member states, the consequences were particularly severe in the re-established and weakly institutionalized young democracies. As Jan Zielonka has noted:

Parliaments in Central and Eastern Europe are the greatest institutional losers in the process of European integration [...] their position was never

strong before joining the union, partly because of their own organizational shortcomings, and partly because of the weak parties in the region.

ZIELONKA 2007, 174

According to another observer, the EU ways in the enlargement process were detrimental to democracy:

The Commission's proclivity, during the accession process, to work directly with executive agencies in the applicant states, bypassing the legislature, has done little to improve already weak parliamentary oversight in the region. And the prestige of the domestic lawmaking function has plummeted due to the mandatory extension of the *acquis communautaire*, a code of law *octroyé* from abroad, without serious input from domestic constituencies.

HOLMES 2003, 113

The influence and the status of the parliamentary assemblies was weakened even though governments needed to keep them informed on the contents of the membership negotiations because parliamentary legislation was necessary to fulfil the obligations for EU membership. The national parliaments in the candidate states of 2004 therefore engaged in the search for how to assume more influence in EU policy making. This involved among other things 'fact-finding' missions by legislators and civil servants to parliaments in the existing EU member states of that time, participation in various conferences, meetings of the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC) and the European Convention.

Denmark a Solution, Not a Problem

In this context, the Danish parliament was no longer seen as an obstacle to EU policy making. Rather, it was increasingly seen as an example to follow. The parliamentary scrutiny exercised by the European Affairs Committee over its government has been described by some practitioners and academics as a procedure that made the Danish Folketing one of the most powerful national parliaments in the EU. Depending on one's perspective, this can be viewed as a vice or a virtue. With the intensifying debates on the democratic deficit in the EU, or even the double democratic deficit when the shift of power from national parliaments to governments is included, Denmark's strong parliamentary scrutiny has increasingly been cited as exemplary (Maurer and Wessels 2001, 463;

Raunio and Wiberg 2000, 351; Raunio 2005, 321f). The Danish model enables broad participation and openness making it worth emulating for those concerned about democratic legitimacy, open debate, and popular control of the EU.

Denmark's creation of a standing European affairs committee, the Market Committee (*Markedsudvalget*), in 1972 was an institutional innovation leading to Danish involvement and ultimately membership in the European Communities. The committee had an institutional predecessor, the Market Negotiation Committee (*Markedsforhandlingsudvalget*), which was established in 1961 to follow the negotiations over Denmark's request to join the EEC (Laursen 2001; Jensen 2003, 34f). What was innovative in 1973 was the creation of a parliamentary committee to which legislative competencies were delegated. The Danish government had to present its position on the Council negotiations and receive a bargaining mandate from the committee (Damgaard and Jensen 2005, 400). Initially, the government was obliged to inform the European Affairs Committee about EEC decisions that were applicable to Denmark or required action by parliament (Laursen 2001, 103).

The capacity of the committee to issue a binding mandate to ministers negotiating in the Council arose out of a political crisis in 1973. The Danish minister of agriculture returned from a Council meeting where an agreement had been reached on agricultural prices. However, the Danish parliament would not accept it. Since the minister could not explain the policy outcome, the conservatives and liberals in opposition, forced the government to accept a procedure requiring a mandate from parliament (Laursen 2001, 104). This model has been applied ever since, although the European Affairs Committee is not mentioned in the Danish Constitution, nor is the committee's mandate legally binding. The mandating procedure is regular and occurs every Friday before the Council meets.

Two Ideal-Type Models of Parliamentary Scrutiny

There are various parliamentary models of EU oversight within the EU member states. Descriptions of oversight instruments generally refer to means for gathering information and instruments for influence and participation. Access to EU documents and other relevant information and institutionalized contacts with relevant parties, such as ministries, civil society representatives, members of the European and national parliaments belong to the first aspect. The deliberations between the parliament and the government and the scope of parliamentary involvement in EU policy making are vital for participation

and ultimately a country's scope of influence. Information and means of influence constitute the power resources that national parliaments have at their disposal to control EU policy making. Access to information on EU proposals and knowledge of ongoing discussions are prerequisites for efficient participation, but the character of deliberations with the government is the most important factor. Still, information is of little use if the possibilities of having a say in actual policy making are weak. The regularity of the deliberations and the capacity by explicitly requiring the government to have a mandate and tie its hands in EU negotiations are the crucial parameters. The scope of involvement is dependent on whether EU policy making is a task for a restricted, centralized group of legislators or if a wider spectra of parliamentarians within particular specializations (standing committees) is to deal with EU matters. The involvement of the standing committees invites broader participation and the use of parliamentary expertise in the deliberations with the government, although negotiations can be hampered.

The British and the Danish are the empirical cases for the classification of two ideal-type models of parliamentary EU oversight, namely, *document-based scrutiny* and *mandate-based scrutiny*. Parliamentary activity in document-based scrutiny focuses on screening and examining legislative proposals and other documents emanating from the EU. The parliament sifts through these in order to find the most important ones and when necessary consults with the appropriate minister before formulating a parliamentary opinion. However, within document-based scrutiny parliaments have no formal instruments at their disposal with which to issue the government binding instructions in EU negotiations. The parliament has a limited time period to deal with a EU proposal and the government is expected not to finalize the negotiation before the parliament has completed its scrutiny. However, it is up to the parliament to signal if and when it wants to intervene in the process of formulating the EU negotiation position.

In Andreas Maurer's and Wolfgang Wessels' analysis (2001) of the strength of parliamentary scrutiny, the member states with mandating arrangement are situated in the top, that is, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Austria – whereas the document based come thereafter and the member states with other arrangements are at the bottom as to the policy influence (Luxembourg, Spain, Portugal, Greece). In 2004 a majority of the new member states did not follow the British example, but opted for some kind of mandate-based scrutiny. The table below shows that seven of the eight post-communist EU member states that joined the EU in 2004 have some type of mandate-based scrutiny, whereas the Czech Republic, Malta, and Cyprus chose a document-based scrutiny of EU affairs. Mandate-based oversight appears to have been the most attractive model to

TABLE 10.1 *Types of parliamentary scrutiny among the twenty-seven EU-members*

Document-based scrutiny	Mandate-based scrutiny	Other
United Kingdom	Denmark (1973)	Belgium
Ireland (Oireachts)	Austria (1995)	Greece
France	Finland (1995)	Luxembourg
Germany	Sweden (1995)	Portugal
Netherlands*	Estonia (2004)	Spain
Italy	Hungary (2004)	
Cyprus (2004)	Latvia (2004)	
Czech Republic (2004)	Lithuania (2004)	
Malta (2004)	Poland (2004)	
Bulgaria (2007)	Slovakia (2004)	
	Slovenia (2004)	
	Romania (2007)	

* Mandating in Justice and Home Affairs

SOURCES: PARLIAMENTARY WEBSITES, COSAC

emulate. European parliaments that have mandate-based scrutiny differ as to the types of EU draft legislation that require a mandate. The mandating of the European Affairs Committees generally occurs systematically, except for Austria and Hungary where it is less regular. The two states that became members of the EU in 2007 opted for different paths: Bulgaria chose document based scrutiny, whereas Romania opted for a mandating model. (Table 10.1)

Ultimately, a majority of the new member states in 2004 opted for what Danish policy entrepreneurs advocated as strong parliamentary scrutiny of governments, namely, a mandate-based model. The Danish example was popular among newcomer states to the EU, although they translated and adapted it to fit the different parliamentary institutions and practices within their own countries.

Entrepreneurship in National Parliaments

The agency-oriented policy transfer literature has this far been dominated by studies of importers and 'pupils' which outnumber the investigations of exporters and teachers of ideas and policies. However, theories and concepts

on policy entrepreneurship originally developed for policy analysis have also found some acceptance in studies of the policy transfer processes. Policy entrepreneurs promote certain ideas in order to persuade others to adopt them (Mintrom 1997). John W. Kingdon defines policy entrepreneurs as “advocates, who are willing to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, money – to promote a position in return for anticipated future gains in the form of material, purposive, or solidarity benefits” (1995, 179). Studies of policy entrepreneurs have predominantly focussed on how they promote policy ideas and the factors that contribute to success. There are far fewer explanatory accounts of why individuals, organizations, think tanks, and states engage in the dissemination of ideas and policies.

Policy entrepreneurs employ a variety of strategies such as identifying problems, networking, shaping the terms of debate, and coalition-building (Mintrom 1997, 739). They use existing networks, but also create and try to institutionalize new networks for spreading ideas and policies (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996, 345f). Some conditions have been considered particularly favourable to policy entrepreneurship. First, policy entrepreneurship is more likely to succeed when problems need solutions and opportunities for launching new ideas arise. A policy window has been characterized as a “fleeting opportunity for advocates of proposals to put forward their pet solutions, or to push attention to their special problems” (Kingdon 1995, 165). Second, networks facilitate transfer since they allow policy makers to coordinate their activities around a shared problem, build alliances, and learn about the successes and failures of other countries or places and formulate consensual policies through the exchange of information and debate (Mintrom 1997; Stone Sweet, Sandholtz, and Fligstein 2001). A network can be both an arena as well as an actor depending on the level of its institutionalization. Within networks policy entrepreneurs try to shape the terms of debate, connect with members of the policy making community, craft arguments, and broker ideas (Stone Sweet, Sandholtz, and Fligstein 2001). The literature discriminates between different types of networks. Policy networks consist of a broad spectrum of actors, that is, politicians, civil servants, experts, and activists, who exchange information and ideas within a specific policy field. Advocacy coalitions are groups of people from both governmental and private organizations that share certain beliefs and coordinate their activities in order to influence policy making (Sabatier 1998). Epistemic communities are networks of experts within a specified issue area (Haas 1992). They take part in politics by presenting ‘scientific evidence’, suggesting cause-outcome relationships, etc. Networks with higher connectivity are likely to promote more learning than those with fewer links (James and Lodge 2003, 186).

The policy entrepreneur in the present case is the European Affairs Committee, which bears a mandate from the Danish parliament. A key person was its chairman between 2000 and 2005, Social Democrat Claus Larsen Jensen. “He saw many possibilities for national parliaments,” as a civil servant described Jensen assuming chairmanship, “and he immediately came up with many proposals” (Larsen 2008). His personality is cited as an important factor in initiating and carrying out transnational parliamentary activities at the time. As the chairman of the European Affairs Committee he has been characterized as a dynamic social networker, as someone who was engaged in a wide variety of fronts. Jensen’s background was in the Danish trade union movement, where he was international secretary responsible for EU affairs between 1982 and 1998. He was also active in international and European trade union organizations and had been involved in many networks during the 1990s when the young democracies of Central and Eastern Europe were integrated in the trade union movement. “I came to the European Affairs Committee with an experience of organizational work and with the operation of a European network – and with a belief that national parliaments were crucial for providing democratic legitimacy to the EU” (Jensen 2008).

A Parliamentary Committee with Self Esteem and Resources

The availability of generous financial, personal, and intellectual resources and broad support from the representatives in the European Affairs Committee were preconditions for transnational parliamentary lobbying activities. The European Affairs Committee is a high-status, well-staffed, and powerful committee of the Danish parliament. The unit providing EU-information is also situated with the committee and provides additional resources. “I had a marvellous operational unit at my disposal [...] resources for doing things,” Jensen (2008) stated. “This was an immense opportunity for taking action.” In 2001 he arranged for a group of civil servants on the committee to jointly develop a strategy on policies and means. Moreover, the chairman had the backing of almost all members of the committee for his initiatives to lobby other member states’ parliaments since this was in accordance with the Danish European Affairs Committee’s self-understanding as representing a powerful parliament in EU affairs and as a model to emulate. An illustration of the conceived superiority of the Danish model may be had in the following statement by a long-standing member of the European Affairs Committee:

The parliamentary system of scrutiny of European legislation has for many years been generally successful and also useful for the Danish

Government. Members of the Folketing attend meetings in the Euro-paudvalget very regularly and make sure that the Danish Government has a mandate from the Parliament at all times. And this scrutiny process is being gradually improved in order to secure better information for Danish society. Such a system can be adopted without serious problems by all European parliaments and has indeed been introduced in several member states.

Kjeld Albrechtsen, quoted in MULLALLY and WATTS 2006, 17

According to the chairman of the European Affairs Committee, the broad consensus in Denmark on strong parliamentary control of EU affairs was an advantage in many settings, such as within European party groups: "When a conservative or a social democratic representative meets a colleague from Denmark, they will receive the same message about the significance of strong parliaments for EU policy making" (Jensen 2008).

