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CHANGE AND STABILITY. HOW THE PARTY LEADERSHIPS OF THE DANISH PROGRESS PARTY AND DANISH PEOPLE'S PARTY ARE ORGANIZED

DOI: 10.2478/ppsr-2019-0004

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ORCID no. 0000-0003-0204-8203**e-mail:** kp@ifs.ku.dk**Abstract**

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to show the role played by the party leadership in the Progress Party and the Danish People's Party in the formation and consolidation of party organization, policy and strategy. The added knowledge provided by this article is an elaboration on one of the successful so-called radical right political parties of this century, namely the Danish People's Party, and its predecessor, the Progress Party, for the non-Danish speaking audience. Based on a plethora of data sources (interviews, documents, surveys and secondary material), the analysis shows that the differences in how the Progress Party and the Danish People's Party are organized are much larger than any organizational modifications after the party leader change from Kjærsgaard to Thulesen Dahl. While Kjærsgaard was not able to implement marked organizational changes within the Progress Party, she did stand for a different strategy and policy than Glistrup, focusing on parliamentary influence, and a right-wing position on the new politics dimension, but more pro welfare on the redistributive dimension. There were no substantial changes in organization, strategy or policy when Thulesen Dahl took over the leadership of the Danish People's Party; however, the strategy prior to the 2019 election did change. In sum, the overall expectation that party organisational change was larger when Kjærsgaard took over from Glistrup in the Progress Party, and in particular when establishing the new Danish People's Party, than when Thulesen Dahl took over from Kjærsgaard, is mainly supported.

Keywords: political party, party leadership, Denmark, organization, populist radical right**Introduction**

Party leaders are central when new parties are established, in particular in the type of personal(istic) parties, characterized by the dominance and centrality of the party leader in regard to party formation, party organization and party survival, of which we see an increasing number of (Gunther & Diamond 2003; Calise 2015; Kostadinova & Levitt 2014; Kefford & McDonnell 2018). On the Danish right wing, the party leader has indeed been

central in the formation of first, Mogens Glistrup's Progress Party, and more than twenty years later also Pia Kjaersgaard's Danish People's Party. The Progress Party entered the *Folketinget*, the Danish parliament, with 28 seats out of 179 in 1973. It was a game changer not only by adding another actor to the established party system but also due to its protesting and anti-establishment nature (Kosiara-Pedersen & Kurrild-Klitgaard 2018). Kjaersgaard and her followers split from the Progress Party in 1995 to form the Danish People's Party, which is a de facto continuation since the Progress Party afterwards went into decline (Pedersen & Ringsmose 2005).

The purpose of this article is to show the role played by the party leadership in the Progress Party and the Danish People's Party in the formation and consolidation of party organization, policy and strategy (cf. Harmel & Janda 1994). The added knowledge provided by this article is an elaboration on one of the successful so-called radical right political parties of this century, namely the Danish People's Party, and its predecessor, the Progress Party, for the non-Danish speaking audience. As in other successful right-wing parties in particular, and new parties in general, the party leadership plays an important role. This article aims to examine how the three main party leaders of these two parties have had an impact on the party organization, policy and strategy.

The article first presents the theoretical basis and methodology of the paper. The analysis is divided into three sections based on the party leaderships of Mogens Glistrup, Pia Kjaersgaard and Kristian Thulesen Dahl: 1. The formation, rise and fall of the Progress Party, 2. The formation and first fifteen years of the Danish People's Party, and 3. The seven years under the leadership Thulesen Dahl. Each section shows the role played by these party leaders in the formation and consolidation of the party organizations, policies and strategies, and hence, how party leadership (change) has an impact on party policy, strategy or organization (cf. Harmel & Janda 1994).

Theoretical framework

Theories of party change and party organization form the theoretical framework within which the role of the Progress Party and the Danish People's Party leadership in the formation and consolidation of party organizations, policies and strategies is analyzed. The purpose of this article is not theory testing but the theory guides the narrative.

Much emphasis within party research has been put on the party decline. However, in particular from the 1990s, the 'decline' and 'failings' in book titles within party research were replaced with 'change' and 'adaptation'. Harmel and Janda's (1994) integrated theory of party change and party goals, bridging these two literatures, has been particularly seminal and useful. In Harmel and Janda's framework, the main independent variables explaining party change is leadership change, change in the dominant faction, and external stimuli, in particular those related to the party's primary goal termed 'external shocks' (1994: 266–8). The main focus within this article is on the change of the party leader, and whether this is related to party change. Party change is a change in a party's "rules, structures, policies, strategies and tactics"; aspects of change that are in direct control of the party (Harmel and Janda 1994: 275). In this article, I focus on changes in organization (rules and structures), but also include changes in strategies and policies. Organization is here understood as the formal party organization based on party statutes as well as how it works in practice. How parties organize has been of interest to the political science

community for more than hundred years (Ostrogorski 1903; Michels 1911). However, it really took off with the Katz and Mair led project in the 1990s (1992; 1994; 1995; 2018), and a renewed focus continues currently with the wealth of data publicly available through the Political Party Data Base project (Scarrow et al. 2017; www.politicalpartydb.org). When analyzing party organizations, emphasis was initially on the 'original' party types of elite parties, mass parties, catch-all/electoral-professional and cartel parties, as identified in what became classics due to their theoretical reflections on how parties organize (Duverger 1954; Kirchheimer 1966; Panebianco 1988; Katz & Mair 1995). In particular when Katz and Mair (1995) summed up the party organization research (and presented the cartel party model), they emphasized party adaptation and change rather than general decline.

