Organizing Local Democracy: The Norwegian Experience

by

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A dissertation submitted to BI Norwegian School of Management
for the degree of PhD

BI Norwegian School of Management

Department of Public Governance

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The dissertation may be ordered from our website www.bi.no
(Research - Research Publications)

Acknowledgements

Abstract

The dissertation traces empirically certain prerequisites for effective local democratic politics as viewed in terms of the functioning of the local democratic chain of delegation and in terms of the functional organization of a local tier of government. Propositions from previous theoretical and empirical research is put to the test in statistical analyses using official data characterizing Norwegian municipal and county governments (1983-2003) and data collected in survey questionnaires going to Norwegian local council members (1995-2003).

One broad motivation for the dissertation viewed as a whole is that much previous research that has sought specifically to assess the quality of Norwegian (and Nordic) local democratic politics has downplayed issues of delegation and electoral control with the representative political level. Still, apart from being motivated by questions concerning the quality of Norwegian local democracy, the present dissertation also explores the operation of some very general mechanisms of democratic politics. One major methodological advantage of the present dissertation's overall design is that it allows for the comparison of several hundred units embedded within the same national regulatory framework.

Taken together, the individual studies of the dissertation (chapters two through five) would seem to elicit the broad conclusion that Norwegian local democratic politics does show itself effective in some exceptional circumstances: voters may react sensibly to local policy and local parties may act as real disciplining organizations and they may take up positions as distinct local political alternatives. On the other hand, a general finding is also that there is vast potential for improvement, and that efforts in that direction would likely have to deal with issues to do with the strong national influence on Norwegian local politics.

Abstracts of chapters two through five:

Chapter two traces the electoral fates of Norwegian local parties from 1983 and up to the present. In broad terms, the findings corroborate the notion that Norwegian local party politics is very much a product of national influences: Local branches of the same nationwide parties face much the same electoral fate in elections – and, a finding in agreement with such a tendency, some evidence is also found that local party platforms are unable to adjust to local opinion shifts. Even so, voters do in some rare situations seem to react to local policy in ways that may be predicted from theory. Specifically, local mayoral parties heading strong coalitions may face great electoral losses in situations where local incumbents would reasonably abscond from much political effort (in times of local recession) and when voters are also accorded the opportunity to coordinate their votes on alternative coalitions (i.e. when the number of running lists is practicable). Moreover, these patterns of truly local electoral reactions apply to municipal elections - they do not transpire in county elections. Most likely this is due to the fact that counties, as compared to municipalities, have very few salient political instruments at their disposal. In addition, the cited preconditions for substantive voter reactions are seldom present even in Norwegian municipalities.

Chapter three asks if there is an organizational role for local parties with respect to committee organization. While theory would predict that larger and presumably more responsible parties would select for functional committee work candidates that are good sectoral informants and are thus but moderately sectorally inclined (as measured by individual councilors' spending preferences surveyed in 1995 and 1999), it is found that this is the case in only one out of four economically salient service sectors, namely in municipal care for the elderly and the disabled. Specifically, the interpretation is that even large and potentially responsible parties need not care much about organizing the local policy process when policy is anyway severely restricted: The municipal care sector in question is arguably the least centrally regulated of the four sectors under study – a view corroborated by councilors' subjective responses to a survey question on sector regulation. As such, the study underscores a *potential* organizational role for local parties in the face of otherwise strict central regulation of local policies.

Chapter four assesses the strength and direction of partisan effects in Norwegian and Danish local politics (2001). It is found that rises in socialist shares in Norwegian local assemblies is accompanied by rising local taxes and possibly rising user fees (income taxes, property taxes and fees in child care services). Three qualifications as to the generality of the findings in the Norwegian setting are nevertheless apparent when compared to findings in Danish local politics: First, substantive effects are by and large small in terms of substantive tax and fee rises from changes in assembly composition. Second, partisan effects are smaller and less pronounced in the Norwegian as compared to the Danish case. Third, Danish socialist parties seem to be in a better position to reap benefits from a *mix* of progressive and regressive tax instruments: While (progressive) tax rates climb as socialist shares in Danish municipalities rise, (regressive) user fees *shrink*, a pattern that does not transpire in the Norwegian case. Presumably, the lesser room for playing out traditional left-right motives of both public finance *and* redistribution in the Norwegian case has much to do with the more restrictive regulation of local tax instruments (income taxation) and the greater reliance on central redistribution in that country.

Chapter five examines local opposition to municipal mergers. The study utilizes official political and economic municipal data combined with local politicians' responses to a survey question gauging respondents' willingness to merge one's own municipality with neighboring jurisdictions (2002/2003). It is found that local politicians are quite sensitive to neighboring municipalities' tax and fee policies: Prospects for increases in taxes and fees in the wake of a merger greatly reduces local councilors' enthusiasm for potential amalgamations, the tendency seemingly unrelated to politicians' different stances on the left-right continuum. Even so, policies in the taxes and fees area are to a large extent harmonized regionally, and the analysis further reveals that the greatest obstacle to widespread structural reform is disparities in local economic resources among neighboring municipalities. Moreover, account for policy and resource disparities reduces the substantiveness and significance of effects from small municipality size (population) in itself, the latter factor often assumed to heighten the quality of local democratic processes. Thus, structural non-reform seems to have little to do with the upholding of (allocatively) effective policy differences (or policy process differences) from the one municipality to the next. In stead, since the larger parts of municipal expenditures are financed through the central transfers scheme, the overall conclusion is that it has much to do with resource disparities that are intentionally set at the central government level.

Contents

List of figures and tables

1 Introduction: Motivations, theoretical and methodological approches and some broad conclusions

1.1 General background and motivation

The organization of local democratic politics is a recurrent theme in political science and related disciplines: Precisely how many levels of government should nations consist of? And how many local jurisdictions should there be at each level? What responsibilities should the different tiers be charged with? To which degree should local jurisdictions be able to fend for themselves financially? How much leeway should they have for acting out truly local policies? General answers to questions such as these are not easily arrived at. While different answers will typically hinge on expected economic, social and political consequences at both the national and local level, the focus of the present anthology is on local political consequences. Specifically, the focus is on consequences for local democratic politics in the context of Norwegian local government. These very rudimenatary inintial qualifications notwithstanding, there is indeed much general debate and awareness around such questions in Norway today.

To give but a few examples: First of all, while in office (2001-2005), the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development, Erna Solberg (Conservative), had her ministry spearheading an appeal to local authorities to substantially reduce the number of smaller municipalities in Norway[1], and, in close cooperation with the national government, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) has initiated a process of local evaluations of potential local border adjustments.[2] The main attractions behind municipal amalgamations are prospects for reaping benefits from economies of scale and the attainment of enhanced professional bases for municipal services. The results, however, are meager. Since the last compulsory municipal mergers in the nineteen-nineties, the number of municipalities in Norway has basically remained unaltered - with a reduction of one from 435 to 431 municipalities today.

Second, the future of the regional level of local government has recently been discussed in two major research reports – the one commissioned by KS (Selstad 2004), the other the Green Paper from the Government Commission on Regional Policy (NOU 2004). Both reports envisage a reduction in the number of regional governments (from nineteen counties today), but have nevertheless been criticized on grounds that too little attention is paid to issues that could bolster the political clout, and, through it, the democratic legitimacy and vigor of regional government (see for instance Hervik and Rattsø 2005 for a recent critique). Voter turnout in Norwegian local elections has been falling stedily throughout the post-war period, with regional turnout dropping from 71.3 per cent to 55.1 cent from 1975 to 2003, a development that has prompted widespread concern.

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[1] See the ministry's web site on municipal mergers and inter-municipal cooperation, http://odin.dep.no/krd/komsam/.
[2] See Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities' web site on this issue, http://www.ks.no/templates/District.aspx?id=11574.

Third, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development has launched a Commission on Local Democracy (*Lokaldemokratikommisjonen*) to look into *inter alia* "the development in the relationship between the central and local levels of government since 1975". Further, the Commission Mandate asks: "What are the implications for citizens and local politicians of central government limits to local freedom of action".[3] The implicit wariness behind such questions is that there could be very little business left for local democratic institutions in an era of ever increasing national government intervention in local affairs.

There is at present, then, much *public debate* around questions of local democracy in Norway, and the official and semi-official contributions mentioned above certainly go into motivating the present thesis as it will elaborate on the general theme of Norwegian local democratic politics. Additional motivations may nevertheless be brought into play: As for the *theoretical perspectives* that are commonly applied in local government studies, there certainly are different views on what local democracy really is, or should be. Thus, theoretical choices must necessarily be made, and they will typically hinge on matters of fruitfulness and the relative novelty of their application within the research community. The present anthology will highlight certain general aspects of democratic politics that have been downplayed in *previous research* on Norwegian local politics. Specifically, the research presented here will give emphasis to various formulations of the competitive model of democracy.

On a more general note still, one may argue that the analysis of local democracy is but a special case of democracy studies as such. Indeed, apart from being a study of Norwegian local democracy, one central aim of the present thesis is to say something about conditions for good democracy in general. To be sure, to the extent that this national-sub-national analogy is sound, the advantages of working with local political units is quite apparent: Analysis of local jurisdictions generously allows for the extensive study of numerous similar units embedded within a national unitary administrative system. The potential pitfalls and limitations are equally obvious, ranging from issues of complex analysis design to questions of generalizability across levels (from local to national democracy) or across national settings (from Western European to non-European systems, say).

The intention behind the following outline is that it be a broad introductory guide to the substantive chapters that follow. In this, emphasis is given to the specific motivations that have stimulated work on the thesis viewed as a whole, to a broad and unifying understanding of the theoretical perspectives that underlie the separate studies, and to some very common features of methods and design. Obviously, such a brief outline will necessarily leave some loose ends, and we leave for the separate chapters the detailed discussions of specific problematics in local democracy. Still, some overarching conclusions as to the implications of findings is nevertheless offered, and the outline concludes with a few remarks along these lines.

The remainder of the outline is organized as follows: The following section presents the general theoretical perspective of the thesis and contrasts it to that found in much current research in the field. The argument is that previous research on Norwegian local politics is very much slanted towards certain conceptions of local democracy, and that this leaves quite unexplored inquiry into other conceptions that are conceivably just as important in the very

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[3] My translation. See the Ministry's web site http://odin.dep.no/krd/lokaldemokrati/mandat/016051-991126/dok-bn.html for the Commission Mandate.

least. Also in this section, a few brief remarks are given on some very general scientific philosophical questions that have also informed the choice of theoretical approaches. Next follows a section that comments on a few overarching research design and methodolgical issues that seem particularly applicable to the study of local politics. The subsequent section presents the four substantive research questions that are dealt with in the separate chapters of the thesis. Lastly, and as mentioned, the final section attempts some broad conclusions in terms of an overall assessment of results: Does the study viewed as a whole find any evidence of "democracy at work" in the context of Norwegian local politics?

1.2   Theoretical approaches and previous research

So, how fares local democracy in Norway? Is the gloomy conclusion of defunct local democratic politics in the face of ever more intense national intervention warranted? If not, to what extent and in what ways are local political institutions – i.e. municipal and regional assemblies and the parties that make them up – able to efficiently aggregate local voter preferences into representative policy? And what, if anything, seems to hinder the realization of even fuller local distinctiveness and the playing out of even more intensive local politics?

A clarifying starting point for discussion is to ask about what role there is for representative democracy at the local level in Norway. Much research into the quality of Norwegian local democracy has concentrated on supplemental opportunities for *direct* citizen participation or also on prospects for greater practical involvement of citizens with the representative political level.[4] In either case, both the *competitive democratic politics* perspective that emphasizes control of political elites through the ballot[5], and those strands of *participatory democratic theory* that stress citizen involvement alongside representative politics[6] face much the same problem: How can citizens make sure that politicians and bureaucrats do what they're supposed to do? While proponents of participatory democracy models would see opportunities for greater citizen involvement the solution, theorists that focus on mechanisms for voter control of competing political elites typically search for remedies elsewhere: What, for instance, are the effects of different constitutional setups, of variations in voter heterogeneity or of differing formal chains of institutional responsibility?

Figure 1 below presents the general line of inquiry, within which can be located the specific research questions as dealt with in the separate chapters of the thesis.[7] As such, the diagram highlights a coarse chain of delegation that might be applicable to competitive and participatory models of democracy alike: Power is formally delegated from citizens (voters) to representative institutions (parties and assemblies) (I), and, ideally, the latter should in their turn formulate policies (in the aggregate) that are in a certain sense representative of the views of the former (II). In this process political institutions may among themselves organize the formation of plans for sound policy action in ways that may be more or less instrumental (III). In the next step, political institutions hand over formal responsibility for implementation of policies to local bureaucracies (IV). The actual policies that local bureaucracies in the end

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[4] This is especially true of research into local democratic politics on the regional level. See chapter two (pp. 16-19) for a more detailed discussion of previous research in this field.
[5] Central references for models of competitive democracy are Schumpeter (1942), Riker (1982) and Downs (1957).
[6] See for instance Cohen (1984), Pateman (1970) and Ware (1987) for models of participatory democracy.
[7] Regular case entries in figure 1 alluding to the units of analysis in chapters two through five.

deliver (V) may, however, come out distorted, and problems of delegation that cause policy failures in the wider sense may be located at each of the stages of the process (I-V).[8]
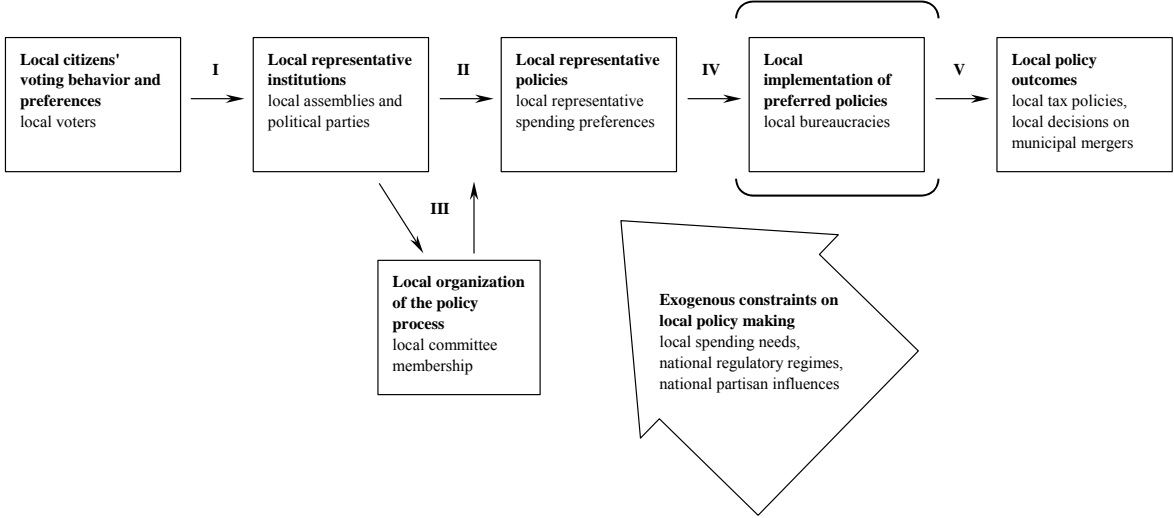
Figure 1.1: The chain of delegation in local democratic politics.

The thesis will give emphasis to the competitive model of democracy as it takes on problematics of local voter control, local parties' organizing roles and the politics of local *outputs* in a context of voter responsiveness. The motivation for this is threefold. All three motivations are in effect critical stances against the research tradition that is inclined towards the ideal of participatory democracy (PD hereafter).[9] And, although the third motivation is in a basic sense superfluous in terms of motivating the present research effort, it is nevertheless important - precsisely *because* it points beyond the present research questions.

First of all, PD research in the local political context *predominates* the field. For instance, in chapter two, the review of literature on Norwegian regional democratic politics reveals that by far the greatest bulk of research takes on themes such as citizen involvement in political processes other than elections, citizens' knowledge of local political processes and institutions and similar issues. Also, in chapter five, very much of the cited research is predictaed on implications from manipulating basic opportunities for more or less citizen involvement (i.e. municipality size). Of course, other than the approach applied here being relatively *novel* in the midst of such preponderance, this particular motivating impulse is relatively weak should it stand alone. But there is more.

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[8] The bracketing of the box containing "local implementation" signifies that relations between the representative and administrative levels will not be analyzed in the present thesis, due to reasons of space.

[9] For argument's sake, I subsume under the 'participatory democracy' term also concepts that have more to do with processes dealt with within the 'discourse democratic' tradition (see e.g. Rose (2000:ch. 3) for a dsicusion of the two traditions). While there certainly are differences in terms of the realms and implications that these two politico-philosophical traditions attend to, much is also common ground: For instance, (popular) participation in political debates and dsicussions is simultaneously a precondition for discovering a true preference and an instance of political self-realization.

Second, PD research in local democracy sudies is at the same time *insufficient*. Not only does PD research *necessarily* stop short of direct inquiry into issues of voter *control* of representative level institutions, it does so on very fragile foundations. Typically, PD researchers would criticize proponents of the competitive model for not taking heed of some very significant issues. Specifically, PD scholars would argue that unless citizens are duly and thoroughly informed – i.e. unless citizens are quite personally involved in the political process - the very rationale for controling representative bodies is lost sight of: Citizens need to be highly informed in order to make reasoned choices. Nevertheless, one may on purely theoretical grounds question this very *need* for highly informed and active citizens that is ususaly stressed within the PD tradition. In many cases voters are rendered capable of reasoned choice from acting on simple cues from their surroundings – voters need only be sufficiently informed.[10] In other words, there is no strong theoretical argument to the effect that good democracy may *not* depend almost exclusively on real opportunities for competitive politics.

Furthermore, the competitive element is important in its own right. It is not too much to say that the competitive mechanism is quite explicitly the reference in the laws and regulations that (should) govern local democratic politics in Norway (and other democratic systems, local and national). In principle, therefore, and regardless of any particular factors or particular motivations that inform local political processes or local political outcomes, one may at some certain level legitimately ask of the general quality of local democracy. This legal impetus is to say that there is a normative assumption that there are at least some *universals* that a (local) government must stick to in order that it be deemed democratic. And the issue of voter control is certainly among them, the reason simple enough: Should ruling elites be exempt from external control, consequences *could* be dire. If popular input *is* important – and in terms of basic democratic values there will be no disagreement between PD scholars and others on this point – then control is likely the most important issue.[11] All the more surprising is the gross neglect of control issues in contemporary local democracy stuidies.

Certainly, no PD researcher would seriously consider relinquishing the possibility of electoral control on the grounds that more or less informal citizen involvement is a *sufficient* condition for good democracy. Even so, viewed up against the preponderance of PD thematical research in local democracy studies, such a posture would have put things in more perspective. But, even though the PD argument is admittedly that wider popular participation is but a *necessary* condition, there is even trouble with this more moderate working hypothesis.

Third, and in practical terms, the bulk of research with a PD inclination is either *misdirected* or *underdeveloped* at best. And it is not necessarily the theoretical arguments of PD that are at

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[10] See Lupia and McCubbins (1998:2) on this point. For a more detailed discussion of the analytical arguments and the arguments on the theoretical focus and shortcomings of previous research, see chapter two (pp. 19-21).

[11] One should offer some obvious qualifications to the argument at this point. The interest in general democracy thematics in the present thesis is very much academic. As such, the empirical context of Norwegian local politics may be likened to a laboratory setting. Still, democracy is more than a potentially positive result: If it seems not to be present at all, then there is indeed grounds for alarm and outcry. Even so, if results should show that there simply isn't much to be said for democracy at the local level in Norway, that would most likely be a lesser concern. Norwegian citizens are not in general bereft of their democratic rights – democracy is presumably up and going at other levels (the national level). Thus, local democratic deficits would most likely have to be viewed as minor democratic imperfections in the larger picture. The bottom line is nevertheless that a characterization of the (Norwegian and Nordic) field today as "local *democracy* studies" is somewhat of a misnomer. Hopefully, as the present definition of democracy conforms to the standard definition, the present studies should also contribute to the field.

fault. On the contrary, they are quite clear: Greater citizen involvement in local politics is an effective and necessary mechanism for (better) attuning the representative level to the public view. But, even if one should admit that wider popular participation is necessary in terms of bringing democracy up to a certain level, the empirical results that would substantiate such a claim are very much lacking. Stated another way, much current research treats participation as a *dependent variable* where it should instead be treated as an *independent variable*. For instance, again with reference to the literature reviewed in chapters two and five, phenomena such as electoral turnout in local elections and local citizenries' levels of political interest, knowledge and confidence is either analyzed *descriptively* or else patterns of (such) participation are sought *explained* (by locality size, say).[12]

Direct investigations into the question of whether voters seem to be getting the actual policies they want is certainly the focus of the present studies. Furthermore, as the foregoing discussion has hopefully made clear, that question has not figured very high on the agenda in Norwegian and (Nordic) local democracy studies. And, partly as a logical concomitant to such a development, neither has the issue of voter control with the representative level. This is the principal motivation behind the present research effort. Nevertheless, there is a potential case to be made on the part of PD arguments – and this points future research in a certain direction: Further research of local service satisfaction levels should be undertaken, and so should research looking generally into how well (local) representataive level opinions and policies reflect public opinion *as opportunities for greater citizen involvement vary* (with locality size, say).

All this said, the contribution of the thesis lies first and foremost in a more stringent overall formulation of the problem in local politics (i.e the issue of voter control of political outputs). Further, since the thesis is primarily an empirical enterprise, there is also some innovation in terms of method and design, and the next section of this outline offers some general notes on such issues. The separate articles that make up the thesis apply models that are well-known in the literature on delegation problems in particular and the political economy literature in general. As such, the thesis contributes less in terms of pure theory development.

The hypotheses that are explored in the thesis stem from *rational choice* models of politics, broadly conceived.[13] Criticisms of the rational choice approach will usually center on the trade-off between validity[14] and parsimony. While rational choice theorizing is often accused of making too simple assumptions for social behavior, and so of being too attuned to the goal of parsimony, there is – perhaps as a direct consequence of this "bias"- certainly a case to be made for its defense on a purely analytical note:

For one thing, the very simplifying aspects of rational choice theory is hardly a drawback with a view to theory development. Inasmuch as rational choice theorizing aids in the formulation

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[12] Of course, these results are relevant if greater personal involvement is an end in itself (see note 9). Still, they do not pertain to questions of voter-representative level congruence. Only in a few instances does the reviewed literature touch upon the question of whether voters get the political outoputs that they want (Baledrshiem et al. 2003; Lolle (2003a); see note 131 on p. 83 for a discussion of substantive results). The point here is that these two instances need to be supplemented by further research.

[13] Central comprehensive references in this respect are Strøm et al. (2003), Mueller (1996) and Besley (2005), to mention but a few. All focus on *general* problems of delegation (problems of "adverse selection" and "asymmetric information" within an agency theoretical perspective) as they are to be found in *different* constitutional settings (presidential and parliamentary systems).

[14] Perhaps, though, in line with Quine (1969:ch. II), "preference for subjective detail" should be substituted for "validity".

of simple basic assumptions and precise and consistent definitions that are also amenable to measurement, *scientific revision* is made easier in the face of gross discrepancies between model and reality. Simplification and precision makes for greater ease with which some crucial assumptions may be altered and others incorporated in revised and combined models. For instance, one may question the simpler model assumptions of running candidates deriving utility from holding office *combined* with campaign platforms that may be freely altered to accommodate voter preferences. Perhaps there *is* something to the proposition (as put forth first in chapter two) that the latter assumption is not valid in the context of Norwegian local politics. It is partly promises of fruitfulness such as this, i.e. that assumptions and components of models may be altered with relative ease, that has guided the choice of theoretical approaches in the present thesis.

As this is not the place for a general philosophical discussion of research approaches, we note merely at this point that the rational choice foundations of the present thesis is grounded in an established "standard" tradition of theorizing and empirical research that aims for generalizability and isolation of certain interesting theoretical principles (Mjøset 2006): It is the operation of the (studied) theoretical principle in itself that is the focus of interest.[15] In interpreting the results from the individual studies of the thesis, then, the aim is *not* to deliver anything near a complete account of outcomes in local politics. On the contrary, the aim is very much to turn attention towards some interesting features that resonate reasonably well with the wider public and normative debate, on the one hand, and that have also previously been inadequately examined, on the other. Still, as the thesis is primarily an empirical evaluation of certain interesting and important theoretical propositions, there is the quite obvious need for empirical method to disentangle the operative from the contextual features. This point carries naturally over into issues of research design.

1.3   Some general notes on research design and methods

Theoretical discussion is, as always, in a context of *ceteris paribus*.[16] Two implications for the present study seem to apply, one general and the other more specific. First of all, from a general econometric point of view, it is of course essential that the analyses include proper (measured) controls, the exclusion of which might possibly make for distorted interpretations of the operative effect estimates of interest. This problem is too general to be dealt with in depth here: The specific contexts of specific research problems will demand different empirical controls and research designs, and so the problem is by and large better dealt with as the different research settings of the individual chapters are presented.

The second implication is perhaps more fundamental and also particularly relevant to local politics as it concerns control for a very special and generic confounding variable – at least in the case of Norwegian local politics: In most models one assumes that candidates or parties are either free to adjust their policy platforms in the face of changing voter preferences or that

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[15] As pointed out Steinmo (2001) and by Fiorina (1995a:110-11) rational choice scholars are not so much interested in comprehensively understanding real outcomes as in appreciating some underlying theoretical principle or general logic; they will find more pleasure in explaining ten percent of the variance among nine cases than with understanding ninety percent in one case.

[16] Generally, critics of the rational choice approach often "assume that a monocausal explanation is being offered because they fail to recognize that [rational choice] propositions typically are stated with a *ceteris paribus* condition" (Fiorina 1995b:88).

they are not, say because of the varying rigidity of purely ideological "trademarks". Most often analyses offer control for partisan effects to take account of this. In local politics it could be that this sort of statistical control is doubly important, in that most local parties are merely local chapters of nation wide party organizations. Thus, local parties are not only at the mercy of the impersonal effects from long-term ideological labels. In the short run they are also very much dependent on the vagaries of the central party organizations for their electoral success and the policies that they may credibly offer to local constituents.[17]

Presumably this trait of local politics interplays strongly with the first point mentioned to make local political affairs especially difficult to grasp – for voters and political scientists alike. For the bulk of theorizing on agency problems in the democratic chain of delegation is indeed general in the sense that it mainly focuses on established systems of democratic government, i.e. on variants of parliamentary and presidential systems as they are to be found at the *national* level. In the context of Norwegian local government things are rather trickier. Systems of parliamentarism or presidentialism allow for precise conceptions of formal responsibility for policy – for clear conceptions of *incumbency*, that is. This, one may argue, is lost sight of in the *Alderman* system of Norwegian local politics, whereby all major parties of the local assembly form an executive board that *collectively* stands responsible for policy. In other words, there is no clear Norwegian local analogue to a national incumbent as separated from the wider assembly or from any other (local) independent political institution.[18] Particularly when analysis is focused on responsibility for policy and on prospects for accountable government, care needs to be taken as to what, if any, party or combination of parties is to be considered the responsible sponsor of local policies.[19] As such, both these points relate to the tilted arrow shape in the lower right hand corner of figure 1: The influence of common organizing principles (the *Alderman* principle) and the influence of national party organizations, and both these considerations will guide the analyses of different parts of the local chain of delegation.

Viewed up against this aspect of Norwegian local politics, a few brief and general notes on econometric techniques may be offered. Needles to say, the data at hand allows for extensive statistical analysis. While a detailed account of the specific statistical techniques that will be utilized in the individual chapters of the thesis is difficult to give at this point,[20] the overarching and generic problem in much statistical analysis of field data is that of providing proper control for "undue" influence on the effects estimates of operative variables[21] and of devising of proper significance tests. In closing this section, then, a few points may be made with reference to the application of some advanced statistical techniques that are well equipped for handling such problems in general and that would also seem quite appropriate in light of the mentioned complexity of Norwegian local politics.

The foregoing discussion has alluded very much to issues such as local party dependence on national party organizations and local jurisdiction dependence on national regulatory regimes. In addition, a local jurisdiction is just that: One may reasonably assume that sub-jurisdictional

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[17] Chapter one, in particular, goes some way in attempting to disentangle these different influences on local parties' electoral success.

[18] Practically all Norwegian local jurisdictions have since 1837 been organized according to the *Alderman* principle.

[19] This too, is much the focus of discussion in the analysis of local parties' electoral fates in chapter one (see Monkerud 2005a:20-21).

[20] Suffice it to say that the techniques that will be applied throughout the thesis must be sensitive to the specific research question in ways that adequately deal with the *ceteris paribus* assumptions (as discussed above).

[21] For which the inclusion of control variables is the traditional remedy.

processes going on within it (local partisan policy positioning, say) are highly informed by factors that are common to the jurisdiction as such (in economic or politico-institutional terms). In other words, not only will *local* parties' electoral fates likely cluster or move in unison around a *national* party trend over time, on the one level, individual local politicians' attitudes or behavior is in addition likely to be dependent on both local *and* national party processes, as well as on purely local jurisdictional factors. Detailed delineation and measurement of influences at every relevant level is probably too much to hope for. Techniques nevertheless exist that grant to the researcher efficient methods of differentiating between relevant level-specific processes, thus making for some additional leverage in unbiased interpretation of effects estimates. Without going into detail at this point, the issue at hand is the application of various *mixed models*, *fixed effects models* and *panel data* techniques, whereby variation is partitioned in ways that may be said to model the mentioned complexity over and between levels of data reasonably well.[22] These comments necessarily very brief and coarse, the reader is invited to consider the specific applications as they are put to use in the individual chapters of the thesis.

1.4 Aspects of local democracy: The specific research questions

Below is given short research problem outlines of chapters two through five. Each chapter deals with specific substantive aspects of Norwegian local democracy, the focus of study progressing from different aspects of voter control, via questions of local parties' command of the policy making process to queries into the determinants of actual policy decisions.

The focus of inquiry in chapter two ("Regional velgermakt og politikktilpasning? Om betingelser for et virksomt lokaldemokrati")[23] is the preconditions for efficient local democratic politics, and as such it offers an evaluation of the operative chain of local democratic delegation, all from the manner in which voters efficiently are able to select representatives that campaign for certain policy platforms,[24] to the way in which voters might sensibly punish or reward ruling coalitions after policy has been implemented. Empirically it analyzes the electoral fates of local parties in regional (county) and municipal elections over

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[22] For example, in chapter two *panel data* (numerous local party branches' electoral fates in a number of elections) is analyzed. The choice between *fixed effects* models (in which observed and unobserved locality effects are completely factored out) and the more statistically efficient *random effects* models (which provides and factors out an estimate for *variation* in cross sectional effects) is tricky with noisy data. However, results do not differ markedly from the one model to the other. Chapter five, on the other hand, analyzes cross sectional (synchronic) data at the individual (politician) level nested within municipalities. One may hypothesize that many of the determinants of local politician preferences derive not only from individual characteristics, but also from contextual factors (municipal economic conditions, say). In addition, preferences may converge locally simply because individuals are located in a common social setting. *Multilevel analysis* of simultaneous individual *and* group level effects models such *clustering* of responses, and in so doing provides both proper tests of significance and some intuitive measure of explained variation. Needless to say, applications of such mixed models (or different panel models) requires that data may sensibly be partitioned in levels or cross-sections and time periods. This is not the case, for instance, in chapter four as it relies on the "control variable approach" as the only workable "remedy" for controlled analysis of purely cross-sectional data. For a discussion of panel data analysis, see e.g. Hsiao (2003). For discussions of multilevel analysis, see e.g. Singer (1998) and Bryk and Raudenbush (1992).

[23] In English: "Regional voter control and policy adjustment? On the preconditions for effective local democracy".

[24] Specifically the question is whether political parties (i.e. local branches of nation wide parties) are able to freely alter policy platforms in response to changes in local opinion (i.e. whether platforms are exogenously given or not).

seven election periods against expectations from theories of pre-election and post-election politics (Tabellini 2000:11-14; Ferejohn 1994; Cox 1997).[25]

Chapter three ("Self-organizing committees? An analysis of committee members' spending preferences in Norwegian local councils 1991-1999"), takes a fresh look at local assemblies and parties with respect to their ability to rationally organize the policy making process. In particular it seeks to assess the merits of two distinct hypotheses as delineated by for instance Krehbiel (1991): Are members on committees first and foremost spokesmen for extreme sector oriented views, able, in the absence of strong parties, to self-select to the committee of their choosing? In short, are committee members extreme preference outliers? Or are they carefully selected by strong and policy responsible parties – carefully, in the sense that selected members are allowed to hold only moderately outlying preferences, thereby rendering them credible *specialized informants* in parties' efforts to make sound sectoral policies?[26]

Chapter four ("Do Parties Matter for Local Revenue Policies? A comparison of Denmark and Norway"), is an empirical inquiry into the 'Do parties matter?' controversy in the context of local tax policies in two quite similar Nordic countries. On the one hand, one may argue that tax policy plays straight into a strong Western left-right dimension, and so is a major arena for political positioning (Boyne 1996). On the other hand, tax policy, like any other policy, is characterized both by path dependency and the demands of a well functioning economy (Rose 1985): Since revenues are routinely raised through established tax laws, politicians (left and right) will shy away from tax raises out of fear for electoral reactions. Thus, while the former line of argument would lead to expectations of substantial partisan effects, the latter argument would predict quite the opposite. In addition, and as a variant of the latter argument: If the *local* demands of modern economics has not effectively frustrated opportunities for local partisan positioning, one may posit that *national governments* have done so most adamantly. Declining local political leeway in the face of intense national involvement in and regulation of local politics would make substantial local partisan effects even more incredible in the context of Nordic local politics.[27]

Lastly, chapter five ("Local opposition to municipal mergers: Efficiency, local political diversity and redistribution"), analyzes the political and economic determinants of local politicians' preferences for merging their own locality with neighboring municipalities. Drawing upon previous research, suggesting that policy issues related to taxation and municipal service levels form central categories in voters' local political attitudes (Pettersen and Rose 1997), it combines efficiency gains data on proposed municipal mergers (Langørgen et. al 2002) with municipal level data on municipal income and tax levels and individual representatives' preferences. In a setting that resembles a substitute for Tiebout (1956) migration, distributive effects in municipal income and in the tax policy area are assumed to

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[25] Data sources in chapter two: Local parties' electoral shares, local parties' assembly shares and local economic data from *Statistics Norway/Norwegian Social ScienceData Services*, local citizen policy preferences from the *Institute for Social Research*, N ∈ [1318, 2828].
[26] Data sources in chapter three: Survey questionaire data form four *Norwegian School of Management* surveys to local politicians, N ∈ [856, 3753].
[27] Data sources in chapter four: Local parties' assembly shares and local economic data form *Statistics Norway/Norwegian Social Science Data Services* and *Statistics Denmark*; survey questionaire data form *Norwegian School of Management* survey to local politicians N ∈ [113, 433]). The survey is documented in Monkerud (2003).

influence local decisions to merge with neighboring localities.[28] In a certain respect, the research question in this chapter seeks to identify the determinants of *institutional choice* rather than day-to-day politics or policy making: Going beyond an evaluation of Norwegian local democracy at work, it also asks of possible obstacles to local democratic reform.[29]

1.5 Summary of results: Democracy in the context of Norwegian local politics

What are the wider implications from the findings in the present thesis? What is the state of local democracy in Norway? Do the separate studies of the thesis find that democracy in general is up and going? First of all, as one central motivation for work on the thesis has been the evaluation of democratic politics in general, some reflections should be offered on whether the empirical setting of Norwegian local politics has aided any in the attempt. Obviously, there is also the need for an overall assessment of whether the proposed theoretical patterns in fact *do* find their counterparts in the empirical realm. Second, and needless to say, an overall characterization of Norwegian local democracy as based on the empirical findings is clearly in order.