However, some parliamentarians took a more diplomatic stance and said that they were responsible for giving advice and support to the newly democratized states in Central and Eastern Europe as they were integrating into the EU. As legislators involved in international parliamentary cooperation they saw themselves as making history by socializing new parliaments into the rules of the democratic game. Initially the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe was the main platform for networking, but with the growth of the EU new opportunities for the exchange of opinions and experiences evolved. "As small states with no colonial history, well-functioning democracies, and well performing economies we [i.e., the Scandinavians] had a perhaps undeserved good reputation," suggests the former vice-chairman of the Danish EU Affairs Committee, Elisabeth Arnold (2008). Hence, it was an advantage for policy entrepreneurship that Denmark was conceived of as a leader and a role model in the field (disregarding its history as a colonial power in the North Atlantic and beyond). Even though the European Affairs Committee has been described as an arena for party political contestation in the mandating of government (Jensen 2003), there was agreement on the relevance of strong parliamentary scrutiny.

Windows of Opportunity

Timing is crucial for policy entrepreneurs. The opening of a policy window is a metaphor for a limited period of time in which opportunities for innovations arise. These windows open either because pressing problems in the

environment require solutions (such as climate change, tsunamis, etcetera) or because events in the political sphere enable transformations (new government, elections, new chairman of a parliamentary committee) (Kingdon 1995, 165). Policy entrepreneurs engage in matching of solutions to problems and vice-versa. The Danish parliamentary entrepreneurship was characterized both by problems to which solutions were needed and by particular political circumstances that stimulated policy entrepreneurship.

The Danish activities took place in the general context of interconnected events: treaty reform and the enlargement of the EU. The role of national parliaments had been an issue in the EU since the 1980s. The influence of national legislatures on EU policies was in decline both in EU institutions and member states. The direct link with EU policy making was broken in 1979 when members of the EP were no longer appointed by their national parliaments. Moreover, as those national legislatures delegated decision making power to their government representatives negotiating in the European Council, they were also in retreat in domestic politics. The parliamentary EU oversight procedures that had been set up to compensate for the loss of decision making capacity empowered member states' parliaments differently. A number of initiatives were taken to increase the role of national parliaments on EU structures as well as strengthen their ability to oversee their own governments, particularly since the EU had gradually increased its powers (Maurer 2001; Bengtson 2007; Knudsen and Carl 2007). The popular legitimacy of the EU seemed to be in constant decline and was among other things reflected in growing numbers of critical votes in several EU referenda and low support for European integration in popular surveys. Although national parliaments no longer seemed able to provide popular legitimacy for the European integration project, they were still considered necessary for facilitating popular support for it.

Three parallel debates concerning the involvement of national parliaments were going on in the beginning of the twenty-first century in the EU. The policy entrepreneurship of the Danish parliament consisted of crafting arguments and proposing solutions for the issues raised. The first debate was on the participation of national parliaments in policy making at the level of the EU; the second was by what means national parliaments might influence and control their governments' negotiations in the European Council and thereby exercise democratic control of EU policy making; and the third was how national parliaments might strengthen their presence and coordination in the EU.

The first issue was to (re)introduce national parliaments into the EU policy making process. The role of national parliaments in the overall European architecture was one of the four prioritized reform concerns in the EU treaties (Nice Declaration No. 23 on the Future of the Union, par. 5 and 7). National

parliaments at this time were not only an object of discussion, but were actively involved as representatives with voices and voting power in the European Convention that drafted the constitutional treaty. According to the Lisbon Treaty of 2007, parliaments will again be able to take part in EU policy making by checking if legislative proposals from the European Commission conform to the principle of subsidiarity (Protocol on the application of the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality). The so-called early-warning mechanism empowers national parliament with means to invite the Commission to review proposals that are suspected of violating the subsidiarity principle. National parliaments can make the Commission reconsider its proposal if one-third of national parliaments declare that subsidiarity has not been respected. The Commission has to withdraw a proposal if the majority of parliaments and the majority of EP members or a majority of 55 per cent of the members of the European Council agree on this.

Secondly, the legislatures of new member states had to prepare and adapt their parliamentary organizations to full membership in the EU. The majority of these were parliaments situated in recently democratized post-communist states where the delegation of decision making competencies to the EU was a difficult issue. After a decade of learning the norms and practices of representative democracy, yet another reform was demanded. Some parliaments felt that they had been side-stepped by their governments during the membership negotiations with the European Commission and that their role at times had simply been to rubberstamp agreements already concluded (Dimitrova and Mastenbroek 2005). Consequently there was interest in learning from others how to secure parliamentary control over a government negotiating in the European Council. Even parliamentarians in older member states were disappointed with their role in EU policy making and demanded reforms. For example, a British MP urged the House of Commons to learn from other parliaments:

The countries, which have joined the EU more recently – like Sweden and Finland, and several of the new member states – have also set up Danish-style systems, with greater power for the parliaments relative to the executive. Britain could learn from their experiences.

Michael Gowe, quoted in MULLALLY and WATTS 2006, 17

A third, less public issue was the future role of COSAC, an organization established in 1989. This inter-parliamentary body consists of representatives from national parliaments as well as the EP and is hosted by the member state holding the EU presidency. The Danish presidency in 2002 conceived of COSAC as an inter-parliamentary body for the exchange of information between national

parliaments (and the EP). There were some ideas in the European Convention and among parliamentarians that COSAC should be responsible for the control of subsidiarity. According to one suggestion, each parliament would send a delegation of members of the European affairs committees or sectoral committees (Lekberg 2002). The Danish presidency formulated a proposal suggesting that COSAC should facilitate the exchange of information on how national parliaments may enter objections to Commission proposals (Danish Parliament 2002). The Danes apparently wanted to prevent initiatives that could transform COSAC into a representative assembly of national parliamentarians.

The Timing of the Irish ‘No’

The problem of how to open the EU for influence of national parliaments had thus been on the agenda for some time and did not constitute a new window of opportunity from the Danish perspective. Rather, the Irish referendum on the Nice Treaty was a starting point for Danish activism according to the chairman of the European Affairs Committee: “We could not have done the same five or even three years earlier. The ‘no’ in the first Irish referendum on the Nice Treaty of 2001 was a fantastic opportunity” (Jensen 2008). By this development Denmark appeared no longer to be alone as a member state with citizens who were critical of the EU and caused problem for the pace of integration by voting ‘no’ in referenda on EU matters. Even one of the member states where citizens had traditionally been supportive of deeper European integration voted ‘no’. According to the chairman of the Danish Committee of EU Affairs, “It became manifest that no government could count on popular support for the EU forever.” As a consequence, Ireland started a process on how to increase the popular legitimacy of the European project and among its priorities was how to reform parliamentary scrutiny of EU policies.¹ As one of the civil servants on the Danish EU Committee stated: “Political events coincided in a way that made the pursuit of our policies possible and credible” (Larsen 2008).

The Danish European Affairs Committee is a pioneer in the field (Berry and Berry 1999, 176). Leader-laggard models have been formulated in diffusion studies and a central presumption (although contested as non-testable) is that in any policy area the policies of some states are more highly regarded than others’ and that policy makers are more likely to turn to these leaders for cues.

1 In June 2011 the Irish parliament (*Oireachtas*) reformed its document-based EU oversight organization: The joint Committee of European Affairs monitors broad EU policies and programmes, and the sectoral committees scrutinize EU legislative proposals.

Not only did some of the other EU states conceive of the Danish model as an example to follow, but Danish parliamentarians themselves held their EU scrutiny in high esteem and were firmly convinced that others could learn from them. As one of those interviewed stated, “Since we were convinced that we had the best arguments on how national parliaments should be involved in policy making we believed we should try them on others as well” (Jensen 2008). An obvious point of departure for parliamentary policy entrepreneurship was the conviction that the Danish mandating model was the best method for involving and empowering national parliaments. Although the Danes did not openly criticize models of EU scrutiny used by other member states, it nevertheless became clear in the European benchmarking process that they looked with disfavour on some other countries “like Greece and Belgium” (ibid.). According to the chairman of the European Affairs Committee “it was an advantage to be conceived of as a good practice or a role model,” his mission being the creation of a transnational parliamentary laboratory where methods could be presented and compared (ibid.).

Ideas, Models, and Strategies

The Danish line of argumentation for lobbying strong parliamentary scrutiny of governments was planned in detail within the administration of the European Affairs Committee. It proceeded in two steps: The first point was to describe the function of national parliaments in the overall EU institutional structure. The second point was to show that strong parliamentary scrutiny did not hamper flexible decision making, but rather contributed to democratic accountability and efficient implementation of EU legislation by the member states. The idea was to counter the notion that national parliaments were an impediment to cabinet ministers’ negotiating in the European Council and consequently to EU decision making. Strong parliamentary scrutiny was considered beneficial for the implementation of EU legislation since it would be easier for the parliaments to make the necessary decisions if they were familiar with the issues and had an opportunity to influence them. The three Nordic member states are said to have the best implementation record of the EU members due to administrative culture (Falkner et al. 2005). The Danish presidency coupled this observation together with parliamentary oversight structures. The idea of national parliaments bringing the EU closer to their citizens was taken up as a reason for involving national parliaments, but the above argument on efficiency was the most important.

Claus Larsen Jensen declared that “the primary function of a national parliament is to control its government” as he travelled around presenting models

for how legislatures should take part in EU policy making, in his capacity as the chairman of the Danish European Affairs Committee (Jensen 2008). In order to find support for strong national parliaments in the EU their function had to be clearly defined as distinct from that of the EP. Historically there has been a tension between national parliaments and the EP as two different types of assemblies legitimately representing citizens. The question of what role national parliaments should play within the EU has received different answers throughout the history of European integration. However, the solutions have (more or less) oscillated between two ideal-types, partly due to different views on the institutional architecture of the EU: on the one hand, there is a model of indirect EU representation according to which national parliaments are predominantly considered as scrutinizing governments negotiating in the legislative deliberations of the EU councils. The direct representation of national parliaments in the EU, on the other hand, envisions an assembly of national parliamentary representatives, as is the case in federal systems. The Danish European Affairs Committee tried to downplay this conflict by pointing out that the EP and the national parliaments have distinct roles, both of which are necessary and complementary. The EP is a directly elected co-legislative body, whereas the national parliaments control governments. "The discussions in the Convention on the subsidiarity control of national parliaments, which ultimately resulted in the national parliaments being empowered to directly intervene in the EU policy making process was initially a bit disturbing for our line of argumentation" according to Jensen, "despite the fact that we were strong supporters of the proposal" (2008). The Danes wanted to prevent the view that saw parliaments' control of their governments as secondary.

The Danish representatives did not present a particular model to emulate, but rather focussed on initiating a debate on comparisons of parliamentary arrangements in various bilateral and multilateral settings. In 2002 the Danish presidency initiated within COSAC a process of formulating minimum standards of how national parliaments should be involved in EU affairs. These so-called Copenhagen criteria were presented as "instructive minimum standards," leaving it "up to each Parliament to decide the extent to which the guidelines should be implemented" (European Parliament 2003). These non-binding guidelines thus alluded to the binding Copenhagen criteria that new candidate states had to fulfil in order to initiate membership negotiations with the EU. They highlighted three elements of parliamentary scrutiny: the quantity and quality of information, the timing of information exchange, and opportunities for national parliaments to apply the information and exert influence on EU policies. However, no particular member state parliament was mentioned in the official documentation as a model or best practice to follow, although

pressure was put on new member states to set up parliamentary EU oversight procedures. “The idea of these guidelines was to engage old and to be member states in a debate on parliamentary EU organisation,” according to one of the civil servants on the Danish committee of EU affairs (interview with Laursen). That is, the process, which consisted in debating good practices and comparing different types of parliamentary scrutiny, was organized as peer learning.

The Danish parliament also produced a brochure entitled *The EU and Democracy in the Nordic Region* (Eduskunta, Folketinget, and Sveriges Riksdag 2002), to meet the demand for information on parliamentary procedures concerning the EU, and to be used for marketing of the Nordic mandating model. The pamphlet was a presentation of EU oversight procedures in the three Nordic member states and was distributed within the European Convention, COSAC, and bilaterally. It was a Danish initiative, written by civil servants of the European Affairs Committee and entirely financed by the Folketing. The Finnish and Swedish parliaments were informed of the enterprise and had the opportunity of commenting on the contents. The impression of a collaborative venture is underlined by the fact that the logotypes of the three parliaments are printed on the back of the publication. However, the idea was to present the parliamentary EU organization in the three Nordic states as a coherent model: Both Sweden and Finland had an eye on the Danish model, but ended by developing their own procedures. Nonetheless it makes sense to talk of a Nordic model of European affairs committees, as the principle that parliaments exercise influence and supervision of their governments on EU questions is the same.