The party organization literature focuses on various dimensions of organization, either implicitly or explicitly in tables (e.g. Katz and Mair 1995). The organizational characteristics focused upon here are the most important ones, namely the rules and structures in regard to candidate nomination, party leader selection, representation at the annual meeting, party member exclusion and party discipline, as well as the de facto practices. The strategies focused upon here are those pursued in regard to formal government formation (including providing the parliamentary majority of a minority government) and parliamentary collaboration. The policies focused upon are both the party's political program and the issues de facto emphasized.

The three party leaders focused upon here, Glistrup, Kjærsgaard and Thulesen Dahl, each have different leader personalities; however, only the Glistrup-Kjærsgaard change led to a change in the base of power as it altered the dominant coalition, unlike to the Kjærsgaard-Thulesen Dahl transition (cf. Harmel and Janda 1994: 280). The dominant faction was replaced when the Danish People's Party was established, and this maximized the conditions for party change, since the leadership in this situation was expected to "engage in both power-motivated and goal-motivated changes" (Harmel and Janda 1994: 282). Hence, party change was expected to be larger when Kjærsgaard took over from Glistrup in the Progress Party, and in particular when establishing the new Danish People's Party, than when Thulesen Dahl took over from Kjærsgaard.

Method, cases and data

The modest ambition of this article is to show the impact of the party leaderships of one of the successful so-called radical right political parties of this century, namely the Danish People's Party, and its predecessor the Progress Party, in order to contribute with nuance to the argument about the importance of party leaders in new (populist, right-wing) parties. Hence, focus here is not mainly on the electoral importance, but also of how party leaders choose to organize and the strategies and policies, they pursue.

This is, to some extent, a comparative analysis of the impact of the three party chairs of the Progress Party and the Danish People's Party. These are not two distinct parties, since the Danish People's Party is the successful portion of the Progress Party after the split in 1995. On the other hand, the split in 1995 provided a window of opportunity for major changes that established parties do not have. These two parties provide good examples of how party leaders may play a major role in the formative phase but also that party owners may be replaced.

The Progress Party is one of “the most important right-wing populist parties that emerged” in the second wave (Mudde 2019: 15). The Danish People’s Party is one of the 15 main populist radical right parties in Europe; parties which have nativism, authoritarianism and populism in common (Mudde 2017; Mudde 2004). Nativism, i.e., the combination of nationalism and xenophobia, shows clearly in their party principles and manifesto, where Denmark is supposed to be for Danes only since non-Danes threaten the homogeneous nation-state (Danish People’s Party 2019b; Danish People’s Party 2019c). Authoritarianism defined as the importance of authoritative figures and emphasis on law and order, is also clear. The Danish People’s Party emphasizes law and order across the policy areas and promotes a high level of punishment for crimes involving the safety of both humans and animals (Danish People’s Party 2019b; Danish People’s Party 2019c).

‘Populism’ is a more disputed concept but the core could be argued to be rhetoric where the pure people are positioned against the (corrupt) elite, that is, an anti-elite sentiment. The Danish People’s Party is not an extreme right party, as they do not contest democracy (cf. Mudde 2004), and neither was the Progress Party. However, they do apply some populist rhetoric. The Progress Party wanted to undermine the legitimacy of the *gammelpartier* (old parties) and the welfare state system (Bille 1989). Due to the parliamentary role of the Danish People’s Party, they are markedly less anti-mainstream or anti-elite than the Progress Party. Their engagement with everyday politics integrates them into the established political system. Danish People’s Party members and voters have lower levels of both external and internal efficacy as well as social trust when compared to those of other parties, which underpins an anti-elite perspective on politics (Kosiara-Pedersen 2017: 276–280). The rhetoric of the Danish People’s Party is no doubt populist. As stated by Kjærsgaard in her autobiography: “We need to be the people’s party, and there needs to be room for the common man and those people others dislike” (Albertsen 2014; author’s translation). The Danish People’s Party is not for those “who take a short trip to London to shop. Those with extended education, high incomes and expensive cars. Those who live far away from the problems” (Albertsen 2014; author’s translation).

The narrative of this article is based on a multitude of data sources. The analysis of the Danish People’s Party is mainly based on 1. Party statutes of the Danish People’s Party from 1996 with changes in 2003 and 2006 (Danish People’s Party 2019a), 2. Party leaders’ official CVs from parliament’s website (Folketinget 2018; Folketinget 2019), 3. Interviews with the leader of the Danish People’s Party Kjærsgaard (Kjærsgaard 2002), the leader of the party secretariat in the Danish People’s Party, Steen Thomsen (Thomsen 2002), and the party secretary in Danish People’s Party, Poul Lindholm Nielsen (Nielsen 2017); 4. The Danish People’s Party manifesto (Danish People’s Party 2019b, 2019c). The analysis of the Progress Party is mainly based on secondary material, primarily the analysis and data on the formation and organization of the Progress Party provided by Lars Bille (1997). In addition to these sources, the analysis also includes opinion polls (Danmarks Radio 2019) and newspaper articles.

The creation and life of the Progress Party

Mogens Glistrup was a tax attorney proud of not paying taxes. He became a public figure when he in the beginning of 1971 participated in a television program on taxation and first likened tax cheats with the railway saboteurs of Second World War’s resistance

movement, and then showed his 'zero-tax-form' (Larsen 1977). Hence, he appeared on television but was not a TV personality as such. Half a year later, a local party branch of the Conservative People's Party nominated him to be a candidate for parliamentary election, but he was declined access to the nomination meeting since he was not a party member (Bille 1997). Glistrup had been politically active in the 1960s promoting a drastic reduction of the public sector and the elimination of personal tax. As a response to the Conservatives refusing his nomination, Glistrup announced that he established his own party, the Progress Party.

