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"The relationship between religion and politics, as reflected in party platforms in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden 1988-2008"
The relationship between religion and politics, as reflected in party platforms in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden 1988-2008

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Abstract
As part of the work on my dissertation on religion and politics in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden I examine the party platforms from all parliamentary parties in these countries from 1988, 1998 and 2008 or ones that are as close to those years as possible. In my paper I try to show an overall change from a more or less mono-religious political discourse to a more multi-religious one. But I will also try to point to differences between these Nordic countries in that respect. I will also try to map what kinds of secularism that are being expressed within these platforms and how religion is being portrayed as a positive resource respectively as a (potential) problem.

Introduction
As part of the work on my dissertation thesis Religion and politics. An empirical study and analysis of the political parties and their policies on religion in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden 1988-2008 I here would like to present a first look at what might be found on religion in one of my main empirical sources, namely party platforms.

The research question that I will be working with here is: In what areas of society do the parliamentary parties consider religion to be a relevant factor and what kind of change can be seen over time in regards to that? Is religion becoming more or less public in that sense?

Theoretical framework
According to José Casanova a process of what he calls the de-privatization of religion is taking place since the late 1970s. If the process of secularization in the Western world has turned religion from being an overall ideology of society to much more of a niche, then there are several signs of religion re-entering the public sphere, at least in certain areas, including politics.¹

¹ Casanova 1994
This paper is part of the on-going discussion of empirical evidence to that theory as well as a way of trying to map the relevance of religion in different areas of society, from a political perspective. Due to the limitations of this paper and the early stage of this analysis I will focus here on a descriptive level of the contents of the party platforms. In due course I will then add an expanded theoretical framework as well as a more thought through methodology.

Definitions, materials and method
Politics is decision making on the distribution of values, such as material ones – economical, natural resources etc – and non-material – for example norms on what is good and what is less good in society.\(^2\) And a political party is then an organisation that competes for office in elections, for the purpose of performing politics.

Party platforms are an ideological statement by such parties, worked through with the members of each organization and decided on through democratic vote. They come in different shapes, with somewhat different purposes and more or (in some cases much) less frequently. Apart from the more ordinary party platform there are also forms like principal platforms, work platforms and election manifestos.

Within this project it has not been possible to stay strictly with one of these different kinds, as I have had to find similar documents from years as close to 1988, 1998 and 2008 from all of the parliamentary parties.\(^3\) Unfortunately that makes the comparison between the different documents somewhat less accurate and therefore the findings here need to be carefully addressed.\(^4\) As the other main empirical source in my dissertation will be records from parliamentary debates it seems to be reasonable to limit the study of party platforms to ones from parliamentary parties. But I have also decided to add the Sweden Democrats, to be able to compare (radical) right-wing (populist) parties in the Nordic countries.

All in all this has resulted in 118 documents or, in some rare cases, collections of documents from 35 political parties. Of these are 99 digitally searchable and the rest I have had to examine manually.

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\(^2\) Hagevi 2005, pp 8-9 and Easton 1965, p 50.

\(^3\) According to the guidelines of the NOREL project, of which I and my dissertation work is a part, three years are in focus for empirical analyses on religious change in the Nordic countries: 1988, 1998 and 2008. These are inspired by the work in Gustafsson 1985.

\(^4\) A somewhat different source could have been election manifestos, through The Manifesto Project: http://manifestoproject.wzb.eu/. Unfortunately the coding of content there has not included a variable for religion, but otherwise that would have been an excellent source for quantitative content analysis.
Now this is not all about politics of course, but about religion as well. My interest here is to find religion in a substantial sense, as the point here is mainly to trace the relationship between politics and organized religion. But I also think that it will be interesting to try to examine these findings in relation to a functional definition – that is how the political parties actually use these ideas or concepts. The relationship between these two basic definitions might be called religion as a communicative arena. Further on in my dissertation work I will be trying to work more on the construction of religion in the political arena than I will be able to do here.

In accordance with the codebook of the NOREL theme 3 Religion and the media I have been searching for a number of words (or rather their equivalents in Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish) in the party platforms: *religi*, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, church, mosque, synagogue, temple, Jesus, God, Prophet, Buddha, bishop, minister, pastor, imam [or similar in other religions], deacon*, congregation, worship, Bible, Koran, satanism, angels, meditation, spiritual [åndelig – spiritualitet], new age, hijab, cross [and similar religious symbols], faith, holy, secular, secularization, life views (organizations) and atheism. In practice I have only found a few of these words in the party platforms, mainly *religi*, Christianity, church, faith, congregation and life views. The word spiritual has caused some trouble to me, as it sometimes is used in a wider sense in the Nordic languages than in relation to what usually is defined as religion. Therefore I have chosen to exclude findings of it in some cases here.

The next step has then been to code the findings as either depicting religion as a resource or as a (potential) problem. I have considered religion to be a resource when it is seen as something worth protecting (as in the principle of religious freedom) as well as in cases where it more explicitly is described as something that contributes to society. In some less frequent cases the findings could have been coded as neutral, in the sense that they merely state a fact (e.g. “The church is separated from the state”). But in those cases I have yet coded them as religion being a resource. This might of course be disputed, but my point is that the mere mentioning of religion is a statement about its relevance in society, as opposed to discarding it.

The final step has been to categorize the area where religion is mentioned. Based on my findings I have listed 18 such areas: party identity, national identity, principal level (the principle of religious freedom and religious equality), education (on all levels), culture (arts, music etc), immigration, foreign policies (including relations to the

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5 Bäckström 2002, pp 80 and 91.
EU and the UN), (inter)national security (in relation to conflicts, or potential ones), trade and industry, health care, scientific research, environmental issues, organized religion (primarily the national churches, but in some cases also other denominations and religious organizations), other welfare (than health care), food and animal care, labour market, equality (gender and sexuality) and correctional care (prisons etc). Here I have focused more on content than on headlines, when coding. That means in practice that in some (although rare) cases different areas might be touched upon in different sentences in the same paragraph. But the most common case above all is that all sentences under one heading are coded as one and the same area. The coding does not measure the quantity of text, but rather the quality of it.