The pamphlet was quoted in various national settings. One example was a memorandum to the Riigikogu, the Estonian parliament, by its member and European Affairs Committee chairman and member of the Res Publica party, Marko Mihkelson:

Estonia does not necessarily have to reinvent the wheel [...]. The most obvious examples are from the Nordic countries. Although Denmark, Sweden, and Finland have all followed their own paths we can talk to some extent of the Nordic model. Riigikogu has to make a decision soon. It is necessary to rely on the experience of other countries and, based on these, develop a model that fits the Estonian realities best and is the most efficient solution for us. Several Nordic experts have said good things about the Finnish system, i.e., the Grand Committee, because this system is most explicitly defined. This does not mean that the automatic copying of this model guarantees its success in a new context.

It is difficult to assess to what extent Danish policy entrepreneurship had an impact on the final decisions on EU oversight procedures adopted by national parliaments of new member states in 2004. There is surprisingly little research on how and in which ways policy transfer and learning matter for institutional developments and, in our case, on how increased interaction among parliaments and the EU and “learning of ‘best practices’” might have led “less-engaged parliaments to enhance their control efforts” (Karlas 2011, 259). The Danish policy entrepreneurship framed deliberations in a way that member states that did not opt for a mandating model, that is, chose a model which appeared less democratic, transparent, and efficient, had to present convincing arguments, such as referring to historical ties (Malta), or election systems (majority voting in the Czech Republic). Danish policy entrepreneurs actively engaged in information, dissemination, and persuasion on procedures for EU policy making by national parliaments.

Conclusions

We have examined how the Danish European Affairs Committee engaged in influencing the way in which EU member or candidate states organized their parliamentary EU scrutiny. The committee marketed a Nordic model of parliamentary oversight over EU affairs and encouraged members to hold their government accountable for the decision making in the EU by drafting strong oversight instruments.

Treaty reform and EU enlargement had put the issue of national parliaments on the agenda. For the states opting for EU membership in 2004 an unresolved question was how to secure parliamentary influence over EU policy making. There was consequently a great demand for information that the Danes tried to satisfy. Preconditions for taking action were that the Danish European Affairs Committee had economic, personal, and intellectual resources at its disposal. The members of the committee representing all parliamentary parties agreed that parliament should provide guidance to others. The Danish Folketing made use of various instruments in order to engage EU member and candidate state parliaments in debating oversight ideas and alternatives. Representatives from the Danish legislature travelled extensively to other parliaments and used existing networks, such as COSAC and transnational networks of parliamentarians and civil servants to market their institutional templates. The Danish parliamentary engagement was based on the conviction that the ‘Nordic’ mandating model was best suited to an open political process with parliamentary scrutiny of EU policy making. As innovator and as representative of a paradigm that ensured democratic influence and

control without hampering the implementation of EU legislation, the Danish parliament was presented as an example to be emulated.

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Adopting a New Political Culture: Obstacles and Opportunities for Open Government in Austria

Peter Parycek and Judith Schossböck

Information is a major source of power in the post-industrial world and the foundation of all governing. Not only lies access to public information at the heart of the democratic process (Garnham 2004), it is also a prerequisite for the organized knowledge that benefits society (Robins and Webster 2004). Scholars and politicians have therefore been promoting a social transformation toward an information society. While technological advancements have an effect on the flow of data that governments and society rely on (Mayer-Schönberger and Lazer 2007), some scholars argue that we do not face an information revolution, but only a change in how information resources are accessed (Robins and Webster 2004). Be this as it may, the gathering and storage of information is crucial for the maintenance of power, decision making, and providing services to citizens. The way this is done is a central characteristic of the information culture in a country.

A recent report on information and intelligence needs in the twenty-first century has pointed out that governments adapt their practices to a world of greater interdependence and interaction (Henry L. Stimson Center 2008). In particular when public demand for transparency is high, governments search for new ways of managing the relationships with their citizens and with stakeholders, not least through policies of 'open government' (Peters 2009). Society is undergoing a massive transformation visible in decentralized network communication, the trend towards open source knowledge, and the constant demand for innovation and information resources in the business sector. In such a climate, governments and organizations respond by increased focus on the structuring of knowledge and information.

Open government relies on freedom of information (FOI) through access to government records. The digital age has changed the discussion of open information. While 'open' in open information primarily refers to publishing, sharing, and free access to information (as in the terms open government, open data, open science, open access, or open source), freedom of information relates to the distribution of information, namely the right of a citizen to see official information that governments and other institutions keep about them. Open information means transparency about what information exists and

giving individuals control over their personal data. Open technologies in this sense include open source and open standards. However, openness can refer to all kinds of content and data. According to the 'open knowledge definition' (OKD) of the Open Knowledge Foundation (OKF), a piece of knowledge is considered open if it can be freely used, re-used, and distributed (Open Definition 2012).

Policies that embody the idea of openness seek to increase transparency and accountability in a state or a society. As promising ideas for the vitalization of citizens' interest in politics and for economic and scientific innovation, these concepts reflect an ambition towards more engagement and collaboration within public institutions and politics in general. However, the degree of transparency and openness of a state's information depends on its information culture. The proactive publication of information and the right to request access to documents may vary considerably between states because of cultural differences and divergent understandings of the role of government.

Certain developments and technological advancements, like the increased role of Internet communication in citizens' everyday life, the distribution of e-services and e-government tools, and the appearance of new Internet cultures (visible in the discussions of information transparency surrounding the case of WikiLeaks and the networked protests of the Arab Spring) have transformed our understanding of information cultures, their practices and their impact significantly. The Internet has largely blurred traditional definitions of who information providers, content makers, producers, and consumers are (Bruns 2008). While the state has traditionally been an owner and withholder of information, citizens have become increasingly dissatisfied with situations in which they are not given the right to access and control information relevant to them. The issue of privacy and control over online information in particular is strongly contested by both activists and governments. International protests against proposed legislation, such as the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), the Stop Online Privacy Act (SOPA) or the Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act (CISPA), showed that many citizens are concerned about online privacy legislation and distrust increased information sharing between private companies and the government.

International policies aimed at open information, open data, and open government served as best case practices for Europe during the recent years. Some organizations have already adapted to these practices. For instance, the president of the World Bank, Robert Zoellick, emphasized that open data helps with producing new analyses, developing innovative politics, and working on problems with new attempts to a solution. The provision of open data, Zoellick argues, could help with fighting poverty in the developing countries. Consequently, the World Bank also opened their data sets to the public.

Open government strategies have emerged internationally in response to increased demands for transparency and the changing role of information in politics. They typically follow the three pillars of the open government strategy proposed by Barack Obama in 2009: transparency, participation, and collaboration. Open government is now on the political agenda of European countries and included in e-government action plans (European Commission 2011; Kroes 2010). These plans on the European level will challenge local governments on such issues as how access to information should be legally treated. The trend among European countries to publish vast quantities of government data can be seen as a competition for the prestige of being regarded as an open government. Paradoxically, such a phenomenon has not emerged with regard to improving (FOI) laws.

One example of an international effort to promote open government is the Open Government Partnership (OGP), which seeks strong commitments from participating government agencies to encourage transparency, increase civic involvement, fight corruption, and use new technologies to hold government more accountable (OGP 2012).

As per 2014, Austria is not among the participating countries and has not yet set the adaption of open government as a legislative goal. However, politicians are currently working on an official open government strategy and several other initiatives, especially regarding the transparency of governmental data. The City of Vienna is developing such plans and the coalition agreement of the Viennese Government of November 2010 mentioned a dedicated expert group that is working on an open government concept for the city in a chapter on information and communication technologies (ICTs) (*Gemeinsame Wege für Wien* 2010). Additionally, the City of Vienna has established a leading role in open government data during the last years and is seeking to foster open innovation via a dedicated open government data roadmap.

Legislative and cultural factors will influence Austria's decision to adopt open information values. These factors are interrelated, as information laws shape a country's information cultures and vice versa. Legal and cultural factors are not the only preconditions affecting openness. Economic, democratic, and demographic issues can expand and legitimize openness, but can also define areas of conflict. The extent to which culture can be changed by politics has been studied in general, including the relationship between crisis and political change. The coexistence or clash of different cultures (particularly within a country) may also be seen as a crisis; both cultural change and persistence of distinctive cultural traditions have been observed (Inglehart and Baker 2000).

A country's current political makeup can also influence cultural change. Neuroscience research suggests that certain voting blocks are more open to

new ideas. For example, American Democrats score higher than Republicans on tests of openness, which has been seen as a preference for innovation, creativity, curiosity, complexity, and ambiguity (Mooney 2012). A stable and mature civil society is a prerequisite for putting an open government strategy into practice. Colin Crouch (2009; 2011) emphasizes the importance of a strong and vibrant civil society for the 'remaking' of government and the development of an opposition movement as counterforce to governmental control. According to Crouch, civil movements are the most likely source of a country's democratic revitalization.

Open Government, Open Data, and Open Information

The United States are often seen as in the lead when it comes to developing open government strategies, but discussions using the term 'open government' already took place in the late 1950s among those studying information exchange in the American government (Parks 1957). After World War II publications were increasingly delayed and sometimes information was withheld. Open government principles and the idea of free government information were then considered (Parycek and Sachs 2010). As a result, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) was signed in 1966 and came into effect in 1967, despite the opposition of President Lyndon B. Johnson. Since then, the US has continued to increase access to information for its citizens, although some US administrations opposed this development (Parycek and Sachs 2010; Little and Tompkins 1975). In Europe, open government directives are mostly found within e-government policies.

In a narrow sense, open government strategies are about improving transparency and accountability in public affairs (Heckmann 2011). More broadly they include citizen participation and collaboration in government as proposed by Barack Obama in his election campaign and the Open Government Directive (Executive Office of the President 2009). The Open Government Directive and the evolving international discussion on this topic indicated a new trend: for the first time, the principles of transparency were considered part of a holistic government strategy on the highest level. The former grassroots movement of activists now seems to have been adopted by large NGOs and has entered the domain of governance. Open government strategies encompass more than just publishing government information: Their goal is to increase citizen involvement and influence the direction of the governing process itself (Thibeau 2009). The balance between open government and governmental secrecy is at the forefront of contemporary public debate (Piotrowski and Van Ryzin 2007).

The topic of open government has also been addressed by research and in popular discourse. Many studies have examined strategies for bringing about more transparency and for assessing their effectiveness in the context of local government (*ibid.*). Several strands of research concentrate on one key element of open government (like transparency or participation, resulting in a plurality of concepts such as e-democracy and e-participation). Some say these terms are vague or contradictory, an observation that may be applied to open government research in general (Fuchs 2009). Academic research in this field includes open government case studies (including best practice projects), policy recommendations (that can be described as a 'how-to' of open government, emphasizing the potential and risks of the concept or of implementation plans), and research focusing on perspectives, attitudes, and opinions of citizens and stakeholders.

Implementing open government policies requires the consideration of certain preconditions (Müller 2010). These mostly depend on information cultures, which have changed recently on a local and global level. Such cultures, in turn, inform and promote new government concepts. While all countries are confronted with these changes, there are significant differences in the attitude toward open information and open government in the member states of the European Union (EU). The introduction of open government depends on cultural and organizational change, and open government strategies often respond to already changing information cultures. However, many have seen the open government philosophy as a means of facilitating cultural change, and they seek to use this change for new state policies. New policies and new legislation may be seen as the final manifestation of cultural shifts that have occurred. Some political and social movements can change cultures in significant and enduring ways. Open government advocates and related bottom-up initiatives can be viewed in such a light.

Information cultures and information policies nowadays play a significant role in social development, as many of the main challenges and political upheavals of today have crucial information components. In some cases, these cultures are essentially about security and retrieval, such as cyber attacks against government or critical private sector information systems. However, information strategies cannot succeed through technological means only. As open government has thus far primarily been the domain of technologists, the power of technological change may be overrated. Technical solutions can be used as tools for more transparency in a state, especially in delivering services to citizens. But open government strategy is not only about technology, but also requires cultural changes in organization and processes (Moore 2011). Without addressing cultural characteristics and preconditions, the value of open government in a state will be difficult to measure.

The publication of state information has a long discursive history based on a country's information laws. It engages the interest of a broad audience, whereas the publication of raw data (known as the open data strategy) appeals to a smaller circle of stakeholders. Through the implementation of an open data strategy, a state commits to publishing non-personalized, copyright-free information that is machine-readable (Berners-Lee 2009). This allows new intermediaries to create services and applications of potential interest to a broader audience.

