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Ethnicity, Neighbourhood and Social Relations in the Nordic Countries
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The ethnic composition of a neighbourhood is an important factor determining the possibilities for inter-ethnic relations between citizens as well as attitudes to different ethnic groups. There has been, especially in recent years, lots of research concerning the intertwined relations of ethnicity, residentiality and attitudes towards people of different ethnic origin. The purpose of this paper is to compare four certain apparently similar European countries that nevertheless differ from each other in these matters. Of four Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland) in comparison, especially Sweden has quite a long history in immigration. This fact has diversified affects to matters in question, but countries have other disjunctive features as well.

The idea of the study is to analyze the impact of ethnic composition in the place of residence on the inter-ethnic contacts and attitudes through the comparison of four Nordic Countries. Data are from European Social Survey 2002-2003 (N=7541).

The results confirm the importance of several previously well-known individual level determinants on friendship contacts and attitudes, but also reveal some interesting differences between Nordic countries. Both individual (eg. education, age) and aggregate (country, ethnic composition of the neighbourhood) level explanatory factors are associated with the probability of inter-ethnic friendships in four Nordic countries. As expected, inter-ethnic relationships seem to more common in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods. However, this association is slightly different in Sweden than in other Nordic Countries. Also the country differences in the impact of the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood on attitudes to different ethnic groups is discussed.

Keywords: Comparative research, Nordic countries, ethnicity, neighbourhood, social relations
Introduction

The world is getting more global, and in many societies multi-ethnic neighbourhoods are becoming a more commonplace phenomena. This is the situation also in the Nordic countries. Ethnic residential segregation is a phenomenon which has interested scholars for several years. Especially in the United States there is a huge amount of research on the factors promoting the likelihood of certain ethnic groups to live in a certain area. Since the pioneering works of Chicago School and other urban sociologists the body of research has experienced an exponential growth as well as diversified substantially.

As van Kempen et. al (1997, 1632) note, the rationale for researchers focusing on immigration and ethnic segregation has been to integrate newcomers into society and ethnic residential segregation is often seen to make this process very difficult. Especially in the United States, problems concerning segregation and immigration in general have been common topics in the public debate for several decades. In northern Europe, this debate has not as a long tradition. In Nordic Countries, we have seen the rise of public discussion on the topic relatively late.

Like in so many other countries in Europe, also the Nordic countries have encountered tightened attitudes towards ethnicity and immigration issues. Because this attitude shift has happened in a few recent years, the change does not yet show itself on our data, which was collected in 2002. However, to fully understand the current situation, one must know the background and history of the subject and the complex relationships between ethnicity, immigration, attitudes and relations. Due to The Nordic countries external similarities, they often get "bundled" together, and are being handled as one coherent unit, leaving their subjective differences in the dark. Country level comparisons bring out the differences and question the idea of the Nordic collective.

Our research stems from two traditions of sociological thought. Firstly, we base our analysis the research on neighbourhood relations and secondly, on the research on segregation and ethnic relations. The idea of the study is to analyze the relationship between the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood and interethnic friendship ties in four Nordic countries. In this manner it is possible to compare countries that share relative similarity regarding cultures and socioeconomic conditions, but differ from each other by the amount of immigrants, immigration policies, ethnic residential segregation and social integration for a certain degree (Figure 1). This choice makes a more detailed contextualization of some immigration related policies and conditions possible.

At first we define the crucial concepts of the research on segregation, neighbouring and ethnic friendship ties. After that, we take a closer look on the ethnicity and immigration issues specific for the selected countries. The latter part of the study approaches the association between ethnic residential segregation and interethnic friendship in Denmark, Norway Finland and Sweden with European Social Survey 2002- survey dataset. In our concluding chapter we summarize the findings of the analyses. The findings of the analyses are also discussed in this part of the article in the context of previous research findings and suggestions for future research.
Previous research on neighbour relations and ethnicity

A neighbourhood (as well as ethnicity) is a challenging concept to define. However, by neighbours we usually understand people who live near each other whereas a neighbourhood most commonly refers to a locality inhabited by neighbours. Neighbouring, on the other hand is usually regarded as actual, observed interaction between neighbours, and when we are interested in neighbour relations, we actually approach the qualitatively different aspects of neighbouring (Bulmer 1986, 21; Ruonavaara & Kouvo 2009, 2.) All in all, neighbouring and/or neighbourhood relations are a crucial part of almost everybody's life. Depending on the measure how these concepts are operationalized, it is estimated that generally neighbours form about 10-20 per cent of people's networks (Fischer 1982; Wellman 1998; Völker & Flap 1997).

However, these percentages do not reveal much of the quality of neighbour networks. It is true that all neighbour relations are not equally important or intimate. One may only say "hello" to one neighbour and spend a lot of time with another during a common hobby or interest. In other words, neighbouring does not require kinship. As Allan (1989, 150) notes what neighbours share nowadays is often only a common locality but not necessarily any need to be embedded in a set of local relationships.