When Glistrup announced the establishment of the Progress Party in the *Grøften* restaurant in the *Tivoli* amusement park on a sunny day in August 1972, he had five concerns with regard to creating a new party: 1. to gain the necessary 17,000 signatures to become eligible to stand for election as a party; 2. the lack of staff and personalities; 3. the 2% electoral threshold; 4. collaboration within the parliamentary group; and 5. lack of funding. These were concerns "since he did not want to create a party" (Bille 1997; author's translation). Glistrup was aware of the barriers to entry and the need for resources, and also that a mainstream party organization would be one way which could grant him these; however, while this was not a path he wanted to tread, that is what he, to a large extent, ended up with.

The Progress Party was an anti-party system party. As argued by Lars Bille (1989), the Progress Party was not anti-system in Sartori's term (1976) but opposed the established party system. At the beginning of the 1970s, the Danish parties were mass parties characterized by a branch structure, party members with rights and duties in regard to candidate nomination, leadership selection and manifesto making, and though declining: class-party linkage and party membership figures. There was no public party financing and professionalization in regard to party staff and political marketing. Glistrup opposed building a traditional party organization. He did not want the Progress Party to look like the other 'old parties', in particular, since statutes, procedures, division of labour etc. would imply exactly the kind of bureaucracy that Glistrup fought politically to limit (Bille 1997: 62). At the first annual meeting in 1973, prior to the election, Glistrup de facto decided who could attend. The decision at the meeting was that local branches could be organized but that no national organization would be formed. No rules and procedures for the following candidate nominations were decided, so these became rather random. Some candidates were picked by Glistrup himself, other candidates by local branches, and some of the latter were vetoed by Glistrup. This chaotic process showed the need for some formality, and while Glistrup managed to postpone the decision for some years, by 1976 the Progress Party had a party structure not dissimilar to the established parties (Bille 1997: 62–63; Larsen 1977).

Glistrup opposed the formalization of the organization and managed to sustain some control via a powerful national committee (Bille 1997: 63). Glistrup was himself a lifelong member of the exclusive national committee which had five other members elected by the annual meeting. The national committee could appoint attendants to the annual meeting. As argued by Lars Bille: It was with "the strong central leadership and one person's both formal and de facto dominating position that this new party distinguished itself from other Danish parties. Not in its basic structure" (1997: 63; author's translation). Hence, if Glistrup had been able to get it his way, the Progress Party would to a much larger extent have supported Harmel and Janda's argument, that "new organizations are quicker to

experiment with new organizational forms” (1994: 282). Glistrup did not want the mass party structure which the Progress Party to a large extent ended up with but preferred a personal party.

Candidate nomination lay in the hands of the local branches, but their procedures were to be approved by the national committee. In 1992, it was formalized that the powerful national committee were to approve the candidates; hence, a limitation of rank-and-file party members’ say in the intra-party democracy (Bille 1997: 118). More central control than in classic mass parties, and more than in the established Danish parties.

The lack of organizational transparency and party leadership formed the basis for internal turmoil and division in the coming decades (Bille 1997: 62). Party voters seemed to dislike this. After the initial very successful election in 1973, where the Progress Party gained almost 16 percent of the votes (see figure 1 below), the electoral support of the Progress Party declined steadily until 1984 except for a small increase from 1975 to 1977.

Glistrup had given himself the title of ‘campaign leader’, which left the Progress Party as the only Danish party where neither the chair of the membership organization, chair of the parliamentary group or political spokesperson was the party leader (Bille 1997: 106). While there is no doubt that Glistrup was the party owner and leader right from the beginning, his absence due to his jail sentence for tax evasion in 1983 left a leadership vacuum (Bille 1997: 106).

Political and strategic disputes

Kjærsgaard took over the leadership of the Progress party in 1984 when Glistrup was imprisoned for tax fraud. According to herself, she became political spokesperson in 1984 without the prior consent of the parliamentary group merely by stating it to one of the tabloid newspapers (Kjærsgaard 2013). She was the political spokesperson from 1984 to 1993. However, until 1989, she shared the de facto party leadership with Helge Dohrmann, who chaired the parliamentary group (Bille 1997: 386).

Kjærsgaard stood for election in 1979 and 1981 before getting elected in 1984 (Folketinget 2018). Hence, her political, parliamentary experience was limited when taking on the de facto party leadership of the Progress Party. Prior to her entry to parliament, from 1978 to 1984 Kjærsgaard cared for the elderly as a ‘home carer’, and this is a CV that she has used politically to indicate her base among ordinary, common people (even though she is the daughter of a shop owner and hence not with a classic worker background).