Secularism can be understood in several ways. José Casanova argues that in certain contexts it can mean a principle of statesmanship and in other political ideology. In its simplest form the principle of how a (modern) state should be organized secularism meant a separation of religion/church and state, a principle of neutrality that ought to guarantee citizens equal treatment and that no group or individual rights are violated. Such a principle does not need different religions or any theory or approach to religion as such. Secularism can also be an ideology that comes in different versions, and Casanova focuses on two of those. The phenomenological or historical-philosophical secularism is about an understanding of religion as something associated with a previous, non-modern era or context. Political secularism on the other hand, does not necessarily have a negative view of religion as the phenomenological and therefore conferred most thought that religion should not influence or be present in other societal spheres than their own. I will use these distinctions in this paper as operationalizations of secularism to try to define which one is expressed where in the party platforms.

Briefly on Nordic politics
The European political party systems have been shaped by certain social cleavages. The national cleavage (with roots in major societal transformation in the 16th to 18th centuries, primarily the reformation and the French revolution) concerns the conflicts between centre and periphery and the one between church and state. The industrial cleavage in the 19th and 20th centuries concerns the conflicts between town and country

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6 Casanova 2009, p 1060.
landed interests versus industrial entrepreneurs) and class owners and employers versus tenants, labourer and workers). 7

In the Nordic countries this has developed into a number of electoral poles and fronts on a functional-economic dimension. Labour parties have been concerned with wages and pensions. Farm parties have been concerned with prices and subsidies and business parties (mainly conservatives) with prices and taxes. One of several struggles between the left (labour) and right (farm and business) wings has been over the role of Christianity in society, where the right wing generally has been considering it (Christianity) to be more of a resource than the left wing has. 8

Nordic politics can be considered to be relatively stable in comparison with many other countries. For most of the 20th century a five-party “model” has been significant: communist, social democratic, agrarian, liberal and conservative, where the Social Democratic/Labour parties have been electorally dominating up until the end of the century. 9 During the late 20th century new parties entered the parliaments: Christian Democratic, environmental and populists. A tendency to move towards ”pre-electoral alliances” or even ”modified two-party systems” also developed. 10

The most volatile country in that respect is Denmark. The most important reasons for that is that it in contrast to Finland, Norway and Sweden has an election threshold of two instead of four percent, making it more easier for smaller political parties to enter and stay in the parliament. The most obvious example is the Danish so-called earthquake election in 1973, where five new parties entered the parliament and one third of the members of the parliament was replaced by new ones. Another difference is the prime minister’s prerogative to call for snap elections, when she or he finds it suitable.

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8 The model was developed to capture the Norwegian case, but can also be applied to the other Nordic countries. Knutsen 2004, p 64 and Rokkan 1999, p 376.
9 Berglund & Lindström 1978
10 Allern, Elin Haugsgjerd & Aylott, Nicholas 2009.
Empirical examination of party platforms

Denmark

*Centre Democrats* (Centrum-Demokraterne)

The Centre Democrats was a bourgeois party, in the middle of the political left/right scale, 1973-2008. It held seats in the parliament from the year of its formation until 2001 (with 2.2-8.3% of the votes) and for about a month in 2007 through a defector from the Danish People’s Party. It was in the cabinet 1982-88 (with three bourgeois parties) and 1993-96 (with the Social Democrats).

I have examined two of its party platforms, from 1989 and 1998, but not any from ”2008”, as the party did not produce one such during its last years. In the platform of 1989 religion is only present in a picture of a priest in his pulpit, reading a book by Karl Marx.\(^{11}\) The text surrounding it is about NATO and security politics. There is no explicit reference to the picture in the text and I have not been able to interpret the meaning of including such a cartoon here, other than that religion probably should be considered a problem in this case, given the bourgeois ideology of the party. In 1998 religion is mentioned in the text, in regards to culture (in the sense of national identity). The party states the importance of teaching for example knowledge of Christianity in schools and I therefore classify religion here as a positive resource.

*Danish People’s Party* (Dansk Folkeparti)

The Danish People’s Party is a radical right-wing (populist) party, founded in 1995, through a division or split in the Progress Party. It has been growing in electoral support since its formation, from 7.4% in the 1998 parliamentary election to 13.8% in 2007 (with 15.3% in the election for the European parliament in 2009) and has been supporting the Liberals and the Conservatives in the cabinet.

I have examined platforms from 2001 and 2009 and have found an increasing interest in religion in regards to the number of areas, where it is mentioned. More specifically Islam is always mentioned as a problem, and often in relation to Christianity, which on the other hand is always mentioned as a positive resource for society. Christianity and the folk church are described as part of the nation’s and the party’s identity and Islam is associated with what is regarded as non Danish values, such as Sharia law, the wearing of the veil (seen as an expression of the oppression of women) and a creator of problems in school and in association with Islamism.

\(^{11}\) *CD – partiet i centrum*, p 20.
Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten – De rød-grønne)
The Red-Green Alliance is the most leftist party in the Danish parliament and was founded in 1989 through a merger of three left-wing parties. It has been represented in the parliament since 1994 and has since then won a share of 2.2-3.4% of the seats there.

I have examined the platforms from 1989, 1996 and 2003. The first one is very brief, as it was written the same year as the party was formed, and does not mention religion at all. In 1996 religion is mentioned in three areas. First in regards to immigration, where it is something to cherish. Then as an international threat in the form of Islamistic fundamentalism and finally a statement for same-sex marriages in church, where I classify religion as a positive resource. In 2003 religion is thought of as a problem in relation to international gender equality and sexual equality in Denmark, but as a resource on a principal level.

Progress Party (Fremskridtspartiet)
The Progress party is a radical right-wing (populist) party, was founded in 1972 and became the second biggest party in the Danish parliament through the so-called earthquake election in 1973 with 15.9% of the votes. It remained there until 1999, but then only with a 2.4% of the votes. As mentioned above the party split or was divided into the Danish People’s party in 1995.

In the platform from 1989 religion is seen as a resource in providing care in youth recreation centres and in prisons. The party also wants to set the folk church free from the state, in a positive sense. In 1993, just a few years later, religion is resource on a principal level, but also as a part of national identity, although the party wants the church to be free from the state. In 2011 the party still exists, although outside the parliament. It has no formal up to date party platform, but lists the stopping of and a sending back of immigrants from Islamic countries as the first of its four main goals on its website.\(^\text{12}\)

Conservatives (Konservative Folkeparti)
The Conservatives was founded in 1915 from its predecessor Højre and since 1988 its share of the votes has decreased from 19.3% to 10.4%. But the party still have been

\(^{12}\) http://www.frp.dk/
able to form a cabinet together with the Liberals since 2001, with the support in parliament from the Danish People’s party.