Previous findings are becoming more usual in the analyses of modern neighbourhood relations or social relations in general. For example, Robert Putnam (2000, 105-7), one of the pioneers of the popular research area on social capital pays a lot of attention to the decline of neighbouring as one of the signs resembling the erosion of social capital in America. Along with other measures of sociability and cohesion, also neighbouring has decreased remarkably in the United States from seventies to the shift of the century. In general, social scientists think that neighbour relations are no more as significant as they used to be. Neighbour relations also compete with other possibilities for interaction especially in modern urban settings and networks for example because of increased transportation possibilities and the impact of the information and communication technologies on the interpersonal sociability. (Wellman 1998; Guest & Wierzbicki 1999; Putnam 2000.) Although these mentioned results come from the USA, similar trends have concerned social scientists also in Europe and in some countries there is more observable erosion of social capital than in others (Larsen 2006). However, even though the general decline of neighbouring could be interpreted as a neutral shift to extra-neighbourhood ties, for certain groups of people such as full-time mothers of small children and less mobile elderly neighbourhood relations are still of a great importance with real benefits for well-being (Allan 1989; Fischer 1982).

Another challenge for the cohesion of modern societies is immigration. Especially the Nordic Countries have experienced the trend of immigration quite late compared with many other western societies. As Robert Putnam (2007, 1) opens his article "one of the most important challenges facing modern societies, and at the same time one of our most significant opportunities, is the increase in ethnic and social heterogeneity in virtually all advanced countries" and continues elsewhere in the text "the central challenge for modern, diversifying societies is to create a new, broader sense of ‘we’. Putnam describes in his article the process
which is happening in the American society and concludes that people living in ethnically
diverse environments tend to "hunker down" ("pull in like a turtle"), in other words refrain from
social activities and score low in many other indicators of 'social capital'. Putnam's thesis,
however, is questioned with more rigorous empirical tests. Gesthuizen et al. (2008) refute this
thesis in a detailed and elegant study of 28 European societies and found that instead of ethnic
diversity, it is economic inequality and national history with continuous democracy that explain
better countries scores of social capital indicators.

As these discussions indicate, our societies and therefore also neighbourhoods nested into them
are facing challenges that raise many questions. From the European perspective, the research on
social contacts between ethnic minorities and majorities is rather new, whereas in the United
States there is strong and decades long tradition of the studies on ethnic segregation and various
dimensions of it (for the USA see e.g. Duncan & Lieberson; Frey & Farrell 1994; Lee &
Campbell 1998). Several European studies have revealed more or less similar patterns in the old
continent (Musterd 2005; van Kempen et. al 1997; 1998). In their new article Semyonov and
Glikman (2009) summarize the European findings of the residential ethnic segregation so far into
four main points:

"...first, despite being relatively a recent phenomenon, residential segregation is
substantial and wide-spread across European cities; second, patterns of ethnic residential
segregation in Europe are quite similar to those observed in the United States; third, the
rate of ethnic residential segregation between Europeans and ethnic immigrants, although
substantial, are not as high as those between whites and blacks in the United States; they
are much more similar to segregation rates observed between whites and Hispanics; and
fourth, for the most part, rates of residential ethnic segregation in European cities have
been increasing over the years." (Semyonov and Glikman 2009, 695)

It seems that immigration is not going to decrease and it usually brings ethnic segregation as a
side product, also in Europe. Still, why should we be worried about ethnic segregation? To
answer this question, we should look at this concept in a more detail. Following van Kempen et
al. (1998, 1632), (residential) ethnic segregation could be defined as a situation in which some
areas are characterized by an underrepresentation and other areas the overrepresentation of
particular ethnic group. Researchers see at least three crucial reasons explaining this
phenomenon. One reason for ethnic minorities to reside in a particular area might derive from the
lack of economic resources that ethnic majority in the country may have. Secondly, housing
markets may discriminate ethnic minorities by different means. Third explanation suggests that
preferences of the majority do not favour habiting in the ethnically diverse areas and therefore
these areas stay ethnically segregated. (Semyonov and Glikman 2009, 694.) Various branches of
segregation studies have also approached phenomenon from the specific perspectives. However,
many of these branches could be broadly interpreted as following above mentioned lines of
reasoning (cf. van Kempen et. al 1998).

Segregation may have some benefits for the member of the minority in the area through bounded
solidarity or social capital among the inhabitants (Portes & Sensenbrenner 1993) as well as by
enabling possibilities for ethnic entrepreneurs (Portes & Zhou 1996), but it is more often seen as
an undesirable phenomenon. Reasons for that are obvious. Ethnic residential segregation restricts individual's possibilities to participate in society in many ways. Disadvantages are for example insufficient access to medical care and social services, the insecurity of the neighbourhood and poor opportunities for educational attainment and employment (Duncan & Lieberson 1959; Farley & Frey 1994; van Kempen et. al 1998; Musterd 2005; Semyonov and Glikman 2009).