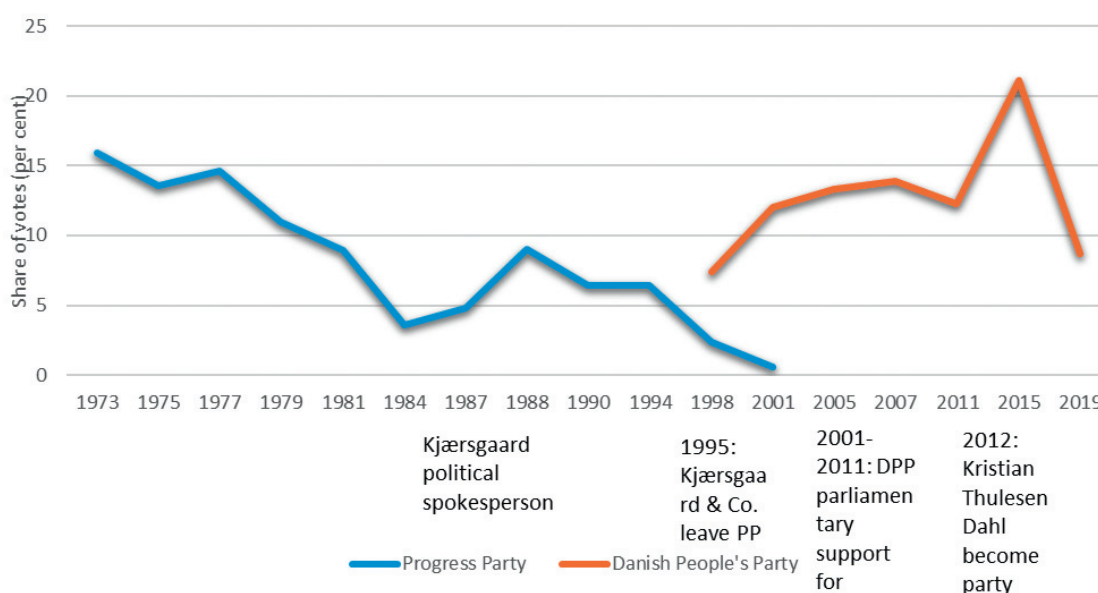
After Glistrup was reelected to parliament in 1987, an internal tension between a hard-liner, protest line, represented by Glistrup and the pragmatic line pursued by Kjærsgaard developed. The division on policy and strategy resulted in a power struggle. While the party agenda from the outset had focused on economic liberalism, less tax, smaller public sector etc., the party program was in the 1980s supplemented with anti-immigrant messages. Glistrup made some harsh statements about Muslims and immigrants, and in 1991 he was excluded from the party he had himself formed. However, Glistrup’s exit did not end the fragmentation, which continued until the Progress Party split in 1995.

The Progress Party reached a low point of electoral support at the 1984 election, where Kjærsgaard was elected for the first time and took on a role in the leadership. At the two following elections in 1987 and 1988, the Progress Party saw some increases; however,

nowhere near their 1973 success. From 1988, the trend was downward again. Hence, during the combined leadership of Helge Dohrmann and Kjærsgaard 1984–1988 (Bille 1997: 386), the Progress Party increased their electoral support, whereas it was declining under the (sole) leadership of Kjærsgaard from 1988. The political strategy of Kjærsgaard seemed less popular among the (potential) Progress Party electorate.

The conflict at the leadership level between Glistrup's protest line and Kjærsgaard's pragmatic line came out at full speed at the annual meeting of the Progress Party in 1995.¹ At this chaotic annual meeting of the Progress Party, Kjærsgaard and her fraction lost the leadership contest. In short, Kjærsgaard tried to extend her leadership to encompass leadership of the membership organization. Previously, these positions had been separate (Bille 1997). Hence, Kjærsgaard was unsuccessful in centralizing leadership within the Progress Party.

Figure 1. Electoral Support of the Progress Party and Danish People's Party, 1973–2019



Source: Kosiara-Pedersen (2020).

After the exit of Kjærsgaard and her supporters in 1995, the Progress Party stood for election in 1998 and gained representation, mostly due to the popular MP from Northern Jutland, Kirsten Jacobsen. The four MPs elected in 1998 all left the Progress Party in 2000 and became independents in parliament. At the 2001 election, the Progress Party gained only 0.6 percent of the vote under the leadership of Glistrup. The Progress Party with various party leaders and attitude leaning towards Glistrup still tried to make a comeback. Glistrup died in 2008. The Progress Party gave up seeking the required number of signatures to stand for election when the new party New Right, which is positioned on the right wing on the value as well as the redistributive dimension like the Progress Party, became eligible to stand for election in 2016. Since then, there has been no news from the party

¹ The most chaotic part may be viewed (in Danish) here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCuAlBoUiqs>

(The Progress Party 2019). Hence, it is reasonable to argue that the Danish People's Party is the de facto successful succession of the Progress Party.

In sum, Glistrup represented a desire for organizational innovation but was limited in the extent to which he could implement this by his supporters as well as the established institutions within the parliamentary democracy. Parliamentary routines and the praxis of the political system led to a more established organization than that which Glistrup initially wanted. Also on the political front, he brought renewal. The right-wing stance on the size of the economic sector and taxation was beyond what the system normally heard of, and in the 1980s he pioneered anti-immigration and anti-Muslim views. Glistrup stood for a harsh, right wing, oppositional line, which only makes sense for parties on the fringes of the political system to pursue, while Kjærsgaard wanted to pursue a more pragmatic, cooperative strategy. While the latter was not welcome within the Progress Party, it turned out to be rather successful with the Danish People's Party.

The creation and consolidation of the Danish People's Party

The 1995 annual meeting of the Progress Party prompted the creation of the Danish People's Party. Together with three of the Progress Party's parliamentarians, about 1/3 of the party members and part of party bureaucracy, Kjærsgaard chose to leave the Progress Party and create a new party. The Danish People's Party was formally established in 1996. As shown in figure 1, the Danish People's Party not only picked up from the Progress Party but went on to achieve a higher level of electoral support.

Kjærsgaard was not only the leader of the Danish People's Party but was especially during the first couple of years simply *the* party. The party had no advertisements without a picture of her, and she kept the rest of the party on a very short leash with the support of a few trusted fellow politicians and party bureaucrats. There is no doubt that Kjærsgaard was the party leader and decisive for the immediate success of the Danish People's Party. However, the success of the Danish People's Party is not solely one woman's work. Part of the success pertains to the rest of the small leadership group, which have been instrumental in institutionalizing Danish People's Party. This group has been expanded over the years but the core has been stable for the party's almost 25 years of existence. They have taken on roles and tasks of major importance for the institutionalization and success of Danish People's Party. Kjærsgaard was successful with the Danish People's Party not only because she was a charismatic leader with a political program addressing topical issues high on the electorate's agenda but also because she had collaborators able to take on necessary and important tasks along the way. While there is no doubt that she was decisive, it is also clear that she has not been the sole decision-maker. Besides Kristian Thulesen Dahl (see below), who was one of the four MPs who left the Progress Party, the group consists of three organizational people, two of whom became politicians.