In the platform of 1992 religion is considered to be a positive resource in regards to national and party identity, on a principal level, in culture and in foreign policies. In 2000 religion is only mentioned as a resource in national identity, but then in 2010 it returns again as well as part of party identity on a principal level and then also in relation to immigration, in all cases as a resource.

**Christian Democrats** (Kristeligt Folkeparti/Kristendemokraterne)
The Christian People’s Party was founded in 1970 on the initiative of two priests and was elected into parliament through the so-called earthquake election in 1973. It has since then been part of the parliament except for 1994-98 and since 2005. The party’s share of the votes has varied between 1.7% (2005) and 5.3% (1975). In 2003 the name was changed to the Christian Democrats.

I have examined three platforms – from 1986, 1996 and 2008 – and in all of these the party mention religion as a resource in party and national identity, in education and in churches and denominations. In various platforms religion is also considered to be a resource on a principal level, in culture, immigration, foreign policies, environmental issues, social politics and labour market. The only case where religion is considered to be a (potential) problem is within health care, where the party warns about forms of treatment associated with the new age movement, but where on the other hand a Christian view on humanity is seen as a resource. Religion in relation to immigration and religious minorities becomes an issue in 2008, but in a positive sense.

**Liberal Alliance** (Ny Alliance/Liberal Alliance)
Liberal Alliance (formerly New Alliance) is a fairly new party, founded in 2007 by members of parliament from the Social Liberals and the Conservatives. It got 2.7% of the votes the same year.

In its platform from 2009, the party identifies its own roots in the Enlightenment and its critique of dogmatic religion although it seems to see religion as a resource on a principal level. The party warns about radicalisation of Islam among immigrants, and

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consider the folk church to be a resource, although it wants to remove the responsibility for national registration from the church, which I have thought of as religion being a problem as well (although that of course could be disputed).

*Social Liberals* (Radikale Venstre)
The Social Liberals was founded in 1905 and the party is traditionally described as being in the centre of the left-right political scale. It has been in many cabinets, both right and left side ones, but is since 2001 in opposition. The electoral support for the party has varied between 3.9% and 9.2% since 1988. The Social Liberals is updating its party platform quite rarely. In 1976 the party’s fourth platform was published and the current one came in 1997. In addition to those two I have been examining the election manifesto of 2011, to have something similar to compare with of more recent date.

In 1976 the party saw religion as a resource on a principal level and was working for a (more) tolerant church, which I have interpreted in a positive way, although it could be the other way around as well. The principal platform of 1997 and the election manifesto of 2011 are both fairly brief (three-four A4 pages) and have no explicit references to religion at all.

*Social Democrats* (Socialdemokraterna/Socialdemokratiet)
The Social Democrats was formed in 1871, got its first seats in parliament in 1884 and formed its first own cabinet in 1924, which it continued to form up until 2001, being the biggest party in all general elections until then.

In the 1988 party platform religion is only mentioned in the paragraph about the folk church, where it is considered to be a resource and the party discusses the democracy in it and the use of its buildings. In 1996 religion becomes interesting on a principal level and as an important part of teacher’s education, as part of trying to strengthen own identity in meeting others. In 2004 religion is still interesting on a principal level, but is now seen as both a resource and a (potential) problem, when it threatens democracy. When it comes to immigration issues religion is a resource, or at least not a problem in itself.

*Socialist People’s Party* (Socialistisk Folkeparti)
The Socialist People’s Party was founded in 1959 and has been cooperating with the Socialdemocrats from time to time, although it has never been in the cabinet itself.
Since 1988 the party has gained between 6% and 13% of the votes in the general elections.

In the 1991 and 1994 platforms religion is just mentioned as a resource on a principal level. But about a decade later a major change seems to have occurred. In 2003 religion still can be considered as a resource on a principal level, but it is also associated with international conflicts, where it is either thought of as used by other forces or a threat in itself. The party also wishes to separate the folk church from the state, not because it is a problem in itself, but for the sake of religious equality in relation to other denominations.

Liberals (Venstre)
The Liberals was founded in 1870 and is currently the biggest party in Denmark, with 26.3% of the votes, a major change since 1988, where it got 11.8%. The party governs the country since 2001, together with the Conservatives and with support from the Danish Peoples’s Party.

In 1986 the party considers a Christian view of life to be part of its own identity.\textsuperscript{15} I have only been able to get hold of a preliminary version of the platform of 1995, where it is suggested that Christianity should be described as part of national identity, but as that is the case in the 2006 platform I find it likely that that became part of the final version in 1995 as well. The party also describes religion in positive terms on a principal level in 1995 and claims that the folk church should continue with its close relationship with the state, although it is suggested that non-members should be relieved from paying taxes to the church’s confessional work.\textsuperscript{16} In 2006 the party sees religion as a resource on a principal level again and confirms its support for the folk church, as well as acknowledging the freedom rights of other denominations.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} \textit{Et trygt liv i frihed} 1986, p 5.
\item \textsuperscript{17} \textit{Venstres principprogram. Fremtid i frihed og fællesskab}. (2006), pp 3-4, 9-10 and 13.
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11
Finland

Centre Party (Suomen Keskusta/ Centern i Finland)
The Centre Party was founded in 1906 and has agrarian origins. Since 1988 the party has gained 15.8-24.8% of the votes in general elections and has been in most of the cabinets since World War II, including holding the seat as prime minister during several periods. That makes the party substantially more influential than its Nordic sister parties.

In the draft for a new party platform in 1989 religion is not mentioned at all, but in 1996 Christianity is described as part of national identity. Ten years later Christianity is also seen as a part of the party identity and of Finnish culture.  

Green League (Vihreä liitto/ Gröna förbundet)
The Green League was founded in 1987, although it was not formally registered as a political party until the year after. It is an environmental party that has gained 6.5%-8.5% in the general elections since its formation and that has been in three cabinets so far.

In 1988 the party does not mention religion at all, but in 1998 religion is considered to be a resource on a principal level and as part of a multi-cultural society. It also states that it appreciates what churches do in regards to international relief and peace keeping, as well as for domestic welfare. In 2006 the multi-cultural society is further emphasized, both as a resource on a principal level and as a (potential) cause of conflict between Islam and Christianity in Europe, that needs to be handled. Another consequence is that the party wishes that the formal ties between the state and the two national churches should be dissolved, as a way of ensuring equal treatment of all religions.