Although all these mentioned problems are serious, we focus on the one particular outcome of segregation, namely the effect of it on social friendship ties between the ethnic minority and majority of the country. Lack of friendship ties with the ethnic majority of the country might make integration with the society difficult especially in the Nordic countries, which could be regarded as relatively ethnically homogeneous societies. From the point of view of valuable social networks, segregation may thus hinder the accumulation of beneficial social capital through valuable and non-formal networks which furthermore reduces possibilities to gather both economic and human capital, for example education and job opportunities (Bourdieu 1986; Lin 2001; Coleman 1988; Portes 1998). As previous research reveals strong correlation between ethnic segregation and various social problems it is of course important to take into account that it is not necessarily the ethnicity but also the economic and social deprivation as such which explain the lack of social capital necessary to gain these individual benefits (Letki 2008, 119-122). For example, the neighbourhood may offer very limited network based possibilities to advance in society and thus it is not because of cultural reasons but neighbourhood status that makes integration in society difficult. In addition, as was stated earlier, not all neighbourhood relations are equally beneficial. Therefore, we have to approach the association between the neighbourhood ethnicity and social relations from a broader perspective.

An interesting possibility is to study the impact of the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood on the social ties is to take into account the quality of these relationships. At first, whereas neighbouring does not necessarily require kinship, analyzing only the number of any social contacts in the neighbourhood do not tell us much of the deeper integration in society, whereas taking into account the number of ethnic friendship ties does this better. This is, of course, not to undermine the importance of so called 'weak ties' as social relations one may possess (eg. Granovetter 1983), but to take into account also the importance of the intimacy of these relationships.

Secondly, friendship ties are also relationships which are positive for their nature. This feature has been seen as crucial when one wants to reduce prejudices between different groups of people (Pettigrew 1994; Semyonov Glikman 2009, 696). This idea is based on contact theory which proposes that prejudices between different ethnicities decrease when groups establish constructive and positive relations with each other and when these contacts are not limited to short term relations. Recent research suggest that besides four key conditions (originally from the research of Gordon Allport) - equal group status, support of authorities, common goals and intergroup cooperation - relations must contain 'friendship' potential as well in order to efficiently decrease intergroup tensions (Pettigrew 1998). Opportunity to become friends comes possible only when members of these groups have spatial and temporal resources to build these relationships - for example ethnically homogeneous and atomized neighbourhood will not advance interethnic friendship according to contact theory and research field's recent
developments.

Besides various individual level determinants also societies shape intergroup contacts. Prevailing norms at the different levels of society may constrain or facilitate interethnic friendship. Previous research has shown that for example in Northern Ireland neighbouring Protestant and Catholic farmers or blacks and whites in South Africa during the apartheid policy had frequent contacts, but rarely formed friendship with each other because of prevailing country level norms. On the other hand in societies where intergroup harmony is a shared common goal these kind of problems do not emerge. This kind of normative support is seen to make other conditions necessary to build friendship between groups much easier. (Pettigrew 1998, 78-79.)

Semyonov and Glikman (2009) found in their analysis of 21 European countries that many of the propositions of contact theory are applicable also in European settings. Those living in ethnically homogeneous neighbourhoods were less likely to form friendship with immigrants even after controlled for several individual and aggregate level sources of explanation. Inter-ethnic friendship was also associated with low levels ethnic prejudices and it was seen as a mediator between ethnic residential segregation and prejudices supporting friendly attitudes towards immigrants.

Our aim is to analyze the relationship between the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood and interethnic friendship in four Nordic countries. By doing so, it is possible to compare countries that share relative similarity regarding cultures and socioeconomic conditions, but differ from each other by the amount of immigrant and immigration policies for a certain degree. Therefore it is easier to analyze the effects of ethnic residential segregation on the friendship ties without extensive speculation about the various possible macro level explanatory factors, as in the case of comparative analyses with numerous differing nations. This choice makes a more detailed contextualization of some immigration related policies and conditions possible.

**Ethnicity and immigration in the Nordic countries**

For a long time, the term ‘ethnicity’ showed up mainly on researchers’ talk, but in a recent few years the same thing that has happened to many originally scientific concepts has happened to it: it spread from sciences language to informal, everyday speech. The word came to replace earlier, more troublesome concepts. The primary aim was to replace the concept of "race", especially in sociological and historical research. (Huttunen 2005, 121-123.) Ethnicity is a way to be culturally distinguished by other people and groups: it distributes society and works as a principle for social differentiation (Eriksen 1991, 130).

Ethnicity is also often defined via listing; ethnic groups are understood to be ones connected through language, culture, religion, traditions, ways to dress and so on. This kind of listing happens on both scientific and colloquial language. (Huttunen 2005, 127.) Ethnicity can take many different forms, but usually an idea or a myth of shared origin among the groups members is stressed (Eriksen 2002, 6). This distinguishes ethnic groups from other cultural groups - for example professional cultures. Ethnicity is sometimes understood as a kind of a metaphorical
kinship: a person is born to be a member of his or her ethnic group, just like one is born to be a part of a family (Huttunen 2005, 127). Using the word 'ethnicity' easily awakens certain mental images of minorities and 'race relations', but one has to bear in mind that all majorities are also equally ethnic (Eriksen 2002, 4).