Søren Espersen was a candidate for the Progress Party 1992–1995 but left with Kjærsgaard. In the Danish People's Party, he was in charge of press and communication 1997–2005, and was from the outset a central strategy oriented member of the leadership. In 2012, he became vice-chair when Kristian Thulesen Dahl was elected chair; a choice that was not disputed.

Peter Skaarup had been centrally placed in the Progress Party organization. In particular, in the first phase of party creation, he played an important role in ensuring that

the ‘village idiots’ and ‘fortune seekers’ of the Progress Party did not enroll in the Danish People’s Party. Peter Skaarup screened all new members in the establishment phase of the Danish People’s Party since “he knew all the members of the Progress Party” (Kjærsgaard 2002; author’s translation).

Poul Lindholm Nielsen also has a history in the Progress Party where he was organizational chair in 1994. In the Danish People’s Party he was, from the start, a central figure. In 1996–2004 he was vice-chair in the party organization, and has been party secretary since 2004. As such, he has not only been part of the party leadership. He has also had a central role in maintaining party discipline and unity. Poul Lindholm Nielsen is known for being the one (together with one of the organizational consultants from the party) who travels the country when there are local disputes or when rebels need to be reminded of the party line and party discipline. These earfuls and expulsions have apparently given him the nickname ‘Poul Blood’ within the party (Sahl 2015); however, he finds this to be a necessary and natural task to take on to ensure party success (Nielsen 2018).

Organizational mainstreaming and centralization in the Danish People’s Party

On the face of it, the Danish People’s Party looks a lot like the established parties in the Danish party system with branches, the annual meeting as the highest authority also electing the party chair etc. (Danish People’s Party 2019a), i.e. basic mass party structures with traits from the catch-all and cartel party models also (Bille 1997). However, the Danish People’s Party stands out, having a higher degree of centralization.

The fractionalization and continued conflicts within the Progress Party have had an impact on how Kjærsgaard and colleagues decided to organize the Danish People’s Party (Kjærsgaard 2002; Thomsen 2002). They consolidated their power by establishing a party organization with deliberate party rules and structures. The keywords are centralization and tight party discipline. The reason for the tight leadership control and centralization of all decisions is to be found in the prattle and squabbles of the Progress Party (Kjærsgaard 2002). The Danish People’s Party established a powerful leadership (and screening of new members) in order to ensure both that the ‘village idiots’ of the Progress Party did not enroll in the Danish People’s Party but also so that the Danish People’s Party could pursue influence within parliament. Kjærsgaard and her collaborators were very well aware of the need for tight party discipline if their mandates were to count in the parliamentary business (Pedersen 2006; Pedersen & Ringsmose 2005).

The Danish People’s Party also stands out formally from the other parties since their statutes are shorter and slightly more limited in the rights and duties granted to rank-and-file party members. When asking Kjærsgaard why she established a party member organization if members are not to have a say, she argued that there is a tradition for party membership in Denmark that is, “parties are supposed to have members”, but that she got her mandate from the electorate, and hence, was not to be limited by party members (Kjærsgaard 2002; author’s translation). The leader of the party secretariat in a similar way said, that “the party’s voters are above the members so that members cannot enroll and think that they thereby may change the policies of the party (Thomsen 2002; author’s translation). Members are left with no say on party policies. The time left for member

proposals and political discussions at the annual meetings indicate that intra-party democracy is not a thing in the Danish People's Party. The annual meeting is a celebration, not an arena for debate.

Compared to the other Danish parties, the lack of intra-party democracy is not a problem for Danish People's Party rank-and-file members. Intra-party democracy is not an incentive for enrollment, and they are quite satisfied with the influence that they (do not) have (Kosiara-Pedersen 2014; Kosiara-Pedersen 2017). They see themselves mainly as the cheerleaders of the party leadership.

One of the challenges Glistrup faced, when not wanting a traditional party organization, was a lack of funding. However, the context of the Danish People's Party is markedly different than that of the Progress Party due to the public party funding available since 1987 and drastically increased in 1995. The Danish People's Party relies mainly on public funding (party accounts as published by parliament at www.ft.dk); hence, is not dependent on party members: "We live off the public financial support. Whether we have 0 or 10,000 members doesn't have any financial impact" (Thomsen 2002).

The Danish People's Party stands out compared to other Danish parties in regard to exclusion of party members. The national committee may expel members, and unlike with other parties, this decision cannot be reviewed by the formally highest authority in the membership party, namely the annual meeting (Danish People's Party 2019a; Kosiara-Pedersen 2015a). The Danish People's Party has had to exclude party members. In the first election period also MPs, and over time both rank-and-file members and local elected politicians, have left the party either voluntarily after the encouragement from the party or by exclusion. Party staff play a central role in ensuring party discipline across the country (Nielsen 2018). Hence, while the (smaller) degree of centralization in the Progress Party did not suppress the factions, the efficiency of the party staff and leadership has been much more successful with this in the Danish People's Party, where any fractional tendencies have been suppressed and 'solved'.

Formally, Danish People's Party statutes state that the national committee or 25 delegates may propose a party chair, and that the party chair is elected at the annual meeting (Danish People's Party 2019a). Indeed Kjærsgaard was re-elected with a standing ovation at every single annual meeting during her reign. Nobody questioned her leadership. And nobody questioned that she selected Kristian Thulesen Dahl first as her deputy, and then her successor.