Christian Democrats (Kristillisdemokraatit/Kristdemokraterna)
The Christian Democrats was founded in 1958 by members of the National Coalition Party and was formerly known as Finnish Christian League up until 2001 (Suomen Kristillinen Liitto). Since 1988 the party has gained 3-5.6% of the votes in general elections and has been represented in the parliament ever since 1970.

The Christian Democrats generally states that religion ought to be considered as a resource in many different areas, including its own identity, national identity,

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19 Gröna förbundets program 1998
20 Gröna förbundets principprogram 2006
education, culture and foreign policies (where it ought not be used in support of conflicts). In 1982 it also states that secularism and atheism are opposite to a Christian way of life. The party also claims that there is a need for priests within the military service and spiritual guidance within probation as well as the importance of Christian values within security policies. In 1998 the party wishes for example for more programs based on Christian values in the media. In 2005 it states among other things that the EU ought to recognize its Christian heritage and openly commit to it.

National Coalition Party (Kansallinen Kokoomus/Samlingspartiet)
The National Coalition Party is a liberal conservative party that was founded in 1918. It has gained 17.9-25% of the votes in the general elections since 1988 and is currently the biggest party in the parliament. The National Coalition has been in several cabinets, although it has never held the position of prime minister.

In the 1988 platform religion is considered to be a resource on a principal level and as part of national identity. When the party makes claims both in 1988 and 1998 about the need for non-confessional religious education in schools I have interpreted it as religion being a resource, although in need of adaptation to multi-religiosity. In both of those platforms the folk churches are seen as a national and spiritual resource. In 1998 the party states that health care treatments should not be based on belief and opinions, but on science, which I have interpreted as a negative view on religion. In 2006 Christian values and ethics are considered to be en important ground for dialogue in a multi-cultural society.

True Finns (Perussuomalaiset/Sannfinländarna)
The True Finns was founded in 1995, but is an inheritor to the Finnish Rural Party (1959-1995) and I therefore will treat them as one and same party here. It can either be labelled as a radical right-wing (populist) party or an extreme centre party, but nevertheless it has agrarian origins. In the 2011 general election it gained 19.1% of the votes, making it the second biggest party, together with the Social Democrats. Before then the True Finns hade only gained 0.99-4.9% in any election since 1988.

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21 Suomen Kristillisen Liiton yleishjelma 1982
22 Kristillisen Liiton tavoihejelma 1998
23 Kristdemokraternas principprogram och det allmänna programmet 2005
24 Kokoomuksen Lähijan tavoihejelma (1988)
26 Samlingspartiets principprogram (2006)
In the platforms that I have examined from 1992 and 2001 religion is considered to be a resource on a principal level.\textsuperscript{27} In the election manifesto 2006 the health care system is said to be built on Christian values, the churches are appreciated for their international aid and most of the world’s conflict areas are said to be in Muslim countries.\textsuperscript{28}

*Social Democrats* (Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue/Finlands Socialdemokratiska Parti)
The Social Democrats was founded in 1899, at that time as the Finnish Labour Party. Since 1988 the party has had a share of the popular vote at about 21–28\%, making it one of the biggest parties. It has been in the cabinet for long times, most recently 1995–2007.

The Social Democrats mention religion on a principal level in its 1987 platform and it also states that the state should be neutral in regards to religion. In 1999 the party on the other hand identifies Christian ethics as part of what has formed the party. In 2007 there is no mention of religion whatsoever.

*Swedish People’s Party* (Suomen ruotsalainen kansanpuolue/Svenska folkpartiet i Finland)
The Swedish People’s Party is a Swedish-speaking minority and mainly liberal party founded in 1906. The party has gained 4.3-5.5\% of the vote since 1988, has been in several cabinets and cooperates with parties both on the left and right wings.

I have examined platforms from 1988, 1997 and 2006 and found that in all of these religion is regarded as a resource on a principal level and Christianity is seen as part of national identity. In 1988 the party considers the national churches as a resource in a special paragraph, as a provider of ethics and spiritual welfare. It also mentions the need for religious services in Swedish, in that platform as well as in those of 1997 and 2006, although in the latter ones under a cultural heading.\textsuperscript{29}

*Left Alliance* (Vasemmistoliitto/Vänsterförbundet)
The Left Alliance was founded in 1990 through a merger between the Finnish People’s Democratic League, Democratic Alternative, Finnish Women’s Democratic League and

\textsuperscript{27} *Suomen Maaseudun Puolueen Puolueohjelma* (1992) Lähiajan tavoiteohjelma (2001)
\textsuperscript{28} *Suomalaiselle sopivin. Perussuomalaiset r.p:n eduskuntavaaliohjelma* (2011)
\textsuperscript{29} *SF:s Partiprogram 1988, Partiprogram ”Med människan” 1997, Steget före. Svenska folkpartiets partiprogram 2006.*
The Communist Party of Finland. It has gained 8.1-11.2% in the popular elections to parliament since then and has held seats in two cabinets.

The Party has very little to say about religion in the three platforms that I have read. In 1990 it simply states that the church is separated from the state. In 1998 religion is associated with discrimination and as the opposite of French revolution ideals, as human beings ought to be the ultimate source of power instead of God, but Christians also in association with peace movements. In 2007 the party takes a more neutral stand, stating that it’s up to each and every citizen to choose his or her own view of life, without the state interfering.

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Norway

Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet/Arbeidarpattiet)
The Labour Party is a social-democratic party that was founded in 1887 and it has been the largest party in Norway since 1927, with a peak of 48.3% in 1957. In the parliament the party had an absolute majority from 1945 to 1961. Since 1989 the party has won 34.3-35.4% in the parliamentary elections and has held the position of prime minister since 1935 with the exception of just 16 years.

The party embraces religion on a principal level as well as the multi-religious society as it grows in visibility and needs to be attended to within for example childcare. It speaks in a positive manner over organized religion, particularly the folk church and calls it part of national identity in the platforms of 1986 and 1997. In all of the three platforms that I have examined religion is considered a resource with regards to equality policies, including promoting more female priests within the Church of Norway, but the party also wants to make it harder for the church and others to discriminate against homosexuals. It also views organized religion to be a resource within the welfare work in social society and as an ethical advisor within health care as well as in technological and economic areas. In 1986 the party points out the importance of giving opportunities for pupils to what it calls alternative education in views of life. Religion matters internationally as well. The party encourages the church international relief as well as other similar organizations in their work and sees opportunities for building bridges amongst different cultures and religions. But religion is also associated with wars and conflicts and cannot be taken an excuse for violating human rights.

Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet/Framstegspartiet)
The Progress Party identifies itself as conservative liberal and libertarian, but has also been described as conservative and right-wing populist. Since it was founded in 1973 it has gradually become one of the largest parties with 6.3-22.9% of the votes in popular elections since 1989, but has never been part of governmental cooperation.

The party also identifies itself as based on a Christian view of life and humanistic values in the three principal platforms that I have examined, as well as it describes

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Norway the same way, promotes freedom of religion and claims that the Church of Norway would be best served as an independent church from the state. In 1989 the party states that religious education in public schools should be neutral and multi-religious. In 1989 and 1997 it mentions the importance of the state supporting church relief organizations as well as the Red Cross. In 1997 religion is described as related to international conflicts and as a potential risk of rising costs in public welfare as a result of immigration.

Conservative Party (Høyre/Høyre)
The Conservative Party was founded in 1884 and was the second largest party in the country from 1921 up until 1997, when it was surpassed by the growth of the Progress Party. From 1989 it has gained 14.1-22.2% of the votes and has participated in six governments since 1950.

The party describes Christianity as part of its own and national identity and promotes religious freedom in all of the three examined platforms. These perspectives include a developing view of the need for the state church to become separated from the state, for its own sake. Religion is seen as a positive resource in immigration policies, as well as internationally (in 1985 and 2000). In 1985 the party stresses the importance of stimulating dedication to a conception of life among the youth, as part of educational policies and in 2009 culture is described as a way to a better understanding of human differences, such as religion. The Centre Party wants to keep the connections between the Church of Norway and the state, but in 2009 the positive view on religion also includes support for the multi-religious society, including financial aid to mosques and synagogues, for example.

Christian Democratic Party (Kristelig Folkeparti/Kristelig Folkeparti)
The Christian Democratic Party (or literally the Christian People’s Party) was founded in 1933 as a reaction to growing secularism, promoting Christian and cultural values as an alternative way. Since its beginnings a declaration of Christian faith has been required for members who want to be elected to positions of trust, although that

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36 Here I have focused on three principal platforms. But if we would exchange the 2009 principal platform for the work platform of the same year (Fremskrittspartiets handlingsprogram 2009-2013, p 36), religion and religious fundamentalism is once again mentioned as a source of international conflicts.

demand has been questioned lately. The party has had seats in the parliament ever since it was founded and has been part of five non-socialist coalition governments and has held the position as prime minister twice.

The party acknowledges – through the three platforms that I have examined – Christianity as part of its own identity, views the freedom of religion as a general principle and calls for the need for Christianity to influence cultural life and welfare work in society. It is positive in relation to supporting churches and religious organizations and promotes the separation of church and state and underlines the importance of Christian values in school and the need for compulsory religious education. Religion is considered an important value internationally, although the party in 1997 and 2009 calls for reactions against religiously motivated oppression.

Related to national security issues are also for example the right to not participate in military service, due to religious or ethical reasons. In relation to immigration policies different religions are considered to be positive resources, but the party also points out the need to support repressed religious converts, in which religion at the same time is considered to be a resource as well as a problem. Other issues related to immigration are a call for education in Norwegian values for immigrant religious minority leaders and gendered ones like the need to educate immigrant women in equality policies in relation to their religion and to ban female circumcision. The party also opposes research on stem cells in 1997, as it is considered to be incompatible with a Christian view on humanity.

Centre Party (Senterpartiet)
The Centre Party (originally the Farmer’s Party and later the Norwegian Democratic Party – Democrats) is a centrist and agrarian party, founded in 1920, focusing on decentralization in society, including opposition to membership in the European Union. With an exception for the 1993 election, where it gained 16.7% of the votes, the party has had a share of votes between 5.6 and 7.9% since 1989. It has supported seven non-socialist governments since 1930, including three of which it held the

42 KrFs program 2009-2013 (2009), p 51.
position of prime minister, but in 2005 and onwards it instead has been part of a red-green government coalition.

The party promotes the freedom of religion in all of the three platforms that I have examined and describes its own identity in Christian and humanistic terms. But it’s only obvious in the 2009 platform that that applies to national identity as well. The Centre party wants to keep the bonds between the Church of Norway and the state, but the positive attitude towards religion is more equally distributed in 2009 as the party then also expresses the need for financial support for religious buildings other than churches, such as mosques and private chapels. On the other hand the party also expresses the need for education in Norwegian values for leaders of minority religions. In 1985 and 2009 it underlines Christianity as a core value in public schools, but in 2009 also the importance of teaching religion, so that religious minorities will be understood well. In 1985 abortion is rejected on the basis of Christian values and in 2009 the party exemplifies spiritual needs as important within hospice care. Religion and religious freedom is considered to be an important resource both in international relations (1995 and 2009) and as part of immigrant’s identity (1985). The only case where religion can be considered to be a problem is in relation to TV commercials, where it ought to be forbidden. On the other hand that applies to political messages as well.

Socialist Left Party (Sosialistisk venstreparti)
The Socialist Left Party (originally Socialist Electoral League) was founded in 1973 and entered the parliament the same year, where it has held 2-23 seats since then, with a share of votes in popular elections of 4.2-12.5%. In 2005 it became governing for the first time in a red-green alliance.

The party is committed to religious freedom, but not always in a positive manner, as religion is also said to be constantly related to tensions. All through the three party platforms that I have examined the party promotes the separation of church and state, on the basis of that freedom. The party is against banning religiously imposed clothing, in the name of that same freedom. The same kind of reasoning applies to

religious neutrality within education, health care, treatment of drug addicts and childcare.\textsuperscript{50} Nevertheless I have interpreted those issues as a view on religion as a resource, although that might of course be disputed. The party is explicitly critical towards religion when it comes to issues of equality, where religion is thought of as an expression of patriarchy as well as homophobia.\textsuperscript{51} On a global basis religion is said to be much associated with destructive fundamentalism, although it is also mentioned that religion as well has contributed to tolerance.\textsuperscript{52} Immigrants for religious reasons ought to be treated as refugees.\textsuperscript{53} Finally it would be an exaggeration to claim that the party identifies itself as a Christian or religious one, but in 1995 it states that in certain issues it has a lot in common with for example certain Christians.\textsuperscript{54}

\textit{Liberal Party (Venstre)}

The Liberal Party is Norway’s oldest political party, founded in 1884, and is considered to be social liberal, despite the fact that it’s name in Norwegian means “left”. At the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century it was the largest party in the country, but has since then lost a lot of its influence. Since 1989 the party’s share of votes in popular elections has been 3.2-5.9\% and during that period the party has taken part in two governments.