So, have the present studies managed to shed light on pertinent and general issues of democratic politics, and has the empirical context of Norwegian (and Nordic) local politics proved an appropriate laboratory to that end? The answer to this question is very much in the affirmative: Each of the separate studies shows that predicted patterns *do* also emerge empirically. In chapter two, it transpires that voters are more prone to punish local incumbents electorally as signs of policy responsibility on the part of the latter become more marked. Furthermore, electoral punishment is harsher as exogenous conditions worsen, the blame predictably placed with the local incumbent, and harsher still as voters are accorded real opportunities for installing an alternative ruling coalition. In chapter three, it is shown that there *is* an organizational role for local parties: Larger and presumably more responsible parties are all the more careful in selecting for functional committee work candidates that are but moderately sectorally inclined. Specifically, since larger local parties have a stake in local policies and finances, they also require good informants on committees that do not exaggerate sectoral needs. Smaller parties, with lesser stakes in local policies and finances, seem in their turn less inclined to hedge against committee members that hold extremely outlying sectoral views and that are therefore worse informants. The analysis in chapter four shows that there are indeed partisan effects in Nordic local politics: As socialist shares in local assemblies rise, so do local taxes and fees, although the effect is more pronounced and somewhat different in the Danish case (see below). Finally, in chapter five, it turns out that local politicians are quite sensitive to neighbors' tax and fee policies as they make up their minds with regards to more or less prospective mergers.

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[28] In addition, it is reasonable to assume that municipal assemblies are unable to strike credible *ex ante* deals, with the enlarged assembly collectively responsible for the enlarged jurisdiction's joint resources. This further substantiates the assumption that decisions to merge will have to be informed by potential distributive effects (see Coase 1960).

[29] The chapter an extension of my Master thesis (*hovedoppgave*) from the University of Oslo. See Monkerud (2004). Data sources in chapter five: Local economic data form *Statistics Norway/Norwegian Social Science Data Services*; survey questionaire data form *Norwegian School of Management* survey to local politicians, N=1379. The survey is documented in Monkerud (2003).

Next, one may ask what the present studies have to offer in terms of characterizing Norwegian local democracy in particular. On the face of it, the above account goes to show that all is apparently well: voters seem to react sensibly in local elections, local parties act as real organizations, parties may position themselves saliently in the tax policy area and voter and politician awareness is quite high in certain policy areas. The finer conclusion is not so generous, however. First of all, the cited patterns in local parties' electoral performance (chapter two) apply only to municipal governments. Regional (county) level jurisdictions cannot show for the same reasonable local voting patterns. Moreover, even in municipal elections, voters seldom get the chance to coordinate their voting behavior so as to effectively punish incumbents that do not deliver the required results: In the Norwegian multiparty system voters are only in the rarest of circumstances faced with clear alternatives to the incumbent coalition, this very much a necessary precondition for any substantial electoral losses on the part of the ruling coalition.

While local parties do seem to act as organizations in some circumstances, it is found in the study of committee organization (chapter three) that this is only the case in the one out of four economically salient policy areas that is not heavily regulated by central authorities. Specifically, the interpretation is that even large and *potentially* responsible parties *need not* care much about organizing the local policy process when policy is anyway severely restricted. This view may be contrasted with the premise underlying the assertion that "the [local] party – and, through it, the executive board and the assembly at large – is a relatively effective coordination mechanism" (Vabo 2001:32; my translation), The argument here is that local parties most of the time needn't worry too much about being effective in this manner.

As for the analysis of partisan influences (chapter four), it also shows that effects are by and large small. Furthermore, it seems that effects in Norway are not as clear as they are in Denmark. First of all, effects (i.e. in terms of policy differences between local assemblies of different compositions) are much more pronounced and stronger in the Danish case. Second, Danish assemblies of different compositions (in terms of socialist shares) seem to a much greater extent than their Norwegian counterparts to be able to act on financial motives (total tax revenues) *and* redistributive motives (the mix of progressive and regressive tax instruments). Presumably, this has much to do with the more restrictive regulation of other local tax instruments (income taxation) in the latter country.

Furthermore, even though politicians (and, presumably, voters) are quite sensitive to neighboring municipalities' tax policies when contemplating on whether or not to merge (chapter five), local policy is much a neighborhood fad anyway: For the most part, local opposition to mergers is grounded in economic disparities between neighbors. The ideal of the politically aware local citizenry reacting to prospective policy changes is very unlikely a fair description of the state of affairs.

Viewed as a whole, then, the different studies of the thesis would seem to corroborate a general contention that Norwegian local politics is quite low on salient and ideal democratic processes. Also, the studies would seem to confirm the accompanying contention that this has much to do with ever-stricter central regulation of local policy and finances. For instance, as voters seem to punish incumbents in times of local recession (chapter two), the latter is very much penalized for lack of adequate *central* financing. The central regulatory effect already mentioned as highly relevant in the above accounts of local organizational (chapter three) and local partisan positioning (chapter four) processes, it is also present in the process of municipal mergers: The larger portions of municipal expenditures – disparities in which are

the greatest obstacles to structural reform - are financed through the central transfers scheme. Still, the studies do find that there is at least *potential* for substantial political processes. Only in certain circumstances does local political action seem to matter in real terms. An overall conclusion is that there is plenty of room for improvement of local democratic politics in Norway.

2 Regional velgermakt og politikktilpasning? Om betingelser for et virksomt lokaldemokrati

2.1 Innledning

Fylkeskommunen som selvstendig forvaltningsnivå har alltid stått under hardt press. Med innføringen av direkte valg til fylkestinget og knesettingen av egen beskatningsrett i 1976 – reformer som skulle understreke fylkeskommunens demokratiske og autonome rolle – var forventningene høye. Men, mens valgdeltagelsen i det første valget lå på 71,5 prosent, var den ved siste valg (2003) nede i 55,1 prosent. Nyere undersøkelser tyder også på at nær en tredjedel av fylkestingsrepresentantene er for nedleggelse av fylkeskommunen (Kommunal Rapport 2003). Det kan altså se ut som om presset er tiltagende over tid. Samtidig luftes idéer om nye regionale løsninger for utøvelse av offentlig politikk: Bør man i det hele tatt holde seg med et folkevalgt nivå mellom kommuner og stat? Eller holder det med *statlig* regionalpolitikk der det viser seg behov for regionale løsninger og koordinering? Eller kan endog kommunene ordne dette selv, gjennom frivillig interkommunalt samarbeid? Og hvilke oppgaver bør et eventuelt mellomnivå ha? Bør et nytt mellomnivå i større grad finansiere sine tjenester selv gjennom øket beskatningsrett? Nylig har den såkalte Distriktskommisjonen lagt frem sine anbefalinger (NOU 2004:19) for et nytt regionalt nivå og Kommunenes sentralforbund har også utarbeidet en rapport som ser for seg en reduksjon i antallet regionale styringsenheter (Selstad 2004). Mye av debatten dreier seg om regionnivåets oppgavetilfang og handlefrihet, og kritikken mot offentlige og andre utredninger har blant annet dreiet seg om manglende visjoner og konkrete tiltak på disse områdene, slik dette kan undergrave det demokratiske innslaget i regiontanken (Hervik og Rattsø 2005).[30] Under i de fleste innlegg ligger nemlig at et fremtidig regionalt styringsnivå skal være *folkevalgt*.[31]

Med den pågående norske regiondebatten som en særdeles aktuell motivasjonskilde, er det generelle fokuset i denne artikkelen følgende: Hvordan kan lokale folkevalgte enheter – herunder mulige nye regioner – fungere som effektive demokratiske institusjoner? Utvilsomt kan det være på sin plass å trekke på de erfaringer man har gjort med den selvstendige fylkeskommunens virke gjennom snart 30 år. Utover en spesiell interesse for det regionale nivået i seg selv – der én modell altså er utprøvet i fylkeskommunen – trengs det til sammenligning: Hvor godt fungerer fylkesdemokratiet sett opp mot det lokale demokratiet i primærkommunene? Mens sistnevnte arbeider etter mye de samme prinsippene som fylkene (med hensyn til valgordning, intern organisering [formannskapsmodellen] mv.), er det nok av andre forhold som skiller de to forvaltningsnivåene fra hverandre (oppgaveportefølje, beskatningsfrihet mv.).

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[30] I Tor Selstads utredning faller eksempelvis "[d]røfting av finansieringsordninger og –modeller […] utenfor rammen for […] rapporten" (Selstad 2004:17).

[31] Se for eksempel ECONs utredninger (2004a;2004b), gjengitt i kortversjon i Kommunenes Sentralforbund (2004): "Samtlige offentlige utredninger som er gjennomført i de senere årene argumentere[r] for et *folkevalgt* mellomnivå i forvaltningen" (min uthevelse).

Artikkelen er organisert som følger: I neste del gjennomgås den foreliggende forskningen om det fylkeskommunale demokratiet. Vi skal her særlig påpeke to relaterte forhold som utgjør en svakhet ved den foreliggende forskningen. For det første legger mesteparten av forskningen som omhandler befolkningens *input* i fylkespolitikken vekt på holdninger til og kunnskap om fylkeskommunen og på befolkningens direkte deltagelse i fylkeskommunens virksomhet. For det andre har de studier som allikevel undersøker *samsvaret* mellom det folkelige og representative nivå i fylkeskommunen enten valgt å undersøke samsvaret i sosial bakgrunn mellom velger og representant, eller man har også mer eller mindre deskriptivt og statisk søkt å fastslå graden av holdningssamsvar mellom de to. Få undersøkelser knytter an til Cox' (1997:226) begrep om vedtaksrepresentativitet, dvs. til betraktninger omkring hvordan lokalpolitiske beslutninger fanger opp velgerpreferanser, hvordan velgere eventuelt kan reagere på lokalpolitiske utfall, og, i forlengelsen av dette, hvordan ulike systemiske betingelser kan tenkes å gjøre slike prosesser mer eller mindre vanskelige. Artikkelens første del munner ut i en presisering og begrunnelse for det konkurransedemokratiske synet på lokalpolitikk som legges til grunn i de påfølgende empiriske analyser.

På bakgrunn av gjennomgangen av demokratibegrepet vil artikkelen så i neste del trekke inn teoretiske perspektiver på velgerkontroll og politikktilpasning, og i påfølgende del også søke å teste empirisk noen av de generelle implikasjoner som fremsettes på data fra fylkesnivået – og også fra kommunenivået som et sammenligningsgrunnlag. Artikkelens siste del oppsummerer funnene i de empiriske analysene og konkluderer.

2.2 Fylkeskommuneforskningen og ulike demokratibegreper

I det følgende oppsummeres først forskningen omkring fylkesdemokratiet, og det pekes spesielt på berøringspunkter med relevant forskning på lokalpolitikk generelt (fylkes- og kommunepolitikk sett under ett). Fremstillingen støtter seg i stor grad på Signy Vabos (1995) brede forskningsoversikt over feltet, der de fleste aspekter ved fylkeskommunen som organisasjon behandles.[32] Dernest settes forskningen inn i et større bilde: Funnene og forskningsfokus må nettopp diskuteres opp mot en prinsipiell forståelse av de grunnleggende begreper om 'representativitet' og 'demokrati'.

2.2.1 Forskningen omkring befolkningens forhold til fylkespolitikken

En rekke av de forskningsbidrag som refereres i Vabos (1995) oversikt undersøker befolkningens generelle holdninger til fylkeskommunen som et mer eller mindre viktig forvaltningsnivå i det norske styringssystemet.[33] Hovedinntrykket er at befolkningen har en "rimelig oppslutning" om fylkeskommunen (Vabo 1995:28), men også at den som viktig forvaltningsnivå rangeres på tredjeplass etter vekselvis kommunen og staten med hensyn til dens innvirkning på hverdagen eller dens betydning ved valg (Vabo 1995:28-30). Samtidig er befolkningen usikre når det gjelder faktisk og ønsket oppgavefordeling mellom forvaltningsnivåene, men et flertall ønsker allikevel en dreining av oppgaver mer mot det lokale (kommunene) heller enn i statlig retning. Dessuten mener et flertall (utenom en andel

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[32] Befolkningens forhold til og kunnskap om fylkeskommunen, fylkeskommunens interne organisering, fylkeskommunal tjenesteyting, planprosesser mv. Her vektlegges kun det første aspektet.
[33] Blant annet refereres landsomfattende undersøkelser fra 1983 og 1990 og fylkesvise undersøkelser fra Sogn og Fjordane i 1988 og Rogaland i 1991 (Vabo 1995:28-32).

på 20 prosent usikre velgere) at "fylkeskommunen har sin naturlige plass i styringssystemet" (Vabo 1995:29).

Et annet fokus i forskningen er befolkningens kjennskap til og kunnskap om fylkeskommunen som organisasjon og styringssystem.[34] Det generelle inntrykket er at kunnskapen om fylkeskommunens oppgaver er lav, men at kjennskapen til hvem som utgjør den øverste politiske ledelse og de politiske organer er forholdsvis høy: Over halvparten (opp mot 65 prosent) kjenner navnet til fylkesordføreren, mens et noe knappere flertall (54 prosent i Sogn og Fjordane) svarer at fylkestinget er øverste politiske organ (Vabo 1995:32-33). Omfattende informasjonstiltak fra fylkeskommunens egen side – om fylkets egen virksomhet - ser heller ikke ut til å være særlig utbredt (Klausen og Østtveiten 1999:65-67). Selv om kunnskapsspørsmål slike som disse kun søker å fange opp "visse *minimums*kunnskaper" som må til for å oppnå "kontakt mellom de styrende lokalt og regionalt og velgerne" og dermed bedre lokale tilpasninger (Vabo 1995:32-33), *kan* det innvendes: Uten at dette sammenholdes med tendenser for eksempel på andre forvaltningsnivåer (vet et flertall av velgerne hvem som er Stortingspresident eller hvordan Stortinget er organisert?) sier de lite. En mer prinsipiell innvending er at velgerne egentlig ikke trenger særlig mye av den typen informasjon som her fokuseres på: Befolkningens politiske *preferanser* tas best hånd om – kan det hevdes – av organisasjoner som evner å formulere og tilgodese befolkningens mål. Dette poenget tas opp igjen med større tyngde i neste del av artikkelen.

Også direkte brukermedvirkning har stått i fokus: Klausen og Østtveiten (1999:65-71) dokumenterer at "den reelle graden av brukerinnflytelse er ganske moderat" innenfor videregående opplæring og at "pasientorganisasjonene i ganske stor grad trekkes inn" selv om det er en "viss variasjon mellom fylkene" på dette punktet (Klausen og Østtveiten 1999:80). Igjen kan man stille et prinsipielt spørsmål om både forskningsfokus og reelle implikasjoner av slike funn: Dersom man antar at et virksomt representativt folkestyre – dvs. dersom det representative demokratiet virker etter hensikten – kan man hevde at direkte medvirkning fra velgernes side ikke har noen *nødvendig* instrumentell verdi. Politikk er snarere resultatet av at ulike partier konkurrer i valg og deretter gjennomfører politikk etter den platformen velgerne gir sin tilslutning. Hvordan et representativt demokrati kan eller ikke kan virke etter hensikten er selve det teoretiske og analytiske hovedfokuset i denne artikkelen. Mens en videre prinsipiell *begrunnelse* for å vri fokuset i en slik retning tas opp i neste del av artikkelen, skal det her kun påpekes at fokuset uansett flyttes til det folkevalgte nivå eller – enda bedre – til forholdet mellom velgere og folkevalgte.

I Vabos (1995) oversikt finnes allikevel få henvisninger til folkevalgte og karakteristikker av deres adferd og *politiske* holdninger slik de oppfattes av dem selv eller av velgerne. Ett unntak er Baldersheim og Jamils (1992:55) dokumentasjon om rogalendingenes labre interesse for "hvem som har flertall i fylkestinget" (Vabo 1995:31). I et annet spørsmål mener over halvparten at "partitilhengere og interessegrupper […]blir] tatt mest hensyn til når beslutninger tas" (Vabo 1995:31; Baldersheim og Jamil 1992:55-57). Baldersheim og Jamil dokumenterer også at rogalendingenes avstand til politikken (målt gjennom spørsmål om hvor lett partiene kan skilles fra hverandre) er større på fylkesnivå enn på kommunenivå (*ibid*). Av nyere fylkesforskning tar eksempelvis Botvar (2006a) for seg konfliktlinjene (parti-, geografi- og sektorkonflikter) i de nordiske regionforsamlingene slik de oppfattes av de folkevalgte selv,

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[34] Blant annet refereres tre undersøkelser i Telemark (1979-1983) i tillegg til undersøkelsene nevnt i note 33.

mens Buch (2006) ser på ulike individuelle rolleoppfatninger (politiker-, parti- eller velgerorientering) for politikere i de samme forsamlinger.[35]

En innvending mot de sistnevnte studier er at de ikke tar for seg aktuelle stridsspørsmål og heller ikke trekker inn velgernivået. For det første, ettersom de ikke trekker inn aktuelle stridsspørsmål kan de heller ikke relatere undersøkte adfreds- eller holdningsmønstre i forsamlingen til rimelige preferansemønstre hos velgerne.[36] En empirisk studie som ser eksplisitt på partienes politiske oppfatninger på fylkesnivået kan godt nevnes. I deres studie av fylkespolitikernes politiske holdninger viser Sørensen og Hagen (1998) at i alle fall *potensialet* for partipolitisk posisjonering er stort også i fylkeskommunen på visse områder. Både når det gjelder faktiske og ønskede prioriteringer av forskjellige oppgaver er partiforskjellene små både i primærkommunene og i fylkeskommunene - og svakere i sistnevnte: Fylkeskommunen har et langt smalere oppgaveportefølje enn kommunene, og kan også sies å være sterkere regulert av nasjonale standarder. På andre områder er imidlertid ønskene klart divergerende - både i kommunestyrene og i fylkestingene er representanter for sosialistpartiene i sterkere grad for høyere skatter og avgifter, for bruk av private produsenter og for friere brukervalg. For kommunene slår dette også ut i faktisk politikk der sosialistpartirepresentanter er i flertall, mens det i fylkeskommunene ligger hindringer i veien gjennom skattereguleringen (fylkene kan ikke kreve inn gebyrer av betydning og krever ikke inn eiendomsskatt) og gjennom liten tilgang til private produsenter (kjøp av private sykehustjenester skjer sjelden) (Sørensen og Hagen 1998:111). Dette viser at partifarve, og lokalforsamlingens sammensetning etter partifarve, ofte kan være en god indikator på hvilke holdninger som *gjenspeiles* i forsamlingen: Uten at den enkelte studien undersøker velgernivået direkte, kan slike resultater relateres til analoge velgermønstre gjennom henvisning til andre studier – som ofte nettopp vil vise at partitilhørighet også der er gode indikatorer for en rekke aktuelle holdninger.[37]

For det andre er det likevel et potensielt problem at velgernivået ikke trekkes inn. Dersom valg til forsamlinger har noe for seg, er det grunn til å etterlyse forskning som søker å avdekke hvorvidt velgere har *reell kontroll* over hvilken politikk som vedtas og føres og hvilke representanter som velges inn i folkevalgte organer.[38] En innfallsvinkel har vært studier av det lokale rommet for politikk. Et eksempel er Hilmar Rommetvedts (1988) studie, der forskjeller i partienes valgoppslutning mellom kommunestyre-, fylkestings- og stortingsvalg undersøkes, og der det dokumenteres at fylkestingsvalg heller enn kommunetsyrevalg oppviser større likheter til stortingsvalget med hensyn til den lokale partivise oppslutningen. Tolkningen er at fylkestingsvalgene i sterkere grad enn kommunestyrevalgene gjenspeiler rent nasjonale disposisjoner blant velgerne, og at den større

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[35] Botvar (2006a) og Buch (2006) er deler av et større fremstøt (Mydske 2006) som undersøker flere prosessuelle forhold på det folkevalgte regionnivået i de nordiske landene: I tillegg til de nevnte problemstillingene undersøkes også politikeres selvoppfattning av egen innflytelse i regionale institusjoner og deres kontakter med det omkringliggende samfunnet. Kun Botvar (2006b) trekker in velgernivået (se diskusjonen nedenfor).

[36] Eksempelvis sier en studie som finner at geografiske heller enn partimessige konflikter spiller en rolle lite om hvorvidt og hvordan ulike preferanser langs den førstnevnte dimensjonen munner ut i faktisk politikk.

[37] Med bakgrunn i en ofte implisitt henvisning til valgforskningen knytter flere studier direkte eller indirekte (gjennom partitilhørighet) an mellom preferanser og forsamlingsvedtak. Eksempelvis kan nevnes Borge (2000), Borge og Rattsø (2004), Blom-Hansen et al. (2006), NOU (2005:6, vedlegg 8) og Monkerud og Sørensen (2004) som alle knytter politiske vedtak (om skatter og avgifter eller om konkurranseutsetting) til kommunestyrets sammensetning og/eller behov og preferanser i elektoratet.

[38] Et mønster med hyppige *utskiftninger* ikke trenger allikevel ikke å være det man er på jakt etter: I enkle modellforståelser holder det med at velgerne kan true effektivt med utskiftninger, slik at forsamlingen *tilpasser* seg preferanser.

spredningen i kommunevalgsresultatene viser at det er større rom for politikk på kommunenivå enn på fylkesnivå (Rommetvedt 1988:162-163). Også Botvar (2006b:93-99) undersøker noe av det samme i en sammenlignende studie over de nordiske landene, mens Klausen og Østtveiten (1999:15-24) ser valgdeltagelse i fylkestingsvalgene som en indikasjon på "legitimiteten i systemet" (*ibid*.:15). Her kan det selvsagt innvendes mot den siste innfallsvinkelen at høy valgdeltagelse er "en nødvendig, men ikke tilstrekkelig betingelse for at befolkningen skal bli i stand til å styre i overensstemmelse med de demokratiske idealene" (*ibid*.). Både de studiene som blott ser på lokale varisjoner i den partivise oppslutningen og de som undersøker valgdeltagelsen vil se bort fra de spesifikke mekanismer gjennom hvilke velgerne kan tenkes å *kontrollere* politikken. Det nettopp er et slikt poeng som ligger bak analysene i denne artikkelen. Før analysedesign og –resultater presenteres kan de ankepunkter som forskningsgjennomgangen hittil har oppregnet med fordel presiseres og sammenfattes ytterligere: Hvilke teoretiske fundamenter kan i særlig grad underbygge fokuset på kontrollaspektet ved demokratisk politikk?

2.2.2   *Noen betraktninger omkring begrepet* representativt demokrati

Av gjennomgangen over synes det klart at mesteparten av fylkesforskningen har lagt vekt på befolkningens inngående kunnskap om og forhold til fylkeskommunen som forvaltningsorganisasjon. Også direkte brukermedvirkning har stått i fokus for forskningen. Mindre inngående har vært skrevet om fylket som representativ politisk og demokratisk institusjon, der beskrivelser av befolkningens forhold til sine politiske representanter står i sentrum. Her trengs altså til avklaring på tre relaterte punkter: For det første, hvor inngående kjennskap må befolkningen ha til fylkeskommunen før man kan kalle sistnevnte "demokratisk"? Spørsmålet er altså om den type kunnskap som fylkesforskningen stort sett dokumenterer er nødvendig eller relevant i sammenhengen. For det andre, hva skal vi forstå med begerepet 'representativitet'? For det tredje kan det diskuteres hvor viktig medvirkningsaspektet er: Hvor viktig *kan* det være i et politisk fellesskap som fylket? Og er det viktigere enn andre mekanismer når det til syvende og sist skal fattes et overordnet representativt vedtak?

Befolkningens *detaljerte* kunnskap om det representative politiske nivået – dvs. institusjonene og også partiene og deres posisjoner - kan hevdes å spille en mindre rolle enn det en kan få inntrykk av gjennom den refererte forskningen. Gjennom ulike signaler fra omgivelsene – for eksempel meningsmålinger, etablerte partinavn, informasjon fra meningsfeller ol. - kan de aller fleste (når det virkelig gjelder) treffe rasjonelle valg med hensyn til det å stemme på den eller de kandidater som tilbyr politikk som ligger nærmest ens egne preferanser: "Reasoned choice does not require full information; rather, it requires the ability to predict the consequences of actions"(Lupia og McCubbins 1998:2).

Representativitet kan på sin side defineres på flere måter. For det første kan representativitet forstås både som *bakgrunnsrepresentativitet* og *holdningsrepresentativitet*. I det første av disse tilfellene er det et poeng at de valgte delegater (lokalpolitikerne) har samme bakgrunn som de representerte (velgerne) hva gjelder sosio-økonomiske, etniske og kulturelle faktorer. Idéen er at en slik dypere kobling mellom representanten og den samfunnsgruppen han/hun representerer kan gi større legitimitet til de politiske beslutninger som tas – i tillegg til at det sikrer meningssamsvar mellom velger- og representantnivå via det holdnings- og interessefellesskapet som antas å eksistere innenfor de ulike samfunnsgruppene. Det kan imidlertid hevdes at dette idealet i praksis er vanskelig å oppnå. For eksempel skiller

fylkestings- og kommunestyrerepresentantene seg fra velgerne når det gjelder både utdanning (overrepresentasjon av høyt utdannede blant politikerne) og kjønn (flest mannlige representanter) (se for eksempel NOU 2000:22:kap. 8; Botvar 2006a:99-107). Det er imidlertid ikke sikkert at dette trenger å ha så store uheldige konsekvenser:

Gjennom *holdningsrepresentativitet* kan ulike velgergrupper sikres politikere som målbærer deres holdninger, slik "[r]epresentation [often is] defined as having one's views *voiced* in the legislative decision-making process" (Cox 1997:225, min uthevelse). Tidligere studier har vist at holdningene hos norske lokale partipolitikere (kommunestyrerepresentanter) stort sett gjenspeiler holdningene hos tilsvarende grupperinger på velgernivå (Hagen og Sørensen 2001).

Mot disse gjennomgripende formene for representativitet kan det på den annen side hevdes at *vedtaksrepresentativitet* må være det mest sentrale og egentlige mål dersom politikk i det hele tatt er interessant. Representativitet kan nettopp defineres som graden av "having one's views reflected in the final product of the legislative decision-making process, that is, in *enacted policy*" (Cox 1997:225-226, min uthevelse).[39] Mens et elektorat vil bestå av et i prinsippet uendelig antall nyanser i holdninger, må forsamlingen til sist treffe et vedtak på bekostning av alle alternative vedtak. I de empiriske analysene som følger er idéen om vedtaksrepresentativitet styrende, slik de undersøker *på hvilke måter* ulike vedtak kan tenkes kontrollert av velgerne gjennom utskiftninger av representative beslutningstagere.

Idéen om det representative demokrati kan kvalifiseres ytterligere. I denne artikkelen legges størst vekt på å kartlegge erfaringer med lokalpolitikken som *konkurransedemokratisk* arena, der blikket rettes mot velgernes muligheter for å skifte ut konkurrerende styrende eliter gjennom valg (se for eksempel Rasch 2000a; Schumpeter 1942; Riker 1982; Downs 1957). Et *deltagerdemokratisk* perspektiv vil i tillegg vektlegge muligheter for medvirkning og nær kontakt mellom velger og folkevalgt (se for eksempel Rose 2000:69-72; Cohen 1984; Pateman 1970; Ware 1987). Begge retninger innenfor studiet av lokaldemokratiske prosesser vil ha sin berettigelse – på like og ulike vilkår: Ytre sett kan begge idealtyper lede frem til politisk representasjon som avspeiler velgernes preferanser eller som også er representativ i bakgrunns- eller holdningsmessig forstand. I tillegg vil det ligge et formativt og oppdragende element på velgernes vegne i det deltagerdemokratiske perspektivet. Og i et *diskursdemokratisk* perspektiv kan det hevdes at bred deltagelse og diskusjon legger opp til en ytterligere gevinst ved at argumentenes vekt snarere enn et aggregat av egninteresserte synspunkter vil komme til å prege utfallet av den politiske beslutningsprosessen (Rasch 2000b:14): Selve diskursprosessen vil virke til at eventuelle skinnuenigheter avdekkes.

Alt annet likt kan man imidlertid anta at et større politiske fellesskap i større grad trenger sterke formelle institusjoner (les: representative partier) skal det lokale demokratiet fungere godt. I et lite politisk fellesskap kan den direkte tilgangen til både enkeltpolitikere - og til hele styringskjeden fra det politiske nivå og ned til de enkelte tjenesteenheter - lettes betraktelig. I et større fellesskap kan man anta at mer eller mindre klare politiske plattformer slik de fremføres av partiene *må* spille en større rolle. Poenget er altså at man i et større politisk fellesskap nok kan ha større forhåpninger om demokratiske gevinster gjennom forbedrede

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[39] Slik sett er også den mest representative politikken på en enkelt dimensjon den sentrumsorienterte (Cox 1997:226). Mer presist kan det hevdes at politikk som tilgodeser medianvelgerens preferanser er den mest representative (slik den minimerer det gjennomsnittlige avviket til velgernes preferanser).

konkurransedemokratiske betingelser (politiske ansvarsforhold, valgordning, intern politisk organisering mv.) enn gjennom tilrettelegging for bredere deltagelse og medvirkning.[40]

Dessuten kan man *generelt* anta at den nevnte diskursdemokratiske proseessen frem mot enighet sannsynligvis må ende på et visst punkt: Til sist kan man sitte igjen med et residual av konflikt, og det må uansett fattes en avgjørelse som kan regnes som omforent (Rasch 2000b:15).[41] Fokuset tvinges dermed over til effektive kontrollmekanismer for å sikre best mulig samsvar mellom velgerpreferanser og poitiske beslutninger. I et slikt perspektiv blir begreper som *gjenvalg* og *partikonkurranse* sentrale. Delegasjon gjennom representasjon og en virksom partikonkurranse må meget sannsynlig spille en helt sentral rolle i de fleste typer demokratier.

2.3   Betingelser for et velfungerende representativt demokrati

Den foregående diskusjonen har forhåpentlig vist at det godt kan anlegges en forståelse av lokalpolitikk som prosesser innenfor et representativt (konkurranse)demokrati – både utfra et prinsipielt standpunkt og utfra det fokuset som forskningen generelt og overveiende har hatt på andre aspekter ved lokalpolitikken. Med dette som forutsetninger kan betingelsene for et effektivt lokaldemokratiet presiseres ytterligere.

2.3.1   *Betingelser for et velfungerende lokaldemokrati: Partiløfter og velgerreaksjoner*

For at et representativt demokrati skal fungere hensiktsmessig må to overordnede betingelser være oppfylt. Partiene må for det første tilkjennes tilstrekkelig lokalt handlingsrom: Interessante løfter skal kunne fremmes og innfrielse av løftene må kunne gjøre praktisk forskjell. For det andre må velgerne ha anledning til å kunne straffe de politiske partier som ikke innfrir sine løfter. Kravene kan ses som gjensidig opprettholdende: Dersom partiene mangler evne til å kunne formulere betydelige politiske løfter, vil det heller ikke foreligge noen rasjonelle grunner for velgerne til å straffe eller belønne faktisk politikk. Og omvendt, dersom velgerne av ulike grunner ikke reagerer på faktisk politikk, vil heller ikke partiene ha incentiver til å formulere alternative politiske løsninger. Flere forhold kan imidlertid stå i veien for at disse oppfylles:

Det første forholdet er definerende for *representative systemer* som sådan, og springer ut av potensielle agent-problemer i forholdet mellom velgere og representanter. De to neste omhandler *organiseringen* av lokaldemokratiet – slik det kan hevdes at forskjellige politiske ordninger gjør styringskjeden mer eller mindre oversiktlig og håndterlig. De to siste forholdene har med de videre *rammebetingelser* å gjøre: Dersom lokaldemokratiet ikke levnes særlig spillerom, så finnes verken grunnlag for partienes tilpasning til lokale preferanser eller for reelt virksomme straffereaksjoner fra velgernes side.

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[40] Selv i smågrupper vil det være enkeltpersoner som tar ordet og fører debatten, og i større grupper forsterkes tendensen. Dersom dette er selve hovedproblemet, ligger den demokratiske utfordring i å finne frem til "rules of fair representation" (se for eksempel Klausen (2004b:83-84) og hans diskusjon av bla. Schumpeters (1942) og Dahls (1989) synspunkter på slike problemer).
[41] Se for øvrig Elsters (1983:33-42) prinsipielle diskusjon omkring etiske og praktiske problemer forbundet med oppnåelsen av en enhetlig flertallsvilje eller enstemmighet – som man *kan* hevde er den politiske prosessens hensikt og endelige formål.