Well-behaved 'backseat' to ensure parliamentary influence

At the party's first national election in 1998, the Danish People's Party received 7.6% of the votes, which established it as the main party on the right wing of the political spectrum. On 20 November 2001, the Danish People's Party became the third biggest party in parliament when they got 12% of the votes; this resulted in a rise from 13 to 22 mandates out of a total of 175 elected in main Denmark (excluding the four MPs elected in Greenland and the Faroe Islands). The election results of the Liberal Party, the Conservative People's Party, and the Danish People's Party gave them jointly a majority of the seats in parliament. The Liberal party leader, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, created a Liberal/Conservative minority government with the parliamentary support of the Danish People's Party. On 8

February 2005 both the position of the Danish People's Party as the third largest party and the government majority were maintained. In 2007, the Danish People's Party, as in 2005 and unlike a number of its sister parties elsewhere in Europe, successfully survived its involvement with the governing parties. The parliamentary support of the government was more fragile after the 2007 election even if the Liberal-Conservative government supported by the Danish People's Party continued in office.

It was important to Kjærsgaard to build a party with enough party discipline to gain parliamentary influence. It was a deliberate strategy, and a strategy that differed from that of Glistrup and his adherents. Kjærsgaard needed "silence in the backseat", so that the other parties could rely on her delivering the mandates of the Danish People's Party in political negotiations (Kjærsgaard 2002). During the ten years of providing a parliamentary majority for the right of center government, the Danish People's Party gained marked concessions in return for their support of the government's policies on all other issues. The concessions granted to the Danish People's Party was mainly in regard to stricter immigration and integration policies, harsher sentences for crime, more care for the elderly, and projects promoting Danish history and culture. In return, the Danish People's Party supported the government's economic policies that lay further to the right than their party program. Hence, for those who were not studying the party program, the Danish People's Party seemed right-wing on both the value dimension (immigration and law and order) and the redistributive dimension.

In the spring of 2011 tighter border control was introduced in exchange for supporting changes to the early retirement scheme; a deal that may at least partly explain the electoral loss at the 2011 election together with the lesser focus on immigration and integration policies in the campaign (Kosiara-Pedersen 2012). The balance between the left and right sides of parliament tipped in 2011, and the Liberal-Conservative government supported by the Danish People's Party was replaced by a center-left Social Democratic led coalition. The 2011 national election was a setback for the Danish People's Party where they lost the three seats gained in 2005 and 2007. This was the first electoral losses since their inception in 1995.

In sum, contrary to Glistrup's desire of his personal party unlike the 'old parties', Kjærsgaard chose the well-trodden path of established parties when creating the party organization. However, she added more than a sprinkle of formalized centralization to avoid the prattle and squabbles of the Progress Party. Politically, the Danish People's Party placed itself on the radical right on the value dimension, with an emphasis on anti-immigration and strong law and order policies, and they supported the right of center government's economic policies. Strategically, Kjærsgaard and her troops were able to pursue the strategy of seeking parliamentary influence that caused a great deal of antagonism during her time in the Progress Party.

Successful transition of power and division of labour

Kjærsgaard has not been challenged in any way. Neither has her choice of crown prince. At the summer meeting of the parliamentary group on 7 August 2012, Kjærsgaard announced her resignation and passed the baton to Kristian Thulesen Dahl. He attained the position formally at the annual meeting 15 September 2012. Thulesen Dahl was one of the four MPs who left the Progress Party in 1995 and took on the role as vice chair of

the Danish People's Party. When Thulesen Dahl took over as the party leader of the Danish People's Party in 2012, he was an experienced politician as seen in his official parliamentary CV (Folketinget 2019). He enrolled in the Progress Party youth organization at a young age and chaired it 1991–1994. From when he was 20 years old, he was a candidate at general elections. He was part of the Progress Party national committee for a year prior to leaving the party. He was a temporary MP in 1993, and was elected in 1994. In 1995, he took his mandate to the Danish People's Party, where he also obtained a seat in the national committee. He has held offices in municipal councils in 1997–2010. After the 1998 general election, he became the chairman of the parliamentary group, and in 2001–2011 served as chairman (and from 2011 as deputy chairman) on the financial committee in parliament. Hence, when taking on the leadership of the Danish People's Party, he had substantial political organizational and parliamentary experience to build on.

In particular, two aspects of his personal background are relevant for the way in which he fills the party leader role, namely his ties to southern Jutland and his business degree. His upbringing and residence in southern Jutland, a rural part of Denmark on the border of Germany, has granted him a special status in this area (Nedergaard 2015) with substantial electoral support as the result, which became very apparent in the 2015 election results (Hansen & Stubager 2017). Secondly, his business degree and his interest and understanding of the area of financial policy has granted him a high level of respect among both political supporters and opponents. These competences vary greatly from those of Kjærsgaard.

There are no indications of changes in the party organization, neither formally in the statutes or in how the party organization works in practice. Thulesen Dahl has, as was Kjærsgaard, been applauded at the annual meeting's leadership elections since 2012, and the intra-party democracy and upholding of party discipline did not seem to change after he took over. Nothing changed in the party statutes (Danish People's Party 2019a), and the stability of the party organization and its crew, also signals no change.

The change in leadership was not meant to result in policy changes. As argued by Kristian Thulesen Dahl: "Does a new chairman mean a new line of policies? Some may think so. But this is not how I think. On the contrary, we must cherish the key issues that have characterized the Danish People's Party since our foundation in 1995. [...] You know where we stand – and it will be like that in the future as well" (Thulesen Dahl 2012; author's translation). The ship should stay on the successful course. Hence, the change in party chair was not a result of fractional challenges. On the contrary, the transition of party leadership to Thulesen Dahl confirmed the stability of the dominant coalition. And as argued by Harmel and Janda (1994), less change is expected in that case.