Another concept that is prone to multiple constructions is that of immigrants. There are some differences also in the Nordic countries, how the term gets defined in them. In Norway, the "immigrant population" is categorized as follows: immigrants are people whose both parents are born abroad. This applies even if they themselves are born in Norway. (Cooper 2005) In Denmark, the ethnic population is divided: categories are immigrants and descendants. This has not always been so, because some years ago categories were labelled first and second generations of immigrants. Because the term second generation immigrant is a paradox, the label was later changed to descendants. A transition in the immigration and integration discourse preceded this. Corresponding categories in Sweden are foreign born, domestic born and Swedish born with foreign parents. Other subcategories are made up from reasons to enter the country: work, study, asylum application, family reunification etc. (Soholt 2007, 7.) In Finland, the word "immigrant" covers much of the various definitions although to some extent reasons for entering the country are also used (like in Sweden).

The four countries in comparison look externally quite similar. Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland are all modern, advanced welfare states. However, they do have their own differences when it comes to ethnicity and more closely immigration issues: history, attitudes, values, and laws and regulations concerning it differ depending on the country in question.

**Sweden**

Out of the countries under study, Sweden is the largest - both by size and population. In the 1950’s and 1960’s Sweden got most of its immigrants from neighbouring countries, mainly from Finland (up to total of 550, 000 Finns). Around that time, Sweden didn’t have any formal policy concerning immigration assimilation. Because most of the migrants came from other, culturally similar Nordic countries, it was considered self-evident that they would incorporate themselves. (Westin 2006)

The first official integration policy was endorsed by the Parliament in 1975. The policy was crystallized into three main goals: equality, freedom of choice, and partnership. Although the terminology has changed over the years, the key elements of the policy still stand in nowadays Sweden. According to the policy, permanently residing immigrants in Sweden had the same rights as Swedish citizens. This included access to the states welfare system. When it came to immigrants’ private life, they could choose from alternatives: either assimilate to the Swedish culture or maintain their own, native culture. This manifested itself for example in targeted language support for immigrant children. (ibid.) The part about partnership also meant that immigrants could get voting rights in different elections. However, at the same time it meant that immigrants’ choices shouldn’t clash with certain Swedish values and norms considered essential. When the integration policy came into effect, things had changed: the labour immigration from
other than Nordic countries had stopped, and the focus of immigration shifted. Since that, immigration has mostly been formed up of refugee migration and family reunification. 1989, the growing stream of refugees steered the Swedish government to tighten the regulations concerning the asylum seekers. Applications would be treated according to the 1951 Geneva Convention: humanitarian grounds for asylum could not therefore be used anymore. Sweden´s strict immigration and asylum policies have received some criticism from different actors: for example from the Red Cross, Save the Children and the Swedish Church. (ibid.)

In spite of this, in the year of 2004, when 10 countries joined the EU, Sweden was one of the three countries (alongside the UK and Ireland) that allowed the citizens of the new Eastern European Member States to work in Sweden without a formal permit. The other countries wanted to monitor migration flows and thus created temporary regulations. In the present-day Sweden, most of the cross-border movement is between neighbouring countries, but most labor migrants come mainly from Germany. Neighbours Finland and Denmark have greater migration to them, compared to migration from them. This is not the case in Sweden: it has some what greater migration from it. Compared with the EU immigrants and the non-European immigrants, the EU immigrants are on the minority position. (ibid.) In public discourse, word "immigrant" refers to people who are not of Nordic origin. These days, authorities avoid the term in official discourse and use the expression "people of migrant origin". However, even Sweden hasn´t escaped some negative phenomena concerning immigration - for example social exclusion and stereotyping have showed up. To resist these phenomena, a policy of diversity management was introduced some years ago. More attention has also been focused on the laws on ethnic discrimination. (ibid.)

**Denmark**

For a long time, Denmark have had a very homogeneous population and national culture. This is probably why it really hasn´t regarded itself as a country of immigration. Sure Denmark has had its share of immigrants also in the past, but most of them came from other Nordic or Western countries (for example Germany and Poland). In addition to that, earlier the country received more emigration than immigration. (Hedetoft 2006) For several decades, the refugees were generally welcome, but when the immigrant flow became stronger in the 1980’s and the 1990’s with refugees from the third world countries, attitudes changed and took a turn for a tighter direction. This turn showed itself also on legislation, where refugees possibilities were restricted. This had an efficient influence on the number on refugees - they have been declining in the past few years. However, this does not apply to the other immigrants; their numbers have risen every year. (ibid.) Denmark has several ethnic groups, so the immigration diversity is multidimensional - ethnic minority groups represent lots of different cultural features. This diversity sometimes poses notable challenges to Danish society. This has not always been easy. Cultural and religious questions have arisen in public, some more dramatic than others: one of the best known example of this is the stir about the Mohammed cartoon -incident. (ibid.)

The immigrant question divides Danish people and politics. Laws and decrees have varied according to the ruling political party. Few restricting rules, for example the later withdrawn
Untegration Act (1999) and the family reunification rule (2003) have been criticized and seen discriminatory, even by such level as the UN, the EU and the Council of Europe. The last-mentioned rule has lead to situation where some Danes with a foreign husband or a wife have settled in other countries without such restriction, like for example neighbouring country Sweden. Also one detail in Danish law is that it does not allow multiple citizenship. When talking about Denmarks immigration and its policies, two key points are essential: cultural homogeneity and ideological presumptions of the Danish welfare state. Due to strong monocultural identity, the aim has been to acculturate immigrants into Danish society as fast as possible. However, over time these two very key points have converted themselves from the supporters of immigration to its obstacles because cultural assimilation has not been as easy as beforehand hoped for, and some citizens and politicians now see immigrants not as welcome as before. Negative stereotypes have arisen and certain groups are viewed in a more positive light than others. In particular, at present a lot of the public conversation circles around the fear of Islam and the crash collide of the western and non-Western culture. At least, this is the image shown to the outside world by media.