For det første, kan det altså være trekk ved representative systemer i seg selv som gjør en effektiv straffemekanisme vanskelig. I klassiske modeller med fullstendig informasjon (for eksempel Downs (1957)) er politikken gitt: Partienes plattformer og politikk tilpasses perfekt til velgernes preferanser – gitt at partiene har full mobilitet langs den aktuelle politikkdimensjonen. I Ferejohns (1994) moralsk hasard-modell er bildet annerledes: Politikerne/partiene vet rimeligvis bedre enn velgerne hvilke grep som skal til for nå et bestemt resultat gitt andre eksogene faktorer som også er med på å bestemme det endelige resultatet. I tillegg har politikeren/partiene bedre informasjon om hvilke forhold som ligger utenfor deres kontroll. Velgerne på sin side er henvist til å stemme ut eller inn kandidater på bakgrunn av resultater alene: De har verken oversikt over det relative innslaget av eksogene forhold eller over de konsekvenser slike forhold har. *Denne informasjonsasymmetrien kan utnyttes av politikerne, og dette kan forklare hvorfor velgerne ikke alltid får den politikken de vil ha og også peke på situasjoner der lokalpolitikerne finner det mer eller mindre regningssvarende å yte innsats (henholdsvis i oppgangs- eller nedgangstider).*

For det andre kan et proporsjonalt valgsystem være en praktisk hindring: I partisystemer med få partier (to eller tre) har velgerne alltid mulighetene til å kaste en sittende (flertalls)koalisjon og erstatte den med en ny en. I flerpartisystemer som det norske kan dette i praksis vise seg vanskelig. *Velgerne kan vanskelig koordinere sine valg seg imellom for å sikre én alternativ koalisjon valgseieren.* Cox (1997:122) viser at for systemer med flere enn 4-5 partier, så finnes ingen rasjonelle holdepunkter for velgerne dersom dannelsen av slike alternative koalisjoner er et mål.[42]

For det tredje, kan det hevdes at forklaringen på manglende tilpasning og velgerkontroll heller ligger i at norske kommuner og fylker (i det store og hele) arbeider etter *formannskapsprinsippet*. Ordningen innebærer en vektlegging av *konsensus* fremfor politisk ansvarlighet (Hagen og Sørensen 2001) og gjør det vanskelig for velgerne å plassere ansvaret for den politikken som føres. Mot dette kan det hevdes at noen holdepunkter vil velgerne alltid ha: Martinussen (2004) finner for eksempel at ordførerpartier går sterkere tilbake når lokale skatter og gebyrer settes opp – men substansielt sett er effektene uansett små. Allikevel: *Muligens vil velgerne ha problemer med å plassere ansvaret for lokalpolitikken i et konsensusdemokrati a lá det norske.*

For det fjerde, er det blitt trukket frem at norsk lokalpolitikk arbeider under stadig strammere rammevilkår. Kommunene, og fylkene spesielt, møter økende statlig overstyring i form av strengere minstestandarder og tiltagende bruk av øremerkede statlige overføringer (NOU 2005:6:kap.5). Statlige overføringer utgjør brorparten av fylkenes inntekter, og i kommunene utgjør overføringene sammen med sterkt regulerte lokale skatter 72 prosent av inntektene (SSB 2001). Samtidig utgjør samlet kommunalt konsum 13,5 prosent av BNP (NOU 2005:6:tabell3.3, kap.3). Sørensen og Vabo (2004:21) viser at fylkestingsrepresentantene over tid vurderer statlige reguleringer av lokalpolitikken som stadig strengere på de fleste tjenesteområder, og at den også vurderes som strengere i fylkene enn i kommunene. *Slik sett kan en forklaring på eventuelt manglende lokaldemokratisk tilpasning av politikken ligge i det trange formelle handlingsrom statlige myndigheter levner lokalpolitikken.*

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[42] Med (strategisk) koordinering menes at velgerne samler sine stemmer omkring lavere rangerte kandidater med høyere vinnersjanser. I likevekt gir slik adferd velgerne anledning til å skifte ut sittende koalisjoner ved koordinert stemmegivning uten at det tys til sentraliserte beslutninger.

For det femte, og som en variant av det ovenstående argumentet, kan manglende evne til lokal politikkformulering bunne i de nasjonale partiorganisasjonens overherredømme. Lokalpolitikk kan rett og slett ha blitt for viktig for nasjonale aktører generelt til at den kan overlates til lokale aktører, og sistnevnte må i sitt avhengighetsdilemma innse at de må spille på lag med førstnevnte: *Manglende lokalpolitiske evner er et tegn på at det er den nasjonale partikonkurransen som er den toneangivende, dvs. at de nasjonale partiorganisasjonene ikke tillater de lokale partiene å formulere lokalt tilpasset politikk.*

2.3.2 Norsk lokalpolitikk: Mandatmodell eller sanksjonsmodell?

En grunnleggende forutsetning er at velgerne kan tilbakeføre resultatet av utført politikk til et ansvarlig parti eller en ansvarlig koalisjon for eventuelt å kunne straffe med stemmeflukt (eller true med det) i et enkelt valg. Sett at partiene, av ulike grunner, ikke kan justere sin politikk etter velgernes preferanser før et valg, for eksempel fordi det vanskelig lar seg forutsi hvor ansvaret vil ligge i kommende valgperiode. Denne idéaltypiske forståelsen av demokratisk politikk kan benevnes *sanksjonsmodellen*, slik den kjennetegnes ved at velgerne vurderer nettopp *utført* politikk når de avgir sin stemme (såkalt *post-election politics*, se Persson og Tabellini (2000:11-14)).

Men det er heller ikke sikkert at en slik straffereaksjon etter en gjennomført valgperiode lar seg gjennomføre i praksis. Dersom også observerte ansvarsforhold er diffuse er velgerne henvist til å stemme på de partier som *før* valget kan tilby troverdig politikk – troverdig i den betydningen at det er i partienes interesse å gjennomføre den politikken de gikk til valg på når beslutningen skal tas. Forutsetningene om at norsk lokalpolitikk arbeider etter formannskapsprinsippet (slik det utydeliggjør ansvarsforhold), at ulike politiske partier har bedre informasjon enn velgerne om forhold som påvirker politiske resultater (slik det utydeliggjør den politiske innsatsen) og at velgerne mangler evne til å koordinere "straffeutmålingen" (slik det skaper usikkerhet omkring alternative løsninger) kan uansett gjøre slik kontroll *ex post* (etter gjennomført politikk) mer eller mindre vanskelig.

Dersom partiene (eller kandidatene) er opptatt av posisjoner - enten i seg selv eller som middel til å gjennomføre en spesiell velgeruavhengig politikk - og dersom ansvaret for utført politikk på sin side *kan* plasseres utvetydig, vil partiene kunne tilby troverdige løsninger i forkant av valget – aktiv kontroll *ex post* i det enkelte valg blir overflødig. Slik sett skulle velgerreaksjoner i det hele tatt ikke kunne spores. I denne idéaltypiske *mandatmodellen*[43] kan altså partiene tilpasse sin politikk til velgernes preferanser før et enkelt valg. Men, vi støter igjen på de praktiske problemer rundt tydelig plassering av ansvaret for politisk handling. I et lengre perspektiv kan det imidlertid hevdes at partier kan arbeide etter en slik modell: Partier kan over tid bygges opp rundt langsiktige partinavn, som organisasjoner med egne mål til forskjell fra enkeltrepresentantenes (Krehbiel 1993:238), og de kan signalisere troverdighet for at politikken gjennomføres gjennom intern partidisiplin og utvelgelse av kandidater.[44]

Fra diskusjonen ovenfor kan man altså slutte at lokal demokratisk kontroll med det representative nivå kan skje på to idéaltypiske måter. I analysene som følger undersøkes nærmere hvordan en *sanksjonsmodell* synes oppfylt på fylkes- og kommunenivå - gjennom å

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[43] Såkalt *pre-election politics* (Persson og Tabellini 2000:11-14).
[44] Se for eksempel Snyder og Groseclose (2000) og Wright og Schaffner (2002) for empiriske resultater som støtter opp under slike institusjonelle partieffekter.

se på endring i partioppslutning på bakgrunn av forhold som kan innvirke på velgernes vurderinger av ytt innsats etter en endt valgperiode.

I første omgang skal vi imidlertid se nærmere på muligheten for partienes tilpasning til velgerpreferanser.Vi spør altså: Kan partikonkurransen best beskrives som en *mandatmodell* der et lokalparti (på lang sikt) er nødt til å tilby én bestemt type politikk? Eller har typiske lokalpartier snarere anledning til å tilpasse sin plattform spontant til den lokale opinionen?

2.4 Hvordan fungerer velgerkontrollen?

I analysene som følger benyttes data om oppslutningen til de tradisjonelle og landsdekkende partiene i de sju lokalvalgene fra 1979 til 2003. De ulike partienes oppslutning i lokalvalgene kobles til lokale velgerpreferanser målt gjennom velgernes gjennomsnittlige selvplassering på høyre-venstre-aksen, slik den er undersøkt i Stortingsvalgundersøkelsene.[45] Gjennom disse analysene kan det i noen grad gis svar på spørsmålet om *hvordan* velgerne ved å stemme på ulike partier kan gi uttrykk for ønsket politikk. I neste omgang skal det legges til grunn et *post-election*-perspektiv: Hvilke muligheter har velgerne for å straffe ansvarlige partier/koalisjoner?

2.4.1 Hvordan tilpasses politikken til lokale preferanser?

Sett at partiene som stiller til valg fritt kan tilpasse sine plattformer til velgerpreferansene i det aktuelle valgdistrikt.[46] Dersom velgerne beveger seg til høyre på den aktuelle dimensjonen, er det en enkel forventning at også partiene tilpasser seg dette: Dersom opinionen beveger seg til høyre, beveger alle partiene seg til høyre, og velgeroppslutningen om de enkelte partiene skulle forbli nokså uendret. Mot dette kan man anføre de hindringer som ligger i veien for spontane tilpasninger som ble belyst i forrige del av artikkelen: Man kan anta at de nasjonale og landsdekkende partier både representerer klare potensielle "labels" på en sentral høyre-venstre dimensjon – slik det viser seg i flere opinionsundersøkelser der partiene plasseres langs denne dimensjonen - og at de som organisasjoner rår over virkemidlene som skal til for å gjøre en slik "label" troverdig (gjennom utvelging av kandidater mv.). I opinionsundersøkelser ses dessuten at høyre-venstre-dimensjonen stadig er en viktig

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[45] Se tabell A2.1 og A2.2 i appendikset for deskriptiv statistikk over variablene. Opplysninger om partienes oppslutning i lokalvalgene er hentet fra NSDs kommunedatabase, og måler oppslutning omkring en oppgitt liste som antall stemmer for listen i den enkelte kommune delt på totalt antall stemmer i kommunen. Der antallet stemmer oppgis som null, antas at listen ikke stiller til valg i vedkommende kommune, og observasjonen kodes dermed med verdien "manglende". Se tabell A2.3 og A2.4 for deskriptiv statistikk. Opplysningene om HV-selvplassering er hentet fra Statistisk sentralbyrå og Institutt for samfunnsforsknings valgundersøkelser; 1977, 1981, 1985, 1989, 1993 og 1997, og er tilrettelagt i aggregert form av sistnevnte institusjon. Spørsmålsfotmuleringen har variert noe opp gjennom årene, både med hensyn til benevnelser (radikal-konservativ vs. venstre-høyre), skala (1-7 vs. 1-9 vs. 1-10 vs. 0-10) og retning (høyeste skalverdi til venstre vs. til høyre). Her er indeksen selvsagt både fortolket ("konservativ"="høyre"), likerettet ("høyre" > "venstre") og standardisert (til en 0-9-skala). Verken Statistisk sentralbyrå, Institutt for samfunnsforskning eller NSD er ansvarlig for den analysen eller tolkningen som er gjort på bakgrunn av disse dataene i denne artikkelen.

[46] I en klassisk formulering av partitilpasning – med to partier som stiller til valg etter flertallsmetoden (samt en rekke andre forutsetninger, se for eksempel Helland (2003)) - kan det vises at partienes/kandidatenes posisjoner *konvergerer* mot medianvelgerens veldefinerte idealpunkt på én veldefinert politisk dimensjon (Downs 1957). I flerpartisystemer (med flere enn tre partier) med proporsjonale valg vil imidlertid partienes plattformer (i likevekt) spres langs den aktuelle dimensjonen (Helland 2003).

skillelinje i norsk politikk.[47] Videre kan man anta at spesielt *lokale* avdelinger må belage seg på å gå til valg på det nasjonale partiets "label" – enkeltvis er det ikke mye lokalpartiene kan gjøre for å modifisere slike overordnede partivaremerker. Dersom dette er riktig, skulle man heller forvente at de klassiske høyrepartier/borgerlige partier (H, Frp, KrF, V og muligens Sp) øker sin oppslutning der lokale velgerpreferansene skifter til høyre, og at de sosialistiske partier (DNA, SV og muligens Sp) taper i oppslutning. Og at endringen i oppslutning for de nevnte partier går i motsatt retning når velgerpreferansene skifter til venstre.

Formelt testes denne hypotesen ved varianter av følgende modell:

$$L_{ikt}^{P} \equiv \log\left(\frac{V_{ikt}^{P}}{1\text{-}V_{ikt}^{P}}\right) = \gamma_{.}^{P} + \beta_{HV}^{P} \cdot HV_{kt} + u_{t}^{P} + v_{k}^{P} + e_{ikt}^{P}, \text{ der } P \in \{SV,DNA,Sp,V,KrF,H,Frp\}.$$

Oppslutningen til de ulike landsdekkende partiene i lokalvalgene (kommunestyrevalg og fylkestingsvalg) estimeres altså som en funksjon av den gjennomsnittlige høyre-venstre-selvplasseringen regionvis (HV_{kt}).[48] Det legges til grunn en logistisk (logit)transformasjon av oppslutningen til partiene, slik dette gir konsistente prediksjoner for oppslutning innefor [0,1]-intervallet. I modellen er HV gjennomsnittlig selvplassering på HV-aksen i region *k* ved lokalvalg *t* (0=helt til venstre, 9=helt til høyre), γ og β_{HV} parametre, og u_t, v_k og e_{ikt} feiltermer som fanger opp variasjonen over henholdsvis valgperioder (indeksert *t*), regioner (indeksert *k*) og opptellingskretser (kommune *i* innenfor region *k* i hver valgperiode *t*; indeksert *ikt*).[49] Hypotesen som først og fremst skal testes er altså:

Hypotese 1: $\beta_{HV} > 0$ for borgerlige partier (H, Frp, KrF, V og muligens Sp) og $\beta_{HV} < 0$ for sosialistiske partier (DNA, SV og muligens Sp).

Signifikante estimater for β_{HV} i analysene tas altså til inntekt for en modell der partienes posisjoner ligger mer eller mindre fast, og der velgernes endrede preferanser for høyre- eller venstrepolitikk kommer til uttrykk gjennom endret oppslutning om "fastlåste" partier. Varianskomponentene (benevnt $\sigma_{.}^{2}$; over u_t, v_k og e_{ikt}) – dvs. deres størrelse og innbyrdes

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[47] Og høyre-venstre-dimensjonen er fortsatt den *viktigste* i de fleste demokratier (Huber og Inglehart 1995).

[48] Valgundersøkelsene (fra 1977 og frem til 2001) måler HV-selvplassering hos mellom 1416 (i 1981) og 2143 (i 1993) respondenter. På kommunenivå for de enkelte valgperioder er N selvsagt meget lav, og HV-mål på dette nivået er ubrukelige for vårt formål. I de tidlige valgundersøkelsene er enkeltkommuner av forskjellige typer (næringsstruktur, sentralitet mv.) valgt ut til å representere regioner – dvs. grupper av fylker. I andre analyser (Monkerud 2005) der det legges til grunn *fylkesvise* HV-mål er imidlertid resultatene ikke svært forskjellige fra dem som presenteres her. Uansett kan det for enkelte fylker i de tidlige undersøkelsene være en viss fare for at HV-målene representerer synet i spesielle kommunetyper (som valgt fra det ene av flere fylker i regionen) mer enn fylket som sådan. Takk til Jo Saglie som gjorde meg oppmerksom på dette. En potensiell ulempe ved dette regionale HV-målet er at det omfatter svært store geografiske enheter, slik at det uansett vil tilsløre (altså utjevne) større forskjeller mellom større subregioner innenfor enheten. Se tabell A2.2 i appendikset for oversikt over regioner (fylkesgrupper). Blant regionene i de enkelte valgperioder varierer N (antallet respondenter) fra 59 til 299.

[49]Denne *random effects*-modellen samt de som legges til grunn i neste del av artikkelen antar standardforutsetningene om normalfordelte feilledd over de respektive enheter (valgperioder, regioner, opptellingskretser mv.), og gir dermed en enkel oversikt over variasjonen over de aktuelle enhetene (regioner og valgperioder).

Tabell 2.1: Partienes lokaltilpasning i fylkestingsvalg 1979-2003. Estimerte effekter av gjennomsnittlig regionvis selvplassering på HV-aksen på partienes oppslutning (L).

		I	II	III
SV	HV (HV-plassering, 0=venstre, 9=høyre)	-	-0.572 ***	0.033
	$\sigma_u^{\,2}$ (varians over valgperioder, var[u_t])	0.236 ***	0.220 ***	0.237 ***
	$\sigma_v^{\,2}$ (varians over regioner, var[v_k])	0.102 ***	-	0.105 ***
	$\sigma_e^{\,2}$ (varians over kommunepartier, var[e_{ikt}])	0.283 ***	0.336	0.283 ***
	-2LL	4541.6	4982.0	4545.3
	N		2827	
DNA	HV (HV-plassering, 0=venstre, 9=høyre)	-	-0.738 ***	0.038
	$\sigma_u^{\,2}$ (varians over valgperioder, var[u_t])	0.039 ***	0.050 ***	0.039 ***
	$\sigma_v^{\,2}$ (varians over regioner, var[v_k])	0.117 ***	-	0.122 ***
	$\sigma_e^{\,2}$ (varians over kommunepartier, var[e_{ikt}])	0.183 ***	0.256 ***	0.183 ***
	-2LL	3306.6	4210.4	3310.3
	N		2828	
Sp	HV (HV-plassering, 0=venstre, 9=høyre)	-	-0.416 **	-0.171 ***
	$\sigma_u^{\,2}$ (varians over valgperioder, var[u_t])	0.078 ***	0.072 ***	0.075 ***
	$\sigma_v^{\,2}$ (varians over regioner, var[v_k])	0.705 ***	-	0.675 ***
	$\sigma_e^{\,2}$ (varians over kommunepartier, var[e_{ikt}])	0.650 ***	0.790 ***	0.650 ***
	-2LL	6888.4	7386.1	6887.3
	N		2827	
V	HV (HV-plassering, 0=venstre, 9=høyre)	-	0.213 ***	0.017
	$\sigma_u^{\,2}$ (varians over valgperioder, var[u_t])	0.030 ***	0.028 **	0.030 ***
	$\sigma_v^{\,2}$ (varians over regioner, var[v_k])	0.130 ***	-	0.130 ***
	$\sigma_e^{\,2}$ (varians over kommunepartier, var[e_{ikt}])	0.496 ***	0.615 ***	0.496 ***
	-2LL	5950.3	6500.9	5953.7
	N		2754	
KrF	HV (HV-plassering, 0=venstre, 9=høyre)	-	1.128 ***	0.058
	$\sigma_u^{\,2}$ (varians over valgperioder, var[u_t])	0.033 ***	0.063 ***	0.033 ***
	$\sigma_v^{\,2}$ (varians over regioner, var[v_k])	0.293 ***	-	0.284 ***
	$\sigma_e^{\,2}$ (varians over kommunepartier, var[e_{ikt}])	0.341 ***	0.489	0.341 ***
	-2LL	5064.0	6032.8	5066.8
	N		2828	
H	HV (HV-plassering, 0=venstre, 9=høyre)	-	0.644 ***	0.091 **
	$\sigma_u^{\,2}$ (varians over valgperioder, var[u_t])	0.084 ***	0.092 ***	0.084 ***
	$\sigma_v^{\,2}$ (varians over regioner, var[v_k])	0.145 ***	-	0.130 ***
	$\sigma_e^{\,2}$ (varians over kommunepartier, var[e_{ikt}])	0.259 ***	0.297 ***	0.258 ***
	-2LL	4281.9	4628.1	4282.9
	N		2828	
Frp	HV (HV-plassering, 0=venstre, 9=høyre)	-	0.698 ***	0.051
	$\sigma_u^{\,2}$ (varians over valgperioder, var[u_t])	0.703 ***	0.745 ***	0.705 ***
	$\sigma_v^{\,2}$ (varians over regioner, var[v_k])	0.175 ***	-	0.166 ***
	$\sigma_e^{\,2}$ (varians over kommunepartier, var[e_{ikt}])	0.291 ***	0.348 ***	0.291 ***
	-2LL	4624.3	5087.2	4627.4
	N		2824	

***) $p<0,05$, **) $p<0,10$, *) $p<0,15$ med ensidig t-test for variansparametre ($\sigma_.^{\,2}$) og tosidig test for β_{HV}.

Tabell 2.2: Partienes lokaltilpasning i kommunestyrevalg 1979-2003. Estimerte effekter av gjennomsnittlig regionvis selvplassering på HV-aksen på partienes oppslutning (L).

		I	II	III
SV	HV (HV-plassering, 0=venstre, 9=høyre)	-	-0.425 ***	-0.014
	σ_u^2 (varians over valgperioder, var[u_t])	0.120 ***	0.104 ***	0.119 ***
	σ_v^2 (varians over regioner, var[v_k])	0.051 ***	-	0.051 ***
	σ_e^2 (varians over kommunepartier, var[e_{ikt}])	0.267 ***	0.294 **	0.267 ***
	-2LL	2910.5	3056.3	2914.1
	N		1873	
DNA	HV (HV-plassering, 0=venstre, 9=høyre)	-	-0.671 ***	-0.006
	σ_u^2 (varians over valgperioder, var[u_t])	0.031 ***	0.041 ***	0.031 ***
	σ_v^2 (varians over regioner, var[v_k])	0.096 ***	-	0.096 ***
	σ_e^2 (varians over kommunepartier, var[e_{ikt}])	0.229 ***	0.289 ***	0.230 ***
	-2LL	3909.6	4519.6	3913.7
	N		2808	
Sp	HV (HV-plassering, 0=venstre, 9=høyre)	-	-0.377 ***	-0.027
	σ_u^2 (varians over valgperioder, var[u_t])	0.053 ***	0.048 ***	0.052 ***
	σ_v^2 (varians over regioner, var[v_k])	0.705 ***	-	0.700 ***
	σ_e^2 (varians over kommunepartier, var[e_{ikt}])	0.667 ***	0.773 ***	0.667 ***
	-2LL	6201.1	6521.8	6204.1
	N		2517	
V	HV (HV-plassering, 0=venstre, 9=høyre)	-	0.070	-0.071
	σ_u^2 (varians over valgperioder, var[u_t])	0.010 **	0.011 **	0.010 **
	σ_v^2 (varians over regioner, var[v_k])	0.076 ***	-	0.077 ***
	σ_e^2 (varians over kommunepartier, var[e_{ikt}])	0.403 ***	0.463	0.403 ***
	-2LL	3795.2	4032.1	3797.6
	N		1940	
KrF	HV (HV-plassering, 0=venstre, 9=høyre)	-	0.902 ***	0.041
	σ_u^2 (varians over valgperioder, var[u_t])	0.019 ***	0.041 ***	0.020 ***
	σ_v^2 (varians over regioner, var[v_k])	0.245 ***	-	0.241 ***
	σ_e^2 (varians over kommunepartier, var[e_{ikt}])	0.263 ***	0.401 ***	0.263 ***
	-2LL	3571.2	4503.1	3574.6
	N		2326	
H	HV (HV-plassering, 0=venstre, 9=høyre)	-	0.532 ***	0.037
	σ_u^2 (varians over valgperioder, var[u_t])	0.033 ***	0.037 ***	0.033 ***
	σ_v^2 (varians over regioner, var[v_k])	0.111 ***	-	0.106 ***
	σ_e^2 (varians over kommunepartier, var[e_{ikt}])	0.291 ***	0.326 ***	0.292 ***
	-2LL	4227.6	4478.3	4231.1
	N		2590	
Frp	HV (HV-plassering, 0=venstre, 9=høyre)	-	0.655 ***	0.227 ***
	σ_u^2 (varians over valgperioder, var[u_t])	0.410 ***	0.406 ***	0.413 ***
	σ_v^2 (varians over regioner, var[v_k])	0.095 ***	-	0.062 ***
	σ_e^2 (varians over kommunepartier, var[e_{ikt}])	0.330 ***	0.355 ***	0.329 ***
	-2LL	2348.4	2415.8	2346.1
	N		1318	

***) p<0,05, **) p<0,10, *) p<0,15 med ensidig t-test for variansparametre ($\sigma_.^2$) og tosidig test for β_{HV}.

forhold – kan dessuten gi holdepunkter for interessante tolkninger rundt det rom for lokalpolitikk som synes å eksistere på kommune- og fylkesnivået. Tabell 1 og 2 viser resultatene av analysene.

I begge analyser (fylkestingsvalg og kommunestyrevalg) legges altså stemmegivningen i enkeltkommunene (opptellingskretsene) til grunn, slik dette bidrar til sammenlignbarheten mellom de to lokalvalgstypene.[50] Dessuten benyttes kun data fra de 404 kommuner som siden 1975 ikke har opplevd kommunesammenslåinger/oppdelinger. I modellspesifikasjon I analyseres kun variasjonen over de ulike enhetene. Både for fylker (tabell 1) og kommuner (tabell2) finner vi interessante mønstre: Størst variasjon for de fleste partier (utenom for Sp, Frp og KrF) gjenfinnes innefor regionene.[51] Uansett er det for alle partier slik at den regionale varianskomponenten ikke er ubetydelig: Allerede her ligger en antydning om forskjellige partilandskap fra den ene regionen til den andre, noe som potensielt kan forklares ved forskjeller i eksogene velgerpreferanser mellom de ulike regioner.[52] Sammenholdt med signifikante, dog gjennomgående svakere, tidskomponenter (σ_u^2) – altså en tendens til at alle lokallag av et landsdekkende parti samvarierer i oppslutning - forteller dette om rimeligheten ved å se (det sentrale) partinavnet som en drivkraft for å forklare oppslutningen om forskjellige lister i lokalvalg.

Et gjennomgående trekk er uansett at tidsresidualens (σ_u^2) andel er mindre i kommunestyrevalg (tabell 2) enn i fylkestingsvalg (tabell 1). Dette er i tråd med andre analyser av de to lokalvalgstypene: Rommetvedt (1988:162-163) viser som sagt at fylkestingsvalg i større grad enn kommunestyrevalg gjenspeiler velgernes syn i den nasjonale politikken (målt ved partienes oppslutning i Stortingsvalget). Det kan være rimelig å se den nasjonale politikken (for eksempel uttalelser fra partienes sentralorganisasjoner) som hoveddrivkraften i kommunikasjonen av troverdige politiske plattformer. Uansett ses altså tegn til at kommunepolitikk er noe annet enn fylkespolitikk – det ser ut til å eksistere større rom for lokale preferansedannelser i det førstnevnte tilfellet. Muligens finnes større rom for lokal tilpasning på kommunenivå enn på fylkesnivå, noe som ikke er urimelig tatt i betraktning det betydelig mindre formelle politiske spillerom fylkene er tildelt. Og muligens må velgerne i fylkestingsvalg i større grad enn i kommunestyrevalg informeres av et forholdsvis langsiktig og eksogent gitt "parti-label".

Modellspesifikasjon II tester resonnementet om *stabile* landsdekkende partiplattformer mer direkte, og estimerer β_{HV} ved å utnytte variasjonen over regioner og kommuner mens det tas høyde for uobserverbare faktorer knyttet til tidsdimensjonen. Mønsteret er tydelig både for

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[50] For kommunestyrevalgene ses av tabell 1 at på langt nær alle partier stiller liste i alle de 404 kommuner og i alle valgperioder som i utgangspunktet undersøkes (min(N)=1318). I fylkestingsvalgene stiller de fleste landsdekkende partier liste i de aller fleste kommuner (min(N)=2754). En kan innvende at dette kan skape skjevheter i sammenligningen mellom fylkestings- og kommunestyrevalgene. Men, dersom det kun legges til grunn kommuner der et parti stiller liste både i kommunestyre- og fylkestingsvalget endrer mønsteret seg (ved β_{HV} eller de ulike variansparametre) ikke nevneverdig.

[51] Eksempelvis finner vi (i tabell 2) at 0,23/(0,23+0,10+0,03)·100%=64% av variasjon (på logitskalaen) i oppslutning over kommunale Arbeiderpartilister skyldes forskjeller mellom kommuner.

[52] Sammenholdt med dramatiske fall i –2LL fra modellene II til III også i kommunestyrevalgsanalysene (tabell 2), har dette implikasjoner for debatten om kommunesammenslåinger: Dersom oppslutningen om de ulike partiene sier noe om realiserte velgerpreferanser, er det ikke sikkert at sammenslåing av kommuner (innenfor samme region) trenger å ha store uheldige konsekvenser – oppslutningen er i stor grad *regionalt* fordelt. Tidligere studier har også vist at kommunal skatte- og avgiftspolitikk er regionalt fordelt (Monkerud 2004:59-60).

fylkestingsvalg og kommunestyrevalg: De tradisjonelle sosialistiske partiene (SV, DNA), samt Sp, har systematisk lavere oppslutning i fylker der velgerpreferansene ligger til høyre på HV-skalaen (og omvendt for de resterende partier), og effektene er substansielle. For eksempel: Med en oppslutning om DNA på 35% i fylkestingsvalget[53] i et gitt fylke (dvs. en odds på 0,54), forventer vi ifølge modellen at DNA-oppslutningen er $0{,}54{\cdot}e^{-0{,}74}/(1+0{,}54{\cdot}e^{-0{,}74}){\cdot}100\%=21\%$ i et fylke med ett skalapoeng høyere skåre på gjennomsnittlig HV-selvplassering.

I modellspesifikasjon III gis en sterkere test av hypotesen, ved at det også tas hensyn til ulike nivåer i partioppslutningen fra region til region i undersøkelsesperioden. Dermed får en bedre tak på effekten av endringer i HV-selvplassering *innenfor* de enkelte regioner i tidsperioden: Modellen redegjør (som i modell I) altså i tillegg for uobserverbare forhold ved det enkelte regionale partiavsnitt. Effektene her er betydelig mindre (fra –0,17 til 0,23 på logitskalaen) og i langt mindre grad signifikante. Dette kan tyde på at oppslutningen om de ulike partiene regionalt er ganske robust overfor endringer i opinionens svingninger på HV-dimensjonen. Der resultatene er signifikante går de imidlertid ikke imot den predikerte retningen i forhold til en rimelig plassering av partiene langs HV-aksen.[54]

I kommuneanalysen er det allikevel i stor grad høyrepartiene (H og Frp) som går frem som følge av en dreining i gjennomsnittlig HV-selvplassering (signifkant og sterkt for Frps del i kommunene, signifikant men svakere for H i fylkene). I fylkestingsanalysen estimerer modellen imidlertid også at Sp går systematisk tilbake som følge av en venstredreining i opinionen. Eksempelvis: Med en typisk oppslutning om Frp på 10% i kommunestyrevalget i en tilfeldig region (dvs. en odds på 0,11), forventer vi ifølge modellen at Frp-oppslutningen øker til $0{,}11{\cdot}e^{0{,}23}/(1+0{,}11{\cdot}e^{0{,}23}){\cdot}100\%=12\%$ som følge av en høyredreining i opinionen på ett skalapoeng på gjennomsnittlig HV-selvplassering. Resultatet for Sps del i fylkesanalysen gir holdepunkter for å påstå det eksisterer et visst *potensial* for folkelig forankret høyre-venstre-politikk også på fylkesnivået. Men, som tidligere påpekt, ligger det ikke i særlig grad til fylkene å omsette velgerpreferansene det her er snakk om til *faktisk* politikk (i form av valg av tjenestorganisering eller skatte- og avgiftspolitikk).[55]

Hovedresultatet av analysene er klart: Vi finner enkelte holdepunkter for at lokalpolitikk tilpasses velgernes preferanser ved at velgerne stemmer på partier med eksogent gitte og stabile plattformer. Dette er i tråd med andre undersøkelser som analyserer noe av det samme, om enn med andre typer data og metoder: I Sørensen (2004:537-538) vises at holdningene til ulike privatiseringsreformer innenfor partiblokkene i kommunestyrene (henholdsvis Frp, H; KrF, V, Sp og DNA, SV, RV) er forbausende stabile over tidsrommet 1995 til 2003, på tross av at opinionen fra 1988 til 1999-2003 svingte i retning av større privatiseringsiver.

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[53] En oppslutning på rundt 35% er nær typisk for dette partiet. Se tabell A2.3 i appendikset for detaljer.

[54] Substansielle forklaringer på at oppslutningen om et enkelt regionale parti synes robust overfor skift i HV-selvplassering kan ta utgangspunkt i flere forhold som i vår analyse er uobserverbare: Ubredt og sterk regional partiidentifikasjon eller at andre og viktigere konfliktlinjer enn HV-dimensjonen, sannsynligvis kryssende med sistnevnte, fanges opp av den regionale partisammensetningen. En metodologisk forklaring på få signifikante resultater i analysen er den svake tidsvariasjonen for HV-selvplassering vi ofte finner over de sju aktuelle valgperiodene (se tabell A2.2 i appendikset for detaljer) kombinert med HV-mål beheftet med betydelige feil (utvalgsfeil og måle- og spesifikasjonsfeil) (jf. note 48).

[55] Man kan innvende at såkalte *fixed effects*-analyser - der et sett regiondummies erstatter den estimerte variasjonstermen (σ_v^2) - gir en sikrere test av hypotesen da dette også tar hensyn til alle *observerte* regionspesifikke og tidsinvariante forhold. Supplerende tester av slike modeller gir allikevel noenlunde samme mønster som det som rapporteres her.