The party describes itself as having parts of its origins in Christian and humanistic values in 1985 and 1996, but only in 1996 as part of national identity.\textsuperscript{55} Religion is present on a principal level in 1996 and 2009 and the party recognizes religious organizations as part of a multi-religious civil society, which should have the right to equal financial support from the state. Demands for confession to one single religion (in practice Christianity) for the right to uphold certain offices should therefore consequently be removed. The party promotes the separation of church and state, while still stating the importance of the continuation of a broad folk church.\textsuperscript{56} All in all

\textsuperscript{52} Sosialistisk Venstrepartis prinsippprogram 1995 (1995), 3.1 Hovedutfordringene, 3.5:Fundamentalisme.
the presence of religion is most obvious in the 1996 platform and much less in the two other ones. There the party states the need for religious education in schools, although with a quantitative emphasis on Christianity and the right to choose non-armed military service for religious or other ethical reasons. The party recognizes the tension between Islam and Christianity in Europe, but at the same time states the importance of focusing on individuals, rather than religions, cultures or groups of people and also underlines how religions can create peace and understanding as well. In accordance with immigration policies the party finally describes the need for asylum for human beings that are being persecuted for their religion amongst other reasons.57

## TABLE 3: Norway

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Religion a resource = +
Religion a problem = –
Sweden

Centre Party (Centerpartiet)
The Centre Party was founded in 1913 as the Farmers’ League and describes itself today as a green social liberal party, with decentralization as one of its core values. The party had its golden days in terms of election progress in 1973, with a share of the votes of 25.1%. Since 1988 the results have spanned between 5.1 and 11.3%. The Centre Party was a close ally of the Social Democrats and partnered in two governments 1936-45 and 1951-57, but since then it has been more oriented towards the centre-right wing and have been part of five bourgeois governments, including one (1976-1982, with a short interregnum 1979) where it held the position of prime minister.

The party describes its own identity partly in terms of being sprung from Christian ethics and views of life and describes human beings as having a spiritual dimension in 1990 and 2001. It commits itself to the principle of freedom of religion both domestically and internationally in all of the three platforms that I have studied, but also states in 2009 that religion cannot be allowed to supersede individual human and civil rights, which I interpret as religion being a (potential) problem.58 In 1990 the party promotes the need for an open folk church, but as well support for free churches and in 2009 it discusses the consequences of the separation of state and church that took place nine years earlier. The folk church is also mentioned in relation to trade and industry, as the party suggests that forests owned by the Church of Sweden ought to be sold to individual foresters and church buildings as being an important part of the cultural heritage. In relation to education policies the party promotes the right for parents to choose schools for their children in accordance with their own philosophical and religious convictions.59

Liberal People’s Party (Folkpartiet)
The Liberal People’s Party is a social-liberal party that was founded in 1902, originally as the “Freminded National Association” (Frisinnade Landsföreningen). In the election of 1911 the party gained 40.2% of the popular votes, but since 1988 the figures have been a more modest 4.1-13.3%. During that period of time the party has been part of three centre-right governments.

Spiritual freedom seems to be an important value to the party, as an expression of what it stands for, meaning freedom to have and to express political, religious and other convictions. But it also identifies itself and the nation with its Christian roots, as well as taking a stand against what it calls religious intolerance, wars and oppression through history. In the set of spiritual freedom multi-religiosity and the separating of church and state is a consequence to the party. But it also underlines the importance of having the state supporting culturally interesting church buildings and discus the consequences of the folk church losing some of its influence on the creating of values in society. The (mis)use of religion is thought of as a problem when it comes to international conflicts.

*Christian Democrats* (Kristdemokraterna)
The Christian Democrats was founded in 1964, originally as Christian Democratic Unity, but did not enter the parliament until 1985. Since then it has gained 2.9-11.8% of the votes in popular elections and has been part of three centre-right governments.

Through the three (groups of) documents that I have examined the party identifies itself as a non-confessional, but still inspired by and rooted in (Judeo-) Christian views and ethics. The religious heritage and culture in society on the other hand is only obvious in the 1996 platform. The party promotes the importance of Christian values within education as well as neutrally based religious education in schools and especially mentions the need for such education within medical training. In environmental issues the party refer to the biblically inspired concept of stewardship (förvaltarskapstanken) and promotes the freedom of all churches, including the folk church. The multi-religious society, religion on a principal level and immigration is present in the platforms, although relatively sparsely. In 1987 Christian principles is described as a way of promoting peace in the world and the party also focuses on persecutions of Christians in the Middle East in 2010-11. The party points to the importance of seeing to spiritual needs within healthcare and amongst handicapped, to let Christian values influence pre-schools and childcare, to encourage cooperation on

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60 Folkpartiets program 1990 (1990): Folkstyre och rättsstat; Det liberala och frisinnade arvet; En liberal attityd, Folkpartiets program 1999 (1999): Respekten för den enskilde; Frihet och förankringar; Liberalismens rötter; Den svenska liberalismen; Demokratin; Människan och politiken; Frihet i gemenskap; Kultur; Nätverk, Frihet att växa. Folkpartiet liberalernas partiprogram (2007), pp 4, 6-8, 22-23, 25, 38
social matters between churches and other partners and to emphasize values of equality, regardless of race, age, religion or sex within social policies. The party also discusses the role of religion in relation to culture, in 1996 from a Christian perspective and in 2010-11 more seemingly openly as religion in general.62

Green Party (Miljöpartiet de Gröna)
The Green Party (or in Swedish literally The Environmental Party the Greens) was founded in 1981 and was first elected into the parliament in 1988. Its share of the votes has varied between 3.4 and 7.3% since that year and the party has been part of two red-green governments during that period.