The principles of open data have been defined by activists, advocates, and the open data movement. A central actor in the open data movement, the Sunlight Foundation, has defined ten principles of open governmental data: completeness, primacy, timeliness, ease of physical and electronic access, machine readability, non-discrimination, use of commonly available standards, licensing, permanence, and low or no cost (Sunlight Foundation 2010). Many open data advocates are found within the Linked Open Data movement, which aims to publish structured data so that it can be interlinked and become more useful. It is argued that open data alone is not enough for reaching its full potential, as data without insight into the engineering process or the traces of its origin can only generate a limited amount of trust (Berners-Lee 2009). Semantic Web is an umbrella term for an architectural concept consisting of methods, technical specifications, and standards aiming to provide added value to the data by combining it with meta-data. This meta-data describes relations and dependencies to other data. By attaching the semantic component, comparable data can be automatically identified and linked, thereby creating new information.

The term open information comprises information that is readable by machines and people, that is, contextualized and non-contextualized data. While data can be any symbol, sign, or measure in a form that can be directly captured by a machine, information is data that has value in a context leading to knowledge when linked to an intelligent network (Barlow 1994; Rowley 2007). If one wants to refer only to machine-readable information, the term open data is appropriate. While the open data movement is advocating the publishing of data to start, there is also hope that this will lead to added value in society via more information for citizens and further knowledge creation.

The readiness for putting open data strategies into practice varies according to cultural background and political structures. In Anglo-American countries, open data initiatives were launched by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Sunlight Foundation (2012) in the US or the open data initiative in the United Kingdom. Most open data initiatives and movements

were started and are supported by web enthusiasts, often following the Linked Open Data principles or forming interest groups (Heath and Bizer 2011).

Legal Preconditions

Different approaches to governmental information can be seen by comparing their laws concerning FOI. For instance, Sweden's Freedom of the Press Act of 1766 was an early legal milestone in the state's obligation to provide the public with information (Gøtze and Pedersen 2009; Medimorec, Parycek, and Schossböck 2010; Parliament of Sweden 2009).

In an ideal scenario, authorities deliver information without reference to any particular occasion. In Australia, for instance, the government must justify withholding access, rather than the applicant having to justify his or her case for seeking it (Hill 2011). Its Freedom of Information Act of 1982 is a key element in this regard, providing a general right of access to documents. The FOIA in the US of 1967 gives American citizens the right to obtain official documents. The wording of several amendments to the FOIA makes it clear that the state is obligated to disclose all information, therefore having to justify its actions when access is denied. The Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments of 1996 made it clear that US authorities are to emphasize computer-based access to information. The authorities are also obligated to grant citizens access to the technical means of using that information, if necessary (Parycek and Sachs 2010). Due to the rapid development of ICTs, the FOIA was again amended 2007 by the Openness Promotes Effectiveness in Our National Government Act. The amendments focused on developments within the media and declared web-based information platforms to be news services.

Austria does not yet have a dedicated FOI law. An international comparison of information laws by Bertelsmann based on the Banisar study¹ reviewed processing times and costs (Banisar 2002). Sweden had the shortest processing times ('as soon as possible'), followed by Hungary (eight days) and the US (twenty days), although in most cases this refers to legally set processing times and not the average time of actual requests, as legal standards are not always followed. Austria (eight weeks) was far behind in this comparison (Hart and Welzel 2003). However, after the general elections in 2013 the Austrian government has announced the replacement of the existing law and has now issued the first draft for FOI legislation. This was in response to an online petition for

1 The Banisar study explored different conditions in 53 countries with FOI legislation regarding the right of citizens for access to information and its legal regulation.

FOI reform by a civil society initiative called *Transparenzgesetz.at* that had demanded more transparency via a dedicated law and been supported by more than 11,000 people.

Increased access to information and strengthened transparency are also defined as objectives to be realized on the European level by 2015 according to the Ministerial Declaration of e-government concluded in Malmö 2009 (EU 2009). In the area of environmental information, for example, the EU seeks to build a shared data portal that Austria is currently working on in the framework of the *Projektgruppe Umweltinformation* (PG-UI 2009). The necessary interoperability of European data lead to the INSPIRE directive of 2007. INSPIRE not only focuses on the standardization of geographical data, but on a spatial data infrastructure (SDI) as well. Member states are obliged to actively publish environmental data, but the plan's complete implementation in Austria was hindered due to financial constraints. Another agreement for opening information on an international level is the 1998 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, usually known as the Aarhus Convention, that Austria joined in 2005. It makes the active collection and public availability of environmental data compulsory. Due to the national implementation of Regulation 2007/2/EG, which mandated the creation of a national environmental data portal, publishing of information by the state is expected to expand.

Access to information, public participation in decision making processes, and access to justice in environmental cases is part of the Aarhus Convention. Guideline 2003/4/EG (European Environmental Information Guideline) regulates a similar right of access to information within the EU (Legat, Krammer, and Mayer 2009). These guidelines aim to control environmental pollution (PG-UI 2009), but also to enable citizens to control environmental law by providing them with relevant information. This exemplifies how access to information can contribute to increased public awareness of environmental issues and bring citizens closer to the government (Legat, Krammer, and Mayer 2009). The mindset behind these efforts is to provide a networked information portal for interested citizens. Another European legislative framework is Directive 2003/98/EC, also known as the PSI Directive. It encourages EU member states to make as much public sector information as possible available for re-use. The guideline regulates a non-discriminatory and transparent distribution of public information (Püschel 2007). Despite these recent initiatives on the European level, Austria, as noted above, still lacks a separate, national FOI law. While in certain countries the publishing of free information takes place with reference to a legal framework, for example, Germany's Freedom of Information Law of

2006, the situation in Austria (and Eastern Europe) is more complex, and activists have addressed this specific situation in the past, asking for the adoption of European standards.

The FOI legislation in Austria is known as the Duty of Disclosure Law, which grants a right to ask for information, but no obligation to publish it (*Auskunftspflichtgesetz* 1987). This right to information does not imply the right of citizens to access records. For the federal states and municipalities, other laws (like the Viennese Duty of Disclosure Law) are binding. In addition, there is a catalogue of exceptions, such as the Official Secrecy Regulation (*Amtsverschwiegenheit*), which limits the right to information. Unique within the EU, official secrecy is part of the Austrian Constitution. Paragraph 20 describes the obligation of national, provincial, and community agencies, as well as of all other institutions of public law, to disclose information, as long as it does not undermine the obligation of official secrecy that all persons entrusted with duties in federal, provincial, and municipal administration are to observe (*Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz* 1934). The latter applies to information related to official activities which are to be kept confidential in the public's interest or in the interest of other persons. Under certain conditions, exemptions from secrecy in official matters are permissible.

These regulations have been criticized because in modern democracies official secrecy should serve the protection of private and certain public information, but not the general protection of administrative data and knowledge. If Austria seeks to keep pace with the requirements and developments on the EU level, it will have to improve its information policies, which will require substantial legal amendments. However, as indicated, the success of new information policies not only depends on legislative action, but on cultural factors as well.

Information Cultures and Politics

The way legal and political institutions conceptualize transparency depends on socio-political cultures of openness and information cultures. As there are many possible indicators of societal openness, information cultures are not easy to define. Often, they are described in terms of information technology, but they are more related to people than to technology itself. They concern cultures of using information technology, but also the general organizational culture of a state or region (Widén-Wulff 2000). The values a population has regarding information depend on historical background, personal attitudes of political stakeholders and citizens, technological infrastructure, and information ethics. Information cultures can also be viewed as responsible for unwritten rules in policy making

and can often explain what has really happened. Ursula Maier-Rabler and Christina Neumayer (2009) define information cultures, together with technology and policy, as a basic factor of e-politics. The concept of e-politics refers to e-based societies, for whom the Internet is a rapidly expanding medium for information and communication. Depending on whether a country's information culture is restrictive or permissive, either an 'answer culture' or 'question culture' dominates the process of access to information (characterized by questions of active or passive transparency) and the discourse of information retrieval.

Information cultures play a key role in how access to information and the notion of knowledge in general are valued. Maier-Rabler (2002) differentiates between information-friendly and information-restrictive cultural and societal frameworks. In this theory, the flow of information within a state is linked to the information culture of a country. For example, some democracies that emerged within a strong Protestant environment tend to foster values such as individual engagement, community commitment, and accountability of political representatives. Anglo-American and Northern European democracies are more likely to favour access to information for all as a constitutive element of democracy. In information-restrictive democracies, by contrast, the information flow between authorities and citizens follows a 'push principle' with authorities deciding on access and distribution of information – a framework that does not foster free information as the basis for participation. In the ideal type of an information-friendly society there is a strong political commitment for information to everyone and free flow of information and knowledge throughout all groups in society.

These differences in information cultures can be detected in a number of different settings. In the report *EU Kids Online*, for example, media literacy and the amount of regulations and media restrictions imposed on young people by their parents was assessed (Hasebring, Livingstone, and Haddon 2008). Whether parents regulate traditional media or new media can indicate something about the media culture in a country, assuming that progressive media cultures are more likely to develop new media strategies. Parents in Catholic Europe generally regulate traditional media like TV, perhaps due to a lack of strategies to deal with new media like the Internet. By contrast, information-progressive countries (in this case Protestant ones) tend to regulate new (online) media (*ibid.*).

Considering information policies and legal regulations, the culture in Austria belongs to the restrictive category. The historical background with a longstanding culture of closure, state sovereignty, and the attributes of the Habsburg bureaucracy has played a significant role for this. The positions of

different countries on information-restrictive measures can partly be explained by this cultural background and the remains of historico-cultural specifics. This is also evident in political debate, such as the discussion about enforcing anti-terror laws, urged by some Austrian political parties such as the Social Democratic Party of Austria (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs*, SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei*, ÖVP), in reaction to the 2011 attacks in Norway. Whereas the official reaction in Norway stressed the country's culture of openness, Austrian politicians have asked for government surveillance of citizens (also regarding the Internet) and more administrative power – a reaction described as 'Metternich-Reflex' by an Austrian newspaper (Föderl-Schmid 2011).

Research into the political climate and the public trust in Austria showed that there is a tendency towards disenchantment with the political party system and its democratic institutions (Friesl, Pollak, and Hamachers-Zuba 2009). However, such disenchantment can generate engagement in alternative politics. There currently are a growing number of political Internet initiatives launched by civil society like thematic blogs, informal networking, and new organizational forms of activity. One prominent case of online mobilization arising out of frustration with the political and educational system is the Austrian student protest movement of 2009. Beginning with a sit-in of the *Audi Max* auditorium of the University of Vienna, the initiative generated extensive media coverage in Austria and other European cities (Edelmann, Parycek, and Schossböck 2011). The demands of the protest movement community included free education and access to information resources.

If one looks at general political culture, a survey has shown that acceptance of authoritarian attitudes has risen, not only in Austria but also in other Central European countries (Rathkolb and Ogris 2010). This research was based on 1,000 telephone interviews per country in December 2007. It found that the number of people who view democracy as the 'best form of government' had dropped by 10 per centage points to 15 per cent as compared to previous studies. Although in post-Communist countries like Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, feelings of powerlessness and loss of orientation (i.e., 'anomie') are much higher than in Austria, about half of the Austrian respondents believed that they had no influence over what actions their government takes and 42 per cent believed they had no voice – a challenging statistic for those who want to revitalize democracy.

One has to be careful in equating low turnout rates in elections with a general disinterest in politics. In times of crisis, for example, voter participation may increase. However, it only represents one aspect of political participation (Filzmaier 2010). Yet, diachronic comparative studies on values in different

nations show that distrust in politics in general and political parties in particular are increasing. Austrians appear to be retreating from the political system and its institutions (Gabriel and Völkl 2008). According to a study of Austrian values, the level of trust in institutions decreased between 1999 and 2008 from 39 to 28 per cent for parliament and from 17 to 14 per cent for political parties (Friesl, Pollak, and Hamachers-Zuba 2009). These developments suggest a lack of participatory opportunities, political education, or democratic self-conception. When asked about their satisfaction with democracy, half of the population in Austria claimed to be satisfied (but only 4 per cent said they were very satisfied). Remarkably, this figure declined by one-third since 1999, while the number of unsatisfied citizens has doubled to 46 per cent (*ibid.*). Half the population looks favourably upon decisions made by experts (as opposed to officials); but also sees society in general as a source of good political decision making. Many think of these developments as an explosive political mixture, especially as more traditional politicians and administrators remain tied to their old hierarchical and authoritarian institutions.

In Transparency International's 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) listing of all countries, Austria ranked 25, compared to rank 10 in 2005 (Transparency International 2012). In comparison to other EU member states Austria ranks on average, and in comparison to the former EU15 countries and the Anglo-Saxon democracies, in the lower third (only the Mediterranean EU member states rank lower). This can partly be seen as the result of several corruption cases in Austria. Another factor giving rise to increased mistrust in politics and administration, as discussed earlier, is Austria's lack of a FOI law. There is also no 'whistleblower protection', as asked for by international organizations like the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), that would protect insider whistleblowers from companies and administration against disadvantages or existence-threatening actions (Council of Europe 2012).