I det store og hele klarer imidlertid ikke den eksplisitte og mer eller mindre valide operasjonaliseringen[56] av lokale preferanser vi legger til grunn å redegjøre særlig for variasjonen i lokalpartienes oppslutning. Eksempelvis kan vi anslå (fra modell III i tabell 1) at Senterpartiets generelle og typiske svingning i oppslutning er $\sqrt{\sigma_u^2} = \sqrt{0{,}07} = 0{,}26$ (på logitskalaen) gitt ved standardavviket, mens en typisk endring på rundt s = 0,24 i HV-plassering *innenfor* en region[57] kun gir opphav til en typisk endring i Sp-oppslutning på +/- $|s \cdot \beta_{HV}| = 0{,}24 \cdot 0{,}17 = 0{,}041$ (igjen på logitskalaen). Lignende betraktninger kan legges til grunn for de andre partienes del (både når det gjelder kommunestyre- og fylkestingsvalg). Selv om det altså kan synes som at rommet for lokalpolitisk tilpasning er større i kommunestyrevalg enn i fylkestingsvalgene, antyder resultatene for begge typene valgs vedkommende at en sentral partiorganisasjon i relativt stor grad kan dømme alle sine lokallag til samme skjebne ved valgurnene.

2.4.2 Reagerer velgerne på lokalpolitikken?

Utover spørsmål omkring partienes tilpasning til endrede velgerpreferanser står allikevel spørsmålene om etter-valgs-effekter (innenfor sanksjonsmodellen) tilbake. Når et parti først har kommet inn i en mer eller mindre ansvarsfull posisjon i lokalforsamlingen, har det da noen incentiver til å gjennomføre lovet politikk? Ulike forutsetninger kan gjøre det mer eller mindre vanskelig for et ansvarlig og handlingskraftig parti å yte en politisk innsats som velgerne kan reagere på:

For det første må en grunnleggende forutsetning tilfredsstilles. Et parti eller en koalisjon må peke seg ut som ansvarlig sett fra velgernes side. Den norske formannskapsmodellen, der alle større partier samlet står ansvarlig for politikken i fylket eller kommunen, kan som nevnt gjøre ansvarsforholdene uklare.[58] Allikevel kan det argumenteres for at velgerne tross alt kan ha enkelte holdepunkter: En ansvarlig koalisjon må for det første være synlig for at velgerne i det hele tatt skal kunne reagere. I lokalpolitikken kan det hevdes at ordfører- og varaordførerpartiet er de mest profilerte, og at disse partiene derfor vil være det mest naturlige mål for straffe- og belønningsreaksjoner fra velgernes side.

Dernest, for at velgerne skal kunne reagere fornuftig, og ikke kun straffe eller belønne en stråmann, må nevnte koalisjon ha politisk handlingsrom. I sin analyse av velgerreaksjoner på kommunenivå argumenterer Pål Martinussen (2004:231) for at lokalpolitikken i økende grad preges av forpliktende koalisjonsdannelser, der gjennomføringen av et forhåndsbestemt program står sentralt. Slik kan ordfører- og varaordførervervet ses som belønninger til partier som står sammen på en mer eller mindre klart avgrenset og sterk politisk plattform. Dessuten finner Martinussen (2004:242-244) altså at ordførerpartiet (og koalisjonspartiene samlet) endrer oppslutning som følge av endret lokalpolitikk (skatte- og avgiftspolitikk,

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[56] Høyre-venstre-dimensjonen er kun en av mange saker, og dessuten kan vårt mål altså være beheftet med store målefeil (se note 48).
[57] Der s=0,31 er et typisk standardavvik for endringen i HV-plassering innenfor en region (se tabell A2.2 i appendikset).
[58] Oslo – som har både kommunale og fylkeskommunale oppgaver – utelates fra analysene som følger. Analysene inkluderer imidlertid Nordland fylkeskommune og Bergen som i deler av undersøkelsesperioden har hatt parlamentarisme som styringsform. Resultatene påvirkes kun neglisjerbart når disse enhetene (og eventuelle underenheter og) utelates fra analysene (for den ene valgperioden (1999-2003) med parlamentarisk styringsmodell).

dekningsgrader og satser for barnehager mv.). At effektene er små, kan understreke det problematiske ved forståelsen av ordførerpartiet eller ordfører/varaordførerkoalisjonen som en analogi til en klart avgrenset regjering (i et parlamentarisk eller presidentalt system) på nasjonalt plan. Uansett kan man hevde at ordførerpartiet/ordførerkoalisjonen er den beste kandidaten for dette analyseformålet i norsk lokalpolitisk sammenheng. Dessuten kan det argumenteres for at validiteten på dette punktet isolert sett er mindre problematisk all den tid det er *sammenligningen* av fylkes- og kommunepolitikken som står i fokus. For enkelhets skyld legger derfor også de følgende anlysene til grunn frem- og tilbakegangen for ordførerpartiet i de to lokalvalgene over tid.[59]

For det andre må velgerne ha noe å reagere på – de må kunne identifisere situasjoner der ansvarlige politikere yter eller unnlater å yte en innsats. Men, mens indikatorer for prioriteringer og andre politiske beslutninger er relativt enkle å identifisere på kommunenivå (jf. Martinussens (2004:253-255) indikatorer), er indikatorer for fylkeskommunale politiske valg vanskeligere å finne. I analysene legges følgende resonnement til grunn: Politikerne har bedre oversikt enn velgerne over eksogene forhold som er med på å bestemme lokalpolitiske resultater – eksogene forhold slike som konjunkturer og rammebetingelser. Velgerne er på sin side henvist til å stemme på ulike ansvarlige partier ut fra de resultater som fremkommer. Når rammebetingelsene ellers er dårlige, vil det dermed være lite regningssvarende for et parti å yte særlig innsats. Selv med stor innsats fra partiets side kan resultatet bli for svakt til å motvirke stemmeflukt dersom rammebetingelsene er dårlige nok, og det kan dermed uansett regne med å bli straffet ved det forestående valget. Dersom man kan anta at politikerne *har* bedre oversikt over rammebetingelser enn velgerne, leder dette til et forventning om at ansvarlige partier unnlater å yte særlig innsats i nedgangstider, og at de blir straffet for dette i lokalvalgene.[60]

I de følgende analysene legges derfor til grunn et mål for veksten i inneværende valgperiode basert på den enkelte kommunens eller fylkeskommunens frie inntekter (skatt på inntekt og formue samt statlige overføringer), slik disse utgjør brorparten av både kommunenes og fylkeskommunenes inntektsgrunnlag. En enkelt kommune eller fylkeskommune regnes å ha vært igjennom en nedgangsperiode ved det forestående valget (*t*) dersom den opplever nedgang i frie inntekter per innbygger i alle fire årene (*a*=1, 2, 3, 4) i en valgperiode (fra *t-1* til *t*) eller i alle årene så nær som ett:[61]

$$\text{NEDG}_t = \begin{cases} 1 \text{ dersom } \sum_{a=1}^{4} \text{nedgang}_{at} \geq 3 \\ 0 \text{ ellers} \end{cases}, \text{ der}$$

---

[59] Martinussen (*ibid.*) analyserer både ordførerpartiets og ordførerkoalisjonens frem- og tilbakegang. Effektene kommer imidlertid klarest frem i det førstnevnte tilfellet, og vi nøyer oss derfor her med analyser av ordførerpartiets endring i oppslutning.

[60] Resonnementet - som nevnt hentet fra Ferejohn (1994) - peker altså på en form for styringskostnader. Dersom rammebetingelsene blir for ugunstige, krever gjenvalg for høy innsats til at posisjonene forsvarer kostnadene.

[61] Alle beløp er deflatert etter Nasjonalregnskapets prisindeks for kommunalt konsum (se http://statbank.ssb.no/statistikkbanken) og er oppgitt i 2000-kroner. Begrepet frie inntekter har noe varierende innhold gjennom den perioden. Særlig ved overgangen til nytt inntektssystem i 1986 oppleves et sprang i inntektene for alle enheter. I den perioden der dette året inngår er kun de enheter med gjennomgående nedgang i de tre andre årene gitt verdien 0 på NEDG$_t$. Tilsvarende gjøres for fylkene for perioden der året 2002 inngår: Etter statens overtagelse av sykehusene fra og med dette året, faller fylkeskommunenes inntekter per innbygger dramatisk (se tabell A2.5 i appendikset for detaljer).

$$
\text{nedgang}_{at} = \begin{cases} 1 \text{ dersom frie inntekter per innbygger}_{at} < \text{frie inntekter per innbygger}_{(a\text{-}1)t} \\ 0 \text{ ellers} \end{cases}.
$$

For det tredje må velgerne kunne se for seg reelle alternativer dersom de effektivt skal kunne straffe en ansvarlig koalisjon. Cox (1997:122) viser at dersom det stiller tre eller færre lister til valg kan velgerne koordinere sine valg strategisk for å avsette en sittende koalisjon og sikre en alternativ koalisjon valgseieren, mens et høyere antall lister gir velgerne få holdepunkter for å opptre slik.[62] Dersom velgerne er misfornøyd med den sittende koalisjonen (mer om dette nedenfor), så forventer vi at den sittende koalisjonen taper mer i valg når den skisserte muligheten for koordinering er til stede. Analysen inkluderer derfor følgende mål for denne sterke muligheten for effektiv koordinering rundt et reelt alternativ til den sittende koalisjonen:[63]

$$
\text{VLIST}_t = \begin{cases} 1 \text{ dersom antallet offisielle valglister er tre eller mindre} \\ 0 \text{ ellers} \end{cases}.
$$

For det fjerde kan ansvaret plasseres mer eller mindre presist hos ordførerpartiet. Dersom ordførerpartiet alene, eller en koalisjonen ledet av ordførerpartiet, har flertall i den lokale forsamlingen og dermed stor *slagkraft*, kan man regne med at ansvaret for utført politikk kan plasseres entydig hos det nevnte parti eller koalisjon. Men, dersom en koalisjon består av flere partier – eller altså høyst to når vi her ser på potensielle ordfører/varaordførerkoalisjoner – så kan man anta at muligheten eksisterer for at de ulike partiene kan blokkere hverandres ønsker. Videre kan man anta at enighet innen koalisjonen blir ekstra vanskelig dersom avstanden mellom koalisjonspartnerne er stor.[64] Indeksen som inngår i analysene tar hensyn til dette ved å inkludere kriterier for situasjoner der 1) koalisjonen har et flertall av representantene bak seg, 2) den består av ett snarere enn to partier og 3) partiene i en eventuell flerpartikoalisjon kommer fra samme blokk, der partiene Frp, H, KrF og V utgjør en høyreblokk og partiene DNA, Sp og SV utgjør en venstreblokk.[65] Vår forventning er at økt styrke hos den sittende

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[62] Se note 42 om strategisk stemmegivning.

[63] Antall valglister utelates fra fylkesvalgsanalysene, ettersom antallet aldri er mindre enn åtte og maksimalt er fjorten i perioden som analyseres.

[64] Resonnementene her er klassiske vetospillerargumenter (Tsebelis 1995;2002): Idéen er at en koalisjon kan være *internt* svak ved å bestå av flere vetospillere (koalisjonspartier), og *eksternt* svak overfor opposisjonen ved at den for eksempel kan ha et mindretall av representantene i forsamlingen. I litteraturen som har undersøkt betydningen av koalisjoners styrke i forhold til budsjettunderskudd er det funnet støtte både for flertalls- og koalisjonskriteriet som det viktigste (se Helland 2005:16-17). Kodingen av indeksen for koalisjonsstyrke – der flertallskriteriet ses som det avgjørende - er uansett i tråd med lignende indekser hos Roubini og Sachs (1989a, 1989b) og Borge (1996;2005). I tillegg har altså avstanden mellom koalisjonspartnerne selvstendig betydning – noe som søkes fanget opp med kriteriet om samme/forskjellige partiblokker: Dersom koalisjonspartnerne vil det samme vil det spille mindre rolle *at* de kan blokkere hverandres ønsker (se Helland (2005:6-7) for en diskusjon av empiriske studier som unnlater å ta høyde for avstanden mellom koalisjonspartnere). I Martinussens (2004) studie har også ideologisk nærhet innenfor koalisjonen selvstendig og signifikant betydning i forhold til ordførerpartiets oppslutning.

[65] Sp regnes tradisjonelt med på borgerlig side i norsk politikk. At Sp her regnes med i venstreblokken kan imidlertid være rimelig (og analyseresultatene blir mer uklare dersom partiet regnes med i den andre blokken): I analysene i tabell 1 ses at Sp-oppslutningen avtar der opinionen dreier mot høyre, og i senere opinionsundersøkelser ser man en tendens til at Sp-velgere plasserer seg til venstre for DNA-velgere på høyre-venstre-aksen.

koalisjonen fører med seg en strengere reaksjon fra velgernes side i form av velgerflukt, dersom velgerne har *grunn* til å reagere og dersom de har *mulighet* til det. Styrkeindeksen for koalisjonen av ordfører- og varaordførerpartiene er bygget opp på følgende vis (der økende indeksverdi angir økt koalisjonsstyrke):

$$
\text{STYR}_t = \begin{cases}
0 \text{ der koalisjonen er i mindretall og består av to partier fra hver sin blokk} \\
1 \text{ der koalisjonen er i mindretall og består av to partier fra samme blokk} \\
2 \text{ der ordfører og varaordfører er fra samme mindretallsparti} \\
3 \text{ der koalisjonen er i flertall og består av to partier fra hver sin blokk} \\
4 \text{ der koalisjonen er i flertall og består av to partier fra samme blokk} \\
5 \text{ der ordfører og varaordfører er fra samme flertallsparti}
\end{cases}
$$

Det kan være verdt å presisere følgende: I en streng fortolkning er de tre nevnte betingelser (nedgangstider, velgernes koordineringsmuligheter og stor koalisjonsstyrke) nødvendige, men ikke tilstrekkelige, betingelser for at velgerne skal straffe ordførerpartiet i et enkelt valg. For eksempel: Der resultatene uteblir er det trolig mindre attraktivt å straffe ved velgerflukt dersom velgerne ikke kan koordinere sine valg seg imellom i den hensikt å sette inn én ny slagkraftig koalisjon eller gi et handlingskraftig parti et klart mandat. Omvendt vil det selvsagt være meningsløst å straffe et parti eller en koalisjon som har frembragt et godt resultat kun fordi koordineringsmulighetene er til stede for å sette inn en ny koalisjon. Og velgerne (som rasjonelle straffere) trenger heller ikke bry seg om ansvarsplassering (gitt ved koalisjonsstyrke) dersom de politiske resultater ellers er fordelaktige. I analysene vil det derfor være spesielt viktig å se på *samspillet* mellom de nevnte variabler. Formelt estimeres varianter av følgende modeller for å teste resonnementene (der samspillsvariablene representeres ved β_I-termene i modellene nedenfor):[66]

$$
\Delta L_{ijkBPt} \equiv \log\left(\frac{V_{ijkBPt}}{1\text{-}V_{ijkBPt}}\right) - \log\left(\frac{V_{ijkBP(t-1)}}{1\text{-}V_{ijkBP(t-1)}}\right)
$$

$$
= \gamma_. + \beta_{NEDG} \cdot \text{NEDG}_{jt} + \beta_{STYR} \cdot \text{STYR}_{jt} + \sum_n \beta_{I_n} \cdot I_n
$$

$$
+ \beta_{\Delta HVB} \cdot \Delta \text{HVB}_{kBt} + \beta_{INNT} \cdot \text{INNT}_{jt} + u_{Pt} + v_{jt} + w_{kBt} + e_{ijkBPt}
$$

for fylkestingsvalgene og

$$
\Delta L_{ikBPt} \equiv \log\left(\frac{V_{ikBPt}}{1\text{-}V_{ikBPt}}\right) - \log\left(\frac{V_{ikBP(t-1)}}{1\text{-}V_{ikBP(t-1)}}\right)
$$

$$
= \gamma_. + \beta_{NEDG} \cdot \text{NEDG}_{it} + \beta_{VLIST} \cdot \text{VLIST}_{it} + \beta_{STYR} \cdot \text{STYR}_{it} + \sum_n \beta_{I_n} \cdot I_n
$$

$$
+ \beta_{\Delta HVB} \cdot \Delta \text{HVB}_{kBt} + \beta_{INNT} \cdot \text{INNT}_{it} + u_{Pt} + w_{kBt} + e_{ikBPt}
$$

---

[66] I modellene indekseres variablene ettersom de varierer over kommuner/opptellingskretser (*i*), fylker (*j*), regioner/fylkesgrupper (*k*) og valgperioder (*t*). Indeksene *P* og *B* angir variasjon over landspartier og landspartiblokker (se nedenfor).

for kommunestyrevalgene.

Modellene estimerer altså den enhetsspesifikke endringen i logiten til oppslutningen om ordførerpartiet som en funksjon av de variablene vi har skisserte ovenfor. De skisserte variablene sporer imidlertid (betingede) effekter i oppslutningen som følge av en ansvarlig koalisjons *prestasjoner*, de sier i seg selv ikke noe om oppslutningsendringer som følge av eventuelle (endringer i) *velgerpreferanser*. I tillegg kontrolleres derfor for endringen i HV-plassering hos befolkningen - som analysen i tabell 1 fant holdepunkter for var utslagsgivende for oppslutningen om et enkelt parti. For hver valgperiode teller en enhets endring til høyre (positiv endring på 0-9-skalaen) i den regionvise preferansen for høyre-venstre-politikk som en positiv enhetsendring for høyrepartier og som en negativ enhetsendring for venstrepartier. Forventningen er at indikatoren har positiv effekt i analysene:

$$\Delta HVB_t = \begin{cases} \Delta HV_t = HV_t - HV_{t-1} \text{ for } P \in \{V, KrF, H, Frp\} \\ -\Delta HV_t = -(HV_t - HV_{t-1}) \text{ for } P \in \{SV, DNA, Sp\} \end{cases}$$

Som en ytterligere kontroll registreres nivået på frie inntekter, slik det sier noe om de ressurser som står på spill når politikere yter eller ikke yter innsats og velgerne reagerer. For hvert år beregnes gjennomsnittlige frie inntekter per innbygger over de aktuelle enhetene (fylker eller kommuner). Deretter måles den enkelte enhets årvisse frie inntekter per innbygger som en proporsjon av årssnittet. For den enkelte enhet tas så snittet av de årvisse proporsjonene over den fireårige valgperioden:

$$INNT_t = \frac{\sum_{a=1}^{4} \text{inntektsindeks}_{at}}{4}, \text{ der}$$

$$\text{inntektsindeks}_{at} = \frac{\text{frie inntekter per innbygger}_{at}}{\sum_{n=1}^{N_{at}} \text{frie inntekter per innbygger}_{at} \Big/ N_{at}}.$$

I modellene for fylkestingsvalgene er videre u_{Pt} og v_{jt} feiltermer som er ment å fange opp henholdsvis den delen av variasjonen i oppslutningen om ordførerpartiet som skyldes at partiet (på tidspunkt t) er et lokallag av et landsdekkende parti og den delen som skyldes det spesifikke for det enkelte fylket i det enkelte valg. I kommuneanalysene kan u_{Pt} tolkes på samme måte som i fylkesanalysene, mens w_{kBt}-termen i begge analysens tolkes som den delen av variasjonen som skyldes forskjeller mellom regionale partiblokker i det enkelte valg.[67]

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[67] Rent teknisk spesifiserer denne feiltermen at det bergenes riktige signifikanstester for ΔHVB-målet – som registreres nettopp på det tidsbestemte regionale partiblokk-nivået.

Også i disse analysene kan feiltermenes relative størrelsesforhold gi grunnlag for å utsi noe om det lokalpolitiske handlingsrommet. Formelt, og først og fremst, er det allikevel følgende hovedhypoteser som skal testes:

Hypotese 2: β_{NEDG} avtar og antar negativ verdi når VLIST og STYR begge øker.

Hypotese 3: β_{VLIST} avtar og antar negativ verdi når NEDG og STYR begge øker.

Hypotese 4: β_{STYR} avtar og antar negativ verdi når VLIST og NEDG begge øker.

Det forventes altså at faktorene som skal til for at velgerne skal straffe ordførerpartiet i valget må spille sammen for at en enkelt faktor skal være utslagsgivende. For eksempel kan man ha svake forventninger om hvordan velgerne vil reagere dersom odførerkoalisjonen skulle bli sett på som ansvarlig (økende verdi på STYR) i en situasjon der de ellers observerer at det er god grunn (NEDG=1) til å straffe, men ikke gis mulighet til å straffe effektivt (VLIST=0). *Alt annet likt*, forventes allikevel at reaksjonen blir *mindre blidgjørende* sett fra ordførerpartiets side dersom det i nevnte tilfelle *kan* straffes effektivt, og det forventes at partiet faktisk *straffes* (i form av tilbakegang i valget) i nedgangstider når dets ansvarlighet og velgernes mulighet for å straffe ellers antar høye, men ikke urealistiske, verdier. Tabell 3 viser resultatene av analysen.

Som et utgangspunkt analyserer spesifikasjon I kun variasjonskomponentene (*u*-, *v*-, *w*- og *e*-termene), og ingen av varianskomponentene synes å endres i stor grad når de operative variablene på lokalpolitisk nivå (NEDG, VLIST og STYR) inkluderes (i modellene II og III).[68] Ytterligere kommentarer omkring varianskomponentene gis nedenfor, og diskusjonen skal i første omgang konsentrere seg om effektene av de operative variablene:

Modellene II og III inkluderer operative variabler og kontroller i to trinn: Som nevnt er stilte valglister i fylkestingsvalgene gjennomgående høyt (fra åtte til fjorten) i hele perioden som studeres, og dermed er det for analysene av dette valgets del kun anledning til å inkludere NEDG og STYR (og samspillet mellom dem). For å kunne sammenligne kommunestyrevalgene med fylkestingsvalgene, presenteres analysen med kun disse to variablene også for kommunestyrevalget (modell II), mens den komplette modellen altså kun gjelder sistnevnte lokalvalg (modell III). For å lette tolkningen estimeres modellene II og III med egne parametre (β) for VLIST, STYR og VLIST·STYR for ulike tilstander av NEDG.[69]

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[68] Men, modellene II og III gir signifikant bedre tilpasninger til data enn henholdsvis modell I og II: Når modellene estimeres med ML (full maximum likelihood) snarere enn REML (restricted maximum likelihood) faller –2LogLikelihood-målet fra 1127,7 i det første tilfellet til 1001,9 (strekt signifikant fall, df=5) og deretter til 987,0 (p=0,007, df=4) i modell III. Ingen av effektestimatene endres ellers nevneverdig i og med ML-estimering, og tilsvarende fall registreres ikke i fylkesanalysene. Se for eksempel Singer (1998:352) om ML-estimering for å evaluere bedre tilpasning i modeller med tillegg av flere fixed effects (som her).

[69] Dvs. effektparametre for $X_{NEDG=1}$ og $X_{NEDG=0}$ der

$$X_{NEDG=1} = \begin{cases} X \text{ dersom NEDG=1} \\ 0 \text{ ellers} \end{cases} \quad \text{og} \quad X_{NEDG=0} = \begin{cases} X \text{ dersom NEDG=0} \\ 0 \text{ ellers} \end{cases} \text{ for X=VLIST, STYR, VLIST} \cdot \text{STYR.}$$

Denne formuleringen er ekvivalent med den som legges til grunn i modellene ovenfor.

Tabell 2.3: Endring i ordførerpartiets oppslutning (ΔL) 1979-2003.

	I		II		III
	Fylker	Kommuner	Fylker	Kommuner	Kommuner
NEDG (=1)			-0.077 **	0.007	0.014
Effekter for NEDG=0*:*					
VLIST (=1)					0.223 ***
STYR			-0.020 *	-0.030 ***	-0.031 ***
VLIST (=1)·STYR					-0.056 *
Effekter for NEDG=1*:*					
VLIST (=1)					0.005
STYR			-0.002	-0.035 ***	-0.030 ***
VLIST (=1)·STYR					-0.184 ***
ΔHVB			0.016	0.039	0.030
INNT			0.076	-0.009	-0.015
$\sigma_u^{\;2}$ (var[u_{Pt}])	0.023 ***	0.024 ***	0.021 ***	0.025 ***	0.025 ***
$\sigma_v^{\;2}$ (var[v_{jt}])	0.013 ***		0.013 ***		-
$\sigma_w^{\;2}$ (var[w_{kBt}])	-	0.003 ***	-	0.003 ***	0.003 ***
$\sigma_e^{\;2}$ (var[e_{ijkBPt}], var[e_{ikBPt}])	0.044 ***	0.094 ***	0.044 ***	0.089 ***	0.089 ***
-2LL	-412.0	1177.9	-395.4	1038.6	1039.1
N (kommuneparti·valgperiode,	2418	2213	2418	2116	2083

***) p<0,05, **) p<0,10, *) p<0,15 med ensidig t-test for variansparametre ($\sigma_{\cdot}^{\;2}$) og tosidig test for $\beta_{\cdot\cdot}$.

I modellspesifikasjon II ses for fylkestingsvalgenes del at vekst eller nedgang er utslagsgivende for fortsatt oppslutning om ordførerpartiet: Dersom det tas utgangspunkt i den gjennomsnittlige ordførerpartioppslutningen over hele perioden som studeres på 29 prosent, tilsvarende en logit på log(0,29/(1-0.29)) = -0,895, predikerer modellen at logiten *som følge av nedgangstider* faller til –0,895+(-0,077) = -0.972, tilsvarende en oppslutning på $e^{-0,972}/(1 + e^{-0,972})$ = 28 prosent når koalisjonsstyrken ellers ligger på et typisk nivå.[70] Effektene er altså meget svake i utgangspunktet. Allikevel *avtar* den negative effekten av nedgangstider med *økende* verdier på STYR. Eksempelvis predikerer modellen at effekten av nedgangstider kun er –0,077 + 3,8·(-0,002-(-0,020)) = -0,009 når STYR antar sin høyeste verdi (der ordfører og varaordfører kommer far samme parti og partiet har flertall i forsamlingen). Videre er effekten av STYR *større* i negativ retning (og signifikant) i vekstperioder (β=-0,020) enn i nedgangsperioder (β=-0,002). For fylkeskommunenes del går resultatene altså *imot* hypotesene som ble fremsatt.

I de tilsvarende analysene (modell II) av kommunestyrevalgene er bildet annerledes: Mens NEDG ikke synes å ha effekt for oppslutningen om koalisjoner med typisk STYR-verdi (β=0,007), er effekten sterkere i negativ retning for sterkere koalisjoner, slik den endres til

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[70] For å lette tolkningen er STYR sentrert rundt snittet over perioden som studeres (hhv. rundt 1,2 i fylkesanalysene og 2,2 i kommuneanalysene, se tabell A2.6 og A2.7 i appendikset).

0,007 + 2,8·(-0,035-(-0,030)) = -0,007 for de aller sterkeste. Dessuten er altså effekten av STYR sterkere i nedgangstider (β=-0,035) enn i oppgangstider (β=-0,030). Så langt støtter altså resultatene opp under de hypotesene som ble fremsatt.

Modellspesifikasjon III inkluderer i tillegg VLIST i kommunestyreanalysen. Som kan ses redusres effekten av STYR i nedgangstider noe fra den generelle modellen (β=-0,035 i modell II) til modellen som tar hensyn til om velgerne har sterk mulighet til å koordinere rundt en eventuell alternativ koalisjon (β=-0,030 i modell III). Uansett ser effekten av at velgerne gis effektiv koordineringsmulighet ut til å være klar. Gitt nedgangstider øker effekten av STYR i negativ retning for økende verdier av VLIST og omvendt. Samspillseffekten på β=-0,184 antyder at sterke ordførerpartier som i nedgangsperioder står overfor en handlekraftig velgermasse kan regne med å tape relativt mye i valg.[71] Dette er i tråd med det teoretiske utgangspunktet, og vi skal se nærmere på de substansielle implikasjonene nedenfor.

For begge lokalvalgstypenes del ses også en effekt av opinionsdreining, om enn ikke signifikant: Substansielt estimeres at ordførerpartiet taper dersom opinionen svinger i favør av det som kan antas er partiets "farge". I kommunestyrevalgene vinner ordførerpartiet i snitt rundt 0,030-0,040 i oppslutning på logitskalaen dersom det er Fremskrittspartiet, Høyre, Kristelig Folkeparti eller Venstre det er snakk om og opinionen svinger til høyre, eller dersom det er snakk om Sosialistisk Venstreparti, Arbeiderpartiet eller Senterpartiet og opinionen svinger motsatt vei. I fylkestingsanalysene er effekten ikke like stor og heller ikke der signifikant. Effektene er uansett av samme moderate størrelsesorden som dem i tilpasningsanalysene i forrige del av artikkelen (tabell 1, modell III). Nivået på frie inntekter ser ut til å spille mindre rolle (ingen signifikante effekter, men mer betydelig og positiv i fylkestingsanalysene).

Hovedhypotesene finner støtte i materialet når det gjelder prediksjoner for ordførerpartiets frem- eller tilbakegang i kommunestyrevalgene. For fylkestingsvalgenes del er mønsteret adskillig vanskeligere å tolke. På den ene siden kan det synes som at det eksisterer en generell tendens til at nedgangstider fører med seg slitasje for ordførerpartiet i fylkeskommunen. På den annen side viskes altså betydningen av nedgangtider ut ettersom ordførerpartiet leder en sterkere koalisjon. "Spennet" i effektene i kommunestyreanalysene kan også synes betydeligere enn de tilsvarende i fylkestingsanalysene. Samtidig er snittverdien for ordførerpartiets endring fra det ene valget til det neste (en endring på –0,10 på logitskalaen) omtrent de samme i fylkestings- og kommunestyrevalg (se tabell A2.6 og A2.7 i appendikset).[72] Men, variasjonen er noe større i kommunestyrevalgene (s=0,34) enn i fylkestingsvalgene (s=0,27). Slik sett kan det hevdes at ordførerpartier på fylkesnivå sliter med *generell* slitasje mer enn tilsvarende partier på kommunenivå.[73]

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[71] En kan innvende at variabelen VLIST ikke fanger opp det "reelle" antallet partier. For eksempel inkluderer Martinussens (2004) analyser *partifragmentering*, men uten at effektene er signifikante eller retningssvarende i forhold til teorien. VLIST måler dessuten antallet lister som stiler i *valget*, snarere enn et partiantall i *den sittende lokalforsamlingen*. I tillegg er samspill mellom koalisjonsstyrke og indikatorer for koordineringsmuligheter (antall partier el.) ikke analysert i Martinussen (2004).

[72] Med en gjennomsnittlig ordførerpartioppslutning på 36 prosent i kommunene gir dette en typisk tilbakegang på 2,3 prosentpoeng. Dette er sammenlignbart med den gjennomsnittlige tilbakegangen på 2,9 prosentpoeng som Martinussen (2004:240, tabell1) finner for ordførerpartier i kommunestyrevalget i 1999.

[73] Se for eksempel Rose og Mackie (1983:119-120) om effekten av å sitte i posisjon, slik det forenkler ansvarsplasseringen *i og med fokuse*t på alt som går (mer eller mindre) galt.

For å få en enklere og mer systematisk oversikt over de substansielle implikasjonene av kommunemodellen, beregnes i figur 1 forventet endring i ordførerpartiets oppslutning direkte i *prosentpoeng*. Beregningen tar utgangspunkt i typisk oppslutning for ordførerpartier av ulike styrke (se forklaring i figur), og figuren illustrerer således hvor stor andel av velgermassen som under ulike betingelser (gitt ved NEDG, VLIST og STYR) kan ventes å endre adferd til ordførerpartiets favør eller disfavør.
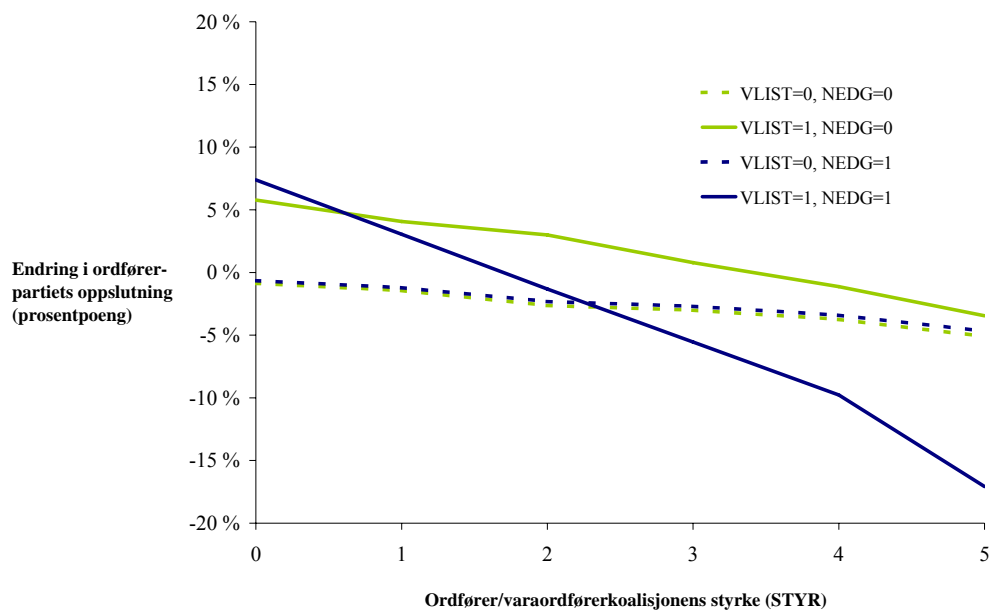
Figur 2.1: Estimert endring i oppslutning for ordførerpartier av ulike styrker. Kommunestyrevalgene 1979-2003.