The party considers religion and spirituality to be a resource on a principal level in all of the three platforms that I have examined.63 In 1997 religion is mentioned as part of education policies, as one example of areas where equal treatment of students is important and as one out of several possible orientations for free schools. The same year the party also considers the possibility of transferring the ownership of forests and agricultural land from the Church of Sweden and other state institutions to individuals or cooperatives. Whether that ought to be seen as religion being a resource (an asset?) or a problem might be discussed. When it comes to international security the party points out that wars and conflicts often have religious grounds, as well as economical, ecological or cultural ones.64 In 2005 religion is mentioned from two other aspects. Churches are mentioned as taking part of the work for a more fair distribution of global environmental resources. But religion can also be considered to be both a resource and a problem when it comes to equality policies, as it on one hand ought to be respected and valued, but on the other hand also is associated with oppressive structures in society.65

Moderate Party (Moderata Samlingspartiet/Moderaterna)
The Moderate Party is a liberal conservative party that was founded in 1904 as the General Electoral League. It is today the second largest party in the parliament and has

64 (Miljöpartiet de Grönas) Partiprogram 1997 (1997), pp 26, 36-37 and 53-54.
gained 15.3-30.1% of the votes in popular elections since 1988. During that period the party has been part of three governments, where it has held the position of prime minister in all.

The party considers religion to be a resource in society on a principal level in all of the three platforms that I have examined. In 1984 and 2001 the party connects national identity and common values with Christianity, but only does the same thing with party identity in 1984. The freedom of religion also applies to policies of education, immigration and the multi-religious society, although Christianity is thought of as more central, at least within religious education in public schools as it is more connected to core values in society. The party wants the Church of Sweden to be separated from the state, but to continue as an open folk church, to get equal financial support as other organizations in society and an increased amount together with other Swedish international relief organizations. The party also shows its appreciation for church’s social work. Finally the party says in 2007 that it wants the churches to be able to keep their legal right to perform marriages, but that in accordance with their own theological standpoints.

New Democracy (Ny Demokrati)
New Democracy was founded in 1991 and got elected with 6.7% of the votes in the parliamentary election that same year, but had to leave the parliament in 1994 and was finally dissolved in 2000. The party mixed populism and xenophobia with economic liberalism and supported the bourgeois government, although it did not have any seats in it itself.

Based on the coding that I have applied here, the party does not express any views on religion whatsoever in the one and only party platform that I have examined. On the other hand that silence is also a finding that might be interpreted as religion not being considered to be a relevant factor at all.

Swedish Social Democratic Workers’ Party/Social Democrats (Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti/Socialdemokraterna)

69 Ny Demokrati partiprogram (1991)
The Social Democrats was founded in 1889 and is the oldest and largest political party. It has formed the government and held the seat as prime minister during most of the 20th century, with an exception of only 19 years all in all since 1911. The share of votes in popular elections from 1988 and onwards has varied between 30 and 45.3%, making it the most successful political party in the history of the liberal democratic world.  

The party promotes religious and spiritual freedom as a resource in all of the three platforms that I have examined. In 1990 it does so in relation to education and in 2009 it does so in relation to immigration and foreign policies as well as on a more principal level. However in 2001 religion, as well as for example communism, is also sometimes associated with fundamentalism and as a phenomenon that from time to time tends to limit the freedom of others. Although the party might not be said to have religion as part of its identity it still recognizes a kinship with the free-church movement in 1990 and 2001, but does not mention the Church of Sweden at all.

**Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna)**

The Sweden Democrats was founded in 1988 and its roots can be found in fascism, although it rejected Nazism in 1999. It is now considered to be nationalist or (radical) right-wing populist and entered the parliament for the first time in 2010 with 5.7% of the votes. That means that the party has not had seats in parliament during the period that actually is being examined here. Yet I have decided to present it here for reasons of comparison with similar parties in the other three countries.

The party commits itself to the principle of religious freedom in 1999 and 2005 and in those two platforms it also associates religion (Christianity) with national identity, although in 1999 mosques and Islam on the other hand are described as expressions of non-Swedish values. Islam is then also portrayed as a problem in regards to animal care and female equality. The party wishes to keep the bonds between the Church of Sweden and the state. Finally in 1989 and 1999 it promotes the individual right to choose non-armed military service for religious or other ethical reasons.

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Left Party (Vänsterpartiet)

The Left Party (originally Social Democratic Left Party of Sweden) was founded in 1917 following a split in the Social Democratic Party and was called the Left Party – The Communists from 1967 to 1990. Since 1988 it has gained 4.1-11.8% of the votes in popular elections and has supported four Social Democratic governments during that period, but without having any seats in the cabinet of its own.

The party considers religion to be a resource on a principal level and in a neutral and equal manner in all of the three platforms that I have examined and it also portrays capitalism as spiritually decadent. In 2008 the party states that reactionary political, but religiously coloured, powers are gaining momentum in large parts of the world. Finally it also calls for a complete separation of church and state, as the state ought to be completely religiously neutral.

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75 Partiprogram 2008 (2008), pp 10 and 15.
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Religion a resource = +
Religion a problem = –
Cross comparison analysis

By countries

In Denmark the interest in religion seems to increase somewhat during the period of time, although it differs significantly from party to party. Of the different quotes on religion that I have found I have considered about 75 per cent to be viewing it as a resource. When it comes to their own identity four out of eleven parties mention Christianity as part of it and seven parties mention its relationship to organized religion, but only Christian Democrats does it in all of the three platforms. Liberal Alliance on the other hand define itself in terms of not being associated with “dogmatic religion” and the Danish People’s Party both embraces Christianity as well as takes a stand against other forms of religion when describing itself. With regards to national identity six of the parties define their own country as having Christian roots and once again the Danish People’s Party also states that “fundamentalist religions” is a threat against that identity. Two areas where the interest in religion definitely has increased in relation to immigration and foreign policies, in both cases in positive as well as negative ways. Gender and other equality issues hardly seem to relate to religion at all here.

There is no real tendency on the interest in religion in the Finnish party platforms. But when they mention religion it is almost always (∼94 per cent) as a resource. Three parties out of eight considers Christianity to be part of its own identity and five parties consider it to be part of national identity, most frequently Christian Democrats, Swedish People’s Party and the National Coalition Party. Just as in Denmark all parties but one mention the freedom of religion to be an important principle. Only two parties mention religion in relation to immigration, then in a positive manner, and three parties mention it in relation to security policies, but then slightly more negative. In both cases interest increases somewhat over time. On the other hand religion is seen as a resource internationally by four parties. All of the Finnish parties seem to loose interest in organized religion over time here, some speak of the importance of the church(es) and others more about it/them as separated from the state. Gender and other equality issues do not seem to relate to religion at all here.