One way in which the Danish People's Party maintained its political profile was to appoint Kjærsgaard as spokesperson on 'value politics', which would include immigration and integration, as well as law and order, which are core areas of the party program (Danish People's Party 2019b, 2019c). This implied keeping Kjærsgaard in the front line on the issues on which the party is branded. This was particularly relevant since Kristian Thulesen Dahl did not have a strong image on these 'value' issues but had a strong image on the economic dimension, as argued above.

This division of labour seems to have smoothed the transition from a charismatic party owner with emphasis on immigration, integration, as well as law and order, to an 'accountant' type with emphasis on the national budget and economic issues. This division

of labour and smooth transition of public image ended at the national election in 2015, after which Kjærsgaard was elected to be the honorable chair of parliament. However, a return was seen when the majority shifted in 2019 and Kjærsgaard had to leave the chair of parliament. She returned to the parliamentary committees of 'foreigners and integration' and 'cultural affairs', again emphasizing the 'value' dimension.

The electoral results under the reign of Thulesen Dahl were initially quite marked. The general popularity of Thulesen Dahl can be seen from opinion polls immediately following his election. A month after he took over, he was assessed as positively as the most popular party leaders of other Danish parties (Albæk 2013a). Similarly, opinion polls show how the electoral support of the Danish People's Party rose in the aftermath of him taking over the leadership (Albæk 2013b).

The increasing support for the Danish People's Party also showed at the elections. The Danish People's Party increased their representation in the 98 municipal councils in 2013 to a little over 10%. The election to the European Parliament in 2014 was also successful with an increase from 15.3% in 2009 to 26.6% and four out of the 13 Danish MEP seats in 2014. However, Kristian Thulesen Dahl did not seem to play a major role in this. The figurehead of the Danish People's Party list and campaign, Morten Messerschmidt, was very popular and pulled the second highest personal vote ever (second only to former Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen in 2004) with his 284,258 votes. The result implied that the Danish People's Party became the largest Danish party in the European Parliament ahead of the two traditional biggest and governing parties, the Social Democrats (3) and Liberals (2).

Old and new strategies

The electoral success of the Danish People's Party culminated, for now, at the 2015 general election (see figure 1), where the Danish People's Party increased the vote share with 8.8% to 21.1%. This result left the Danish People's Party as the second largest party in parliament, after the Social Democrats, and the largest party in the center-right bloc of parties. Whereas the Danish People's Party previously attracted dissatisfied Social Democrats, at the 2015 election the Danish People's Party gained votes from the Liberals in particular, among other things due to dissatisfaction with the Liberal party leader and prime minister (Hansen & Stubager 2017: 36; Kosiara-Pedersen 2015b).

The position as the largest party right of center obviously results in government speculation. While some populist radical right parties have joined the governments in Austria, Italy, Norway and Netherlands, the Danish People's Party has, like the Dutch PVV, remained an official support party (Lange 2017; Mudde 2017b: 529). It is difficult to know what exactly went on behind the thick walls of negotiations and considerations within and across parties. However, publicly Thulesen Dahl argued that the Danish People's Party would get more out of providing the parliamentary support for the government rather than stepping into the ministerial offices themselves. Hence, despite the Liberals' loss of a quarter of its voters and winning only 34 seats, the Liberal Party's candidate for Prime Minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, acquired the parliamentary support of the bare minimum of 90 MPs to form a single-party minority government. The minority government was challenged due to various demands and almost ultimatums from the three support-

ing parties. Hence, 1½ years later, Løkke Rasmussen formed a minority coalition with the other two minor parliamentary support parties; Liberal Alliance and the Conservatives. Again, the Danish People's Party avoided the formal responsibility and remained outside government office. With the same argument as previously: That they would get more out of staying outside the ministerial offices.

While there is no doubt that Thulesen Dahl kept his initial promise of not changing party policy and stubbornly worked for less immigration and tighter integration rules, in 2017–2018 there seemed to be a shift in party strategy. Thulesen Dahl and the party leader of the Social Democrats, Mette Frederiksen, engaged in discussions on agreements and future collaboration. At the annual meeting of the Danish People's Party in September 2018, Thulesen Dahl announced, that if their plan A, a Liberal led government with the Danish People's Party but without Liberal Alliance, was impossible after the election, they would try every means to secure the influence of the Danish People's Party. "If this is the situation, Mette [first name of the Social Democratic party chair, Mette Frederiksen], you have my telephone number", Kristian Thulesen Dahl announced (Olsen 2018; author's translation). Even though the party delegates applauded, not all voters seem to have a taste for this strategy. While not the only reason for the decline, it did seem to push voters towards the Liberals and Conservatives; voters which are not keen on a Social Democratic led government. This may still be the case even though the Danish People's Party in the first half of 2019 was brought back, tighter, to the Liberals with several political agreements.

The trend in the electoral support of the Danish People's Party has been a decline since the 2015 election. At the municipal elections in 2017, the Danish People's Party's support declined from 10.12 percent to 8.75 percent of the vote. In addition, contrary to expectations, the party did not gain any mayor offices other than one on the small island of Læsø. However, this is a slight dip compared to the results of the two 2019 elections. The Danish EU referendums and elections to the European Parliament have been useful in the formation of the Danish People's Party due to their right wing, strong stance against European integration. They have previously mobilized on their anti-EU stance. At the European Parliament election on 26 May 2019, the Danish People's Party is back at the 2009 level around 15 percent, which would imply a halving of the number of MEPs from four to two. The popular Morten Messerschmidt did not stand for election, and his replacement, Peter Kofod, does not have the same charisma and popularity. In addition, the investigation into fraud in regard to Messerschmidt's MELD/FELD (Movement for a Europe of Liberties and Democracy/Foundation for a Europe of Liberties and Democracy) signals that the Danish People's Party has become part of the EU establishment and may be no better than the established parties. Due to the overlapping EP and general election campaigns, the party leadership was less focused on the EP election.