Av figuren ses, for det første, at ordførerpartiets synlighet og/eller ansvarlighet slik dette kan tenkes å oppfattes av velgerne (STYR) gjennomgående bidrar til å svekke partiets valgsuksess: Under alle omstendigheter synker endringen i oppslutning ettersom STYR øker (alle linjer heller fra venstre mot høyre). For det andre ses tydelig at hypotesene som ble fremsatt vinner støtte: I tillegg til at effekten av STYR altså er gjennomgånde negativ, *avtar* effekten når VLIST og NEDG *øker* til sine høyeste verdier (mørk heltrukken linje har den sterkeste negative helningen av alle); effekten av NEDG *avtar* til sin laveste og *negative* verdi når STYR og VLIST *øker* til sine høyeste verdier (avstanden mellom mørk og lys heltrukken linje for STYR=5 er *minst* av alle avstander mellom mørke og lyse linjer av samme type (heltrukken/stiplet) for alle mulige verdier av STYR); og effekten av VLIST *avtar* til sin laveste og *negative* verdi når NEDG og STYR på sin side *øker* til sine høyeste verdier (avstanden mellom mørk heltrukken og stiplet linje for STYR=5 er *minst* av alle avstander mellom heltrukne og stiplede linjer av samme type (mørk/lys) for alle mulige verdier av STYR). For det tredje, og som tidligere nevnt, kan samspillet mellom effektene være ganske

betydelige i det ekstreme: Av figuren leser vi at et sterkt ordførerparti (ordfører og varaordfører fra samme flertallsparti) kan regne med å tape så mye som 17% i oppslutning når innsats fra partiets side presumtivt ikke er regningssvarende (og resultater dermed uteblir; NEDG=1) og velgerne har mulighet til å koordinere sine valg omkring én alternativ koalisjon (VLIST=1) (jf. den negative ekstremverdien til mørk heltrukken linje).

Allikevel: Selv om analysene av kommunestyrevalgene viser at straffen i det ekstreme kan være nokså hard, kan man spørre om det ikke er helt andre faktorer som allikevel driver partienes frem- og tilbakegang i lokalvalgene.[74] For eksempel er det ikke urimelig å tenke seg at de nasjonale partiorganisasjonenes utspill i lokalvalgkampen har stor betydning for lokallagenes skjebne. Resultatene viser en betydelig *clustering* rundt partinavnet: Men, mens variasjonen over partivalgår i fylkestingsvalgene utgjør om lag $\sigma_u^2/(\sigma_u^2+\sigma_v^2+\sigma_w^2+\sigma_e^2) =$ 0,023/(0,023+0,00+0,013+0,044) ·100% = 29 % av totalvariansen, er andelen i analysen av kommunestyrevalgene kun om lag $\sigma_u^2/(\sigma_u^2+\sigma_w^2+\sigma_e^2) = 0,024/(0,024+0,003+0,094)$ ·100% = 20 %.[75] Det kan altså synes som velgernes stemmegivning i fylkestingsvalg i større grad enn i kommunestyrevalg følger landspartivise svingninger.[76] Partivalgårvariasjonen er imidlertid av noenlunde samme størrelsesorden i kommunestyrevalgene som i fylkestingsvalgene, og selv om kommuneanalysen fant visse effekter av de operative variablene (NEDG, STYR og VLIST), er disse sjelden store nok til å overkjøre de førstnevnte effekten.[77]

2.5 Konklusjon: Fylker, regioner og kommuner i et effektivt lokaldemokrati

Resultatene fra analysene kan kaste lys over flere aktuelle spørsmål omkring organiseringen av det norske lokaldemokratiet. Til slutt i artikkelen skal det antydes noen implikasjoner for det fremtidige lokaldemokratiet i Norge, og også knytte dette opp mot annen forskning som har kommet frem til resultater som belyser noen av de samme implikasjonene: Hva kan analyseresultatene si oss om behovet for ett eller flere forvaltningsnivåer, om man bør holde seg med mange eller få enheter, og om hvilket ansvar og hvilke oppgaver lokale enheter bør ha – gitt at man samtidig skal beholde et visst rom for lokalpolitisk engasjement?

Ett første resultat i analysene av partioppslutningen for de landsdekkende partiene (tabell 1 og 2), var at oppslutningen i stor grad synes å være regionalt fordelt. Dessuten ble det funnet holdepunkter for at tilpasningen til lokale velgerpreferanser foregår ved at partier med mer eller mindre stabile plattformer *endrer* oppslutning heller enn at de *tilpasser* sine plattformer

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[74] Som ses av tabell A2.7 i appendikset har det i kun 3,3 prosent av kommune-valgperiode-enhetene vært stilt tre eller færre lister.

[75] I modellene for fylkestingsvalget lar det seg ikke gjøre å estimere en selvsetndig w_{kBt}-feilterm, og den blir dermed satt till null: Den og fylkesfeiltermen v_{jt} vil korrelere for sterkt til at begge lar seg estimere samtidig. Den beholdes i analysene først og fremst for å kunne gi riktige signifikanstester for ΔHVB-variabelen (se note 67). For kommuneanalysenes del kan w_{kBt}-termen tolkes som den delen av variasjonen som skyldes at regionale partiblokker samvarierer i frem- og tilbakegang. Komponeneten er uansett liten: Det ser for eksempel ikke ut til at det finnes noen rolle for regionale "partiblokk-høvdinger". Ingen av resultatene i noen av analysene endres nevneverdig når w_{kBt}-termen utelates.

[76] *Clustering* rundt en eventuell regionalpartivis endring i kommunestyrevalgene (i hvert enkelt valgår) ser derimot ikke ut til å forekomme i særlig grad (jf. relativt ubetydelige σ_v =0,008).

[77] Dette kan fremkomme ved å betrakte produktet av de operative variablenes hovedeffekter og deres typisk små standardavvik (se tabell A2.6 og A2.7 i appendikset) opp mot estimatene for σ_v (partieffekten).

til lokale preferanser. Dermed kan man også være sikrere på at den regionale fordelingen i oppslutningen om partiene sier noe om realiserte politiske preferanser på velgernivå.

Den klassiske begrunnelsen for lokaldemokrati vektlegger allokeringseffektivitet (Oates 1972) – dvs. effektiviteten som går ut på at ulike deler av landet med forskjellige preferanseprofiler får anledning til å organisere tjenesteyting og skattebyrde etter eget behov. Siden det altså ser ut til at velgerpreferanser i stor grad *er* regionalt fordelt leder dette lett over i argumenter om et hensiktsmessig antall nivåer og/eller et hensiktsmessig antall lokalpolitiske enheter. Tidligere studier har som nevnt vist at det er større spillerom for *faktisk* høyre-venstre-politikk i kommunene enn i fylkene – og det lar seg enkelt vise at dette har sammenheng med det større politiske handlingsrom man finner i førstnevnte enheter. Argumentet leder dermed over i en anbefaling om færre og større kommuner, siden verken allokeringseffektiviteten eller det lokalpolitiske potensialet trenger lide vesentlig, samtidig som de lokale enhetene blir mer robuste og kostnadseffektive. I det aller minste kan argumentet romme en anbefaling om regioner med helt andre oppgaver og et annet og mye større ansvar enn det fylkene har i dag, om det ikke fra et *lokaldemokratisk* synspunkt også slår bena under tanken om et eget *folkevalgt* regionalt nivå uten særlig ansvar og uten de helt store oppgaver. Dette siste poenget henger sammen med de resultater vi ellers har funnet i analysen av velgerreaksjoner på de to lokalpolitiske nivåene.

I analysene av velgerreaksjoner var resultatet at velgerne i kommunestyrevalgene mer enn i fylkestingsvalgene ser ut til å følge rimelige forventninger om hvordan det reageres på det som må antas er utført lokalpolitikk, selv om frem- og tilbakegangen synes å henge aller mest sammen med hva de landsdekkende partiorganisasjonene foretar seg.[78] Ettersom denne potensielle kontrollmekanismen synes å være helt uvirksom på fylkesplan, støtter resultatene samlet sett opp under tidligere "inntrykk […] av fylkeskommunen som et administrativt system [med et] «demokratioverskudd» - institusjonen har for mye demokrati i forhold til oppgavene." (Sørensen 1995:196).

Et hovedpoeng i analysen av lokale velgerreaksjoner er dette: Det skilles ikke mellom det som de lokale forvaltningsenheter selv er herre over og det som bestemmes utenfra. Denne studien har kun identifisert situasjoner der velgerne kan tenkes å mangle kunnskap om politikernes informasjonstilgang og handlingsvalg og der lokale beslutningstagere derfor rimeligvis kan tenkes å unnlate å yte en innsats. Gitt denne informasjonsasymmetrien mellom politikere og velgere er det dermed rimelig å forvente at de faktiske lokale politiske resultater uteblir i "dårlige tider" og at velgerne – som er opptatt av resultatene - dermed straffer den ansvarlige koalisjonen. Dette er essensen i Ferejohns (1994) moralsk hasard-argument om velger-kontrollen i representative systemer. Og det er nettopp et slikt mønster som gjenfinnes i analysene.

Videre var antagelsen at en stor del av den eksogent bestemte ressurstilgangen i norsk lokalpolitisk sammenheng kommer som statlige overføringer og en sentralt bestemt skatteinngang, og analysene viser at det er denne "drahjelpen" (eller mangel på sådan) som i et visst monn driver velgeradferden. Slik sett må det hevdes at straffen velgerne utmåler ikke er særlig målrettet eller effektiv: Lokale myndigheter straffes for forhold som de ikke er herre

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[78] Martinussen (2004) og Sørensen og Vabo (2004) finner en del av den samme effekten ettersom oppslutningen om ordførerpartiet nasjonalt har innvirkning på ordførerpartiets frem- og tilbakegang.

over.[79] En anbefaling som flyter naturlig fra dette resonnementet er derfor at man gjør kommuner, fylker eller fremtidige regioner mer uavhengige av eksogene forhold, eksempelvis gjennom å øke den lokale beskatningsfriheten. Slik kan moralsk hasard-problemet i alle fall avhjelpes noe, i og med at rommet for informasjonsasymmetri (om lokale beslutningstageres handlingsvalg) innsnevres. Spesielt for fylkene kan dette sies å ha vært et problem, ettersom de ikke har hatt anledning til å kreve inn gebyrer og skatter av særlig omfang.

Også den norske valgordningen og den gjeldende organiseringen av det representative nivået i norsk lokalpolitikk har implikasjoner for en effektiv demokratisk kontroll. Analysene finner som nevnt at evnen til å identifisere en ansvarlig koalisjon (gitt ved ulike indikatorer for dens styrke) har innvirkning på en eventuell straffeutmåling i form av velgerflukt. Likeså er muligheten for velgerne til å kunne koordinere sin stemmegivning avgjørende. Og man kan hevde at en fyllestgjørende realisering av disse betingelsene er særdeles vanskelig i det norske systemet. I forbindelse med poenget i forrige avsnitt – om økt beskatningsfrihet – kan man i utgangspunktet hevde at en frigjøring av den lokale beskatningsretten kan føre galt av sted: Systemet er slik utformet at ansvarsforhold og politiske handlingsvalg uansett lett tilsløres, slik at økt lokal beskatningsrett uavvendelig vil føre med seg et betydelig høyere skattetrykk generelt. Mot dette kan man hevde at skattekontrollen allikevel er nokså effektiv gjennom stemmegivning på ulike partier (ved at skattepolitikken og partinavnene har en mer eller mindre klar høyre-venstre-forankring).[80] Av resultatene i denne artikkelen kan man uansett lese at det ligger en *ytterligere* kilde til økt velgerkontroll i både det å gjøre det norske valgsystemet mer oversiktlig (ved å tilrettelegge for færre partier eller bevege seg vekk fra ordningen med proporsjonale valg) og/eller det å gjøre endringer i den gjengse organiseringen av lokalforsamlingene (ved for eksempel å innføre lokal parlamentarisme i stedet for formannskapsorganisering). Og dette gjelder selvsagt for fylker og kommuner som for eventuelle fremtidige regioner.

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[79] Sørensen og Vabo (2004:18), som *har* separate indikatorer for endogene og eksogene faktorer, anslår at "kommuneeffektene trolig er et sted mellom halvparten av statseffektene og like store som statseffektene".

[80] Se for eksempel Erna Solbergs reaksjon på Lokaldemokratikommisjonens anbefaling: "Dette vil føre til økt skatt" (Aftenposten 2005). Anbefalingen fra Lokaldemokratikommisjonen (NOU 2005:6) er nettopp å øke beskatningsfriheten – basert på analyser av virksom lokal skattekontroll.

3 Self-organizing committees? An analysis of committee members' spending preferences in Norwegian local councils 1991-1999

3.1 Introduction

A longstanding claim in the literature on the organization of assemblies is that its members first and foremost seek to accommodate certain 'favorite' policy areas: against any commitments supposedly fostered by members' party affiliation there will be a tendency for the individual representative to harbor particular sectoral interests. For instance, one might assume that assembly members from rural districts are particularly concerned about agricultural policy, whilst urban representatives are more set on confronting social policy issues. Left to themselves, assembly members are free to pursue logrolling deals: by the mechanism of exchange they will *get* in areas that are important to them in return for *giving* in areas that are unimportant (Shepsle 1986; Collie 1988; Vabo 2005). To facilitate working alliances between assembly members that have strong preferences in a particular policy area and constituent groups of the same outlook, assembly members may position themselves in the most policy relevant functional committees (Collie 1988:429). An empirical implication of this view is that committee members are preference outliers as seen form the plenary point of view: they are high demanders on the part of their particular policy area of interest.

Against this view one may posit that candidates are carefully assigned to committee work by a rational assembly. Granted that assemblies, and the partisan groups within them, are mechanisms for coordinating policy across areas, it is reasonable to assume that they will wish to enhance their decision making ability by selecting committee members in a fashion that reaps the informational gain from a specialized committee system. In this setting information passed on from committee members whose preferences are *extremely* outlying will be of little value to responsible sponsors. Policy recommendations from such ardent policy area supporters will likely downplay any collectively detrimental effects from their implementation (Krehbiel 1991:80-101). Even so, committee members are expected to invest considerable time and effort in order to specialize in a certain policy field. Thus, committee members need to be compensated for their efforts, and this may be accomplished by some amount of distributive benefits targeted to the committee in question. Similarly, then, the informational theory of assembly organization expects that committee members are preference outliers, albeit in a weaker fashion: they are but *moderate* preference outliers.[81]

As both the gains from exchange hypothesis and the informational theory of committee organization lead to much the same rough empirical implication - i.e. outlying committee preferences – claims of support for either hypothesis merely in the face of such a finding are problematic. What is needed is some sort of benchmark measure against which one can compare the 'substantive outlierness' of committee members. This would require a deeper

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[81] The expectation from the informational perspective is weaker in two senses. First, one would expect that the compensation to individual representatives for specializing do not run higher than whatever informational gains that can be reaped. Secondly, representatives may be compensated by other means than by distributive gains to their policy area of interest.

probing into the underlying theoretical assumptions and the wider causal chain of the respective arguments with an eye to deriving empirical implications that will follow from the one argument but not the other. However, while this general contention merely relates to the themes that have been up for discussion in the literature, there are other and arguably more serious conceptual and specificational issues at play: As will become quite clear as the paper proceeds, the contention is also that much empirical research in the field has relied on a poor operative conception of *parties* as *organizations*. This paper takes a fresh look at the general claims set forth by the two theoretical frameworks in the empirical setting of Norwegian local politics, and it proceeds as follows:

The next section presents some brief notes on the theoretical debate between the two perspectives, along with a short review of the theoretical and empirical research that has been conducted on the topic. The ensuing section follows up on the preceding review by developing a starting point for further inquiry, namely that only assemblies or parties that conceivably might be held accountable for policy decisions will want to control the process of high-demanding representatives' self-selection to relevant committees. The section then outlines the design of the present investigation and the data which is put to use: responses to survey questions on spending preferences for key municipal and county service areas going to Norwegian local politicians over two election periods. The subsequent section presents and discusses the results of the empirical analyses, and a final section offers some concluding remarks.

3.2   Theoretical and empirical approaches in previous research

A formal and classical starting point for the gains from exchange hypothesis is Arrows' (1963) work on voting cycles, highlighting the difficulties of reaching majority equilibriums in multidimensional policy spaces. In an extension of the argument, this grants to an agenda setter the power to shift the assembly to any position within the policy space (McKelvey 1976). Roemer and Rosenthals (1978) model shows that sectoral committee power specifically *is* conducive to policy making as such.[82] Granted that the plenary may not amend propositions from the committees and that actors operate in an environment of full and complete information[83], the plenary, in taking heed of (diverging) committee propositions, avoids the unpredictability of universalistic voting that will plague policy making in the Arrowian setting. Moreover, as propositions are sectorally slanted and votes are not coordinated across different sectors, an additional result is that committee members – granted their agenda setting power - will be able to drive the total budget upward against the wishes of the plenary.

Two problems of the above account may be emphasized. First, it seems unreasonable that the political process at play between committee and floor should be characterized as one of full and complete information. The original rationale behind committee systems is that causes and consequences of decisions in certain policy areas are *not* known in advance, and that the committee system is set up in order to learn about them. In short, Roemer and Rosenthals

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[82] That is, in game theoretical terms it is an *institutionale equilibrium*, in that it grants to actors the opportunity to avoid unpredictability (voting cycles in this case) (Shepsle 1979).

[83] Complete information entails that each player knows of every other players' relevant preference structure (i.e. there are no types in the game), whereas perfect information entails that all players know what stage of the game they are at (i.e. every node is a singleton).

(1978) account is implausible on a very central point. Second, most assemblies (as is the case for Norwegian local councils) have the right to amend committee proposals - i.e. the usual operating mode is an open rule amendment right. Moreover, in a setting of full and complete information, and in the absence of the closed rule requirement, the (median) floor preference will pass as policy (Helland 2000a:170).

The wider intuition behind the critique may be summed up as follows: In the case that committee members *are* extreme preference outliers, the plenary, in relying on information from the former, will likely misestimate the consequences of making certain decisions. Should the floor really take heed of this information, the result would be a much larger budget than that which the plenary prefers. Accordingly, the plenary should disregard information from extremely outlying committee members. On the other hand, total disregard of committee information would serve as a disincentive for potential committee members to invest time and resources in learning about the causes and consequences of decisions in distinct policy fields, and so would render unutilized potentially valuable information. Thus, the very idea of committee systems as devices for specialization and learning would seem to crumble (Helland 2000a:184-185). In a series of works by Crawford and Sobel (1982), Krehbiel (1991) and Gilligan and Krehbiel (1990;1995) this insight is elaborated upon within a framework that relaxes the assumptions of full and complete information.[84] The resulting proposition is the concept of the *informative* outlier (agent) with preferences that deviate but moderately from the plenary view - informative, that is, as seen from the point of view of a *rational* assembly (principal): Policy responsible assemblies will select for committee service those representatives that request but *some* degree of compensation for specializing, although not *too* much, as this would be an indication of highly sectoral and thus grossly imbalanced views on the spending needs in the relevant policy area.

Empirical research of the sectorization hypothesis has taken many routes, and below is listed but a few examples.[85] One approach has been the analysis of representatives' *preferences*. In Vabos (2005) study of spending preferences among Norwegian municipal councilors it is found that committee members are indeed preference outliers with respect to their particular field of specialization. Nevertheless, that fact is not seen to pose too great a problem, inasmuch as the 'committee effect' does not override other driving forces in Norwegian local politics (local needs and representatives' party affiliation).[86] In another study Helland (2000b)

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[84] That is, the assumption is that committee members *do* have private information about consequences of decisions in their field of expertise.

[85] In addition to the approaches listed here, much early research relied on analysis of patterns of contact between committee members and sectoral groups. The finding of close contacts between the two is, of course, in accordance both with the informational (information gathering) and the exchange (socialization) theories of committee organization. See Helland (2000b:23-24, 60 (note 23)) for a discussion of the limitations of contacts data in this respect. Another approach has been the analysis of *individual* determinants of spending preferences (gender, age, education, occupational background, seniority and the like). For instance, Serritzlew (2003) finds that Danish local councilors' preferences in relevant fields are determined by social background (age, gender, occupation and education) and that seniority on committees has a substantial positive effect on spending preferences in the relevant functional policy field. Also, Vabo (2005:579, table 4) finds that Norwegian local councilors' preferences are informed by personal characteristics such as gender and age. Both, however, find that (national) party affiliation has by far the greatest influence. A discussion of the implications, limitations and usefulness of these findings (on individual determinants in themselves and as viewed up against partisan influences) is offered in the ensuing section.

[86] The pioneering study in the Norwegian case is Fevolden's (1982) analysis of county assembly representatives' prioritization preferences for different policy sectors. He finds that relevant committee assignment does in fact override or is at least comparable to the effect of party affiliation in education, roads and local business and labor policy (*ibid.*:156-165).

finds scant evidence that Norwegian parliamentary representatives' preferences[87] vary significantly between the plenary and the relevant committee settings. Another approach is the analysis of the *budgetary process* itself. In the mentioned study of Helland (2000b:36-40) it is found that expansive budgetary tendencies more often than not stem from the *plenary* deliberation rounds. A more decisive approach still is the analysis of *outputs*. In Helland's (2000a:ch. 9) study of OECD countries in the 1972-1992 period, it is shown that countries with strong committee systems[88] can show for the greatest budgetary discipline. A similar result is found in Hagen and Vabo (2005), where it is shown that Norwegian municipalities with stronger committee systems are also the most financially disciplined. Both these results go against the contention that committee members are outside the control of rational assemblies and parties – i.e. they are *not* free to drive total budgets to excessive levels.

This short review merely an impression of empirical results as interpreted in individual studies, the next section of the paper elaborates further on some very specific operational and specificational issues common to the literature on local government sectorization tendencies. As such, the listed shortcomings of previous studies may figure as contrasts to the research design that is put to use in the ensuing empirical analysis.

3.3   Theoretical considerations and research design

Taken together, the research cited in the previous section of the paper maps the various bits of the causal chain of committee organization. Nevertheless, two interrelated problems, one methodological, the other theoretical, may be identified. Firstly, the cited research on national assemblies (Helland 2000a; 2000b) relies both on analysis of preference selection (outlier analysis) and policy decisions (output analysis). While theoretically comprehensive and instructive, the one problem is analyzed in a single-country setting (Norway), while the other is dealt with by way of multi-country panel analysis techniques. This might pose a problem as seen from a methodological point of view. What is really needed for the broad conclusion is analysis that would tackle both nodes of the causal chain with similar techniques applied to a single sample of comparable units. National quality data of this sort is, however, hard to come by.

The approaches of Vabo (2005) and Hagen and Vabo (2005) viewed together might seem more promising in that respect. But, while evidence certainly is offered to the effect that localities do better in financial terms when they take fuller advantage of the committee system (i.e. have stronger systems that invest in committees agenda setting powers), the main question is left unresolved. As mentioned, the main *micro level* result of the analysis is merely that the problem of outlying committee preferences by and large will be dwarfed by other processes of preference formation or partition (party affiliation and locality needs). Secondly, therefore, Vabo's (2005) analysis does not provide an answer to the fundamental question of whether the outlier finding, small as it may be, is the result merely of semi-free[89] *self-selection* of representatives to interesting committees, or if it is also an indication of

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[87] As measured indirectly by indicators of sympathy towards sectoral interest organizations.

[88] Strong, that is, for instance in terms of delegated decision making powers, as this would heighten the stakes of committee service for the sectorally inclined representative.

[89] There is, of course, also the issue of committee seat allocation with a finite number of committee positions: Even though all representatives would wish to sit on committee A, all cannot be granted a position on it. See Helland (2002b) for a discussion of this problem in the Norwegian national assembly.

responsible assemblies' practices of compensating moderately those representatives that are essentially *selected* for specialization in certain policy areas. Stated another way, there is a need for models of policy responsibility, and it is in this respect that the present article seeks to contribute. Before going directly further down this line, however, we contemplate a bit more on the mentioned specifications and results as found in previous research. Again, emphasis is given to the contributions within the Nordic political setting as this may be motivated both by substantive and methodological concerns: They have attempted both general characterizations of the quality of local democratic institutions in quite similar settings (Nordic local democracy) and they apply methods that may serve as benchmarks to be compared to the analysis design offered here.

3.3.1 *Conceptual and theoretical foundations: Local party organizations, partisan differences and committee assignment*

Both Vabo (2005) (in the Norwegian case) and Serritzlew (2003) (in the Danish case) find that both party affiliation and committee assignment exerts substantial influence on local councilors' spending preferences and that the former influence is far stronger than the latter. Two potential problems plague these results, the one to do with more or less plausible theoretical implications, the other with conceptual and operational issues. First, and this is a general problem with the exclusive use of preference data, the typical (individual) preference is not necessarily a proxy for (collective) action in institutional terms. As local decisions are to be made, say by party leaderships in blunt disregard of committee views, or perhaps *not* made in the case that localities themselves are severely constrained, sectorization, viewed as *preference clustering*, might simply not matter at all in terms of essential action. Even a significant sectorization tendency viewed in this way might not amount to much of a problem in real policy terms. Stated somewhat differently, whereas typical individual preferences within the one institution (committees, say) may not necessarily be viewed as a precursor for imminent action, the analogue in other institutions (parties, say) may very well do so.[90]

Second, both the mentioned studies include partisan variables in their sector-by-sector analyses that are essentially measures of individual affiliation under *national* party labels and also offer control for local needs and institutional factors by way of the traditional 'control variable' approach. As for the latter point, common techniques exist that would better deal with the problem of confounding variables, and the data put to use here clearly allows for their application. Saving the details on this issue for the empirical analysis itself, the more important point here is nevertheless that the 'national party labels' procedure would not necessarily say very much about truly local political processes. Instead one should concentrate on truly local rather than national party labels when assessing relevant partisan differences. Even where locality specific characteristics could be totally factored out, if one relies on analysis of variation between national partisan categories one is still working under the assumption that (typical) local party differences essentially mirror national aggregate differences. That is, one would be assessing the tendency of local branches of nationwide

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[90] This applies equally to the data put to use in the present analysis. However, as the present analysis derives empirical implications from the informational perspective, it is also able to read *informational value* into individual preferences and so provides a resource measure to be acted upon *should* powerful and independent local actors (i.e. local parties) exist to take advantage of it. If the suggested pattern is detected it would be a sign that local *party* democracy is indeed working. If it is not, then democracy could still be at work through *other* institutions than local parties. As for the budgetary expansiveness argument of the sectorization hypothesis, the data at hand would simply not give any definitive answers: Individual preferences may for various reasons be disregarded locally or could be prevented from being realized due to central regulation of local spending.

parties to *ordinally* position themselves similarly from the one locality to next. In technical terms, an appropriate analysis calls for a design that *nests* partisan differences within localities and so sets the ground for characterizations of the relevant political arena: An operationalization of local party systems that would not logically prohibit local parties to position themselves freely in local party systems.

These conceptual and operational issues aside, the basic question is still intriguing. What, if any, differences between local parties exist when external influences, local institutional factors and locality needs have been accounted for? In and of itself, an interesting question is how well local partisan positions seem to cover the breadth of local political preferences, as this would be an indication of a democratically ideal[91] match between working local party systems and local opinions. The question, furthermore, plays indirectly into the argument presented here. Where local partisan positioning on a certain political dimension is totally absent, that would surely signify a situation where local parties with a partial eye to securing preferred policies rather than political positions (i.e. seats in the local assembly) would be less in need for costly organizational measures to enhance electoral success. Still, the troubling and direct consequence of including national partisan effects in the analysis is of course that such a procedure on the whole would misspecify the overall organizational *potential* for *potentially* relevant actors. First of all, local policy *decisions* must be feasible. Local institutions must be able to carry out potential policy platforms – policies should be the result of local decisions rather than central decree. Next, this the foundation of the present study, if parties are at all to have an operative organizational and managerial role in the formulation of local policies it is easily argued that *local* party organizations would have to be charged with that responsibility. If, in its turn, this organizational role is to be realized, a plausible assumption is that incentives will have to exist in terms of parties actually being held accountable for sound policies (by voters). With these points in mind we now proceed to the discussion of the potential and specific organizational roles of policy responsible local institutions.

While the modeling of a responsible assembly would seem highly appropriate for tests of the informational theory, in practice such a task might prove quite difficult in a multiparty setting like that of Norwegian (and Nordic) local politics. Responsibility for policy is often difficult to pin down and voters will thus find it hard to know which parts of the assembly (i.e. which partisan groups) should be held accountable for implemented policy. Also, even if voters are mostly forward looking, the multiparty setting will most often give few clues as to what ruling coalition will eventually win through in elections (Cox 1997). In majoritarian systems these problems would generally be of less importance, with assemblies having a clear single-party basis, thus allowing responsibility for policy to be placed firmly with the party in question. Furthermore, the electoral stakes for the runner-up party in such systems would be equally enhanced, as it would be seen as a clear and potentially viable alternative to the present administration (in a two-party setting). Both the ruling party and the opposition would in this case have high incentives for enhancing electoral performance through organizational maneuvering.

The ensuing empirical analyses attempt to address this difficulty by focusing directly on parties, the argument being that large parties would have to bear the brunt of responsibility for

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[91] This is very much *the* normative argument in making the case for multiparty systems: The political and *voiced* representation of a broad spectrum of opinions (Cox 1997:225). Also, in multiparty systems rational office-seeking parties are positively expected to spread their campaign platforms out on the dimension in question (in models of so-called probabilistic voting; see Merrill and Adams (2002) and Adams and Merrill (1999)).

policy failures and successes even in multiparty settings. Not only may one argue that parties are, or, at the very least should be, central to the representative democratic process: They constitute the list from which voters choose their preferred policy packages. The crucial insight, however, is that parties are organizations and not merely labels under which like-minded individuals gather. Parties and their leaders build reputations and have goals that are distinct from that of any individual representative, they select and screen candidates for ballot positions and they discipline individual representatives into adherence to the party line (Snyder and Groseclose 2000; Wright and Schaffner 2002; Krehbiel 1993).

Much previous research on partisanship has neglected this very central aspect of parties and has instead relied exclusively on the traditional 'difference-between-parties' conception.[92] While informative, results from such applications go only so far – as was suggested in the above discussion. True, while inter-party differences in typical individual preferences is a plausible indication of parties' positions, within-party differences may be far greater, and other positive partitions (along gender or education, say) may even overwhelm party differences themselves. Also true, if other partitions *do* seem to be of greater importance than differences between parties, that might similarly be taken as an indication that party politics in terms of positioning simply isn't salient in the area under study. Still, this does not necessarily obviate the role of parties: The crucial and final test lies in assessing the tendency for representatives' private inclinations to be positively and appropriately restricted by parties as acting *organizations*. As such, the present study is a first stab at evaluating a positive organizational role for parties in the context of local democracy.

3.3.2 *Analysis design, empirical expectations and data*

With the local party focus the starting point, the insight from the informational theory of committee organization would have committee members selected by parties to the effect that members hold but moderately high spending preferences. This in order that committee members be considered as credibly informative and thereby useful in the eyes of the sponsoring local party. Local parties are nevertheless assumed to be instrumental when applying costly organizational measures such as screening candidates for committee assignment. *Et ceteris paribus*, the larger the party, the greater the party's electoral stakes as accountability for policy is then more easily placed at its doorstep and the greater the potential for actually getting certain preferred or mandated policies passed. Hence the greater need for the *larger* party to acquire good information in its efforts to make good decisions and develop reasonable policy platforms that will either secure its position and/or also simply make good use of the potential that lies in holding it. Smaller parties – less electorally exposed and less in a position to make a difference - would on their hand not need to worry much about consequences of bad sectoral information, representatives form their ranks accordingly able to take a seat on their favorite committee without fear of intervention from the party leadership. *The main expectation is that larger parties will be the more careful in selecting for committee assignment members that hold but moderately outlying spending preferences.*

Conditions are not always as clean-cut as this, though. If conditions are such that very little difference exists between contending local parties' spending positions in a certain area and if parties are partially concerned with securing feasible policy in addition to seats, then there will be less incentives for costly measures to hedge against electoral losses or to reap the benefits of electoral success, larger parties always the more exposed. Electoral success for the

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[92] As is the case with the research cited here.

individual party (and so the good information required to secure it) will be less a prerequisite for driving the preferred spending policy home, other parties standing to carry the burden along with it. Good information might nevertheless be required in order to stabilize current policy itself, but incentives for providing this becomes in a similar fashion a collective undertaking, the benefits of investing in information enhancing measures falling on the *entire* group of parties. The collective action problem that this entails for a group of like-minded parties will thus likely lead to the *underprovision* of the information good. *Hence, one would expect that local parties' incentives for selecting moderately outlying committee members will lessen in situations where parties' spending preferences are* much the same. Alternatively, to the extent that parties are first and foremost office-seekers and in the case that large spending differences exist between them, parties may slack considerably on any efficiency enhancing measures, selection of reliable candidates for committee assignment included. Since alternative spending platforms lay far from any single party's position, there is simply less need to hedge against off-mark policies when electoral consequences in the form of massive vote loss isn't very likely. *Accordingly, one would expect that local parties' incentives for selecting moderately outlying committee members lessen in situations where spending preferences are* quite different.[93]

The analysis investigates the main proposition - of positive large party effects – and the contextual propositions – of effects from organizational fragmentation - by applying variants of the following statistical model for analysis:

$$P_{ipjt}^{S,G} = \gamma_. + \beta_C \cdot COM_{ijpt} + \beta_P \cdot PSIZE_{jpt} + \beta_{CP} \cdot COM_{ijpt} \cdot PSIZE_{jpt} + u_{jpt} + e_{ijpt},$$

that is, it estimates individual local representative i's (in locality j and affiliated with party p in election period t) preference (P) for per cent increases or reductions in budget shares going to two central local service sectors (S) at each level of local government (G) – i.e. at both the municipal and county level. The operative variables of interest are first and foremost COM, which measures the individual representative's membership on the relevant standing committee, PSIZE measuring the size of the local party with which the representative is affiliated and finally the interaction between the two, COM·PSIZE, intended to tap the hypothesized effect of a larger party's incentives for keeping its committee members closer to the party line. With the basic expectation that committee members will seek interesting committee positions, higher spending preferences in the relevant area the indication (i.e. $\beta_C>0$), it is expected that this tendency is dampened the larger the committee member's sponsoring party (i.e. $\beta_{CP}<0$).

The crucial specificational feature of the model is nevertheless the u_{jpt} term. It is a random effect over local (j) branches of eight nationwide party labels (p)[94] in two election periods (t).

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[93] As the analyses include fixed locality effects (discussed below), the confounding effect of *general* and *cross-dimensional* local party differences is controlled for. While such general contextual conditions will likely vary from the one locality to the other, the present data does not allow for any practicable positive measurement of general or sectoral differences at the local level. In any circumstance, what must then be interpreted as the *average effect* of party size-on-committee assignment is still informative: One would expect it to be significantly negative in a *more or less salient* local policy field since it would either be nearly absent (in some localities) or else negative (in localities where conditions are conducive) and never positive. Likewise, in evaluating the contextual propositions, measures of typical (average) local differences in spending preferences may only crudely be related to such (policy field) typical party and committee effects.