Nevertheless, as Hedetoft tells us, situation is not totally gloomy - there are also more positive actions under way: several policies and initiatives are aiming at better integration by listening to the immigrants´ problems more closely. For example, ethnic neighborhood improvement initiatives have been established. Also the government has participated by offering programs that help immigrants´ employment. (Hedetoft 2006)

Norway

Norway is the wealthiest of the Nordic countries. In fact, it has also been named by the UN Human Development Program "the world´s country with the highest standard of living" - several times. Of the four countries under our analysis, Norway is the only one that doesn’t belong to the EU. Nevertheless, Norway's attitudes and policies towards migration are very European in nature, and have been that especially since 1990's, when Norway became more integrated in the rest of Europe. Two basic principles describe Norway's character as a immigrant-receiving country: 1) Norway allows only carefully selected migrants, and 2) is committed to verify social, legal and practical equality to all those who arrive. (Cooper 2005)

Like Denmark and Sweden, Norway used to be more a country of emigration, not of immigration and refugees. Also Norway's first immigrants came from neighbouring countries. In the 1950’s, out of these streams formed a joint labor market between Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. Also a joint passport-control area was established in the late 1950’s. This allowed people to travel unrestricted between the Nordic countries. At the end of the 1960’s, labor shortage made Norway to accept migrants from certain countries, for example from Morocco and Pakistan. These workers were thought to be only temporary visitors, but they stayed in the country and were later followed by other migrants. These migrants included also refugees and people seeking family reunification. After hearing about migration mismanagement in other European countries, Norways fear of the sudden immigrant flows from developing countries caused the Norwegian government to set the first formal legislation in order to restrict
immigration to the country. The legislation, so called "immigration stop" was set in 1975. The legislation reflected views that were similar across Europe that time. The public showed its support to legislation. In the 1980’s, and there were lots of manifestations objecting the growing numbers of asylum seekers. Xenophobic attitudes were linked with politics: anti-immigration Progress Party got progressing support in the elections. (ibid.)

In spite of this, at the same time the Norwegian goverment also still aimed to treat both immigrants and natives in an equal manner. In the official statements, respect for immigrants’ language and culture have often been emphasized. The idea has been not in assimilation, but in the adaptation to the Norwegian culture, protecting immigrants from assimilative actions. Over time, more emphasis has been added to immigrants’ duties to learn the language. In order to successfully achieve a multicultural society, Norway has put lots of effort in helping immigrants - for example language training, labor market integration and initiatives to prevent racism and xenophobia. (ibid.) Another difficulty concerning immigration in Norway is undocumented migrants. In the past decade, undocumented migrants have become a larger problem, partly because of the opening of the borders. Norway has also become passage place for those migrants who are aiming at the UK or US. Due to the tightening of the legal mechanisms across Europe, this is likely to increase even more in the future. (ibid.)

Finland

For a long time, Finland was a country of voluntary emigration: immigrant population was small and very integrated into the society. The numbers for forced and voluntary immigration were notable lesser than nowadays. In the turn of the decades 1980 and 1990 this started to change. One major factor in the change was the fall of the Soviet Union - this allowed freer movement in its region. This resulted also in the growing numbers of asylum applications from the former Soviet Union area: the large living-standard gap located at the Fenno-Russian border was a strong inducement to many applicants. Between the years 1990 and 2004, Finland got over 3400 asylum applications from the region. Another powerful form of action occurred in 1995, when Finland entered the EU. The joining has made Finland more known country among migrants. (Tanner 2004) Changed situation shows itself clearly on statistics: first, between the 1991 and 2003, the number of foreign-born Finnish citizens and residents doubled. Secondly, the number of those residents whose first language is something else than Finnish has tripled between the years 1992 and 2004. Third, the number of foreigners (without citizenship) living in Finland has quadrupled between the years 1990 and 2003. (ibid.)

Though the EU has had some influence on country's immigration policies, have Finnish systems many national features compared with other European countries. For example, asylum matters are usually matters of only one ministry, but in Finland the asylum affairs are divided between two ministries. Unlike in other EU countries, Finland is receiving continually growing numbers of asylum applications. For example, Finland has had more applications than neighbouring Nordic country Denmark, even though Denmark has a longer immigrant history. Three key elements are affecting here: 1) Finland's widely known reputation as a stable, socially developed country with little cases of racial violence 2) the lack of a solid and adversarial far right and 3)
stricter asylum entry limitations in other Western countries. However, the Directorate of Immigration has approved few asylum applications, due to the fact that most applications are not based neither on persecution nor of its threat. (ibid.)