As open government strategies are implemented, new cultures of openness may come into conflict with more restrictive information cultures. This is also reflected in media representations of administrative processes. A popular example of how this can appear is seen in the TV series *MA 2412*, a sitcom that satirizes the complexity of Austrian bureaucracy. For a non-Austrian, the detailed cultural allusions may be difficult to understand. However, the basic statement is clear: in Austria, asking for information or help from administrative authorities and officials takes time, and often involves a difficult process in which citizens are not usually seen as customers, nor are they always taken seriously. Media representations such as *MA 2412* may be symptomatic of how relations between officials and citizens are culturally perceived.

Several Austrian blogs document similar conflicts that arise when citizens ask for information from authorities and advocate transparency for the public sector, free access to government information and citizen access to public documentation of the authorities. They also defend privacy of individuals in the face of expanding state knowledge about citizens, combat the idea of a transparent individual, and are mostly citizen-driven. Instead, they advocate more transparency of the public sector and free access to government information. An example is *K2020*, a blog addressing open government, politics, and the blog owner's own applications for information such as inquiries about political advertisements and marketing (2012). Users can download the blog author's correspondence in seeking to obtain information.

Another example of restrictive practices is that many of Austria's public agencies and organizations block their employees from accessing social networks and other social Internet services, for example, the Austrian Federal Chancellery, where employees are prevented from using social networks or services like YouTube. While this is controlled in many other corporate and administrative cultures around the world and not only in Austria, it is also clear that regulations like this stand against the philosophy of open information and open culture, creating a conflict and tension between the current public demand for open government measures and the information culture in working cultures and policies of governance and politics.

Austrian Initiatives and Obstacles

The initiatives to foster Open government in Austria are a first attempt to form an alliance between political stakeholders, researchers, and technical experts in the field. Some of these initiatives have resulted in concrete output in the form of citizen services. As in other countries where such initiatives are not yet sponsored by the government, the Austrian initiatives rely on bottom-up, interest-driven organizations.

The association *Open3.at*, which was founded in 2010, is a non-profit network that acts as an intermediary between polity, administration, business, and citizens to support knowledge transfer in each field. It encourages debate on contemporary governance and new possibilities of interaction between citizens and the state. The project has resulted in applications and data visualization (such as that of budgetary figures), the first of its kind in Austria. The aim of this visualization was raising awareness for imbalances in the state budget plan of 2011–2014.

The network Open Government Data Austria (2012b) seeks to provide free data (e.g., micro-census, census, traffic, or environmental data), readable by machines and humans to the public and business. It is a private initiative that cooperates with the public sector, Federal Agencies, and other organizations. Another recent success of the Austrian open data advocates was the publication of the Viennese open data portal in May 2011 (Open Government Data Austria 2012), and the City of Vienna has since continued to pursue those efforts and to make links with the Austrian open government data community and developers, seeking to foster innovation via open government data strategies.

Most of these initiatives have been driven from the bottom up at the beginning, contrary to the more official measurements in the first phase of open government development in Australia, the US, or the UK, where governments have been more pro-active. Therefore, in Central and Eastern Europe it is important for those trying to get open government principles on the political agenda to find a starting point relevant for decision makers to arouse political interest for the topic.

A top-down initiative is the Austrian Open government Strategy of the Federal Chancellery. The aim of this working group is the evaluation of the potential and risks of open government in a national context. Another government-driven initiative is the Project Group E-Democracy and E-Participation (PG-EDEM), an interministerial group of external experts lead by the Centre for E-Government at the Danube University Krems by order of the Federal Chancellery (Medimorec, Parycek, and Schossböck 2010).

Access to government information is the first step in empowering the public. Since documents published by officials are often written in sophisticated language, the average citizen may encounter difficulties understanding their content. One of the biggest challenges for Austria in seeking to apply open information policies is an increased digital divide in new media literacy. While with regards to access to information and computer equipment in Austria, the digital divide has decreased since the 1990s, a gap can still be observed when correlating usage patterns with socio-demographic data (Parycek, Maier-Rabler, and Diendorfer 2010). A study by Ursula Maier-Rabler and Christiana Hartwig (2006) showed a permanent structural disadvantage of youth of the lower social classes. Likewise, people from a deprived background, retirees, women, and immigrants are disadvantaged, especially women with a low social position. Although 5.4 million Austrians (77 per cent of the population) are Internet users, substantial differences concerning the type of usage have been identified. Therefore, the digital divide must be seen in relation to human capabilities, rather than access to technical infrastructure (Sen 1999).

The problem of a digital gap in accessing information also applies to standardized data provided by the state. The process of publishing and preparing raw data as defined by the open data principles aims at the information elite who knows how to use it. Although the British Government said at the beginning of May 2010 that it would release a 'tsunami of public data', the usability of data is just as important as the data itself and understanding open data is not a general citizen skill (Hunter 2010). Transparent data and information is only useful to average citizens if presented properly.

In discussing the effective use and distribution of open data, experts see a data divide parallel to the digital divide between those who have access to data of possible significance to them and those who do not (Gurstein 2010). The efforts to extend access to data and information, rather than only to technological infrastructure, may create a new divide. This means that citizens would become even further distanced from the information that open government initiatives seek to bring to them. It is necessary to ensure that those having access to data can actually make use of it in ways that are meaningful and beneficial for them. The data divide can be bridged by the efforts of new intermediaries (represented by civil society or business) processing data for a broader audience, for example, by reducing complexity through visualization. These developments might usher in a new era of journalism that may be labelled 'data journalism', comprising the process of acquiring data for visualization purposes. It entails a number of fields from investigative research and statistics to design and programming (Bradshaw 2010).

Another obstacle of open information is related to existing data security regulations. Open data and open information can affect society adversely, and individuals could possibly incur severe personal losses. An example is the listing of hazardous waste sites on maps issued by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that resulted in an immediate drop in real estate values and financial losses to individuals (United States Environmental Protection Agency 2012). Here, the common good clashes with the investment of an individual (Mayer-Schönberger and Lazer 2007). In Austria, data about hazardous waste sites is also open information, but it is only available in print. How to access this data is not common knowledge. Again, only the information elite, such as professional real estate agents, will know how to access and process the information once it is offered in a standardized data format.

The US example shows that if data is electronically available, but not graphically represented or made comprehensible to the public, results may not be forthcoming. In the example of the EPA, data was available before visualization in other formats, but it was the visualization effect that resulted in public awareness and the adjustment of prices. In Austria, similar outcomes may follow data

visualization or simplification. The government has to decide whether individual or common interest is more important in a particular case. The state is expected to assure common interests; on the other hand the imposition of a compulsory collective moral standard, as opposed to an open regulatory one, implies a hegemonic rule. In the case of open data it is still unclear under what circumstances common good standards should be prioritized over individual ones, and so each case and context must be evaluated separately.

Another risk area is the publication of personal data or data that can be linked to personal information in any way, as visible in a Swedish example. Even though the Swedish society is used to radical openness, the launch of the website *ratsit.se* in 2006 resulted in a discussion about data protection, as many obstacles to data access suddenly disappeared. The website allowed users to screen their environment and the individuals around them. The platform was adapted and a fee was charged for accessing private data of individuals (information about companies is still free and mostly accessible through a public registry). These fees reduced the number of data searches on the website. The example of *ratsit.se* shows that free easy access to private information may well lead to surveillance of individuals, which may in turn necessitate regulations for the protection of individual interests and personal privacy. Access to private information also runs the risk of making it available to criminals and corporations involved in data-mining and infringement of privacy.

However, regulations for data protection do not necessarily conflict with open data policies, since one of the key principles of open data is the process of non-personalization, so that data made available cannot be connected to individuals and hence does not conflict with the requirements of data protection (Parycek and Sachs 2010). The challenges for Austria will be to sustain this separation between personalized and non-personalized data on a legislative level as well as to convey the principles of open data to the public, so that citizens can benefit from access to open information without loss of privacy and that governments cannot hide behind data protection laws in order not to make their data public to all citizens.

A controversial point is whether a charge should be imposed on 'free open data' or not (Langkabel 2010). The key argument for free access is that citizens have already paid for the data with their taxes. However, the idea of data access in return for a fee is also promoted because the investment necessary to sustain open data would exceed present computer infrastructures. A solution could be to set flexible data prices and license models for those data sets that do not presently generate income.

A problem for financing the first steps in that direction is that the economic value of open data is difficult to assess, causing administrative and political resistance.

Public agencies that already successfully sell data fear a loss of income for several data sets. Furthermore, the open data discussion may raise issues of copyright law, the right of fair use, and accountability. It may not be possible for administrations to avoid liability for the misuse of data, despite exercising due diligence. Many public agencies know that existing data is neither totally accurate and current, nor complete. However, the Austrian administration demands very high standards of data quality before making it public to citizens.

From a government's perspective, the prospect of losing control can be a concern and authorities often fight socio-cultural change at the beginning due to their role of providing security and stability. Enabling citizens to form opinions on the basis of valid, comprehensive information will thus require a radical change in roles and a new mindset on the part of officials, especially within Central and Eastern European administrations.

Creating awareness of open government and open information is necessary if a paradigm shift is to take place. Advocates of open government and open data must know the points of departure and strategies that will lead towards more transparency, but also the attitude of political stakeholders towards these concepts, as politicians are not only enablers of policy change, but also bearers of the information culture in which they act. In order to understand the complex relationship between information policies and information cultures, we should consider the attitudes of politicians towards the concepts of open government and openness.

Politicians' Attitudes towards Open Government

Although most open government experts or advocates think in terms of ideal legislation, that is, what it means to develop an open and transparent government and how to deal with the respective risks, little is known about how politicians and political parties view these ideas.

Government efforts can only be successful if supported by a majority of politicians. A study of Danube University and open3.at presents an overview on these topics based on an online survey of Austrian parliamentarians conducted in March 2011 (see Parycek et al. 2012). The aim of the invited online survey was to assess parliamentarians' attitude towards elements of open government and to identify possible starting points towards increased openness in governance as well as their limits in the Austrian context.

Members of the National Council were invited to participate in a survey providing a means for open data advocates for assessing the opinion of politicians on the difficulties of open government in Austria. The survey considers the

potentials and risks of open government in the eyes of political stakeholders and their opinion on an Austrian legal framework. The questionnaire survey contained nine questions and was conducted online from 15 to 31 March 2011. The return rate was 23 per cent – an average response rate for online surveys (Sheehan 2001). A session key guaranteed that a person could only fill out the survey once. For privacy and security reasons, the responses were kept anonymous. However, researchers were able to track the number of questionnaires filled out by representatives of different parties.

For the present context, two results are relevant: the risk and potential parliamentarians see with open information (open government data) and their viewpoint on how open government should be legally treated in Austria. While it was expected that the financial crisis in Austria would cause MPs to state economic reasons as the most promising factor, results showed a more nuanced picture, with social factors as key arguments for open government and open data strategies. Only 11.9 per cent saw the strengthening of Austria as an industrial location as a major potential. Significantly more important prospects seen by MPs were the clarification of social coherences by visualization (40.5 per cent), the evaluation of political or administrative measures (57.1 per cent), and a greater understanding and legitimacy of political activities in general (71.4 per cent) (Table 11.1).

In considering open government data in Austria, social risks were again rated very high by participants. The biggest risks envisioned were the misinterpretation of information or deliberate manipulation (55 per cent) and the increase in a digital or social gap (38 per cent).

The results of including open government data in the legal framework were clear: 85.7 per cent advocated a legal basis for open government data. However there were many votes for a Freedom of Information Open Government Data Law (45.2 per cent). In contrast to other countries, Austria has no such law.

TABLE 11.1 *Opportunities of open government data in Austria*

2 out of 4	Number	Percentage
Reinforcement of the Austrian business location	5	11.90
Clarification of social coherences with visualizations	17	40.48
More understanding for political acting	30	71.43
Evaluation of political output	24	57.14
	42 = 100%	

Another 40.5 per cent favoured the implementation of open government data laws in existing regulations, and 11.9 per cent thought no specific legislation was needed. These results suggest that the bottom-up advocacy for open government, in particular regarding data legislation, would find a relatively hospitable reception in the National Assembly. This may in turn indicate that there is a good potential for top-down initiatives for government through data legislation (Table 11.2).

The online survey showed that politicians are aware of the potential of open information, particularly regarding the promises of a better understanding of the political process. Austrian MPs widely favour a FOI law regulating open government policies, and the possession of electronic data and information. The absence of such a law and the lack of a freedom of information culture hinder the development of an integral open government culture from a top-down perspective, and several bottom-up initiatives and petitions with a high number of supporters show that citizens have a strong interest in change (Table 11.3).