[94] That is, the Red Electoral Alliance, the Socialist Left Party, the Labor Party, the Center Party, the Liberal Party, the Christian Peoples' Party, the Conservative Party or the Progress Party.

In technical terms it estimates an error term over local parties in addition to the traditional individual specific error term (e_{ijpt}), and thus specifies the appropriate level of analysis. In line with the argument that the local party (in the relevant election period; indexed jpt) is the natural organizational unit to be studied, this specification will accordingly provide estimates of local party level effects that may be evaluated from variation exclusively *between* such units. Technically this will provide for proper significance tests for effects over local party level units.[95] In addition, this specification render the individual specific error term (e_{ijpt}) an indicator of the typical variation *within* local parties at time t. No variables tapping individual and out-of-institutions characteristics (gender, age, education and the like) are included in the analysis, the reason simple enough: The focus of the present inquiry is a positive evaluation of *organizational capabilities on the part of local parties* as they would plausibly *counteract* individual inclinations, *whatever* the latter may be.[96]

In addition to the variables cited in the statistical model, the analyses successively include time specific fixed effects (dummy variables) for localities (jt). This to analytically disentangle the truly *local* political systemic from plausible extraneous systemic factors and inter-locality differences, the former the appropriate arena for local parties' organizational roles. In other words, we evaluate typical differences between truly local parties (u_{jpt}) and individual preferences (e_{ijpt}) after any locality specific needs and constraints have been accounted for. Moreover, estimates of u_{jpt} (local party differences) as compared to those of e_{ijpt} (differences between individuals) will allow for some crude assessment of the relative ease with which local party systems seem to account for overall local differences of opinions along selected policy dimensions – again, *given* the influence of exogenous factors such as locality specific needs, constraints and preferences and the very structure of local government.

The rationale for studying both levels of government (G) is twofold. First, recent debate on Norwegian local democracy has not only criticized and scrutinized local democracy in general for perhaps not being too strong on local discretionary powers, intense central government regulation much to blame (see for instance NOU 2005:6). The regional (county) level in particular has always been the more criticized of the two, and the regional level of local government in particular is at the very least 'up for reform' (with reform proposals outlined in NOU (2004:19); see Hervik and Rattsø (2005) for a recent critique of these proposals). The choice of studying both levels of government reflects this two-track nature of the debate. Second, the present research design should hopefully be able to link arguments on the constraints on local democracy to the purported differences between the regional and local levels of government. Is county (or municipal) government incapable of (or simply not in need of) organizing local politics efficiently by itself (through, say, sensible use of the committee system)? And does this seem to go along with other indications of local party system incapabilities (little difference between parties' spending positions, say)?

The analyses, furthermore, look into spending preference patterns on four very central expenditure areas (S): Expenditures in the 'elderly and the disabled' and the 'primary schools'

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[95] The substantive rationale is that all variables that are measured at the local party level are more or less easily conceptualized as indicators of realized *organizational* capabilities. For example, local party size would be considered an indicator of a party's (its leadership's) willingness to screen potential committee members carefully.

[96] That other studies have investigated and found evidence of the impact of individual characteristics is nevertheless commendable (as is done in Vabo (2005) and Serritzlew (2003)). Such results would go to show that local parties are not able to totally contain plausible individual routes to individual preference formation or preference clustering. Even so, the present analysis is bent on revealing *mechanisms* for counteracting the playing out of individual preferences, however they must have come about in the first place.

areas in municipalities and the 'somatic hospitals' and 'high schools' areas in counties. These four spending areas constitute the two single-largest specific expenditure areas at the two levels, accounting for approximately 21, 15, 38 and 18 per cent of gross local expenditures respectively.[97] As such, and in isolation, the inherent salience of these services along with their sheer economic importance should bode well for the intensity of local partisan politics.

The data put to use in the analyses consists of responses to questions in survey questionaires going to all municipal councilors in a sample of Norwegian municipalities and counties ($N_{municipality}$=1543 and N_{county}=508 in 1995, $N_{municipality}$=2706 and N_{county}=581 in 1999).[98] The response rate for the surveys is considered quite satisfactory (58-65 per cent), and the survey answers do not seem to be biased in any apparent way. The dependent variable (P) records answers to items listing the mentioned service sectors under the following general question:

We are interested in how you think resources of your municipality (county) should be allocated in next year's budget. In comparison with this year's budget, we ask that you consider whether the service sectors listed below should be granted:

(1)   considerably less resources (i.e. reductions in excess of five per cent)
(2)   somewhat less resources (i.e. reductions in the range of one to five per cent)
(3)   the same resources as this year
(4)   somewhat more resources (i.e. increases in the range of one to five per cent)
(5)   considerably more resources (i.e. an increase in excess of five per cent).

Keep in mind that increases in one service sector usually must be matched by reductions in other sectors.

For ease of interpretation, in the ensuing analyses the original variable has been recoded as follows: (1) = -6, (2) = -3, (3) = 0, (4) = 3 and (5) = 6. In this way effects may be interpreted directly in terms of preferred percentage change in the budget share of the service sector in question stemming from a unit change in an independent variable. As is shown in the appendix (table A3.1) local representatives typically seem to favor moderately more resources to the sector in question (increases of less than five per cent), with large groups also advocating a stand still and with smaller groups still either wanting larger increases or even reductions. In addition to the dependent variable, the surveys also record information on party affiliation (*p*), membership on standing committees (COM) and on the local executive

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[97] Figures reflecting averages over the 1991-1995 and 1995-1999 election periods respectively as taken from local accounts data form Statistics Norway/Norwegian Social Data Services. Neither the Norwegian Social Data Services nor Statistics Norway bears any responsibility for the use of data in the present paper, or for the interpretation thereof.

[98] That is, the data are same as those put to use in Vabo (2005), only augmented by the earlier survey (1994/1995) to maximize the number of data points. Both surveys were conducted by the Norwegian School of Management/the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) towards the ends of the 1991-1995 and 1995-1999 election periods, i.e. in 1994/95 and 1998/99 respectively. In 1995 the municipality sample-size was 80 and in 1999 121 municipalities were sampled. In both surveys populous municipalities are over-represented, so as to reflect political processes in localities where most people live. In the county surveys all counties (19 in total) are represented (save the special case of Oslo, which has municipal as well as county responsibilities).

board.[99] Information on parties' numerical strengths (PSIZE) is supplied by Statistics Norway/Norwegian Social Data Services. Further documentation and descriptive statistics for analysis variables is given in appendix (table A3.2).

3.4 Analysis: Why are committee members preference outliers?

In tables 1 (municipal services) and 2 (county services) is analyzed local politicians' preferences for spending increases or reductions in the four mentioned service sectors.[100] Considering first the simple specification (models I), one observes that there is indeed clustering of individual preferences around local party labels: Overall, $u_{jpt}/(u_{jpt}+e_{ijpt}) \cdot 100\%$ = $1.19/(1.19+4.82) \cdot 100\%$ = 19.8% of the variation in municipal councilors' preferences for changes in primary schools budgets is accounted for by local party affiliation, with a comparable share of 13.3% of the variation so accounted for in services for the elderly and the disabled. Likewise, in the county services analysis (table 2) the picture is much the same, with 19.0% of variation in preferences in the somatic hospital area and 10.7% in the high schools area accounted for by differences between local parties.[101] Even so, the larger part - i.e. the remainder - of the variation is still to be found *within* local parties, thus highlighting the fact that parties are not first and foremost compact clubs of the like-minded. Presumably, individual representatives initially chose their party affiliation in light of a compromise between parties' general position on several dimensions, much like other and perhaps more individual specific characteristics would merely indicate *affinity* with other multi-faceted organizations. Such indications of affinity aside, the local and, specifically, local organizational role of parties themselves is contemplated in more detail below.

Local parties do seem to matter, then, in the sense that parties are composed of individual representatives with typical preferences that tend to vary from the one party to the next. However, the measures of local party differences in models I are essentially appraisals of the *system-wide* variation between local parties. As such they contain portions of variation that are likely accounted for by *inter-locality* differences.

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[99] For party label categories, see note 94. For the COM variable classification is either in pure educational committees or in committees that combine educational issues with pre-school child care, church and/or culture issues in the case of assignment to the relevant committee responsible for the 'primary schools' or 'high schools' spending areas, and in overall health and care services committees in the case of assignment to the committee responsible for the 'elderly and the disabled' and the 'somatic hospitals' areas.

[100] Models are evaluated using the MIXED procedure in SAS version 9.1. As the models include effects of localities, of parties nested within localities and effects of committee assignment nested within local parties, it will put considerable strain on the data: With 1,030 (or 1,031) municipal party observations with recordings on the one (or the other) dependent variable in the data set, the maximum number of individual respondents within a single observation is 24, the median number 3 and the 75th and 90th percentile 5 and 8 respectively. Among the analogous 244 county parties the maximum, median, 75th and 90th percentile number of respondents are 17, 3, 5-6 and 9 respectively. The multilevel or mixed model methodology is nevertheless highly efficient as it utilizes information where it is to be found.

[101] All of these measures of *intraclass variation* (IC) considerably higher than coarse rule-of-thumb of 5 per cent for rejecting a two-level data structure (as is assumed here). Also, large and highly significant reductions in the –2LogLikelihood statistic from models with no local party effect would indicate the same (with drops of 204.4, 98.6, 27.1 and 60.4 for the primary schools, elderly and the disabled, high schools and somatic hospitals areas respectively, all on df=1).

Table 3.1: Municipal councilors' preferences for budget changes in primary schools and services for the elderly and the disabled 1995-1999. Percentage increase from previous year (t-values (betas) and z-values (sigmas)).

	Primary schools				Elderly and the disabled			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
Member of relevant committe (**COM**)			0.82 *** (6.58)	0.68 *** (3.66)			0.59 *** (4.94)	0.79 *** (4.51)
Party's share of seats in council (**PSIZE**)				-0.92 *** (-2.36)				-1.13 *** (-2.79)
Interaction: **COM·PSIZE**				0.97 (0.94)				-1.55 * (-1.55)
Jurisdiction fixed effects (D_{jt}^{k})	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
σ_u^{2} (var[u_{jpt}])	1.19 *** (9.22)	0.37 *** (3.72)	0.26 *** (2.36)	0.26 *** (2.40)	0.68 *** (7.09)	0.43 *** (4.63)	0.53 *** (4.65)	0.50 *** (4.45)
σ_e^{2} (var[e_{ijpt}])	4.82 *** (37.50)	4.81 *** (37.56)	4.78 *** (32.87)	4.77 *** (32.91)	4.42 *** (37.74)	4.40 *** (37.79)	4.27 *** (32.85)	4.27 *** (32.83)
-2LL	17147.7	16409.5	12779.5	12771.2	16649.8	16132.0	12568.5	12556.5
N	3753	3753	2963	2963	3753	3753	2962	2962

***) p<0.05, **) p<0.10, *) p<0.15. Two-tailed test for betas, one-tailed test for sigmas.

Table 3.2: County councilors' preferences for budget changes in high schools and somatic hospitals 1995-1999. Percentage increase from previous year (t-values (betas) and z-values (sigmas)).

	High schools				Somatic hospitals			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
Member of relevant committe **(COM)**			1.52 *** (6.65)	1.64 *** (5.02)			0.69 *** (3.09)	0.73 *** (2.41)
Party's share of seats in council **(PSIZE)**				0.32 (0.44)				-1.34 (-1.42)
Interaction: **COM·PSIZE**				-1.04 (-0.52)				-0.43 (-0.21)
Jurisdiction fixed effects $(D_{jt}^{\ k})$	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
$\sigma_u^{\ 2}$ (var[u_{jpt}])	0.67 *** (3.59)	0.00[a] -	0.00[a] -	0.00[a] -	1.42 *** (4.79)	0.50 *** (2.17)	0.66 *** (2.45)	0.66 *** (2.48)
$\sigma_e^{\ 2}$ (var[e_{ijpt}])	5.61 *** (20.38)	5.62 *** (22.08)	5.30 *** (20.58)	5.31 *** (20.55)	6.09 *** (19.83)	6.16 *** (19.79)	5.56 *** (18.02)	5.56 *** (18.04)
-2LL	4705.5	4569.0	3933.8	3928.9	4802.9	4668.4	3996.1	3989.1
N	1011	1011	884	884	1002	1002	875	875

***) p<0.05, **) p<0.10, *) p<0.15. Two-tailed test for betas, one-tailed test for sigmas. a) The zero estimate for local party variance in the high schools sector is set to the boundary constraint (of non-negative variance components).

When time specific locality dummy variables are added to the model (in models II), the measure of local party differences (u_{jpt}) drops accordingly, with intraclass variation now estimated at $0.37/(0.37+4.81) \cdot 100\% = 7.1\%$ in the primary schools area and at 9.0%, 0% and 7.5% for the elderly and the disabled, the high schools and somatic hospitals sectors respectively.[102]

Specifications III add the COM variable to the model and give clear indications that a seat on the relevant committee typically carries with it higher spending preferences for the service area in question: For instance, in municipalities (table 1), members on the committee responsible for educational issues will typically prefer around 0.7 to 0.8 per cent more spending in the primary schools area than will non-members, while members on health and care services committees typically want spending increases in the care for the elderly and the disabled area that are 0.6 to 0.8 per cent higher than those of non-members.[103] Moreover, all the mentioned effects are highly significant, and, as such they corroborate the results found in Vabo (2005). In the county analyses (table 2) much the same pattern is detected, with membership on the relevant committee entailing extra spending preferences in the range of 0.7 per cent in the health area and a high 1.5-1.6 per cent in the education area.[104] Overall, then, taking private spending preferences as an indicator of where individual interest lie, there seems to be a general tendency for local representatives to take seats on certain 'favorite committees'.

But how large and troublesome is exactly this effect? One way of further assessing the substantiveness of the effects is to view them up against the typical variation of preferences. In municipal education this would amount to a comparison of the 0.8 effect up against the total (typical local) variation of around 5.1.[105] In other words, membership on the relevant committee would typically indicate that spending preferences in this field would increase by $0.8/\sqrt{5.1} = 0.35$ standard deviations, whereas the comparable measure in the health and care field would be $0.7/\sqrt{4.8} = 0.32$ standard deviations. In county health and care services membership on the relevant committee would typically imply an expected increase in spending preferences of $0.7//\sqrt{6.4}= 0.28$, whereas in the county education field one should expect preferred spending increases to be as much as $1.5/\sqrt{5.4} = 0.65$ standard deviations higher amongst members of the relevant committee than amongst non-members.

Yet another way of assessing committee effects is to view them up against typical party differences. This would have the estimated effect of the COM variable viewed up against the

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[102] The zero estimate in the (county) high schools sector is purely logical as it follows from observance of the boundary constraint of non-negative variance components. It seems, however, that the variation between local parties is negligible in this sector: As was shown above, total between-parties variance is at its lowest in this sector (i.e. across all models I). Moreover, in supplemental analyses using the *nobound* option in the MIXED procedure so as to allow for negative variance components, between-parties variance varies from –0.04 (model II) to –0.17 (models III and IV), with substantive patterns in terms of estimated effects of PSIZE, COM and their interaction staying essentially the same.

[103] Viewed over estimates in specifications III and IV.

[104] We note also that inclusion of the COM variable alters estimates for inter-party differences (u_{jpt}) somewhat in all cases where it can be estimated (downwards in municipal education, upwards in municipal care and upwards in county health). This goes to show that it is an important control variable in the present analyses of local party differences: Theoretically it is most likely among the clearest institutional indicators of individual preferences, it is clearly statistically related to the dependent variable and local party samples are likely so small and few as to possibly produce systematic over- or under-representation of certain committee members within parties that have certain inherent spending profiles.

[105] Viewed as an average of estimates across specifications II (i.e. $u_{jpt} + e_{ijpt} = 0.4 + 4.8 = 5.2$), III (5.1) and IV (5.1).

estimate of u_{jpt}, one question being whether the former in some reasonable sense may be said to override the latter. In the municipal education area an estimate of party differences covering 95 per cent of the most typical spending positions would roughly equal $4·\sqrt{0.26} = 2.0$ per cent.[106] Clearly, the effect of committee assignment of 0.8 is nowhere near of spanning this range of potential and typical policy platforms in the area. Likewise, in the municipal care area, the committee effect of 0.7 could hardly be said to override a typical range of policy positions of $4·\sqrt{0.51} = 2.8$ per cent. Similarly also, in the county health area the typical county would not seem to be in want of substantial party differences, with the said 95 per cent range at $4·\sqrt{0.52} = 3.2$ per cent and the committee effect only 0.7.

In the county education area results are suggestive in quite another direction, albeit inconclusive: Since typical party differences cannot be estimated, any definite interpretation of results is precluded. However, since it would seem that party differences in this sector are indeed small, a cautious interpretation would nevertheless link this observation to the otherwise large committee effect: Maybe, since parties do not or are otherwise unable to position themselves at different ideal points, some of the substantial effect is likely a consequence of scant incentives for the individual party to act to secure policies that are shared among *many* parties. The overall impression is nonetheless this: Party differences outweigh committee effects in three out of four service sectors that one should feel are of some inherent salience. We return to a fuller discussion of the implications of this finding in the concluding section and go on to consider results from the more direct test of parties' organizational role:

Specifications III include party size (PSIZE) and the interaction between it and the committee assignment variable (COM·PSIZE). We note first that the specification centers variables around appropriate means – with PSIZE around the locality mean and COM around the local party share of committee members:[107]

$$\text{PSIZE*}_{jpt} = \text{PSIZE}_{jpt} - \overline{\text{PSIZE}}_{jt} \text{ and } \text{COM*}_{ijpt} = \text{COM}_{ijpt} - \overline{\text{COM}}_{jpt} .$$

In this way zero values reflect typical party sizes within each locality and typical committee assignment within each local party.[108] Moreover, effects form single terms may be interpreted straightforwardly as effects that obtain in otherwise typical situations. A first observation is that PSIZE has a significant effect in the analyses of municipal services: Associated with a 10 per cent increase in a local party's share of seats is a 0.09 per cent reduction in preferences for spending in the primary schools area and a 0.11 per cent reduction in the elderly and the disabled area. Expressed in terms of the effect of moving form a typical share of seats (0.17, see table A3.2 in the appendix) to the maximum (0.67) observed share of seats, this would entail reductions in typical spending preferences of $0.9·0.50 = 0.45$ per cent in the former area and $1.1·0.5=0.55$ in the latter. Also, in the county service area of somatic hospitals a similar

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[106] Granted (as is the standard assumption) normally distributed party platforms. While the overall distribution of local parties' spending profiles bears the characteristics of a unimodal and light-tailed distribution they will not perfectly conform to normality. The following interpretations must therefore be regarded mainly as suggestive.

[107] This specification is retained throughout, i.e. in models I through IV, and is the reason for the relative similarity of estimated effects from simple terms entries (PSIZE, COM) across models with and without interaction terms. For a discussion of centering see Singer (1998:334) and Bryk and Raudenbush (1992).

[108] The actual number of represented parties is used to arrive at locality mean party sizes, while sampled local party means are used for measures of mean committee assignment (as no official statistics are available).

effect ($\beta = -1.3$) obtains, although it is not nearly as significant. A reasonable interpretation of this finding is that larger parties will attract representatives from large societal groups that will have to internalize the costs of local tax financed spending more than will the typical smaller group that would prefer to let the larger collective pay up for the special service package that it specifically demands (Sørensen 2003). That this effect is most apparent in the municipal analyses is also suggestive: Municipalities are to some, albeit modest, degree self financed through the use of local fees and property taxes, while counties are by and large totally dependent on central government grants and local tax regulations.[109]

The real focus of the analysis is nevertheless the COM·PSIZE variable. In the municipal primary schools area (table 1) the term takes on a positive, albeit insignificant, value, implying that committee members from larger parties would want *increased* spending. This clearly goes against the hypothesized effect that would instead have larger and more responsible parties select *relatively disinterested* candidates for committee duty. In the municipal elderly and the disabled area the picture is different indeed: While it is estimated that typical committee members in typical assemblies (i.e. members from averaged sized local parties) will want 0.8 per cent more spending in this field than the typical non-member, an increase in party share of 10 per cent will reduce this difference to d = 0.8-1.5·0.1 = 0.65, and an increase from the average party share of 0.17 to the maximum of 0.67 would have the difference virtually disappear as d = 0.8-1.5·0.5 = 0.05. The effect is, furthermore, significant at a conventional, although lenient, level ($p < 0.15$). In the elderly and the disabled area, then, results do seem to favor the hypothesized organizational role of parties in retrieving sound information for sound and responsible policy making. In the county services of high schools and somatic hospitals (table 2) a similar pattern prevails, although effects are not nearly as significant nor as substantive in terms of narrowing down the general difference between members and non-members on committees as party shares rise.[110]

A final refinement of the analysis may be considered. The hypothesized mechanism implicitly involves party leaderships rising to the occasion in terms of controlling candidate selection to relevant committees. If the informational theory has anything going for it, party leaderships will bar fringe preferences from being represented on the committee in question. But, if party leaderships *do* require sound information, indicating that there are salient policy choices to be made at the local level, it would seem unreasonable that leaders of responsible parties should deviate much from the party line anyway (here: the mean party spending preference in a salient policy field): If responsible parties have real stakes in a certain policy field, leaders that do not adhere to the party line will simply not last long. Thus, under such ideal conditions, one should observe party leaders that adhere to the party line regardless of their committee membership status. Still, leaders would nonetheless have to assess the

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[109] Counties and municipalities alike collect income and wealth taxes, but both levels of local government uniformly tax at the maximum rate allowed.

[110] One may argue that the finer test of responsibility for enacted policy lies in contrasting majority parties (or coalitions) with minority parties. The use of the party share of seats (PSIZE) variable here is grounded in both theoretical and practical issues: First, Borge and Sørensen (2001) find in the Norwegian case that municipal parties' numerical strength is a better predictor of parties' budgetary imprints than is dominance in the form of median position or majority status. In a certain sense this would substantiate the implicit claim that policy responsibility is a function of share of seats. Secondly, as no county party holds a majority of seats in the election periods under study and in order to ensure comparability over government levels, only results from the party share specifications are reported. Additional analyses of the municipal services in question substituting majority status for party shares nevertheless reveal much the same pattern: In the municipal care sector committee effects are completely washed out for majority parties, the effect gaining in significance in leadership/non-leadership specific formulations (see below), and effects in the other sectors are similar to those found in the PSIZE formulation.

informational value of junior members' preferences as they are considered as candidates for committee duty.

In other words, as the models hitherto have not distinguished between effects for party leaders and back-benchers, they have possibly also misspecified the relevant working mechanism by allowing irrelevant differences between members and non-members of committees *among* the leadership to enter into the estimation of what should more correctly be viewed as a process of leadership *intervention* into the semi-free self selection to committees by ordinary party representatives.[111] As such, reanalysis should sharpen the effects found so far. In table 3 is analyzed the full models from table 2 with the refinement of two variables and also an additional term for whether the individual representative is an ordinary party member or is conversely a member on the executive board, the latter condition serving as a proxy for ties to the party leadership. In other words, the general effect of COM and the COM·PSIZE interaction term are both constructed to be specific to executive board non-members:[112]

$$COM* = \begin{cases} COM \text{ if respondent is } not \text{ on the executive board} \\ 0 \text{ otherwise} \end{cases}$$

and

$$COM \cdot PSIZE* = \begin{cases} COM \cdot PSIZE \text{ if respondent is } not \text{ on the executive board} \\ 0 \text{ otherwise} \end{cases}.$$

The analysis shows that overall patterns stay much the same: No committee effects deviate very much from those reported in the general analysis in table 1. But, while all the interaction terms (COM·PSIZE) certainly retain their direction, there is also a clear tendency in the municipal care area for the interaction variable to gain in substantiveness and significance (with p=0.02).

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[111] In the sample 14 per cent of municipal education committee members are also members on the executive board. The figures for municipal and county health and social affairs committees and county education committees are 18, 21 and 18 per cent respectively.
[112] The COM* variable in its turn also centered around the appropriate mean, i.e. around the local party share of ordinary (non executive board) committee members.

Table 3.3: Local councilors' preferences for budget changes in primary schools, care for the elderly and the disabled, high schools and somatic hospitals 1995-1999. Percentage increase from previous year (t-values (betas) and z-values (sigmas)).

	Municipalities		Counties	
	Primary schools	Elderly and the disabled	High Schools	Somatic hospitals
Non-member on executive board	0.58 *** (6.07)	-0.03 (-0.31)	0.16 (0.88)	-0.14 (-0.72)
Party's share of seats in council *(PSIZE)*	-0.97 *** (-2.48)	-1.08 *** (-2.65)	0.20 (0.28)	-1.28 (-1.35)
Effects specific to non-members *on executive board:*				
Member of relevant committe *(COM)*	0.47 *** (2.36)	1.00 *** (5.04)	1.67 *** (4.51)	0.79 *** (2.28)
Interaction: *COM·PSIZE*	1.27 (1.16)	-2.56 *** (-2.34)	-0.30 (-0.13)	-2.63 (-1.13)
Jurisdiction fixed effects (D_{jt}^{k})	yes	yes	yes	yes
σ_u^2 (var[u_{jpt}])	0.26 *** (2.44)	0.50 *** (4.39)	0.00[a] -	0.64 *** (2.33)
σ_e^2 (var[e_{ijpt}])	4.72 *** (32.65)	4.27 *** (32.57)	5.31 *** (20.32)	5.62 *** (17.74)
-2LL	12531.7	12338.6	3847.8	3907.6
N	2916	2913	866	856

***) $p<0.05$, **) $p<0.10$, *) $p<0.15$. Two-tailed test for betas, one-tailed test for sigmas. a) The zero estimate for local party variance in the high schools sector is set to the boundary constraint (of non-negative variance components).

Also, in the county somatic hospitals analysis the counteracting negative influence of party size on committee assignment is now considerably larger in substantive terms. But although it is also *more* significant – which is in line with the general expectation – it is nevertheless not significant at any conventional level. In the county service area of high schools and the municipal area of primary schools, moreover, operative effects become even *less* pronounced

as viewed up against the hypothesized pattern. The significant contribution of the finer analysis is in the municipal care area.[113]

3.5 Discussion and concluding remarks

The present study has applied the informational perspective of committee organization to Norwegian local politics and has found that derived party effects could be at work in at least some local policy areas. On its way it has addressed what may be considered both conceptual and operational shortcomings in the literature on local committee organization. To take the last point first, it has argued that party effects should be assessed at the truly local level. Secondly, it has argued that an answer to the question of whether party differences (correctly specified) overshadow typical differences in prefernces between members and non-members of functional committees is not necessarily very informative in itself:

First, such data would not answer the implied question of whether committee members are able to drive their preferences home in terms of real budget allocations. Secondly, *if*, at the very minimum, preferences may be regarded merely as indicators of private interests, and *if* policy is salient at the local level, then one would expect groups to form spontaneously that would take up different stances along the political dimension in question. In other words, one would expect there to be *local parties* with different policy platforms formulated with at least an eye to implementation. If such groups do form, then it would have been altogether truly surprising had individual representatives partitioned themselves (i.e. chosen institutional affiliation) in a more distinguishing fashion a second time around. Still, the analysis of party versus committee effects is instructive as it would go to show how salient (or possible) exactly is party positioning as benchmarked against committee effects. If committee effects should outweigh party differences the implications might or might not be a real problem. Below we comment further on this point and also discuss how and why such situations might transpire.

While the above is much an auxiliary problem in the present study, the focus has instead been on a *positive* organizational role for parties, the potential lying in retrieving good sectoral information by putting sensible candidates on relevant sector committees. In the analysis of committee preferences in the municipal care for the elderly and the disabled sector results do seem to show that parties can make a difference: Larger and presumably more accountable and responsible parties are found to be less burdened with outlying committee members, this an indication that they care about who sits on the responsible committee. In the other sectors that are analyzed (primary schools in municipalities and high schools and somatic hospitals in counties) patterns are either indefinite or less pronounced. But why is this so? While the

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[113] Analysis of the full differentiated models (not reported) – i.e. with executive board membership *and* non-membership specific committee effects – reveal that effects (COM and COM·PSIZE) are by and large insignificant and modest for executive board members in the municipal care area. This is line with the general argument that party leaders stick to the party line when policy is salient. In the other sectors patterns are different: In municipal education (positive and significant) committee effects are larger and more significant among executive board members than among non-members; in county education committee effects are all significant and as substantial among members on the executive board as among non-members; in county somatic hospitals positive committee effects among executive board members increase with rising party shares, possibly indicating that seats on the health committee are popular and seized upon by senior members of the assembly that do not stick to the (mean) party line. The ensuing discussion underlines that these patterns need not be interpreted in terms of real policy implications.

literature on local committee organization has attempted merely to empirically assess the relative impact of parties versus committees, the present analysis has to some extent sought to relate such patterns theoretically to plausible problems in local politics. In other words, the literature would seem to suffer from a shortage on positive conceptions of problems that might transpire in otherwise natural and healthy local democratic systems. Thus, against the backdrop of the ideal situation, wherein parties of distinct stances compete for office with an eye to making a difference, and inasmuch as one should feel that this is an unproblematic assumption in itself, one should hardly be surprised that party effects most of the time outweigh committee effects (as was explicated above). *Nor* should one be surprised if patterns are different. If local party differences are small and individual representatives seem to able to position themselves quite freely, this could have more to do with the basic assumption of healthy local democracy itself than with any tendencies on the part individual representatives to try and outsmart an otherwise salient policy making process. In other words, what is needed is a more thorough contextual understanding of local democracy.

Conversely, the present study has attempted both to theoretically embed its conception of party effects thoroughly in the informational perspective of committee organization and to relate this basic point of view to contextual features that might prove more or less conducive to its positive and ideal occurrence. Has it been successful in that respect? True, in most cases party effects may reasonably be said to overwhelm the impact of committee assignment, save perhaps in the case of the county education sector (where results are anyway inconclusive). What's more, the positively hypothesized conditioning effect from contexts of *organizational fragmentation* in the face of similar sectoral policy platforms does not carry the analysis very far. True, general sectorization tendencies seem to be greatest in the areas where typical local partisan positioning is at its lowest (in the municipal primary schools sector and the county high schools sector). But, in the two sectors where party positioning seems to peak (in county somatic hospitals and in municipal care for the elderly and the disabled), the one sector (elderly and the disabled) is simultaneously burdened with substantive general sectorization tendencies and blessed with equally substantive correctional mechanisms while the other (somatic hospitals) is similarly burdened while not as significantly blessed with counteracting party effects.[114]

So, what other explanations might shed further light on the observed patterns? For one thing, and looking now beyond the purely local setting, the measures of local party differences offered in the analyses are not simply *ipso facto*. The very structure of local government is in the end a central government responsibility. And, since an appropriate structure ideally will need to take into account issues both of classical allocative efficiency (stressing intra-locality homogeneity and inter-locality heterogeneity) and of local democracy (stressing intra-locality heterogeneity), the observed pattern might have something to do with the structure of local government itself. Perhaps county jurisdictions happen to be strong on the one dimension (allocative efficiency) and weak on the other (potential for internal conflict)? Even so, the argument is not very persuasive: In isolation, one should feel that the larger counties are internally more heterogeneous than are the smaller municipalities, and taking politicians' preferences as clues to the wider public opinion (as was done in the foregoing analysis) there is nothing to indicate that preferences do not vary substantially within.

Apart from the very structure of local government itself there is also one other issue that has not been touched very much upon in the foregoing analysis, namely the issue of service

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[114] And patterns are not nearly as tidy in the former area. See note 113.

portfolios and regulatory regimes at the two government levels. In general there is a persistent overall contention that Norwegian local government is heavily burdened with ever more intense central intervention by way of standardization of services, central financing through earmarked grants and limits on local taxing (NOU 2005:6:ch. 5; Fimreite and Flo 2002). At the county level in particular there seems to be very little room left for policies of distribution, redistribution and structural adjustment. Policy will instead be embedded within a centralized regulatory regime as "sectors such as health policy, social policy and education are heavily regulated by the central government in terms of funds, recognition of needs, required service profiles and the like" (Mydske 2006:221).[115] Moreover, this general contention is upheld by local politicians themselves. In figure 1 is presented responses to questions on how local representatives feel central regulation interferes with local politics.[116] First of all, one observes that there is a clear tendency for respondents to characterize central government as much more intrusive in the county services of high schools and somatic hospitals than in the municipal service areas of primary schools and care for the elderly and the disabled.
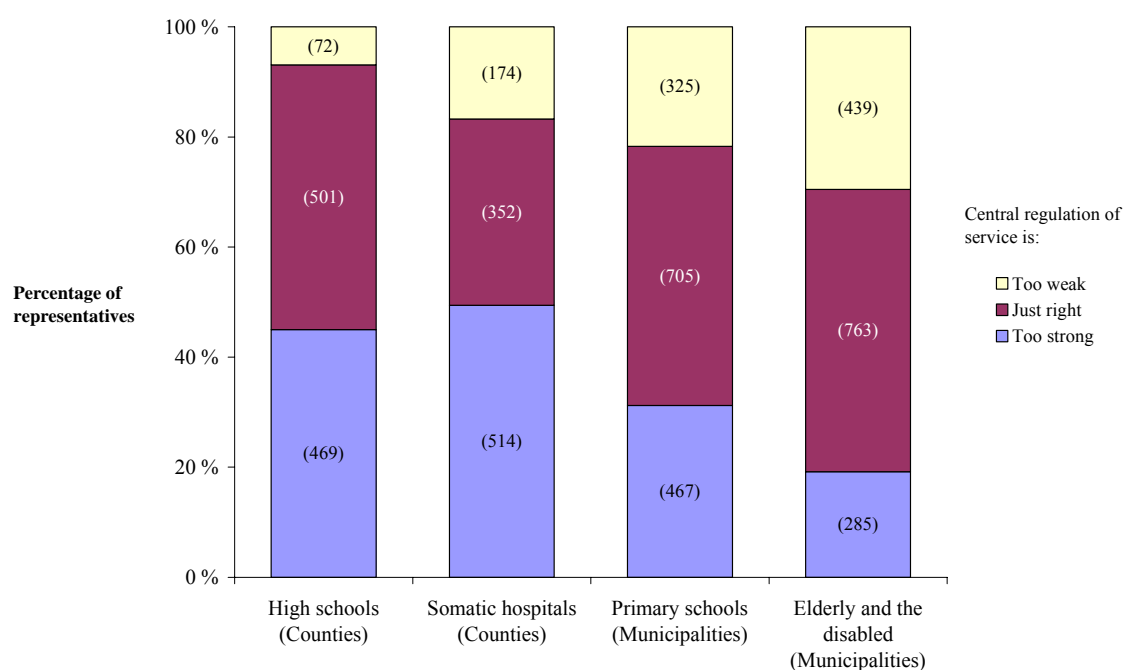
Figure 3.1: Local politicians on central regulation of locally provided services. County councilors' (1995 and 1999) and municipal councilors' responses (1995) (frequencies in parentheses).