Some public debate has risen concerning the asylum application processes, especially their speed in the so called fast-track system. In 2001, the government reacted to the long processing times by adding an amendment to the Aliens Law. Due to it, asylum seekers from countries considered "safe" get a accelerated procedure, where negative decision may take place within eight days, without waiting for any legal appeals. The fast process has its opponents and supporters, both with arguments considered valid. Be that as it may, it seems that the law has helped in shortening the processing times. After a few years of the amendment, asylum decisions started to get processed in international standard time: within four months. The Finnish government sets annual refugee quotas. These quotas, which vary between 500 to 750 refugees yearly, determine the highest number of forced migration related entries to Finland per each year. The quota is characteristically meant for protecting people from most dangerous areas, like certain areas of the Middle East. (ibid.)

Finland has many challenges concerning immigration and integration in the future, one of the most important ones being the language question. In European countries, mastering the country's national language causes lots of concern. This is especially true in Finland, where the national language is difficult to master. The organised language courses have not always been very efficient, due to the different levels of immigrants´ language skills. It is also important to ensure that immigrants will continue to be settled down across Finland, not just in the larger towns. At the moment, the situation is that large amounts of immigrants have been centred upon the capital Helsinki. (ibid.)

Unlike many other countries in Europe, Finland has not had an extreme-right wing political party. However, in a few recent years a very heated public discussion has risen about immigration and different aspects concerning it. Attitudes against immigration and refugee acceptance have gotten stronger and louder: one major actor in this has been the value conservative True Finns Party - or to be more specific, some of its publicly upfront members. In the winter of 2008-2009, the discussion also gave birth to a new concept: "immigrant-critical", which has spread in a very wide use. Many fields' researchers are discontent with this term since it is usually used in a quite racist manner. To many, using it is just another, a more acceptable way of expressing xenophobic attitudes and thoughts. This is why one should take a critical attitude on the term itself.

Our four Nordic countries all share certain common features and challenges concerning immigration issues. For example, one constantly progressing phenomenon is the aging of the population. This situation demands utilization also of the foreign-born work force. The countries are also relatively sparsely populated, which means that they have plenty of room for immigrants and population increase. In fact, for example in Finland there has been some public discussion especially about the refugee quotas: some actors think that they are way too small - that Finland should increase the numbers substantially.
Research Questions, Data and Methods

The purpose of the paper is to provide answers to the question of the impact of ethnic composition of the neighbourhood on interethnic friendship between residents. Particularly, we set following research questions:

1. What is the relative impact of the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood on inter-ethnic friendship ties when controlled for other previously known sources of explanation?
2. Are there differences in the impact of the ethnicity of the neighbourhood between Finland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden?

Data come from European Social Survey (ESS) gathered in the year 2002 (N=7471) and covers over 15-year-old populations of four Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden (see ESS 2002 for more details).

To ensure the interethnicity of reported relations we omitted respondents representing ethnic minority in the country from the analysis. As previous studies (see eg. Stolle et al 2008) and huge body of sociological and social psychological research suggests, it is reasonable to assume that members of ethnic minorities socialize more with other members of this group than the majority of Scandinavians. Thus including ethnic minorities in the analysis might had blurred the results.

Inter-ethnic ties were asked in the questionnaire with a question "Do you have any friends who have come to live in (country of respondent) from another country?" (1= Yes, several, 2= Yes, some 3=No, none at all). Because of methodological reasons and to make comparisons between countries with different amount of inter-ethnic ties possible we coded the item as dichotomous (0= No inter-ethnic friends 1= Inter-ethnic Friends).

The ethnic composition of living area is a subjective evaluation of the respondent to the question how many immigrants live in current area of residence. Category "Some people are of a different race or ethnic group from most people" refers here to an ethnically mixed neighbourhood. This could be interpreted as a situation in which the majority of the residents belong also to the ethnic majority of the country. "Many people are of a different race or ethnic group", however, refers to even more ethnic or 'multiethnic' neighbourhood. "An area where almost nobody is of a different race or ethnic group from most people" represents ethnically homogeneous living area here.

One important criteria for getting interethnic friends might be the length of the residence in the area. This may explain the eagerness to invest in new relationships with neighbours as well as restrict them. Neighbourhood relationships are often conditioned by investment considerations and interdependencies between inhabitants (Völker et. al 2007; Dipasquale & Glaser 1999). It might be meaningless to invest in new neighbourhood relations (as immigrants often are) if one already has a network of neighbours from whom to borrow a lawnmower or who share other common interests. Immigrants, however, might be in a disadvantageous position in both of the mentioned issues. On the other hand, a new inhabitant in the area might be more interested to
build a network including also immigrants because the potential utility of the networking is at the higher level.

Respondents were also asked to describe whether they socially meet people regularly. This item is included in the analysis to control the frequency of inter-ethnic sociability with a general proxy of sociability. This is an important factor predicting the chance to socialize with other people, from different ethnic or cultural origin as well.

Age and education are applied as control variables as well. These variables are associated at first with overall sociability (or "social capital") and secondly with the likelihood of relations with different ethnic groups, since more educated tend to have more frequent inter-ethnic relations, the young have more international friends and, on the other hand, also time use related to different sociodemographic positions restricts or enables the possibilities to meet both people in general, or specifically those from different ethnic origin (Völker et. al 2007; Putnam 2000; Stolle et al 2008).