TABLE 11.2 *Risks of open government data in Austria*

2 out of 4	Number	Percentage
Complication of political acting and decision making	7	16.67
Basis for mismatched discourse among political actors	8	19.05
Separation in society (e.g. digital divide)	16	38.10
Misinterpretation or deliberate manipulation of data and information	23	54.67
	42 = 100%	

SOURCES: PARYCEK ET AL. 2012; OPEN3 2012.

TABLE 11.3 *Legal basis for open government data in Austria*

2 out of 4	Number	Percentage
Separate open government data law	19	45.24
Open government data as part of existing laws	17	40.48
No legal basis necessary, only widely accepted conventions	5	11.90
No answer	1	2.38
	42 = 100%	

SOURCES: PARYCEK ET AL. 2012; OPEN3 2012.

Conclusion

There is a tension in Austrian society between those who favour an open information culture that safeguards private integrity and those who advocate public access to data in order to improve public scrutiny. A similar tension can be seen in the conflict between the still more restrictive information culture of the Austrian government and the top-down demands for increased openness and open government from the EU and international organizations, as visible in the area of environmental information, as well as from the bottom-up demands posed by activists, NGOs, students, etcetera. Although closed and more restrictive systems have worked well in the industrial age, the information age seems to have triggered a clash of cultures which results in more open cultures and policies. The Austrian government must seek a balance between information policies that allow strategies of openness and public access to data but also minimize risk of manipulation and misinterpretation, so that it can satisfy opposing interest groups.

If efforts towards more openness and transparency are not to remain merely rhetorical exercises, political and cultural change is required. Many transparency policies have been criticized for being empty words or public relation instruments, rather than proper and effective tools of public access and democratization. For instance, there have been concerns regarding low participation rates of citizens in e-participation projects of the Obama administration. In this context, Micah Sifry (2010) refers to a marketing of hope and Peter P. Swire (2009) to a gap between initiatives promised during the election campaign and the reality of administration, despite the efforts of using new media for vitalizing democracy.

An example of the successful implementation of open collaboration strategies in politics as one particular aspect of open government going beyond open data is Iceland, where a financial crisis provided the cultural climate for open debate and collaboration. After Iceland's economic collapse in 2008, the new constitution was written based on the ideas of citizens in an interactive process. Members of the Constitutional Council were popularly elected and, in turn, opened up the drafting of the new document to the public (Constitutional Council of Iceland 2011). It was posted online with hyperlinks leading to more information and a place where citizens could leave feedback. The proposed constitution had three pillars, of which one was transparency. In the end, the final draft was sent to a vote, and approved by the voters (Goldman 2012). The example of Iceland raises the question of the circumstances under which the political climate in a country favours the implementation of new strategies of openness and collaboration.

In Austria the current political climate of disenchantment with political parties and institutions might be pointing the way toward a time when more radical concepts of transparency and participation can be implemented, and political parties need to regain their credibility. The success of political parties that advocate a new culture of transparency and openness, like the Pirate Party in the Germany and some other countries, shows that political change is needed and being sought. Although alternative proposals may not yet have reached the sphere of the political, there are indications that a cultural shift with regard to information cultures may be underway. At least, a growing body of both bottom-up and top-down initiatives as surveyed in this chapter point in that direction. In future surveys, it may be useful to know the relation of information cultures and demographic data (age, gender, social status) or party affiliation. This could provide more detailed insights into Austrian information cultures in relation to the political spectrum or layers of society.

In a digital information age, transparency and participation are factors that can stimulate the development of democracies. But for this to happen, governments need to adapt to changing values of governance (Medimorec, Parycek, and Schossböck 2010). At the moment, governments and administration in Austria seem to fear a loss of administrative sovereignty and continue to work within traditional information practices, despite citizen initiatives for more transparency. A first step towards an open information culture that includes the active participation of citizens in government would be a role change for the Austrian administration, enhanced by a corresponding legislative initiative defining the provision of information as a state duty within a specific legal framework: bureaucratic institutions must become more proactive and communicative entities offering citizens knowledge as a service. The need to state reasons for requesting information should be an exception and not the rule. Governments need to re-define the range of data, information, and knowledge made available on request as well as possible restrictions and the grounds on which these should be allowed by way of exception. The current political crisis as well as the rapid developments in information culture would legitimize such changes.

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From Promise to Compromise: Nordic Openness in a World of Global Transparency

Carl Marklund

Over the past few decades, openness has evolved into a key concept in contemporary discourses on democracy, civil society, and the public sphere. Together with related terms such as accountability and transparency, openness has become a well-established ideal for public administration and good governance, not the least in the Nordic countries. Yet, this drive towards openness is a decidedly global phenomenon. Across the world, the free flow of communication and the open access to information are increasingly seen as essential for democracy as well as the checks and balances of public and private power upon which democracy depends.

The idea of openness is morally justifiable and logically convincing inasmuch as democratic politics can be seen as a flow of messages through which problems are identified, policy alternatives are tested, and political agendas are negotiated (Habermas 1989; Rothstein 1995). This requires rational communication and open public debate. Openness and knowledge sharing are also thought to promote the creativity, innovation, and competitiveness of the global knowledge economy (Rogers 1972; Stiglitz 1999; Florini 1999). As such, openness is concerned with both the procedural input as well as the productive output of political and economical processes, broadly promising to bridge the gap between democratic legitimacy and economic efficiency (Scharpf 1999; Naurin 2004; Marklund 2010).

There are thus both democracy-driven and market-driven arguments in favour of openness and its cognate, transparency (Erkkilä 2010; 2012). While these tendencies may sometimes reinforce and sometimes conflict with each other, we can nevertheless distinguish between economic or institutional transparency, on the one hand, and political transparency, on the other, as separate analytical categories. The former addresses the functioning of budgetary processes and administrative structures while the latter involves the decision making process and its accessibility to stakeholders (Bellver and Kaufmann 2005).

This duality of openness and transparency is reflected in the vague, yet highly versatile, character of these two terms (Heald 2012, 31). While the concern with openness has a long history (see Norbert Götz' Chapter 2 in this volume; see also Hood 2006; Heald 2012; Baume and Papadopoulos 2012), it

appears in a variety of contexts, ranging from the highly abstract, general, and primarily metaphorical notion of the 'open society' (Fung and Weil 2010; Soros 1998; Soros 2001; Notturmo 2000) to the concrete administrative procedures, institutions, and legal instruments designed to safeguard 'open government' through freedom of expression, freedom of information, public access to documents, and the protection of whistle-blowers (Deckmyn and Thomson 1998; Hood and Heald 2006; Lathrop and Ruma 2010; Piotrowski 2007; Jubb 1999).

However, contemporary notions of openness are not limited to the ideals of the free market and their implementation in a democratic state. Openness is also closely associated with recent developments in organizational management and information technology. Non-hierarchical structures and inclusive and informal decision making processes have been promoted in managerial discourses and business administration since the 1970s as a pragmatic means towards business performance and profitability through auditing, cost-benefit analysis, evaluation, and quantified performance measurement of business behaviour (Power 1997; 2003). Originally developed to meet demands from the corporate sector, these notions have been adopted by public administration since the 1980s. The outsourcing of public services, the privatization of the public sector, and the evolution of neo-liberal modes of governance and policy agendas – often characterized as part of new public management (NPM) – are highly dependent upon notions of auditing and competition which in their turn require a high degree of transparency (Pollitt 1990; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011; Christensen and Lægreid 2010; Grimmelikhuijsen 2012; Mirowski and Plehwe 2009).

While the 'promise of openness' has been previously examined with regard to its ability to deliver what has been expected of it (Lord 2006; Fung, Graham, and Weil 2007), the contributors to this volume have sought to explore what has given rise to this promise in the first place. In particular, we probe the paradoxes and competing notions of openness in the contemporary world as well as the historical quest for a more transparent society, using primarily, but not exclusively Nordic cases for illustration.

The purpose of this concluding chapter is firstly to reconnect the local experiences of openness with regard to the Nordic countries as well as Austria as discussed in the individual contributions to this book to the contemporary global discourses on Internet freedom, freedom of information, and transparency. Secondly, it revisits the central themes of the emerging field of transparency research. In so doing, the chapter seeks to map out the complex relationship between the complementary and often conflicting aims and forms of openness. Finally, it aims to disentangle the central dilemmas that openness promises to resolve, yet remains marred by.

Cyber-Utopians, Transparency Optimists, and Their Critics

The emergence of openness as a social ideal has also developed in tandem with the spread of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) such as e-mail, social media, and Internet hosting services (e.g., blogs, wikis, online social networking, and microblogging services). ICTs have revolutionized the functioning of business (financial markets and e-commerce, as well as open code and open source), science (open access), civil society organizations, mainstream media, online citizen media (blogosphere), and social life in general (social networks) (Castells 2007; 2009). This fusing of corporate interests, social networking, and cyber activism through ICTs can be exemplified by Facebook's mission: "to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected" (2012).

To cyber-utopians, ICTs represent alternative non-commercial production modes such as crowdsourcing, crowdfunding, open source, and free and open-source software (FOSS), such as the GNU and Linux operating systems as well as the concomitant Open Source Initiative (OSI), founded in 1998 to promote the free software movement. They are also thought to encourage participatory politics and better informed citizenship through e-government, e-voting, and radical, sometimes subversive, transparency (Noveck 2009; Ross 2010; Rosenberg and Ross 2007). These new technologies have facilitated rapid, direct, and increasingly interactive communication and dissemination of information between people, as well as political mobilization. Barack Obama's election campaign in 2008, the Twitter Revolutions, and the Arab Spring are examples, as is the global 'occupy' movement (Shirky 2011).

However, just as technology may provide unique opportunities for public scrutiny of corporations and governments, it may also grant government as well as private corporations new possibilities for the surveillance of citizens and consumers. While ICTs may allow automated or anonymous information retrieval (e.g., data mining), much Internet content remains hidden from ordinary search engines (e.g., Deep Web). Consequentially, cyber-skeptics point out that not only civil society, human rights activists, and regime critics, but also extremists, terrorists, spies, and spin doctors may benefit from technologically driven openness (Schneier 2008; Morozov 2011).

While few Internet freedom activists would deny the potentially dark side of the Internet (e.g., government surveillance, e-crime, online piracy, and copyright infringement), the main counterargument is that Internet freedom will make governmental manipulation and corporate oligopoly less viable, and that the free flow of information on the Internet will make it more difficult for business interests and totalitarian regimes to engineer consent and mould

public preferences as they have done in the past (Rosenberg and Ross 2007). Hence, cyber utopians typically regard various forms of Internet legislation and surveillance as threats to Internet freedom. US initiatives such as Echelon, the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA), and the PROTECT IP Act (PIPA) as well as the EU's Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) fall under this category, and so do various forms of national measures such as the FRA law and the Titan database in Sweden for example.¹

The United States diplomatic cables leak, ongoing since November 2010, confirms that the information advantage long held by states through the so-called state secrets privilege (SSP) has been challenged (Heusser 2010; WikiLeaks 2010). The revelation of massive amounts of classified information by Chelsea Manning, a whistle-blower within the US army stationed in Iraq, disseminated via WikiLeaks led to a worldwide hunt by the US security establishment for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange who found refuge at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. A subsequent leak by a former CIA employee and National Security Agency contractor, Edward Snowden, in June 2013 caused similar alarm, eventually forcing Snowden to seek temporary asylum in Russia. While these leaks have certainly challenged the SSP of the American security and intelligence apparatus, it has hardly abolished it, as some enthusiastic early reports on the WikiLeaks affair claimed (Murray 2004; Žižek 2010; Sifry 2011; Roberts 2008; 2012; see also Greenwald 2014). From the personal fates of Assange, Manning, and Snowden it is also clear that challenging the SSP of one state typically requires the ability to solicit the protection from another.

This far, then, whistle-blowers and leaks have tended to follow the logics of world politics rather than challenge them. Similarly, transparency enthusiasts also find themselves largely operating in accordance with the logic of global media. WikiLeaks, which until August 2010 was hosted by PRQ, a highly secure 'no-questions-asked' Swedish Internet service provider is one among many new channels in a diverse global online media universe, a virtual McLuhanesque 'Global Village' where new platforms for online citizen media continue to unfold rapidly (McLuhan 2003 [1964]; Global Voices 2012). However, the accelerating circulation of information also puts pressure on journalists, bloggers, politicians, public officials, and academics to adapt to the market-driving demands of the 'Global Theatre' which is emerging as a result.