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[115] My translation. Falling outside the present discussion is inquiry into the question of *why* centralization tendencies are on the rise. See Sørensen and Vabo (2004) for a recent account of the Norwegian situation.

[116] The question going to county politicians in both the 1994/95 and 1998/99 surveys and to municipal politicians in the former survey. For ease of illustration county responses for the two election periods have been pooled, the general tendency not shifting much from the one period to the other.

Even so, whereas the three former service areas have seen the launching of far reaching and economically burdening central regulatory reforms,[117] the municipal care sector is very likely an area where there might still be some room left for local political maneuvering. This is very much the impression one gets from the reported response tendency, with merely 20 per cent of respondents feeling that central government regulation in this area is too strong and 30 per cent even demanding that it be strengthened.

The implications of these trends for the present analysis is most likely the following: If effective party politics is to be found anywhere in Norwegian local politics, it is perhaps not remarkable that we should find it in the municipal care sector. First, services for the elderly and the disabled is undoubtedly the sector where local politicians feel there is the most local leeway.[118] As local policies *may* vary, sound information for formulating the right policy is potentially required. Secondly, as municipalities are to some extent financially responsible for their own well-being, the right policy will likely also have fiscal consequences. Hence the need for responsible parties to hedge against potentially bad informants. Where conditions are not so conducive (in the county education and health services and in municipal education) patterns are different. In such situations individual representatives may freely take a seat on their favorite sectoral committee out of pure interest for certain policy areas, knowing, along with their sponsoring parties, a few things: As minimum service standards and spending needs are pretty much known or set in advance, and as service results are more easily observed locally as well as through central monitoring schemes, sponsoring local parties will be less in need of hands-on specialization efforts from reliable and sensible committee members.[119] Private preferences that are extremely outlying, indicating overt affinity with a favorite sector, will pose little threat in this picture since there is simply less need for the additional good information that committee members potentially might produce.And, should the individual representative wish to push the matter, parties need not risk acting on a grossly exaggerated spending proposal for fear that it might be warranted.

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[117] With universal rights to high school level education (*Reform 94*), school enrolment age set down from seven to six with primary school spanning ten instead of nine years (*Reform 97*) and the law guaranteeing free choice of hospital (*Pasientrettighetsloven*).

[118] This conclusion goes for a comparison of services across the board. See Sørensen and Vabo (2004: table 19) where responses to the question in figure 1 are listed for thirteen central municipal service areas.

[119] Incidentally, the positive and significant effects of executive board non-membership in the municipal education area (table 2) may be viewed as a substantiation of this: Where (minimum) standards and spending needs *may* be known in advanced, it is most likely the knowledgeable and experienced (i.e. executive board members) that would know about them.

4 Do parties matter for local revenue policies? A comparison of Denmark and Norway[*]

4.1 Introduction

Does it matter which party controls the government apparatus? Officially, different parties pursue different policies. This is evident from official statements such as party manifestos (Budge 2001). In reality, official policy goals may also be pursued to establish political credibility, which is vital in parties' competition for electoral support. Building a reputation may be in the rational self-interest of party leaders, but political leaders cannot always get what they want. They are not the only actors interested in public policy. Interest organizations, the bureaucracy and the voters have substantial policy interests too. Party leaders are also often constrained by economic or institutional factors, which may leave very little room for manoeuvre. Political parties are thus far from omnipotent actors, but they are, as noted by Schmidt (1996), omnipresent players in politics. It seems reasonable to expect that parties may have some influence on public policy.

This article investigates the impact of party ideology on revenue politics. This area has been largely ignored in studies of the impact of party ideology. In the meta-analysis by Imbeau et al. (2001) only three out of the 43 studies included focus on revenue policy. Boyne's (1996: Chapter 5) survey of the impact of party ideology in local government includes no studies of revenue policy. For some reason, political scientists have chosen to focus on the expenditure side of the public budget; a fact often lamented by the few political scientists who venture into the area of revenue politics (Royed & Borelli 1999:87; Peters 1991: xiii; Steinmo 1993: 1).

The next section outlines the theoretical argument, and provides a brief review of the empirical literature.We then describe the Danish and Norwegian systems of local government and make an empirical investigation of the impact of party ideology on local revenue policies. We find that party ideology has a considerable impact, particularly in the Danish case.Finally,we discuss country similarities and differences in the empirical results.

4.2 The impact of parties' left-right position on revenue policies

Despite extensive debates over the past fifty years (for a review, see Blais et al. 1993: 42–43), most observers agree that the left-right policy dimension continues to be the most important in Western countries (Lijphart 1999: 78–87; Müller & Strøm 2000: 7–11). Consequently, if parties matter for public policy, it seems plausible to expect this influence to be related to the left-right ideological distinction. This is the basic hypothesis to be tested in this article. Left-right ideology can be expected to influence revenue policy in two ways. First, leftist parties are more favourable towards government intervention. In other words, the more leftist a government, the greater the size of government and hence the greater the need for public

revenue. Consequently,we may expect revenue levels to be higher under leftist governments than under bourgeois governments. Second, revenue policy falls into the category of redistributive policies. This is exactly the type of public policy where the impact of party ideology is generally strongest (Boyne 1996:132–135). Redistribution may be pursued by relying to varying degrees on revenue instruments with different distributional profiles – for instance, through the choice of tax structure. *Ceteris paribus*, leftist parties should prefer progressive to regressive revenue instruments. Consequently, we may expect leftist governments to use redistributive revenue instruments to a greater extent than bourgeois governments.

Political credibility is at the core of modern theorizing on parties (Persson& Tabellini 2000). The traditional vote-maximizing (Downsian) model assumes that policy commitments are both credible and flexible. A political party can adjust its programmes/promises in response to changes in electoral preferences, and voters are assumed to believe that election promises will be kept if the party gets majority support. In a situation with two political parties, policy positions are expected to converge towards the position of the median voter, and we would not expect tax rates to increase as a result of a shift from a right-wing majority to a left-wing majority government. Research by Inman (1989) and others suggests that the 'representative' or median voter approach has serious shortcomings in explaining tax policies,even in theAmerican-style two-party system. Moreover,the median-voter theorem does not apply in multiparty systems such as those studied here.Recent models of party competition in multiparty systems suggest that equilibrium positions will not converge towards the median of the voter distribution, but disperse across the relevant policy dimension (Adams& Merrill 1999; Merrill &Adams 2002).

Furthermore, credibility requires parties to offer voters clearly distinct programmes, commonly linked to the left-right dimension. A political party must maintain a stable ideological platform to build a reputation among voters; credibility would be diminished if policy promises were frequently altered. Party activitists are likely to induce party leaders to refrain from short-term office-seeking behaviour (Strom 1990). Credibility calls for party programmes to correspond to the preferences of party activists and elected representatives. To the extent that they have opinions that diverge from the party platform, credibility requires party discipline.

Election promises may *not* always be credible, which induces voters to hold governments responsible for their actual policies. One possible reason is the multiparty system itself, which frequently leads to situations where no single party has a majority in the elected assembly. Budget making tends to involve complex negotiations involving numerous parties, and the resulting outcome is uncertain. Citizens will not necessarily believe parties' election promises, and they may prefer to appraise actual policy results: whether taxes are increased or not. For example, Norwegian voters tend to turn against the ruling party in local government when infrastructure fees increase more than in other governments (Martinussen 2004). If voters punish left- and right-wing incumbents equally hard, we would not expect ideology to affect revenue policies. If voters punish right-wing incumbents harder than left-wing governments, retrospective voting will induce ideological differences in revenue policies.

Most government revenue is routinely raised by established tax laws (Rose 1985: 293), and regulations are particularly important for local governments. One interpretation suggests that politicians shy away from tax initiatives because of negative electoral reactions – the expectation that all incumbents (left or right) are punished for tax increases on election day.

The most ardent advocate of this position is Rose (1985; see also Rose & Karran 1987: Chapter 1) who argues that politicians follow a non-decision-making approach to tax policy due to the political costs. If the inertia argument is correct, we would expect no particular partisan pattern in revenue policy at any given point of time since 'whatever the bias in tax laws today, it is more a reflection of the nation's past than of its current configuration of political interests' (Rose & Karran 1987: 12). Another interpretation suggests that ideology has little bearing at the local government level due to central regulations. Local governments are simply not allowed to implement their ideological revenue policies. Others suggest that ideologies prevail even at the local level: central regulation of one tax instrument induces local governments to exploit other sources of public revenue (Shadbegian 1999; Skidmore 1999).

We are left with contradictory theoretical expectations about the impact of left-right party ideology on revenue policy. Nor have empirical studies resolved the issue. Schmidt's (1996: 169) review of left-right partisan influence concludes: "[I]t can safely be concluded from these studies that the hypothesis of partisan influence on public policy passes the empirical test reasonably well." Boyne's (1996: Chapter 5) survey of the effect of left-right party ideology in local government reaches a similar conclusion. One the other hand, Imbeau et al. (2001) identified more than 600 studies containing empirical results relevant to this question. In a meta-analysis of 43 of these studies, they found that the impact of party ideology is not significantly different from zero. The influence of left-right ideology is thus far from certain.

Relatively few empirical studies focus directly on the impact of party ideology on revenue policy. In Table 1, we summarize the findings of these studies. About half the studies find no effect of party ideology. The typical research design uses national data from the OECD countries. This naturally creates a small-N problem (which in some studies is mitigated by pooling data across a longer time period). Some studies avail themselves of the opportunity to focus on the sub-national level and thus increase the number of cases,but they are all one-country studies. This design makes it difficult to handle countryspecific effects. Furthermore, most studies focus on total revenue or a single revenue policy area (at most two). This design makes it difficult to handle policy-area-specific factors. In this study, we want to take a fresh look. We maximize our leverage by looking at three revenue policy areas in two countries. Data about local government allows us to analyze hundreds of political units.

4.3   The institutional setting: Local government in Norway and Denmark

We explore the relationship between left-right political ideology and revenue policy in two Scandinavian countries: Norway and Denmark. Both countries have a three-tiered public sector. In order to maximize the number of cases we focus on the lowest tier: the municipal level. In Norway there are 435 municipal units, in Denmark 273. In both countries, the municipalities are important implementing agencies of the welfare state.They provide services in the areas of childcare, primary education and old age care. Further, they are responsible for public utilities and local infrastructure.They enjoy considerable autonomy in these areas, and both countries represent cases of 'legal localism' (Page 1991: 13–42) – that is, systems in which local governments enjoy power over wide areas of public policy (see Fevolden & Sørensen 1987; Bogason 1987; Albæk et al. 1996).

Table 4.1: Studies of the impact of party ideology on revenue policy.

Study	Research design	Measure of party ideology	Measure of revenue policy	Finding
Allers et al. 2001	Regression analysis of 593 Dutch municipalities	Left-wing party control of local council and executive board	Property tax revenue per capita	Left-wing municipalities have higher property taxes
Ashworth & Heyndels 2002	Regression analysis of 20 OECD countries	5-point scale of left-right control of government	Tax structure	No effect of party ideology
Berry & Berry 1994	Regression analysis of 48 American states	Liberal party control of government institutions	Increase in sales tax rate and personal income tax rate	No effect of party ideology
Borge 1995	Regression analysis of 414 Norwegian municipalities	Share of socialists in local council	Local fee income per capita	Left-wing municipalities have higher fee income
Borge 2000	Regression analysis of a subset of Norwegian municipalities	Share of socialists in local council	Utility charges in NOK	Left-wing municipalities have higher utility charges
Borge & Rattsø 2004	Regression analysis of 434 Norwegian municipalities	Share of socialists in local council	Tax structure (property tax versus poll tax)	Left-wing municipalities have higher property tax shares
Cameron 1978	Regression analysis of 18 OECD countries	Left-wing party control of the central government	Change in general government revenue	Left-wing governments are more likely to increase revenue
Hallerberg & Basinger 1998	Regression analysis of 19 OECD countries	10-point scale of left-right control of government	Reduction of marginal corporate and personal income tax rate	Mixed evidence
Reid 1998	Regression analysis of 10 Canadian provinces	Left-of-centre party control of government	Annual change in revenue per capita	No effect of party ideology
Rose & Karran 1987: Chapter 6	Regression analysis of taxation in postwar Britain	Labour versus Conservative control of government	Tax rate and revenue	Mixed evidence

Table 4.1 continued

Study	Research design	Measure of party ideology	Measure of revenue policy	Finding
Royed & Borelli 1999	Regression analysis of 14 OECD countries	5-point scale of right-left control of government	Annual change in central government revenue	No effect of party ideology
Schmidt 1982	Correlation analysis of 21 OECD countries	Left-wing parties' time in government; left-wing prime minister; and left-wing parties' share of cabinet seats	General government revenue as percentage of GDP	Left wing governments have higher tax burdens and faster growth in tax levels
Steinmo 1993	Comparative historical analysis of Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States	Close inspection of party composition of government	Revenue and tax structure	No important effect of party ideology
Swank 1992	Regression analysis of 16 OECD countries	Cabinet portfolios held by left-wing, centrist and right-wing parties	Corporate and personal income tax rate	Left-wing governments have lower corporate income tax rates and higher personal income tax rates

Local branches of national political parties govern municipalities in both countries. The distribution of seats in the election period under investigation is shown in Table 2, where the parties are ordered on the left-right scale. This is done according to our own understanding of Norwegian and Danish politics, but the ordering corresponds to well-known expert interpretations of party locations (Castles & Mair 1984; Huber & Inglehart 1995). The table shows that the local government system in both countries contains several parties, but that three parties dominate. In both countries, the left wing is dominated by the Labour Party (Social Democrats), which holds about a third of the seats in local councils. In both countries, the right wing is dominated by two large parties that together hold another third of local seats.

The remainder in both countries is distributed among minor parties. Local lists (i.e., non-nationwide parties) used to be influential in both countries, but account for less than 10 per cent of the seats in local councils today.

The local revenue system is dominated by three types of income sources in both countries (cf. Table 3). First, local taxes constitute about 40–50 per cent of all local revenue in both countries, and the main tax source is local income tax. The central government defines the income tax base, while local authorities in principle decide the local income tax rate (same

Table 4.2: The local party system in Norway and Denmark.

Left-right orientation	Name of party	Norway Seats in local councils, 1999–2003 N	%	Name of party	Denmark Seats in local councils, 1997–2001 N	%
Socialist	Red Electoral Alliance*	68	1	Unitary List*	14	0
	Communist Party*	3	0	Socialist People's Party*	233	5
	Socialist Left Party*	673	5	Social Democrats*	1.648	35
	Labour Party*	3.804	31	Radical Liberals	88	2
	Centre Party	1.798	15	Centre Democrats	4	0
	Liberal Party	522	4	Christian People's Party	30	1
	Christian Democratic Party	1.2	10	Conservatives	480	10
	Conservative Party	2.086	17	Agrarian Liberals	1.557	33
	Progress Party	989	8	Danish People's Party	119	3
Bourgeois				Progress Party	44	1
	Local Lists	1.098	9	Local lists	468	10
Total		12.241	100		4.685	100

Note: * Classified as socialist in the empirical analyses.

rate for all income ranges – i.e., proportional income taxation). However, in both countries, the central government imposes constraints on this decision. In Norway, the local income tax rate is subject to an upper and lower limit. In practice, all Norwegian local authorities use the upper limit. In Denmark, the local income tax level is negotiated annually between the local government association and the central government – the so-called 'budget cooperation' between central and local government. These negotiations normally lead to a recommendation to the individual local authorities to keep income taxation within a specified limit. Since the recommendation is not legally binding and only specifies the average local income tax rate, there is room for local variation. In addition to the income tax, local authorities in both countries can also levy property taxes. In Norway, municipalities are not obliged to levy property taxes, but if they choose to do so, the rate must be kept within 0.2 and 0.7 per cent of property values. Further, property taxes may be restricted to certain areas within the municipality in Norway. In Denmark, the municipalities are obliged to levy a property tax. The rate must be kept within a range of 0.6 to 2.4 per cent of property values.

Second, local fees and user charges are quite important in both countries, although more so in Denmark. User charges are used to finance local public utilities (water supply, sewerage, garbage disposal), but are also used to partly finance welfare areas such as childcare and old age care. The central government imposes restrictions on the setting of user charges. In both countries, public utilities must generally be fully financed by user charges. In the welfare areas, local authorities have greater, but far from full, autonomy. In Denmark, the highest degree of local autonomy is found in the area of childcare arrangements for school children (6–9 year olds). In Norway, local autonomy is highest in the area of preschool child care (1–5 year olds) and childcare arrangements for schoolchildren (6–9 year olds). In these areas in the two countries, user charges may cover from 0 to 100 per cent of the costs. Third, grants from the central government are important in both countries, but more so in Norway where they constitute a third of all revenue.

4.4 Research design

In order to test the relationship between left-right party ideology and revenue policy, we focus on three revenue areas. We analyze the two most important tax sources of Norwegian and Danish local authorities – income and property taxation – plus a selected example of user charges. We have selected a user charge in the two countries, which is important in three respects: budget share, degree of local autonomy and political saliency. The last criterion means that we look at welfare areas rather than public utilities. The first two criteria mean that in Norway we select preschool child care (1–5 year olds) where parents pay to have their children looked after in municipal kindergardens. This area has a large budget share, and local authorities are free to set the user charge as long as it does not exceed the municipal costs of running the child care facilities. In Denmark, we analyze municipal childcare arrangements for schoolchildren (6–9 year olds), where parents pay to have their children taken care of after school. This is the only major area of user payment in Denmark where local authorities are free to set the user charge (as long as it does not exceed the costs of running the service).

The strength of left-right party ideology can be measured in various ways and, as demonstrated by Schmidt (1996: 157–162, cf. also Boyne 1996: 125–131), the choice of a particular indicator can make a very large difference. A first question to consider is whether party strength should be measured as proportion of seats held or simply by control of a

Table 4.3: The local revenue system in Norway and Denmark, 2001.

	Norway		Denmark	
	%	% of GDP	%	% of GDP
Taxes	40	5	54	10
– of which local income tax	38	5	46	8
– of which local property tax	1	0	3	0
Fees and user charges	16	2	24	4
Central government grants	34	4	20	4
Other	10	1	2	0
Total	100	13	100	18

Sources: Statistics Norway; Statistics Denmark.

council (i.e., control of more than 50 per cent of the seats). Proportion of seats may be a better measure than control if the parties give fuller expression to their ideology as their majority increases and restrain their ideological urges as their majority decreases. However, if parties exercise no restraint in using a small majority, control is a better measure. In the empirical analysis, we report results from both types of measures.

A second question is which political body to focus upon when measuring party ideology.At the central government level, relevant bodies are the government and parliament.At the local level in Denmark and Norway there is no precise functional equivalent to these bodies, but a related distinction can be made between the mayor and the council. The mayor is responsible for day-to-day administration, the council for broader policy decisions. Once elected, the council cannot remove the mayor from office. Therefore, both the mayor and the council may be relevant to analyze. In the empirical analysis,we report results from both types of measures.

A third question concerns the classification of parties on the left-right scale. The left-right scale may be divided into any number of units (e.g., a left-centreright trichotomy). However, we follow the convention of classifying parties as either socialist or bourgeois. The precise classification is evident from the asterisks in Table 2.This classification is, of course, debatable, especially in the case of Denmark where the political centre is held by a number of small parties. However, in practice, the empirical analyses are quite robust to the exact placement of the dividing line between socialist and bourgeois parties.

The dependent variable – revenue policy – is measured as the rate.In the case of income and property taxation,this means using local income and property tax rates.The Danish case presents no particular measurement problems since local authorities must levy income and property taxes at uniform rates within their jurisdiction. However, in Norway both income and property tax rates are more difficult to measure. In the income tax area,Norwegian local authorities must,as already noted, levy the tax within centrally specified lower and upper limits, but all local authorities use the upper limit and have done so since 1979.There is thus no variation in income tax rates across local authorities. This situation is probably best

understood as a rational anticipation of the central government's reaction to a reduction of the local income tax rate. Local authorities fear that the central government will interpret a local tax cut as a sign of affluence and react by cutting central grants. In other words, the absence of variation in local income tax rates is a product of central government discretion in the distribution of grants and does not reflect local ideological preferences.To measure the suppressed tax preferences of Norwegian local authorities,we rely on questionnaires to councilors in 113 local authorities and analyze the share of them in favour of increasing the local income tax rate.

In the property tax area, the Norwegian situation is complicated too.While Danish local authorities must levy a property tax rate between 0.6 and 2.4 per cent of property values, Norwegian local authorities can choose whether or not to levy the property tax. In practice, the share of Norwegian local authorities that levies property taxes has remained relatively stable around 50 per cent over time. If levied, the property tax rate must be kept between 0.2 to 0.7 per cent of property values in urban areas or in areas that are undergoing urbanization. However, local authorities may choose to restrict taxation to certain areas within their jurisdiction, or apply it throughout.This complicated system makes it difficult to establish a single indicator of a given local authority's property tax rate. Instead,we have chosen to analyze Norwegian local property tax policy as the municipality's decision whether or not to levy the tax at all.

Finally, in the case of user charges there is no obvious 'rate' to measure. However, we use the functional equivalent of measuring the ratio of the user charge to the costs of the service. This ratio varies from zero to 41 in Norway and from 1 to 108 in Denmark. These basic methodological choices are summarized in Table 4.

4.5 Empirical model

In order to test the relationship between left-right party ideology and revenue policy, we utilize cross-sectional data from Norwegian and Danish local authorities from the local election period 1999–2003 (Norway) and 1997–2001 (Denmark). Our general model is:

$P_{Ak} = C_A + \beta_{1A} \cdot \text{PARTYPOL}_k + \beta_{2A} \cdot \text{CONTROLS}_{Ak} + e_{Ak}$

(k = municipality, A = income tax, property tax, user charge),

where P is our measure of policy outcome, PARTYPOL denotes a vector of variables describing the party ideology of the municipal council and CONTROLS is a vector of relevant control variables.The dependent variable – tax policy – is, as noted above, measured as the income tax rate, property tax rate and rate of user charge. Party ideology is measured as socialist share of seats in the local council, socialist control of the local council and socialist mayor (cf. the above discussion of this question).

The control variables are the following six sets of variables that have all been demonstrated in the literature to influence local tax decisions. First, an unequal income distribution has been demonstrated to have an impact on local tax levels and tax structure (Borge & Rattsø 2004). This is measured as the ratio of median to mean income. Second, population size is included

Table 4.4: Basic methodological choices.

Revenue areas to be investigated	Measure of left-right party ideology	Measure of revenue policy
Local income taxation	Proportion of socialist seats in local council	Local income tax rate (Denmark: actual rate; Norway: hypothetical tax rate)
Local property taxation	Socialist control of local council (dummy)	Local property taxation (Denmark: property tax rate; Norway: probability of levying property taxes)
Local user charges in the areas of preschool child care (Norway) and child care arrangements for school children (Denmark)	Socialist mayor (dummy)	User charge as percentage of costs of running the user-financed service

to capture structural differences across the municipalities (cf. Borge 1995; Allers et al. 2001). Third, expenditure needs and the availability of central funds to finance these needs have been demonstrated to influence local tax decisions (Allers et al. 2001; Borge & Rattsø 2004). We control for this by including a variable for exogenous income. Fourth, the tax base is likely to influence the choice of tax rate, although the direction of the relationship is theoretically indeterminate. A large base requires a lower tax rate to generate a given revenue, but a large base may also make it attractive to maintain similar, or slightly higher, tax levels than comparable municipalities with smaller tax bases. Such a strategy would have a relatively large income effect and may be cheap politically since voters may be expected to focus on rates. The literature has found both types of results (Sørensen 2002; Allers et al. 2001). We use private income to control for the tax base in the analysis of income tax and user charges, and property values in the property tax analysis. Fifth, collective action problems have been demonstrated to be present in taxation (Ashworth & Heyndels 2002; Borge 1995; 2000; Allers et al, 2001; Sørensen 2003). Low general taxes may be considered a public good for political parties, while increased service to specific voter groups constitutes private goods to the parties. According to this reasoning, general taxes resemble common goods and may be over-utilized in fragmented party systems.We include a Herfindahl index to control for this factor. Finally, the ability to export taxes has been demonstrated to have an upward effect on taxation (Allers et al. 2001; Blom-Hansen 2005). For this reason, we include two specific property types in the analysis of property taxation (further details on the specification of variables are available from the authors).

If the 'parties matter' argument is correct,we expect an empirical pattern as outlined in Table 5. First, left-right party ideology should matter for revenue levels because leftist governments need more income. In the local Scandinavian setting this must, if true, manifest itself in the local income tax area. This is by far the most important revenue source for Norwegian and

Danish local authorities. In both countries, this single income source accounts for almost 60 per cent of local authorities' own revenue (i.e., total revenue net of central government grants; cf. Table 3). So, if leftist local authorities need more income, their local income tax rates should be higher. Consequently,we expect a positive relationship between local socialism and local income tax rates (in Norway measured as preferred income tax rates).

Table 4.5: Empirical expectations of the 'parties matter' argument (effect of socialist strength).

	Norway	Denmark
Income tax		
– actual tax rate	Invariant, not analyzed	Positive
– preferred tax rate	Positive	No data, not analyzed
Property tax rate	Positive	Positive
User charge (rate)	?	Negative
Total revenue effect	Positive, very small	Positive, substantial

Second, left-right party ideology should matter for the choice of local revenue instruments because leftist governments use redistributive revenue instruments more than bourgeois governments do. In the local Scandinavian setting this, if true, must manifest itself in the relative use of taxes and user charges. Income and property taxes are roughly proportional, while user charges are regressive. For leftist local authorities in Denmark, this should make the choice of revenue instruments easy: proportional taxes can be used to finance local welfare programmes while regressive user charges can be kept low. In the Danish case, we thus expect a positive sign between local socialism and income and property taxes, but a negative sign between local socialism and user charges. For leftist local authorities in Norway, the choice is not so simple. Since local income tax rates cannot be increased beyond the maximum rate allowed by the central government, leftist local authorities may be forced to rely on user charges for financial purposes to a greater extent than their Danish counterparts.This means that the relationship between local socialism and user charges is theoretically indeterminate in Norway. Redistribution motives point toward a negative relationship, whereas financial motives point toward a positive relationship (see also Borge 1995: 365, who – contrary to our position – expects the financial motive to be larger than the redistributional one).

If the 'taxation by inertia' argument is correct (i.e., politicians prefer a non-decision-making approach because active tax policies are unpopular), then we would expect no statistically significant relationship between socialist strength and tax rates in the two countries. If central regulations matter, we would observe larger ideological effects in Denmark than in Norway. In contrast to Norwegian municipalities, Danish authorities are allowed to set income tax rates. Property taxes are a more important revenue source in Denmark. Norwegian authorities may employ user fees as tax instruments, perhaps forcing socialist councils to set higher user charges than non-socialist councils. Danish municipalities can make an ideological trade-off between taxes and user charges, and socialist councils can collect relatively higher taxes and lower user fees.

4.6 Empirical results

The results of the empirical analyses are reported in Table 6. It presents comparable regression results for income tax rates, property tax rates and user charges. The estimates of party ideology are not much affected because of inclusion or exclusion of particular control variables.As indicated in the note under the table, alternative specifications of left-right party ideology yield slightly different results for income taxes.

The first part of the 'parties matter' argument suggests that income and property tax rates are higher in socialist municipalities. The coefficient for proportion of socialist seats in local councils is positive and strongly significant in both countries for both income and property taxes. Note that the Herfindahl index has a negative effect on income taxes, which means that a non-fragmented party structure reduces taxes. Since right-wing local councils are somewhat more fragmented than left-wing councils (due to the large Social Democratic Party), fragmentation tends to dampen the actual revenue impact of party ideology. The second part of the 'parties matter' argument (i.e., that socialist local authorities rely less on regressive revenue instruments) is investigated by comparing the sign of the coefficient measuring left-right party ideology for taxes and user fees. The coefficient should be positive in the analysis of income and property taxation and negative in the analysis of user charges. This is what we find in the Danish case: Left-right party ideology has a positive effect on income and property taxation, and a negative in relation to user charges. In Norway, local socialism has a positive effect in the income and property tax areas, but no statistically significant effect on user charges. Despite the fact that socialist authorities have an aversion to user charges due to their regressive nature, central regulations of income taxation may lead Norwegian municipalities to apply charges as an ordinary tax.

The control variables show varying results. The ratio of median to mean income measures the extent of local income inequality. This variable appears not to matter much for the specified local revenue choices in Denmark and Norway. Borge and Rattsø (2004) find that local income disparities affect the usage of tax instruments. An unequal income distribution induces Norwegian municipalities to collect a larger share of revenue as property taxes and less by means of user charges in the infrastructure sector. Further analysis should explore whether this trade-off is related to party ideology as well.

Population size is a summary variable that captures various conditions for the production of local services such as population density and urban-rural characteristics. The precise effect of this variable is difficult to hypothesize. Table 6 shows that the effect varies from area to area. Exogenous income and expenditure needs do not generally contribute much to explaining local revenue choices, but in Denmark an upward effect of expenditure needs is found in relation to property taxation. In Norway, exogenous income has a dampening effect on user charges (Borge 1995, 2000), but no certain influence on income and property taxation. The effect of the variables measuring tax base (mean private taxable income; property values) varies across areas and countries. The importance of party fragmentation is verified in both countries in the income tax area, but not in relation to property taxation and user charges. Finally, two special types of property are included in the property tax analysis to control for the special incentives they provide. In Norway, hydroelectric power plants constitute a considerable property tax incentive, while local authorities in Denmark may use summer cottages to export property taxes since these are typically owned by non-residents. These property types are important for property taxation. Many studies of party effects on

Table 4.6: Analysis of local revenue policy.

Dependent variable	A1 – Norway Income tax preference (share of councilors favouring tax increase)	A2 – Denmark Income tax rate	B1 – Norway Probability of levying property tax	B2 – Denmark Property tax rate	C1 – Norway User charge as percentage of service cost (municipal pre-school child care arrangements)	C2 – Denmark User charge as percentage of service cost (municipal child care arrangements for school children)
Proportion of socialist seats in local council	0.636 (5.34) ***	1.374 (3.34) ***	2.518 (6.83) ***	18.669 (7.32) ***	3.387 (1.21)	-15.415 (-3.10) ***
Ratio of median to mean taxable income	-0.044 (-0.13)	3.983 (1.49)	0.275 (0.02)	-3.179 (-0.19)	13.163 (3.55) ***	-40.671 (-1.26)
Population size (log)	-0.004 (-0.25)	-0.123 (-1.46) *	0.463 (6.36) **	-1.038 (-2.03) **	-0.381 (-0.73)	1.779 (1.75) *
Exogenous income and expenditure need	0.177 (0.93)	0.0002 (2.42) **	-0.525 (0.17)	0.001 (2.47)	-18.193 (-5.07) ***	0.0004 (0.38)
Mean private taxable income (log)	0.092 (0.75)	-2.727 (-4.07) **	1.062 (0.63)	-10.052 (-2.09) **	14.459 (4.29) ***	-8.12 (-0.98)
Party fragmentation	-0.739 (-3.35) ***	-1.555 (-2.12) **	1.137 (0.46)	-6.269 (-1.37)	-5.765 (-1.05)	5.301 (0.61)
Property values			-1.904 (10.00) ***	0.00005 (4.61) ***		
Hydroelectric power plants			2.562 (82.69) ***			
Summer cottages (log)				0.689 (4.38) ***		
Adjusted R2/gamma/log likelihood	0.258	0.279	0.639	-718	0.221	0.036
N	113	273	433	273	275	249
Estimation method	OLS	OLS	Logistic	Tobit	OLS	OLS

Notes: ***) p<0.01; **) p<0.05; *) p<0.1 (Wald chi²/t-values in parenthesis). Alternative specification of left-right party ideology (results available upon request from the authors): *Income taxation (A1, A2)*: socialist control: positive and significant in Norway; positive but insignificant in Denmark; socialist mayor: positive, but insignificant in both Norway and Denmark. *Property taxation (B1, B2)*: socialist control: positive and significant in both Norway and Denmark; socialist mayor: positive and significant in both Norway and Denmark. *User charges (C1, C2)*: socialist control: negative and significant in Denmark; positive, but insignificant in Norway; socialist mayor: negative and significant in Denmark; positive, but insignificant in Norway.

government spending and taxes comment on the statistical significance of parameter estimates only. This can be extremely misleading as significance does not imply that estimates are sufficiently large to warrant a substantial interpretation (McCloskey & Ziliak 1996). Furthermore, the 'parties matter' argument not only implies that party ideology has a statistically significant impact on taxation, but also that this impact is large enough to be of practical interest. In Table 7, we have estimated the actual revenue effect resulting from a shift in the socialist share from 0 to 1, measured in Danish and Norwegian Kroner (DKK and NOK) per capita. These numbers can be compared to the private taxable incomes in the two countries. Since the mean share of socialist representatives and standard deviations are also comparable in Denmark and Norway, it makes sense to compare a completely non-socialist council with a council consisting of socialists only.

Table 4.7: The revenue impact of local party ideology in Denmark and Norway: Estimated municipal revenue increase per capita as a result of the socialist share of seats in the local council shifting from 0 to 1.