Analyses are done according to the following steps. At first we present descriptive statistics of the interethnic friendship ties in Nordic neighbourhoods, secondly we analyze the probability of having friends from different ethnic group in all Nordic countries by evaluating the importance of country- and individual level factors at the same time and thirdly, to answer the second research question on country differences, the same analyses are conducted to each country separately. In this manner it is possible to study both the impact of macro- and micro level factors predicting sociability between different ethnic groups.

Logistic regression is chosen as the method of analysis to study the effects of the selected independent variables on the inter-ethnic friendship ties. Here we apply multinominal logistic regression (MLR). In general, MLR can be recommended also for the analysis of dichotomous dependent variables, because in the most contemporary statistic programs it has many options not available in the binary procedure (e.g. Tabachnick & Fidell 2001, p. 521-523). The effects of the independent variables in the models are presented with the odds ratios (Expß). Also the pseudo-coefficients of the determination of the models are reported on the tables (Nagelkerke Pseudo R²).

Results

In Table 1 are presented the results of descriptive analyses. It is possible to see from the table that there are vast differences of interethnic friendship ties in Nordic Countries. In Finland where immigrant population is small less than half of the ethnic majority reports having immigrant friends while in Sweden the share is two thirds of the same national population. These differences are probably explained through the amount of immigrants of total population.

[TABLE 1. about here]
The impact of the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood on interethnic contacts is, however, more interesting and less straightforward. In the three Nordic Countries, the general explanation is that interethnic contacts go together with the ethnicity of the neighbourhood, but this does not apply Sweden. Those Swedes reporting living in an area with "some immigrants" mention more often having immigrant friends than those in the neighbourhood where "Many people are of a different race or ethnic group". Also in Denmark the difference between these two types of neighbourhoods is minimal and not statistically significant whereas in Finland it is almost 10 pct.

Even though we see differences between neighbours and neighbour countries, it is not possible say whether these differences result from other sources of explanation. In Table 2 are presented multivariate analyses to control the relationship between the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood and interethnic sociability for other theoretically relevant independent variables. Selected variables seem to predict fairly well inter-ethnic friendship ties (Nagelkerke Pseudo R² = 0.15-0.20). In the whole sample young age, high education, frequent sociability, recent residential mobility and living in an ethnically diverse area seem to predict fairly well the probability of having immigrant friends.

As it is possible to see already from Figure 1, nationality is a significant factor explaining the probability of having friends of different ethnic background even after controlling for numerous individual factors. The odds ratio (Expβ) to tie a friendship with an immigrant is three times higher in Sweden than in Finland. This leads us to believe that Sweden might differ from other countries by better integrating immigrants to the local community. As mentioned earlier, Sweden's integration politics have historically been very open and permissible, putting high emphasis on immigrants’ rights and freedom of choice.

However, previous analyses do not tell us much of how different explanatory factors operate in the context of particular country. Overall probability of having immigrant friends presented in Figure 1 might be the highest in Sweden also simply because of larger amount of immigrants in the country. After the model with the whole Nordic sample, we conducted separate analyses for each country.

The analyses reveal some interesting results of different background factors explaining the country specific likelihood of having an immigrant friend. Firstly, we can see that when the impact of living area is controlled for other variables in the model, the country differences of the Table 1 remain or even strengthen. Although living area differences between countries are not as remarkable as differences between country level likelihoods to meet people from a different ethnic background, they are still considerable. Secondly, interesting finding concerning the impact of ethnic composition of the area on interethnic relations is that after controlling for other independent variables, residing in the ethnically mixed area (middle category) predicts the best the likelihood of interethnic relations also in Denmark, whereas in Finland and Norway this relationship is monotonic.
As expected, education, age and overall sociability are significantly associated with interethnic friendships in all countries. Duration of living in the current residential area, however, reveal more country specific differences. In Finland and Denmark it has virtually no effect on interethnic friendship, but in Sweden and Norway it is more important. As was hypothesized, those who are new in the neighbourhood tend to also knit interethnic social networks more easily than their older counterparts.

To sum up the analyses, it is possible to say that the relationship between the ethnicity of the neighbourhood and interethnic relations is not straightforward. Our analyses showed that ethnic friendship flourishes better both in ethnically mixed or multiethnic neighbourhoods than in ethnically homogeneous ones, even though more ethnicity does not necessarily increase ethnic integration through friendship ties after a certain point of saturation - as is the case in Sweden and with some reservations in Denmark. We discuss in a more detail the possible theoretical and practical interpretations of this finding in our concluding chapter.

Discussion

The analyses confirmed many of the general hypotheses of the generation of interethnic ties in neighbourhoods. At first, interethnic contacts seem to be explained by various previously well-known factors. The younger, the social, the more educated and those that are new in the neighbourhood are eager to build interethnic contacts than their fellow residents. Also country differences were rather expected in the analyses. The level of immigration strongly determines the possibilities to interact with immigrants and thus inter-ethnic friendship ties are the most common in Sweden.