While the speed and growth of open source may be seen as a positive development (Olcott 2012), it may also reflect a decreasing attention span among

1 The FRA law is named for *Försvarets radioanstalt* (National Defence Radio Establishment), a Swedish government agency tasked with signals intelligence (SIGINT) and computer security.

considerable segments of the public. News-worthy media events soon lose their edge and media providers adapt accordingly. Information overflow blunts human attention and makes it harder for media to get their message across. Since the early 1970s, observers have argued that this may lead to histrionics, oversimplifications, and sensationalism which could be detrimental to rational, open, and honest public debate (Toffler 1970; for more recent commentaries, see Davenport and Beck 2001; Carr 2011). More worryingly, the resulting 'attention economy' may also provide new opportunities for 'managing exposure' and enacting blame-avoidance strategies, for example through the release of massive amounts of irrelevant information (snowing), cryptic documentation (pseudo-transparency), or the usage of manipulative practices such as plants, leaks, and spin, which stalls proper investigation and public scrutiny while simulating disclosure (Peterson 1995; Balkin 1998; Grimmelikhuijsen 2012; Heald 2012; Welch 2012).²

While researchers are gradually becoming more critical towards these aspects of transparency optimism and cyber utopianism, most transparency researchers could still today be considered as "transparency optimists" (Grimmelikhuijsen 2012), to whom openness represents both a means and an end towards a radical, progressive, and libertarian socio-political transformation. Recently, however, a number of critics have begun to express doubts as to whether the global gospel of openness and transparency actually delivers upon its many promises (Lord 2006; Fung, Graham, and Weil 2007). These observers are concerned that the pervasive citation of openness in contemporary political rhetoric and media parlance may be just smoke and mirrors (Naurin 2003; 2004; Fenster 2006; Curtin and Meijer 2006; Garsten and Lindh de Montoya 2008), which does not necessarily change organizational behaviour (Pasquier and Villeneuve 2007) or preclude new forms of government secrecy (Roberts 2006; 2013).

Most of these critics are not against transparency or ICTs in principle. Yet, they note that political openness and transparent information cultures do not automatically follow from technology or legislation. Neither can they be

2 'Plants' usually designate attempts to provide information in such a manner that the sender remains unknown to most receivers. The intention is typically to make the transmitted information appear more trustworthy than if the source of the information was clear from the beginning, whereas 'leaks' are the result of genuine or alleged whistle-blowing. Plants may also be disguised as leaks to make the provenience of the information even more difficult to trace. 'Spin' refers to the activity of orchestrating or dramatizing the release of information with the intent of generating a particular reception among the general public. Spin may make use of both plants and leaks, but is often indistinguishable from ordinary information policy, public relations, and propaganda (for a discussion, see Roberts 2005).

overcome just by bridging the ‘digital divide’ between different social groups (Norris 2001). Instead, political openness and transparent information cultures originate with purposive effort and cultural adaptation on the part of individual citizens engaged in civic matters. Myopic concentration on either legislation or technology – as often presented by cyber-utopians and transparency optimists – may obscure transparency’s diverse and sometimes contradictory social effects (Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes 2010; Porter 1995a). Yet, to the growing ranks of what Thomas S. Blanton (2006) has called the Global Openness Movement, transparency has evolved into a public virtue that only those who have something to hide could possibly wish to oppose (Florini 1998; Heald 2012).

Transparency Legislation and Transparency Research

The connections between these aspects of openness and transparency are complex, situationally dependent, and open to interpretation. In public administration, political science, and the emerging field of transparency research, openness is more commonly referred to as metaphor for a transparent society (Brin 1998; Balkin 1998), while transparency is seen as an instrument of open government, defined as “the release of information by institutions that is relevant to evaluating those institutions” (Meijer, Curtin, and Hillebrandt 2012; Lathrop and Ruma 2010; Fung and Weil 2010; Florini 1999; Welch 2012; Hood and Heald 2006).

In response to the confusion regarding these concepts, Deirdre Curtin and Joana Mendes (2011) have suggested that we may think of open government as a question of ‘vision’ and ‘voice’, respectively. Citizens need information to view what is going on inside government and participation to voice their opinions about it. Similarly, Albert J. Meijer, Deirdre Curtin, and Maarten Hillebrandt (2012, 11) have defined openness of government as “the extent to which citizens can monitor and influence government processes through access to government information and access to decision-making arenas”, thereby combining both the observational and the participatory aspects of openness.

The close and sometimes tangled relationship between openness, open government, and transparency may be clarified by looking at the different ways in which all these concepts relate to freedom of information (FOI) (Florini 2007). In global transparency discourse, FOI is presented as an essential corollary of freedom of opinion and expression. As such, it is linked to other fundamental human rights such as freedom of thought and the right to privacy (Legislationline 2012). It has its philosophical, moral, and economic origins in the Enlightenment and the Linnaean ‘economy of nature’, as distinct from the mercantilism of the Swedish Ordinance Relating to Freedom of Writing and of the Press

(reprinted in Mustonen 2006 [1766]), and its political impetus in the American and the French Revolutions, as opposed to autocracy in the US Bill of Rights (1791). This observation has formed the basis for the post-war rationale for viewing FOI as a fundamental right on its own.

Today, FOI is protected by international and regional legislation, most notably Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); Article 10 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), effective as of 1953; and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), as adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966 and in force since 1976. In addition, in 2009, the Council of Europe passed the Convention on Access to Official Documents, also known as the Tromsø Convention.

This emphasis upon FOI underscores the intrinsic value of transparency (Birkinshaw 2006). However, transparency can also be viewed as an instrumental value that is primarily directed towards achieving other public ends (Hood and Heald 2006). Since active citizenship presupposes full information through real time and retroactive transparency with regard to political decision making processes, it is also seen as essential for participatory government (Welch 2012; Hood and Heald 2006; Meijer, Curtin, and Hillebrandt 2012). Procedural administrative transparency is not only intended to improve accountability and efficiency of public administration, but to ensure that public officials comply with legislation as well as public interest in the exercise of their public duties. David Heald (2012) has listed several other values that transparency might support but also under certain conditions compete with: effectiveness, trust, accountability, autonomy and control, confidentiality, privacy and anonymity, fairness, and legitimacy.

The trendy appropriation of openness and transparency can be illustrated by a brief look at the rise in popularity of these terms since the 1960s (openness) and the 1980s (transparency) and their relative decline since 2000 as shown in Fig. 12.1. They both may have reached a saturation point, as evidenced by the English language publications listed on Google Books.³

Another way of taking stock of the global spread of openness is to look at the passing of transparency laws, variously termed Access to Information (ATI), Freedom of Information (FOI), and Right to Information (RTI) by scholars and activists (Ackerman and Sandoval-Ballesteros 2006; Blanton 2006). An independent Dutch-based legal consultant, Roger Vleugels, has estimated that

3 Google Ngram Viewer statistics only cover publications with these concepts in the title. They are relative to the total number of publications that year by percentage and not in absolute numbers.

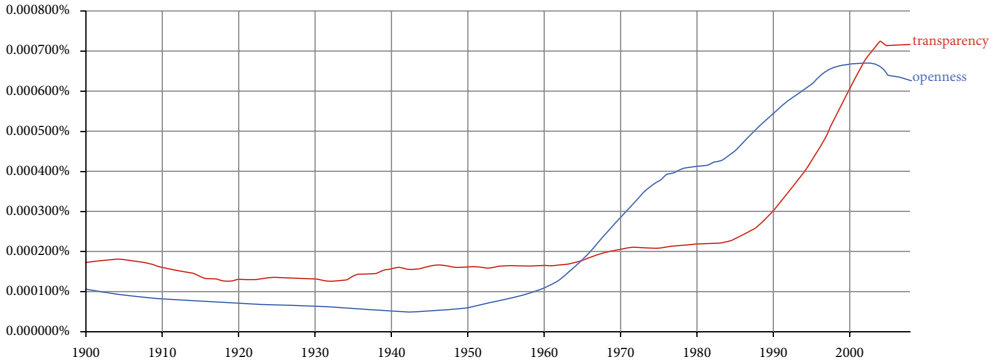


FIGURE 12.1 *Graph of 'openness' and 'transparency' from 1900 to 2008 from the corpus of English language literature with smoothing of 3.*

GOOGLE NGRAM VIEWER. <[HTTP://BOOKS.GOOGLE.COM/NGRAMS/](http://books.google.com/ngrams/)> (16 MAY 2014).

as of September 2012, ninety-three national, 180 sub-national, and three international FOI laws were in effect globally, representing a dramatic increase since 1970.⁴ In that year, only five countries had passed FOI legislation. With the exception of the US Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) which was signed in 1966 and entered into effect in 1967, the countries were all Nordic; Sweden (1766–1774, 1809/1810/1812), Finland (1766–1774, 1952), Denmark (1970), and Norway (1970) (Mustonen 2006; Hirschfeldt 2009; Brundin and Isberg 2009). Iceland's FOI legislation followed in 1996.

While FOI legislation may be one of the key indicators for assessing levels of transparency in a society, it is not a guarantee for openness in itself (Roberts 2000). The legislation may be imprecise, difficult to use, weak in sanctions, too generous with exceptions with regard to SSP and intellectual property rights (IPR), or not fully implemented. However, the spread of these legal instruments after the end of the Cold War does signal a new commitment to openness that has been promoted by the EU, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Investment Bank, and the regional development banks. It is part of a wider move towards global transnational governance through what Ann Florini (1998) has called regulation through revelation (EU 1991; IMF 2012; OECD 2000; 2011; Levi-Faur 2005; Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson 2006).

4 Vleugel's listing is incomplete as it does not include UN resolutions, EU directives, or regional agreements, such as for example intra-Nordic public access regulations.

National governments also seek to profile themselves as 'open'. For example, since 2008, the Obama Administration has launched a series of initiatives to promote open government in the US as well as globally (Coglianese 2009). High-profile initiatives of this kind include the Open Government Partnership (OGP), established in 2011 by the governments of the US, Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, and the UK. Since its inception, the OGP has proven to be one of the fastest expanding international frameworks for transparency, having grown from eight members to some sixty-five countries as of 2014.

The OGP is not comprehensive. Four of five Nordic governments participate in OGP, namely Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, but several governments that do not (as of yet) participate in OGP, including for example Germany, have made equally strong commitments to openness and transparency. Still, the OGP embodies the global trend towards economic or institutional and political transparency. Hillary Clinton, in her "Internet Freedom" speech of January 2010, drew a geopolitical parallel between the Iron Curtain of the Cold War and the "information curtain descending across much of the world", describing "viral videos and blog posts" as "the *samizdat* of our day" (Clinton 2010). The US Secretary of State thereby established a powerful rhetorical link between economic or institutional and political transparency on the one hand and Internet freedom on the other – an alignment which the recent WikiLeaks and Snowden affairs may have rendered more difficult to maintain with credibility (Morozov 2011).

The OGP has been a major initiative for greater government transparency internationally. Participating states are obliged to outline their commitment in "promoting transparency, empowering citizens, fighting corruption, and harnessing new technologies to strengthen governance" through Action Plans (OGP 2014). However, according to a report from the Canada-based Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) released in July 2012, only 30 per cent of the then fifty-five OGP members had by that time pledged to substantially enhance their legal frameworks for RTI, suggesting that some governments may have joined to improve their global standing rather than deepen their commitment to transparency (Karanicolas and Mendel 2012).

The aims of international initiatives such as the OGP require statistical tools by which to quantify and rank the performance of countries with regard to transparency, just as with other indices of good governance (Porter 1995b; Power 1997; Miller 2001; Erkkilä and Piironen 2009). As openness and transparency have developed into qualities by which a society or a country is judged, these concepts have also begun to exercise a kind of discursive power by themselves.

Nordic Openness under Scrutiny

While the Nordic countries commonly score well in most transparency-related rankings of corruption, good governance, market freedom, free press, public access, and public trust, they come out as average achievers in the recent Global Right to Information Rating system, developed by the CLD and Access Info Europe (Global Right to Information Rating 2012). In the 2012 rating, Finland enjoyed the best score (105/150), while Austria was rated lowest with regard to RTI legislation (39/150). The 61 indicators employed aim to track actual transparency, not just a country's legal framework. The Global Right to Information Rating prioritizes recent legislation that takes new communication technology into account and uses up-to-date legal phrasing, while giving less credit to countries with older transparency laws and long-standing traditions of public access as these do not always accommodate new ICTs. Some twenty countries with new legislation have taken the lead in the latest rankings, bypassing the Nordics (Global Right to Information Rating 2014). As a rule, however, precisely these factors – together with the comparatively high levels of civic control of public administration and public participation in policy making as well as correspondingly low levels of perceptible corruption and public distrust – usually confirm the assumed Nordic tradition of openness in contemporary research (Larsson 1998; Erkkilä 2010; Rothstein 2011).