The result of the general election on 5 June 2019 was devastating for the Danish People's Party, who lost more than half their representation in parliament and is now back at the 2001 level of 10 percent. A peek at the opinion polls may give some hints at the reasons for the electoral decline. As argued above, the electoral support of the Danish People's Party rose in the aftermath of the selection of Thulesen Dahl in August 2012. The peak reached in the summer of 2014, while in opposition, was 24 percent, but the Danish People's Party hovered around and just above 20 percent from then and until November 2016. At the time of the formation of the minority coalition of the Liberals, Liberal Alliance and the

Conservatives, the Danish People's Party took a dip to around 17 percent (Danmarks Radio 2019). Hence, it seems as if some voters reacted to the strategy of staying outside ministerial offices. The Danish People's Party recovered slightly and stayed around 18 percent during 2017 and 2018. However, since December 2018, the Danish People's Party has been in decline in the polls (Danmarks Radio 2019).

The possibility of working across the aisle has been spoken out loudly, and while it may follow along the lines of the party program, this is not what at least part of their electorate wants; in particular those voters acquired from right of center parties in 2015. Polls indicate that both the continued strategy of not taking government responsibility and the B-plan of collaborating with the Social Democrats have been taken badly by a substantial share of their 2015 voters; however, it remains to be seen (with details from the forthcoming electoral survey) what actually caused the massive electoral loss. Nevertheless, contrary to what could be expected on the basis of Harmel and Janda's integrated theory of party change and party goals (1994), the electoral loss, while a substantial external shock, does not seem to have resulted in any immediate party change in either organization or policy proposals.

In sum, under the leadership of Thulesen Dahl, the Danish People's Party has not changed either its organization or its policy. While providing the parliamentary support for a right of center government, the Danish People's Party has remained outside the establishment by not taking ministerial offices, which also support a no change conclusion. However, in the parliamentary arena, Thulesen Dahl has opened up for more collaboration with the Social Democrats. While the transition of leadership from Kjærsgaard to Thulesen Dahl was smooth and followed by increased electoral support, the downturn since 2015 may indicate challenges inherent in this shift. But in order to argue that the party leader change and/or the character of the new party is the cause of the decline would require that Kjærsgaard would have pursued a different strategy, or that voters would relate differently to her in the given context. Based on the stability of the leadership group, this is unlikely.

Conclusion

The differences in how the Progress Party and the Danish People's Party are organized is much larger than any organizational change after the party leader change from Kjærsgaard to Thulesen Dahl. While Kjærsgaard was not able to implement marked organizational changes within the Progress Party, she did stand for a different strategy and policy than Glistrup, focusing on parliamentary influence, and a right-wing position on the new politics dimension, but more pro welfare on the redistributive dimension. There were no substantial changes in organization, strategy or policy when Thulesen Dahl took over the party leadership of the Danish People's Party; however, the strategy did change prior to the 2019 election. In sum, the overall expectation that party change was larger when Kjærsgaard took over from Glistrup in the Progress Party, and in particular when establishing the new Danish People's Party, than when Thulesen Dahl took over from Kjærsgaard, is mainly supported.

The Danish People's Party has come a long way since October 1999 where the then Prime Minister, Social Democrat, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen from the rostrum of parliament with disgust and pomposity declared that they would never become *salonfähig*. The

Danish People's Party was the second largest at the 2015 election, and it has provided a parliamentary majority for the right of center governments of 2001–2011 and 2015–2019. Compared to the protest line of its predecessor, the Progress Party and its charismatic leader-founder Glistrup, the road has been even longer.

The three prominent party leaders of the Progress Party and the Danish People's Party have been central in the development of these parties. The parties would not have been created without Glistrup and Kjærsgaard, respectively. However, more importantly, their personality and political decisions were decisive in their successes and failures. The electoral support of the Progress Party waned due to Glistrup's personality and adherence to a stringent ideological profile, in particular a harsh tone in the immigration and integration policy. The Progress Party did not have the organizational capability and personalities to carry on without a strong party leader.

Kjærsgaard and her collaborators had the timely gut feeling (based on their experiences with the Progress Party) when establishing a party characterized by central control and tight party discipline, stability to provide parliamentary support that could be trusted, and a political focus on immigration and integration. Kjærsgaard wanted to acquire political power and make an impact. She organized in order to accomplish this. Hence, the party change when Kjærsgaard and her followers were able to establish a completely new party in regard to rules and structures, the change from the Progress Party was marked. Formally the Danish People's Party did not "experiment with new organizational forms" (Harmel and Janda 1994: 282) to the extent as has been seen with other new parties. Formally, they resemble the mainstream Danish parties, however, with more centralization and a strong enforcement of a tight party discipline.

It is rare to see a successful change in party leadership from a charismatic party owner to a completely different type of party leader. However, the Danish People's Party seems to have succeeded with this. Thulesen Dahl did not change the party organization and strategy at first, and there was stability in the leadership group. At the general election in 2015 the Danish People's Party increased their electoral support and hence, must have appealed to more voters.

Kristian Thulesen Dahl survived the drastic election defeats of 2019. In other parties, such a loss would be regarded as (at least partly) the responsibility of the leadership and have implications; this may not be the case for a top-steered party like the Danish People's Party. Since he is not the party owner as in the case of Kjærsgaard, electoral loss could have shaken his powerbase. However, this does not seem to be the case in the immediate aftermath of the election. However, it remains to be seen whether his collaborators in the leadership will part with him in the longer run.

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