However, an interesting finding was that in Sweden and with some reservations in Denmark, the relationship between the ethnicity of the neighbourhood and friendship ties with immigrants were not monotonic. Residing in the ethnically mixed area, predicts the better the likelihood of interethnic relations than being a habitant of a multiethnic neighbourhood in these two countries. The association was also significant after controlling the friendship ties with other explanatory variables. However, we should be aware that even in Swedish homogeneous residential areas, the likelihood of having an immigrant was higher than in many ethnic or mixed neighbourhoods in other countries.

It should be kept in mind that not all the possible sources of variation are included in our data. It is possible that, for example, the subjective evaluation of the degree of the ethnicity of the neighbourhood may vary across countries. Also several social conditions prevailing in the neighbourhood that might affect the interethnic relationships were not included in the analyses. For example, controlling for neighbourhood safety, level of income, general educational qualifications and dispersion of different immigrant groups in the particular neighbourhood could had explained significant portions of the variance related to the likelihood of having an immigrant friend. As so often with social scientific research we should be cautious when making conclusions over the causal direction between interethnic contacts and neighbourhood ethnicity.
when analyses are based on cross-sectional data. Part of the explanation for the significant association between the variables might result from the fact that those who already have immigrant friends are more interested in moving to more ethnic neighbourhoods. We should also be aware that we did not restrict the contacts only to those immigrant friends who come from the same neighbourhood as the respondent, yet many of the factors that determine the likelihood of having any immigrant friends were controlled in the analyses.

Despite these reservations, our analysis revealed that the impact of the neighbourhood ethnicity on interethnic friendship varies even in relatively similar societies, but is slightly different in their history of immigration. It might be that especially Sweden was experiencing a more multicultural phase in its history of immigration in the year 2002 and for example Finland was just beginning this period. In addition to different levels of immigration, this might result from different immigration policies of these countries. Sweden, Finland and Norway have in their immigrant history applied politics that are acculturating - this meaning that the politics in question are more emphasizing on the preserving of the immigrants’ own culture. Denmark, on the other hand, seems to have had more or less assimilative politics, since the goal has been integrating the immigrant population into the Danish society as quickly as possible. Of four countries in comparison, Denmark also has the strictest laws concerning immigration.

Overall, our analyses support many of previously known results concerning the relationship between neighbourhood segregation and ethnic relationships. Inter-ethnic friendship flourishes better both in ethnically mixed or multiethnic neighbourhoods than in ethnically homogeneous ones. This holds true in general, even though Sweden and Denmark showed some characteristics which could be interpreted as reflecting stronger social segregation. Despite this finding, there is always a risk of exaggeration. As Musterd (2003, 639) argues "people tend to cluster on the basis of their cultural needs". The task for the future research and policy makers of the Nordic welfare state balancing between multiculturalism and pressures of a different kind towards the old ideas of assimilation is, however, to be aware that this clustering is not coupled with several disadvantages that are difficult to solve.

References


Appendix 1. Figures and tables

Figure 1. Immigration, immigrant friends and ethnic composition of living area in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden in the year 2002

Table 1. Ethnic composition of neighbourhood and interethnic friends. Percentages and frequencies. Source ESS 2002.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% (in the type of neighbourhood)</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many people of a different ethnic group</td>
<td>59,8 %</td>
<td>62,3 %</td>
<td>64,9 %</td>
<td>73,9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people of a different ethnic group</td>
<td>59,0 %</td>
<td>53,5 %</td>
<td>62,7 %</td>
<td>77,4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost nobody of a different ethnic group</td>
<td>39,2 %</td>
<td>35,8 %</td>
<td>46,2 %</td>
<td>62,2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46,3 %</td>
<td>41,9 %</td>
<td>54,1 %</td>
<td>67,3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>824</td>
<td>1073</td>
<td>1287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four countries</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expβ</td>
<td>Expβ</td>
<td>Expβ</td>
<td>Expβ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>0.39***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>0.32***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>0.45***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.93***</td>
<td>4.12***</td>
<td>3.26***</td>
<td>3.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>2.81***</td>
<td>2.62***</td>
<td>2.21***</td>
<td>2.75***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>2.98***</td>
<td>2.54***</td>
<td>2.67***</td>
<td>3.26***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>2.28***</td>
<td>2.13***</td>
<td>2.22***</td>
<td>2.24***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primary max.</td>
<td>0.48***</td>
<td>0.52***</td>
<td>0.41***</td>
<td>0.51***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary</td>
<td>0.56***</td>
<td>0.54***</td>
<td>0.54***</td>
<td>0.54***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friends meeting</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month max.</td>
<td>0.58***</td>
<td>0.62*</td>
<td>0.61**</td>
<td>0.47***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week max.</td>
<td>0.70***</td>
<td>0.62***</td>
<td>0.65***</td>
<td>0.73***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times/week min.</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How long in area</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-3 years</td>
<td>1.38***</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.65***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-9 years</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity of neighbourhood</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic</td>
<td>2.05***</td>
<td>1.92**</td>
<td>2.93***</td>
<td>2.10***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>1.88***</td>
<td>2.06***</td>
<td>1.87***</td>
<td>1.77***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homogeneous</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
<td>1(ref.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pseudo R2 Nagelkerke</strong></td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>