As a result, the Nordic countries are often presented as particularly open societies. Specific Nordic administrative, cultural, and legal institutions and practices are regularly cited as the building blocks of 'Nordic openness' – for example, the principle of publicity, the state committee system, well-developed parliamentary oversight, expertise-based policy making (Lundqvist and Petersen 2010), civil society representation and delegation (Strøm, Müller, and Bergman 2006; see also Johanna Rainio-Niemi's contribution in this volume), and the universalistic welfare state (Castells and Himanen 2002; Koster 2008; see also Johannes Kananen's chapter in this volume). Research findings support the popular opinion that openness is firmly established in these countries as a cultural value and an institutional principle.

As such, Nordic openness has been contrasted with the allegedly opaque policy making procedures of the EU (Larsson 1998; Grønbech-Jensen 1998; Naurin 2004; Gustavsson, Karlsson, and Persson 2009). The Nordic countries have self-consciously acted as 'norm entrepreneurs' with regard to improving openness and transparency in the EU and internationally, just as they have profiled themselves with regard to other global issues such as democracy, development aid, disarmament, gender equality, and sustainability

(Ingebritsen 2004; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; see also Ann-Cathrine Jungar's contribution to this volume).

When political scientists address openness, they are often concerned with the technical possibilities of ensuring accountability, transparency, and public trust in the process of government. It is largely a question of the ability of the citizens to access and scrutinize the exercise of public power, checking that this power stays in order while keeping order. This aspect of openness is concerned with policy control through what could be called 'procedural transparency' (Lupia 2008). But there is another aspect of openness which also concerns political science, namely the degree to which the political system is open not only to criticism and scrutiny, but also to what extent it is open to public participation, flexible to external impulses, and responsive to public demands. This aspect of 'political transparency' (Bellver and Kaufmann 2005) is concerned with the degree of 'democratic openness' (Keenan 2003) and 'critical disclosure' (Kompridis 2006) – understood as the ability of envisioning political alternatives and enacting political change – in a given political system (see also Johannes Kananen's chapter).

International political science literature has underlined the role of conflict accommodation, pragmatic compromise, and neo-corporatism in establishing stable welfare state solutions that appear to combine consensus and openness in both politics and economy, at least in hindsight (Katzenstein 1985; Arter 2008; Aylott 2014). Historically, however, Nordic politics may not have been as consensual as nostalgics would have it. The populist Finns Party longing for a lost community, for example, often resembles phantom pains over an idealized consensus of the welfare state of the past which may not have been so consensual after all (see also Ainur Elmgren's chapter in this volume). While the Nordic welfare states did emerge from complex patterns of cooperation and compromise between pre-existing networks of popular movements, bourgeois corporate interests, state bureaucracy, and from the labour movement itself, they certainly did not come about without political struggles, even if these struggles were typically benign in international comparison, with the notable exception of Finland. Consensus had to be actively sought for and pragmatically maintained. Nevertheless, the Nordic welfare state has frequently been praised for its attempt to combine consensus and participation with individual liberty and social welfare. But it has also been criticized for its neo-corporatist tendencies where representatives of civil society, political parties, and public administration forge close circles and links to other organized interests of society and business that are not always open to public insight, as for example noted by the Swedish Power Investigation in the early 1990s (Marklund 2013; see also Rainio-Niemi's chapter).

From Promise to Compromise?

[E]ach country will pursue a path rooted in the culture of its own people. Yet experience shows us that history is on the side of liberty; that the strongest foundation for human progress lies in open economies, open societies, and open governments. To put it simply, democracy, more than any other form of government, delivers for our citizens. And I believe that truth will only grow stronger in a world where the borders between nations are blurred.

OBAMA 2010

Speaking before the United Nations on 23 September 2010, US President Barack Obama made a call for economic, political, and social openness, presenting an integrated vision of a near borderless world, where freedom and truth prevails as a result of global transparency. By employing openness as metaphor, Obama could associate his appeal with other applications of openness and not become entangled in a discussion of which aspects of openness and transparency should head the global agenda he proposed.

As Jack M. Balkin (1998) has noted, the metaphor of transparency suggests a medium through which we can view things and through which others can view us. First, the metaphor suggests that what is on one side of the transparent medium is conceptually separate from what is on the other. Second, it assumes that the process of seeing through the medium does not substantially alter the nature of what is being viewed (Sasaki 2010). Transparency and openness can thus – and perhaps counterintuitively – be applied to virtually anything that is literally or metaphorically described as having some form of limits. The discourses on openness and transparency are typically united by the belief that some things should be allowed to move freely between and across borders while others should not. Transparency has evolved into a critical concept for political debate as a kind of sorting mechanism for ‘semi-permeability’, as distinct from the utopia of a borderless world (Marklund 2012; cf. Hood and Heald 2006; Papakostas 2009). In this vision of openness, borders are to be blurred, not abolished.

Due to their vacuous, yet versatile appeal, openness and transparency can very well be understood as ‘magic concepts’ in contemporary discourses on administration and governance (Pollitt and Hupe 2011; Baume and Papadopoulos 2012). They play a significant part in the language of ‘new ethicalism’ which has emerged over the past few decades, where vocabularies of business acumen and public administration fuse while rhetorically adapting to post-modern values and progressive sensibilities (Sum 2010; Utting and Marques

2010). On the one hand, openness and transparency can be criticized as a vague mantra without much power beyond what has been called 'substitute legitimation' by Adrienne Héritier (1999). As such, it can be analysed as an icon of 'a drifting government' as has been suggested by Erna Scholtes (2012). On the other hand, both openness and transparency contribute to the legitimacy of a neo-liberal ideology of accountability, performativity, and the mantra on regulation through revelation, all of which shape political and social behaviour in distinct ways (Lyotard 1979; Florini 1998; Power 1997; Levi-Faur 2005; Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson 2006; Garsten and Lindh de Montoya 2008; Erkkilä 2010; Berggren 2011; Hale 2008). Together, these two discourses contribute to place openness as a nearly unassailable but also remarkably slippery ideal at the centre of contemporary liberal democracy.

Nordic governments have jumped on the bandwagon of global and EU transparency while profiling themselves as frontrunners of openness. Still, there seems to be a 'Nordic' concern with the 'quality' of this global transparency and its EU-level applications. In May 2012, for example, the Swedish minister for justice, Beatrice Ask, and her Finnish colleague, Anna-Maja Henriksson, wrote an open letter in which they explained that Finland and Sweden do not support a text drafted by the European Council under the leadership of the Danish minister of European affairs, Nicolai Wammen, on reforming the rules for public access to documents held by EU institutions. Noting that Finland and Sweden "will not accept a reform leading to less transparency", Ask and Henriksson close by positioning themselves as the "true friends of transparency", stating that "we trust that Denmark and the EP [European Parliament] will see to it that no such proposal is even put on the table. Who's [*sic!*] with us?" Thereby, the two Ministers discursively established Finland and Sweden as the foremost guardians of openness in the EU (Ask and Henriksson 2012; EU 2001).

Conclusion: Radical and Reflexive Transparency between Conspiracy and Openness

In 1928, H.G. Wells published a little book entitled *The Open Conspiracy*. In this text, the British science fiction writer suggested that only a loosely organized, wide-ranging network of concerned and scientifically informed individuals across nations could hope to achieve world betterment. While the concept of openness did not play an explicit role in these "blue prints for a world revolution" as Wells called it, his 'conspiracy' would paradoxically be 'open' with regard to its ranks, its objectives, and its usage of modern communications

technologies. Instead of leaving world improvement to the competition between nations, Wells' idea for an open conspiracy resembles an early form of today's global openness movement, which moves across regional trade blocks, national governments, international financial institutions, and international non-governmental as well as intergovernmental organizations. In Wells' conception, openness would primarily work as a tool for political mobilization and social change.

Almost eighty years after Wells presented his idea for a world revolution through an open conspiracy, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange (2006) provided a distinctly different call for openness. In a brief essay called "Governance as Conspiracy", Assange warned that all governments and organizations veer towards conspiracy. Yet they are critically dependent upon information to be able to function. If information channels are compromised by leaks, the information flow within the organization will dwindle and the conspiracy will dissolve, Assange surmised. Hence, leaks will sort out bad governance from good. In Assange's vision, openness will function as a disinfectant. However, in Assange's conception, openness would primarily become a tool for political critique and social protest in order to "radically change regime behavior", rather than to enact political reform.

Today, advocates for openness and transparency continue to vacillate between complementary and conflicting notions of openness and transparency, reflecting the dilemma of whether we primarily seek to engender power for political change or to deconstruct power for political accountability. As transparency allows not only for the surveillance of the population by various elites but also for the sousveillance of elites by the people, this duality could theoretically be balanced through the possibility of 'equeveillance' (Mann 2005; Brin 1998). What might be lost in terms of privacy in such a two-way transparent society would, theoretically speaking, be regained by the confidence that public actors will be more likely to abide by norms and social conventions (Naurin 2004). Through equeveillance people would know more about each other and hence be more interdependent. This, in turn, would in this line of argumentation generate more trust, improved public behaviour, and better information.

However, the equeveillance thesis also rests upon the assumption that once we begin to see alike, we are also bound to think alike, as if there were only one notion of what is publicly acceptable, beyond the letter of the law. Yet, openness should exactly allow us to maintain different opinions on that matter. Otherwise, contemporary transparency would not be very different from Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, relying upon either some kind of technologically upgraded mob justice or further judicialization of political debate for its

political sustainability and social effectiveness. The otherwise attractive proposition that we should analyse openness of government in terms of vision and voice (Curtin and Mendes 2011; Meijer, Curtin, and Hillebrandt 2012) appears to obscure the core tensions between freedom and truth on the one hand and power and protest on the other – the critical dilemmas that openness promises to resolve, yet continues to reproduce.

In spite of these possible problems and paradoxes of the openness and transparency discourses, both concepts retain their moral appeal as principles and values. Nevertheless, recent transparency research shows that legislation does not necessarily lead to its stated goals, such as more compliance (Naurin 2004), more legitimacy (Naurin 2007; Worthy 2010; de Fine Licht and Naurin 2010; de Fine Licht, Naurin, and Gilljam 2011), greater trust and confidence (Tolbert and Mossberger 2006; Grimmelikhuijsen 2012; Papadopoulos 2010), higher levels of public participation (Welch 2012), better accountability (Bauhr, Grimes, and Harring 2010), more efficiency (O'Neill 2002; Prat 2005), or greater interest on the part of the public to actually make use of available information (de Fine Licht 2011).

Furthermore, transparency may render policy makers more cautious, so that they place their public image above political responsibility. It could contribute to shifting the focus of politicians from output legitimacy and addressing future challenges to input legitimacy by ensuring formal openness in everyday administration (cf. Scharpf 1999). Organizations may find new ways of keeping their information secure, while formally abiding by transparency laws (Roberts 2006). Thus, while institutional openness and transparency may bring about political and social change, it does not always solve the problems it envisages but can generate new dilemmas and tensions between social, political, and economic openness.

Given these different aspects or values of openness, transparency is perhaps best understood as a method for what Christopher Hood (1976) has called the 'management of dilemmas', as recently suggested by David Heald (2012). According to this view, "dilemmas cannot be resolved as such, but managed for a time and space by reference to the priorities of that time and space. This means that there are no absolutes; only relative responses to contingencies" (Heald 2012, 35). While the shift in emphasis from political openness to economic openness may be steps on a continuum from a positive interventionist welfare state to a regulative workfare state (Majone 1997), the relationship between global neo-liberal transparency and Nordic neo-corporatist openness should not necessarily be seen as an issue of more or less transparency. Rather, as Heald's observation suggests, the shift concerns which dilemmas should be given priority.

The characteristics and limits of openness thus remain an open question. The battle over openness has only just begun (Florini 2007), even though the different values that openness and transparency aim to promote are rooted in the longstanding debate over democracy versus efficiency. Yet, the risk remains that routine calls for greater institutional openness may serve as a proxy for the formulation of concrete political demands, muting public debate and diffusing social criticism.

In the end, then, notions of openness and transparency are both concerned with trade-offs. Globalization, ICTs, new modes of government, and the global openness movement may generate 'radical transparency', allowing for the greater availability of information and access to communication and uprooting past notions of absolute secrecy, as noted by Alasdair Roberts (2006). But this kind of radical transparency also appears to result in new forms of 'reflexive transparency' which to some extent qualify its own achievements by displacing notions of absolute certainty. Openness and transparency do not abolish the ongoing ontological and political struggles over the distinctions between private and public, known and unknown, certain and uncertain. Rather, they contribute to making the borders between these different categories increasingly ambiguous, flexible, and open to interpretation. As we have seen in the contributions to this volume, the promise of openness in securing freedom and truth often transforms into various compromises and trade-offs when transparency policies are to be implemented. To live in an open society, then, requires the ability to tolerate radical uncertainty.

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