Norway is the country where religion is most frequently mentioned in the party platforms and in about 90 per cent of the cases it is considered to be a resource. The interest in religion does not seem to have changed over time, although minor changes in the areas where religion is considered to be relevant have occurred. All parties except the Labour Party mention religion as part of its own identity in at least one, but in most cases all, of the three platforms. All parties but the Socialist Left Party also
considers it to be part of national identity in at least one platform and all parties speaks strongly of the freedom of religion. In relation to immigration religion is thought of as a resource in most cases, but in some cases as well as a (potential) problem and the same goes for security and foreign policies. All parties also speak positively and strongly about the function and position of churches and, in most cases, other religious organizations and in many cases states its support for equal treatment, including financing, of those. In relation to equality religion becomes an issue for the Labour Party in a positive manner and for the Socialist Left Party in a negative manner.

In Sweden the interest in religion seems to have increased slightly over the period of time and in about 90 per cent of the cases it is considered to be a resource. Four or five out of nine parties define themselves as having Christian roots to a various degree and four parties mention that faith as being part of national identity as well. But the Liberal People’s Party also defines itself as liberating from negative sides of religion. All parties except the short-lived New Democracy relate strongly to the principle of religious freedom. Religion is not that much of an issue when it comes to immigration policies, but somewhat more when it comes to foreign and security policies. In the last case it is depicted to be more of a problem. When churches are mentioned it is in most cases about the relationship between the folk church and the state and cultural and financial assets of that church. Religion is not much of an issue when it comes to equality policies, although the Green Party considers it to be part of oppressive structures and the Sweden Democrats views Islam as oppressive towards women.

*By families of political parties*

The primary distinction here is not between left and right wing parties, but rather between parties with different kinds of relationships with religion.

The Red-Green parties are very similar when it comes to religion (in this case Christianity) in relation to party and national identity, where the bonds are quite weak. Except for the Social Democrats and the Left Alliance in Finland religion is mainly discussed on a principal level, as part of immigration, international and security issues. But the Red(-Green)s in Norway also has a lot to say on Christianity and the folk church.

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76 Red-Green Alliance, Social Democrats (Denmark), Socialist People’s Party, Green League, Social Democrats (Finland), Left Alliance, Labour Party, Socialist Left Party, Green Party, Moderate Party, Swedish Social Democratic Workers’ Party, Left Party.
The Centre-Right parties are also quite similar when it comes to religion, but associates in most cases party and national identity with Christianity. The exceptions from this is usually set in relation to liberal parties that on an ideological basis also takes a critical stand against (certain forms of) religion. On a Nordic comparison these parties tend to be somewhat more interested in organized religion (mainly the folk churches) than the Red-Greens.

The Christian Democratic parties are not that different from other bourgeois (Centre-Right) parties in most aspects, but when it comes to religion they differ significantly in the amount of references to it. Another difference is the way the Christian faith is depicted. To the other Centre-Right parties Christianity seems to be more of a cultural expression, than it is to the Christian Democrats.

The (radical) Right-Wing (populist) parties come in two different schools. The Danish Progress Party and New Democracy are are/were more typical populist parties, where religion has been less important, although the Progress Party expressed certain resentment with Muslims. The more recent parties are built around the same framework as the French National Front (Front National) and come in a Nordic form where Christianity is a way of expressing national values (but in most cases not party identity, as opposed to the Christian Democratic parties) and thereby taking a stand against non-Nordic values, as they are expressed in particular within Islam.

**Discussion, analysis and conclusions**

In 1985 Ole Riis claimed that religion was a “non-issue” in Danish politics, meaning that most parties discretely agreed on the principle of religious tolerance and the need for an open folk church. On the basis on my examination of party platforms in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden from the period from then to now I would claim that that picture has changed somewhat in Denmark, as well as in the other countries, if it would have applied to those as well.

In relation to my research question here I have found religion to be considered to be relevant in a large numbers of areas in society by the political parties, although it differ a lot between different parties. In most cases it is also considered to be a

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77 Centre Democrats, Conservatives, Liberal Alliance, Social Liberals, Liberals, Centre Party (Finland), National Coalition Party, Swedish People’s Party, Conservative Party, Centre Party (Norway), Liberal Party, Centre Party (Sweden), Liberal People’s Party.
78 Christian Democrats (Denmark), Christian Democrats (Finland), Christian Democratic Party, Christian Democrats (Sweden).
79 Danish People’s Party, Progress Party, True Finns, Progress Party, New Democracy, Sweden Democrats.
80 Lindberg 2011
81 Gustafsson 1985, p 34.
resource, at least according to my definition of when it can be thought of as such a one. The principle of religious freedom is still important to most parties and it has become more obvious that that calls for consequences in relation to immigrants with non-Christian religions. But when most parties have agreed on the need for a higher degree of religious equality in society (including in some cases changes in relation to the folk churches), the (radical) right-wing (populist) parties have moved in the opposite direction, claiming that Christian values are more Nordic than particularly Muslim ones. That is particularly the case in Denmark, where religion is associated with problems to a higher degree than in the other countries. Religion has become somewhat more of an issue during this period of time, because it has become more obvious that there are issues to be solved in relation to the increased differentiating of religions.

On a country basis religion seems to be most interesting in Denmark and Norway and least in Finland and Sweden. In Sweden that might be related to the lower level (about 70 percent in 2010) of membership in the folk church, but on the other hand it is at the same level in Finland as in Denmark and Norway (about 80 percent in 2010). In Finland it might be related to the much lower level of immigration, but on the other hand Sweden has the highest numbers of immigrants in the Nordic countries. What Finland and Sweden do have in common when it comes to religion and politics is that both countries have separate church elections, as opposed to Denmark and Norway. Therefore certain parts of what otherwise would have been written on religion in the party platforms is instead published in other kinds of documents.

What kind of secularism do these party platforms express? In relation to José Casanovas operationalization of the term earlier in this paper religion in many cases, particularly amongst some leftist parties religion is dealt with as something about to die or at least fade away, thereby expressing a phenomenological or historical-philosophical secularism. As a majority of the other political parties express a relationship between party and/or national identity I am hesitant on stating that they should be labelled (political) secularists at all. In most cases they are rather positive on the role of religion in the public sphere, although there are as well signs of religion being associated with problems.

Does this examination support José Casanovas theory about the de-privatization of religion in the public sphere? What we can tell is at least that religion has not become less interesting during this period of time on a general level, but that it would be necessary to do a similar comparison further back in time to tell of a change in that aspect. Today religion might (still) not be considered a major issue in Nordic party
politics, but it is there (in most cases) and it is changing in character, in most part due to immigration and globalization.

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