	Denmark	Norway
Income tax effect	1418	0
Property tax effect	1730	12
User chage effect	-157	-
Effect on total revenue	2991	12
Total revenue effect as percent of mean taxable income*)	1.90	0.01
Hypothetical income tax effect for Norway		1322
Effect on totale revenue, including hypothetical effect		1334
Total revenue effect as percent of mean taxable income*)		0.90

Note: Norway: NOK, Denmark: DKK.

Source: Regression estimates in table 4.6.

The major observation in Table 7 is that ideology has an important effect on tax revenues in Denmark. Both income and property taxes yield substantial public revenues. Greater socialist strength only yields a very small reduction in per capita revenue from user charges. Overall, we suggest that a socialist council would collect about DKK3,000 per capita more that a non-socialist council.The actual revenue estimates are considerably smaller in Norway: less than NOK100 per capita.As income tax rates are controlled by the central government, socialist councils take in more property taxes, but it yields very little money. Neither do user charges.We have not analyzed user fees in the infrastructure sector. Based on prior regression estimates (Borge 1995, 2000; Sørensen 2003), we find that socialism generates about NOK670 per capita in Norwegian municipalities. Though this is of some (substantial) significance, we cannot escape the conclusion that party ideology has a considerably larger revenue impact in Denmark as compared to Norway.The observed difference could be due to the fact that Norway has a large number of small and relatively ideologically homogenous municipalities. Additional regression analyses of the Norwegian data suggest that party ideology has comparable effects in small and large local governments (less versus more than 5,000 inhabitants). Furthermore, Table 7 demonstrates a large revenue effect of lifting central tax regulations. Overall, our estimates suggest that ideological differences among elected

politicians in Norwegian local government would generate revenues similar to those in Denmark. More importantly, however: the Danish system of local government involves less redistribution than the Norwegian case. Danish local governments are less reliant on government grants than Norwegian authorities (cf. Table 3), which means that tax bases are relatively small in Norwegian municipalities. A given tax rate increase yields less revenue than in Danish municipalities.

Despite so many similarities in political and institutional structures, Denmark and Norway are quite different when it comes to local democracy. There is a potential for ideological effects on revenue policies in both countries; national constraints explain why local parties have a more visible impact in the Danish case. The central government in Norway is more willing to limit local tax bases and constrain local tax rates. Though assistance to peripheral municipalities has a role in both Denmark and Norway, the latter system includes more grants and tax regulations that benefit the rural municipalities (Rattsø & Sørensen 1998). Equalization and regional policy plays a lesser role in Norway, while local self-rule is allowed to unfold in Denmark to a greater extent.

4.7   Conclusion

We have investigated two implications of the 'parties matter' argument for revenue policies. First, if parties matter, revenue levels should be higher under leftist governments. Second, leftist governments should use redistributive revenue instruments to a greater extent than rightist governments. Our empirical analysis has focused on local authorities in Norway and Denmark. Although alternative specifications of left-right party ideology yield slightly different results, the evidence generally supports the two implications of the 'parties matter' argument. As a result of central regulations, local parties matter considerably more in Denmark than in Norway. However, given the opportunity, local parties have no hesitations about making active revenue choices. This means that our analyses are troublesome evidence for the alternative 'taxation by inertia' argument, which holds that the tax policy area is characterized by non-decisions.

5   Local oppostition to municipal mergers in Norway: Efficiency, local political diversity and redistribution

5.1   Introduction: The Norwegian non-reform of local government

Recently there has been an upsurge in the debate over a reasonable and economically efficient local political structure in Norway. Still, the argument is by no means new to Norwegian and Nordic protagonists: Both the Schei Commission of the nineteen-fifties and the Christiansen Committee of the nineteen-nineties (NOU 1992:15) recommended that the number of municipalities in Norway be reduced substantially. An ardent present-day spokeswoman for wide-ranging reform has been Erna Solberg, who, when in office as minister for regional and local affairs (2001-2005), would suggest that Norway could quite well reduce the number of municipalities by roughly a hundred. Municipal mergers nevertheless remain controversial, and the Norwegian Parliament (*Stortinget*) has enacted that no municipality shall be forced into a merger with neighboring localities: Local councils and constituents should decide for themselves whether they would want unification with their neighbors or not.[120]

Despite centrally launched initiatives for facilitating local revisions of existing jurisdictional borders – specifically the "Future of the local political structure" project running from 2003 to 2005[121] - there is no revolutionary change in sight. While the number of municipalities was substantially reduced from around 750 to 450 in the nineteen-sixties, one still faces today a local political structure comprised of a total of 431 municipalities. Moreover, Norwegian municipalities are of the smaller sort: Over half of the municipalities have less than 4,500 inhabitants, a fact that would add to the overall concern over the misfit between developments in demographics and infrastructure and a static structure of local government.

But, how to explain this local reluctance? And what seems to be the greatest obstacle to wide-ranging reform? And is reform really warranted? In an attempt to give some answers, the remainder of this article proceeds as follows: First, it offers a brief theoretical discussion of the problem of municipal mergers as grounded in the perspectives that have been put forth in previous research on the topic and in the wider public debate. Specifically, it contrasts a political economy view emphasizing gains and losses from mergers seen as local political outputs, on the one hand, with a more input-oriented view that associates opposition to mergers with inferior conditions for efficient local democratic processes in larger localities, on the other.[122] Also, a short review of previous and relevant research into the issue of local decisions to merge is given, with particular reference to the Nordic experiences in the field. The ensuing section lays out the research design and presents the data put to use in the empirical analyses, while the subsequent section presents results from the analyses of Norwegian local politicians' responses to questions on merging one's own municipality with

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[120] The so-called policy of local voluntarism (*frivillighetslinjen*).
[121] That is, the *"Framtidens kommunestruktur"* project. See the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development's web site at http://odin.dep.no/krd/komsam/.
[122] The input-output distinction is suggested by Easton's (1965) framework for analysis of democratic political systems.

neighboring localities: As very few actual mergers have occurred, this would seem a practicable road to take in order to gain some understanding of the subject matter. Furthermore, as economic and political data (Statistics Norway) from proposed merger projects (Langørgen et al. 2002) are combined with the said responses (from a survey conducted by the Norwegian School of Management), this allows for *multilevel* analysis of individual responses as encountered within relevant socio-geographical localities. Next follows a section that exploits results from the foregoing analysis of individual preferences in an attempt to answer an interesting question: What are the greatest obstacles to local government structural reform? A final section sums up results from the analysis and offers some broad concluding remarks.

5.2   The politics of municipal mergers

While the main arguments in favor of structural reform have largely centered on prospects for efficiency gains, one may argue that grounding reform on such prospects makes little sense as seen from the viewpoint of Norwegian society at large: Over the merger projects proposed in Langørgen et al. (2002), estimated gains lie in the region of 3 to 4 billion NOK in total. Viewed up against total expenditures in the range of 200 billion NOK in the municipal sector at large, such savings wouldn't seem to amount to much in the wider picture (Baldershiem et al. 2003:155).[123]

If these meager prospects for overall savings should make feasible structural reform less attractive for some (the central government, say), that would nevertheless not preclude that some localities themselves would view efficiency prospects as significantly sizeable. In fact, since most municipalities in Norway have less than 5,000 inhabitants, and since scale effects in selected areas likely exist for population sizes of less than 5,000 (e.g. in administration and the care for the disabled and the elderly area; Langørgen et al. 2002:15), there should be savings for smaller municipalities. In figure 1 is presented savings form mergers as estimated in Langørgen et al. (2002) and as seen up against the population size in each municipality. Although these estimations have been criticized for not taking fully into account all aspects of gains and losses associated with a potential merger, they are presented here as reasonable measures of efficiency gains from plausible merger projects.[124]

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[123] With municipalities in Norway charged with important welfare services - such as care for the elderly and education – much municipal activity would anyway require some degree of decentralization in administering (face-to-face) services: Since geo-demographic patterns will likely stay much the same after a merger, economies of scale exist primarily in the smaller administration and infrastructure sectors (Langørgen et al. 2002:72-73; Bukve 1999; NOU 1992:15; Myrvold and Toresen 2003; Kalseth and Rattsø 1997). While this would explain the small overall gains from wide-ranging reform, gains in least some merger projects could be more substantial as viewed from the merging partners themselves.

[124] Estimations in Langørgen et al. (2002) are based on a series of simultaneous service sector specific regressions of disposable expenditure on a number of independent determinants, among which is municipality population. Based on manipulations of the latter variable new localities are simulated so as to leave no locality with less than 5,000 inhabitants and predicted disposable expenditure for new localities is recorded. The efficiency gain is thus the added total disposable expenditure divided by the new locality's population. Importantly, estimations take into account a reasonable centralization effect (from changes in the area-population ratio) as travel times might increase significantly in new localities. For a rebuttal of criticisms against the operationalizations of centralization costs see Langørgen and Aaberge (2003).
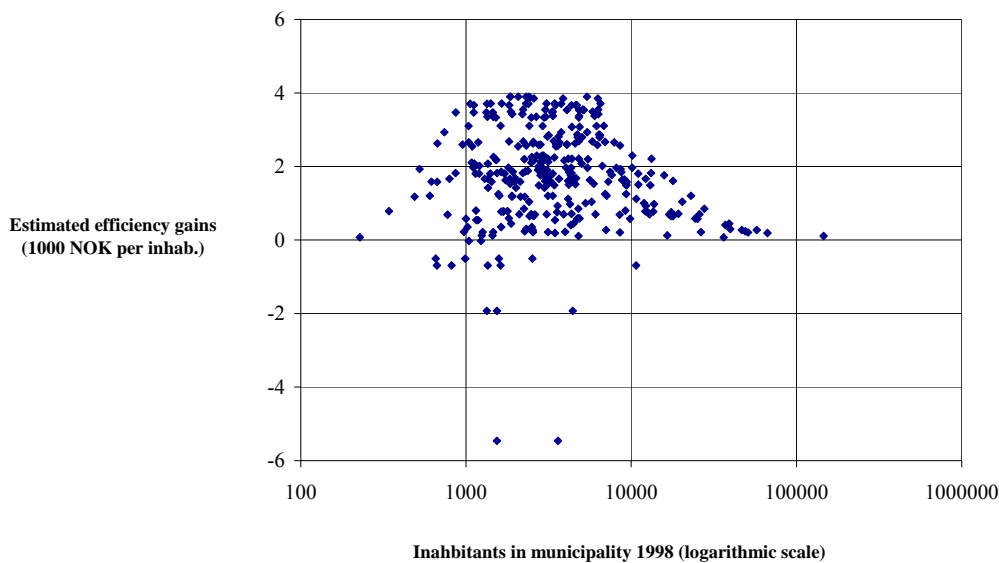
Figure 5.1: Estimated efficiency gains (Statistics Norway) by municiplaity size. (N=330).

The figure shows quite clearly that many smaller municipalities will plausibly stand to win in terms of efficiency gains form scale effects, with localities with populations between 1,000 and 10,000 typically gaining around NOK 2,000 per capita or even double that in the extreme cases.[125] As expected, gains are slimmer with rising populations (above 10,000), and a few (smaller) municipalities will also lose heavily or at the very least not gain very much from merging with plausible neighboring partners.[126] The broad picture is nevertheless that efficiency gains should spur merger efforts for a large number of smaller municipalities in Norway.

As was mentioned above, the structure of local government in Norway has remained basically the same since the mid nineteen-sixties. Moreover, as is also documented in the present article, recent studies have found that opposition to local municipal mergers is strongest in the

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The procedure, furthermore, generates 117 merger projects involving 335 *neighboring* and *road linked* municipalities within the *same economic region* (Langørgen et al. 2002:16), thus reducing the number of municipalities from 435 (the 1998 figure) to 217. Another more radical alternative (yet based on the same methodology) has the total number of municipalities reduced to cover the 90 Norwegian economic regions (*ibid.*:17), thereby also drawing attention to prospects of gains from coordination within clusters of economic activity/across larger municipalities. This article focuses on potential outcomes from the first alternative since scale effects (for the smaller municipalities) seem to be the most important economic effect (additional savings with the radical alternative running at 50 per cent) and since it may be viewed as the more realistic of the two, involving, as it does, fewer potential partners in each merger project.

[125] In comparison the overall per capita gains from a NOK 3 billion saving would amount to NOK 780 (over a Norwegian total population of 4.5 million).

[126] The two municipalities with extreme losses of NOK 5,500 are Måsøy and Nordkapp, potential losses form merging largely due to their thinly populated large land areas.

smaller localities.[127] In other words, opposition to local mergers is strongest where prospects for much discussed gains are the largest.[128] Accordingly, there must be other obstacles to local government structural reform and we discuss below various perspectives that might shed some light on this issue.

A general and basic point is that this overtly *economic* focus in the public debate has largely also downplayed other important aspects of the process of municipal mergers. Municipal mergers are likely quite different from the common business merger: They will typically touch upon central issues of democratic politics and political economy. For one thing, inasmuch as the usual merger between firms will benefit from well-defined property rights (Coase 1960), any synergetic effects from cooperation need not involve redistribution of firm resources. As *ex ante* bargains on the distributive state of affairs are usually and ideally guaranteed by law, firms may reap synergetic benefits form mergers without fear of redistribution after the fact. In the case of municipal mergers things are easier and trickier at the same time: While firms need to negotiate beforehand on distributive gains, they nevertheless enjoy full legal protection of own resources throughout. Municipalities, on the other hand, are democratic political institutions, the assembly *collectively* the 'owner' of the entire 'enterprise'. Nearly any *ex ante* deal on the distribution of resources will be implausible, as the post-merger assembly will likely redistribute resources according to the new *de facto* power configurations – i.e. according to the allocation of seats in the new local assembly. The basic point is that prospects for *decentralized* local democratic structural reform needs to take into account strong pressures for redistribution within merger projects.

The *political economy* focus of the preceding paragraph is highly visible in recent theoretical and empirical work in the field. Both Alesina and Spolaore (1997) and Bolton and Roland (1997) seek to relate local (and national) decisions on whether or not to merge with one's neighboring locality (or country) to prospects for efficiency gains or losses due to changes in jurisdictional size and to economic and political redistributive issues. From a broader societal perspective, moreover, the distinction between the two latter issues is important in the context of local democracy. Whereas pure redistribution of tangible resources resulting from mergers would not enhance the overall performance of the local democratic system, potential changes in the pattern of inter-locality *political* differences is more of an issue. While the logic of redistributive pressures (as pointed to in the preceding paragraph) will likely also come into effect in terms of a harmonization of policies in a merged locality (or differentiation in the case of a split-up), political differences across localities is very much the hallmark of a functional local democratic system: Localities *should* be allowed to differ in salient policy fields in order to ensure a reasonable level of allocative efficiency (Oates 1972), i.e. local subpopulations should to some extent be rendered capable of organizing service-tax packages for themselves according to their own preferences.

In an extension of this logic – stressing the value of inter-locality differences and intra-locality homogeneity – like-minded voters will migrate to localities that offer certain preferred policy packages (Tiebout 1956), this perspective much retained in theoretical and

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[127] See Baldersheim et al. (2003:26-28) for the relationship between municipality size and public opinion, Thompson (2003:16) for the relationship between mayors' opinions and municipal urban-rural status and Jacobsen (2004:186-187) and Monkerud (2003:16, table 4.1) for municipal councilors views as mediated by municipality size (the latter publication documenting the entire survey from which the present study gets its responses).

[128] In addition, others have pointed to problems in smaller municipalities (of less than 5,000 inhabitants) with securing stable professional bases for local services - i.e. to the apparent drain of educated staff in smaller municipalities (Langørgen et al. 2002:16; Aftenposten 2002).

empirical analyses of municipal mergers: For all practical purposes, the process of deciding whether or not to merge localities may be considered a substitute for real Tiebout migration (Young 2002:4; Bolton and Roland 1997). A recent empirical study within this tradition is Brink's (2004) study of Swedish municipality break-ups in the 1980-2001 period. She finds that local decisions to split municipalities are informed by differences in tax bases between different parts of the locality: Richer parts will more likely opt for secession. On the other hand, prospects of efficiency losses or altered tax policies do not seem to explain much of the variation in secession propensity (Brink 2004:133). In isolation, and from the broad societal point of view, this would not seem to be in accordance with the *ideal* motivations for local decisions to merge or secede with neighboring localities, redistribution apparently the sole driving force.[129] The overall perspective in this strand of literature, then, is this: Localities and voter groups within them decide *rationally* on the merger question with clear reference to prospects for efficiency gains, potential economic distributive gains and opportunities for altered local policies.

Quite another strand of research relates local decisions to merge to the *quality* of the local *political process*, thus stressing the importance of *input side* aspects (Easton 1965) of the political systems analysis. Much of the rationale of this research originates from the insights in Dahl and Tufte (1973) relating locality size to voters' prospects for holding local politicians accountable for enacted policy and for generally providing a better overview of the policy process: For instance, as smaller localities are more transparent, the local civil service there will likely find it harder to pursue purely 'bureaucratic interests' and politicians will be able to gauge public opinion with greater ease (Baldersheim et al. 2003:4-7). While it is not necessary to link such processual qualities directly to local opinions on municipal mergers,[130] one may argue that the quality of local services that should result from such processual advantages should also make voters in smaller localities more content with local services and therefore more skeptical towards potential boundary changes: In Baldershiem et al.'s (2003:ch. 4) study of local opinion in Norway, there is indeed indication that service satisfaction is greatest in the smaller municipalities. And, plausibly this can be related to "the greater transparency and political precision of smaller municipalities" (Baldersheim et al. 2003:116).[131] Moreover, such an interpretation of results is directly in accordance with the observation of greater local opposition to mergers in the smaller municipalities (see note 127).[132]

There are nevertheless some specific problems with the above account. First, as the mentioned studies of opinions on mergers and service satisfaction do not offer control for municipal service levels or, related, local resources generally, the conclusion is quite indeterminate. Multivariate analysis of opinions – as will be attempted here - with simul-

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[129] As Brink's (2004) study has only 24 observations (outcomes in local referenda), some indeterminacy is likely due to inadequate sample size.

[130] In fact, in a study of Norwegian local opinions (Pettersen and Rose 1997:112) voters seem to rate their role as 'citizen' (rated number one by 18 per cent) as quite inferior to their role as 'tax payer' (32 per cent) and 'service consumer' (50 per cent).

[131] My translation and emphasis. Even so, Lolle (2003a:189-192) finds in controlled analyses of Danish public opinion that service satisfaction levels are but moderately lower in larger localities (Danish municipalities). Also, the stronger effect of locality size when locality responsibilities such as that for 'security/integration' is evaluated either way has more to do with factors other than size in itself (e.g. crime rates in urban areas) (*ibid.*).

[132] Also, smaller localities are possibly more closely knit in terms of local identities, which might then explain the greater opposition to border reviews. Indirectly, the greater social capital of smaller municipalities might in its turn provide for better tuned services or also figure directly in the minds of voters as a processual advantage of small size to be reckoned with. However, see the ensuing points on small locality citizen efficacy, identity, local political knowledge and information surplus.

taneous control for local resources *and* locality size would make for the stronger conclusion. Indeed, in his study of politicians' and top civil servants' attitudes in thirty Norwegian municipalities, Jacobsen (2004) finds poor local economic conditions to spur inclinations for reforming the local democratic system – indicating that richer localities will be less disposed towards merging, even though service levels might be raised in the effort. And, since smaller municipalities on average are richer than their larger counterparts,[133] the impact of size is likely overrated in the case where such economic conditions are not duly controlled for.[134] Also, in a study of processes leading up to actual merger decisions in eight Norwegian municipalities, Klausen (2004a) finds that public opinion is informed much more by "materialistic" motivations or *output* considerations such as potential effects on the local economy or local service levels than by "softer" *input* considerations such as altered prospects for contacts with the political level or for voters' capability to influence politicians directly.[135]

Second, while citizens of smaller Norwegian municipalities report significantly higher rates of subjective efficacy than do citizens in larger municipalities, the difference is by and large insubstantial (Hansen 2003:40-41). Also, in series of studies of Danish locality size effects, Kjær (2003:82-83) finds no controlled effect of municipality size on self reported local identities, Levinsen (2003a:93) finds scant evidence of stronger interest in local political affairs in smaller localities, Levinsen (2003b:159-160) finds that levels of trust and confidence in local political systems or actors is but somewhat lower in larger localities and Strømbæk Pedersen (2003) finds that citizens in large localities are quite as knowledgeable as their counterparts in smaller localities. It does however transpire that citizens in smaller Danish municipalities report that they are better informed than do citizens of larger municipalities (Lolle 2003b:170-171).[136]

In any circumstance, and in summing up, there is also a strand of theorizing that concentrates on effects from different political processual opportunities in different localities - commonly characterized by size – and that relates opinions on municipal mergers either directly to opportunities for superior types of participatory democracy or else to the results that might follow from or with such systems in terms of greater administrative transparency, higher service satisfaction and/or stronger local identities.[137]

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[133] See e.g. Monkerud (2003:8, table 3.4).

[134] A potentially troubling aspect of the design found in Jacobsen (2004) is that the dependent variable records whether respondents would see mergers *in general* as acceptable, i.e. the question does not ask specifically of attitudes towards mergers involving respondents' *own* localities.

[135] This is not to say, of course, that the *normative* arguments from perspectives that advocate smaller size localities are necessarily wrong. The argument in Klausen (2004a) and here is simply that decisions are *positively* made without much regard to them.

[136] All of the cited studies report locality size effects after control for other relevant locality or individual level variables (e.g. tax bases, gender, age etc.). While citizens may be better informed in smaller localities, there is still the question of whether the extra information is needed. Certainly, the cited study of Strømbæk Pedersen (2003) – insofar as it gauges relevant knowledge – would suggest that it is not. Even so, there are also more general arguments to the effect that very little day-to-day knowledge of local politics is needed: Voters may make reasoned and sensible choices anyway (see note 137).

[137] On participatory democracy versus competitive democracy, see Rose (2000:77-81). A related question is whether efficacy on the part of the individual voter is really necessary: In models of competitive democracy it is (ideally) assumed that competition among contending parties will see to it that the optimal and efficient (median) policy is enacted, and other theoretical results would have voters only *sufficiently* informed so as to be able to make the right choices (see Lupia and McCubbins 1998).

5.3 Analysis design, hypotheses and data

In line with the foregoing discussion on the shortcomings of previous research, the present empirical analysis will attempt to disentangle some quite specific aspects surrounding the decision of whether or not to merge with neighboring localities. Specifically, those decision criteria that have to do with locality size in itself – as they plausibly will indicate the salience of the arguments found within the input oriented strand of research – will need to be separated from whatever potential and positive gains *in outputs* that may result from a merger. In addition it is of interest to disentangle distributive economic considerations from potential political ramifications and also from potential efficiency consequences from mergers. The general model to be estimated, the operative variables and the data put to use is presented and discussed below.

First of all, in terms of modeling the probability P that respondent *i* will want to merge his or her own locality *j* with neighboring localities, one may in conceptual terms generally write that

$$P_{ij} = f(\text{ECDG}_j, \text{POLG}_j, \text{EFFG}_j, \text{SIZE}_j),$$

where ECDG is a vector of potential economic distributive gains resulting from locality *j* in an actual merger having to pool its economic resources (or liabilities) with that of other merging partners and then dividing again it between partners according to the ensuing power configuration (the characteristic distribution of seats between the formerly autonomous parts of the municipality in the new assembly). Parsimoniously, and in terms of sheer assembly seat ratios, the latter may be viewed in terms of municipal population sizes, since Norwegian local electoral systems are of the proportional representation type; POLG are potential changes in local policies resulting from a merger, respondents from locality *j* having to consider an adjustment of policies in the direction of those of other partners, again according to the former locality's standing in the new assembly; EFFG is the potential *synergetic* efficiency gain from a favorable increase in locality size, also to be shared according to former localities' power in the consolidated assembly; and SIZE is the number of inhabitants in locality *j*. Moreover, as it is the *probability* of wanting to merge one's own locality that is modeled, a logistic transformation of the dependent variable is suitable, since this will keep (probability) predictions within the sensible [0,1] interval. Specifically, applying the common *logit* link function and expressing the transformed preference for merging in terms of a linear combination of the mentioned decision criteria we get

$$\log[P_{ij}/(1-P_{ij})] = \gamma + \beta_1 \cdot \text{ECDG}_j + \beta_2 \cdot \text{POLG}_j + \beta_3 \cdot \text{EFFG}_j + \beta_4 \cdot \text{SIZE}_j + u_j,$$

where betas (β) are (vectors of) parameters to be estimated. Note that u_j term is an error term that varies randomly across localities.[138] Since the implied test is concerned with evaluating

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[138] This not to be confused with the traditional observation specific *e* term that one will find in the untransformed OLS formulation (i.e. where probabilities are modeled directly through the "identity link"). As is common when the response is binary, the assumption is that data is binomially distributed, and so the variance of the observed response is exclusively dependent on the population proportion (Goldstein 1999:2; Hox 1995:78). While one commonly assumes unity variance ($\sigma^2=1$), as is also done here for ease of comparability over various models, serious deviation from this assumption should nevertheless be tested for: For all estimated models σ^2 is never less than 0.9 and parameter estimates remain essentially the same whether or not such under- or overdispersion is accounted for.

the *typical* response from typical local respondents as it is informed by relevant contextual aspects (gains and losses specific to the locality), this *multilevel* specification of the model will allow for an assessment of overall clustering of responses within the said contextual setting (the locality) and also provide for correct significance tests for effects from independent variables as they vary exclusively *between* contexts. In addition to pure locality level variables the models will also include important *individual specific* variables. Specifically, models will also include the *party affiliation* of individual respondents, categorizations of which to be described in more operational detail below as the study's respondents are characterized. Suffice at this point to say that whereas contextual variables would potentially inform a typical decision in a reasonably conceptualized political system (most commonly the decision of the local median voter), individual or sub-systemic criteria would nevertheless likely inform the preferences of different groups *within* localities.[139] Moreover, one would expect such tendencies to apply in the political dimension specifically:

Whereas one may argue that pure distributive gains in economic resources (a larger tax base, say) or efficiency gains would be sought after by all types of respondents (be they voters or politicians), different groups will have different preferences for different gains in the *political* dimension. As this study will explore the local tax policy area specifically, two broad perspectives may be summoned up. First of all one might suspect that voters are *generally* opposed to high tax levels, and that politicians will shy away from initiatives to raise them even further. As revenue routinely streams from well-established tax regimes there is less need for any immediate change in policies, and voters and politicians will thus generally oppose mergers that will plausibly involve large tax raises. This is the "tax policy inertia" argument of e.g. Rose (1985), in which current tax policy is much an established and adequate (local) *status quo*.

Alternatively, a merger will present to different groups within a given locality a significant *opportunity* for altered tax rates. This plays straight into a conventional conception of left-right politics on two counts: First, since tax policy is traditionally connected to different preferences for (local) public sector size, on may argue that respondents affiliated with leftist parties will, in the very least, view tax increases as *less* troublesome than will respondents affiliated with rightist parties, the former parties traditionally favoring a large public sector (Peters 1991:3). Second, tax policy is potentially *redistributive* policy and is thus an obvious arena for ideological positioning (Boyne 1996:132–135). Since leftist parties are traditionally associated with inclinations for more redistribution, respondents affiliated with such parties should view increases in more (less) *progressive* tax instruments as less (more) troublesome than should respondents from rightist parties. The tax instruments in question are described in greater operational detail below, and we leave for the ensuing analysis section the technical and specificational issues of the mentioned within-locality effects. Summing up now, and retaining the possibility that municipality size in itself will impact on preferences for merging, the following general hypotheses may be delineated:

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[139] For instance, while Brink's model (2004:121) is predicated on the tax preferences of the decisive median voter being honored or not in the case of secession – secession going through only if the median (seceding) voter gains - tax rates may change to the worse or the better for other voters. In addition, since surveyed respondents are local *politicians*, responses may also be informed by fears of possibly losing an acquired top institutional position in the case of a merger (see e.g. Johnsen in NRK (2003) on this in the Norwegian case) or respondents may also generally identify strongly with municipal producer groups, the latter presumably running the higher risk of unemployment in the event of a merger (although Baldersheim et al. (2003:31) find scant evidence that *voters* with a municipal employment background specifically oppose mergers).

H1: The larger one's own municipality, the greater the willingness to merge

H2: The larger the potential redistributive economic gains from a merging one's own municipality with neighboring municipalities, the greater the willingness to merge

H3: The larger the potential efficiency gains from a merging one's own municipality with neighboring municipalities, the greater the willingness to merge

H4a: The larger the potential tax increases associated with merging one's own municipality with neighboring municipalities, the slighter the willingness to merge

H4b: The larger the potential tax increases associated with merging one's own municipality with neighboring municipalities, the greater the willingness to merge for leftist than for rightist respondents

H4c: The larger the potential increases in progressive taxes associated with merging one's own municipality with neighboring municipalities, the greater the willingness to merge for leftist than for rightist respondents

In operational terms the contextual variables mentioned so far are based in measurements of the following: Measures of *economic* resources are of two types. First, there is the taxes and grants component of municipal income. In Norway roughly 35 per cent of municipal income is accounted for by central government grants (Statistics Norway, 2001) while local income and wealth taxes account for another 40 per cent. Since all Norwegian municipalities levy both wealth and income taxes at the maximum rate allowed, the income and wealth tax and block grants components are summed to constitute one single exogenous resource component.[140] Second, Norwegian municipalities may levy property taxes,[141] and a common motivation for this in many smaller municipalities is the presence of considerable hydroelectric power resources. Not only are hydroelectric power plants highly immobile tax objects, in electoral terms they are also quite insignificant: Taxing of power plants does not involve reallocating masses of voters' private incomes (as opposed to the taxing of households; see below). In addition to taxing hydroelectric power plants, municipalities are entitled to retain up to 10 per cent of produced power for own use, this adding considerably to smaller municipalities incomes should they choose to sell power on the market. The sum of property taxes and income from municipal power sales is accordingly the second measure of local economic resources.[142]

Turning now to operationalizations of *political* "resources", the present study relies on measurements in a quite salient policy field, namely that of local autonomous taxation. For one thing, taxation is very likely *the* most sensitive issue in Western politics, and Norwegian municipalities are to some extent fiscally self-reliant. Even though only roughly one per cent

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[140] In 2000 mean municipal per capita income from income and wealth taxes and central block grants was NOK 25,320, with minimum and maximum levels NOK 17,044 and NOK 57,466 respectively.

[141] Property taxes may be levied within certain limits only, with floor and roof 0.2 and 0.7 per cent of property values respectively and increases in rates may only be moderately increased from one year to the next. Property taxes need not be levied in all parts of the municipality. See *Loven om eigedomsskatt* (Law on property taxes) (at http://www.lovdata.no/) for details. In 2000 49 per cent of Norwegian municipalities levied property taxes. The highest recorded per capita income from property taxes and municipal power sales in 2000 is NOK 33,024.

[142] Figures are available in Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (2002a: Appendix 9). As can be seen from table A5.2, differences in this area between neighboring municipalities (in terms of typical deviations from the overall per capita mean) may be quite substantial.

of overall municipal income is accounted for by property taxes (Statistics Norway, 2001), policies vary considerably from one municipality to the next. First of all, then, the present study lays to ground the level of household property taxes for a standard household as reported by municipal officials in *Norsk Familieøkonomi's* most recent municipal survey (1999).[143] A second measure of local tax policies is that of local fee levels in the infrastructure area (water supply, sewerage, refuse collection and chimney sweeping), this also retrieved from the mentioned municipal survey. Roughly 16 percent of overall municipal income is from user fees, and since services in the mentioned areas are mandatory, fees here resemble pure taxes, albeit of the more regressive poll-tax sort as fees are not nearly directly linked to household values. Moreover, infrastructure fee levels vary considerably across localities even though they are required not to exceed the costs of providing services, a pattern that prevails even after control for local production costs (Borge 2000).[144] In addition, Borge (2000) finds that infrastructure fee levels rise in the event that exogenous income declines (income and wealth taxes and block grants), suggesting that fees are indeed considered to be a (or perhaps *the*) feasible tax instrument in Norwegian local politics. In sum, local policies are gauged through reported household property taxes and infrastructure fee levels, and indicate local preferences for more (property taxes) or less (infrastructure fees) progressive tax policies respectively.

The *efficiency* gain in its turn is simply the estimated per capita gain from merging reported in the preceding section: As this gain (or loss) is specific to the respective merger project, it is assumed that municipalities in the project share the per capita gain equally. This is also the assumption with other resources that are pooled in the event of a merger – that is, resources are pooled and then redistributed according to partners' population sizes. While it may be that some partners are in a position to reap more than others, say because of a dominant population size, this assumption is reasonable in that it is parsimonious and also figures as an expectation of a fair distribution of resources. Besides, in a study of partisan budgetary influence in Norwegian local assemblies, Borge and Sørensen (2001) find that party *size* rather than dominance (in the form a majority or median position) is the best predictor of influence. In the case of tax policies, tax levels are analogously harmonized. Technically, if Z is a resource (income and wealth taxes and block grants or income from hydroelectric power activity) or a policy level (household tax or fee levels) then

$$\Delta Z_j = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{N}(POP_j \cdot Z_j)}{\sum_{j=1}^{N} POP_j} - Z_j,$$

where ΔZ_j is the potential locality specific (*j*) gain of either the economic distributive (ECDG) or the political (POLG) sort in a merger project involving N localities, Z_j is the resource or policy level in locality *j* and POP_j is the population size of locality *j*. In addition, since the measure of the second economic resource component – i.e. (total) property tax and power sales income – contains a portion of income from household property taxation, the ΔZ_j for this raw variable (resulting from applying the above simple procedure) is prudently adjusted by subtracting from it a quarter of the ΔZ_j for household property tax levels (since household tax

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[143] As mentioned, many municipalities do not levy property taxes at all, while the highest reported household property tax level in *Norsk Familieøkonomi's* survey is NOK 5,250. See table A5.1 in the appendix for further documentation of reported household property tax levels.

[144] In the survey total infrastructure fees (for a standard household) vary from NOK 13,588 to NOK 2,872.

levels are reported in per household (four persons) terms. See table A5.1 in the Appendix). Moreover, all figures are harmonized so as to reflect price levels in the year 2000.[145] Descriptive statistics for ΔZ_j variables (of the ECDG and POLG sort) are given in table A5.2 in the Appendix.

Respondents in the present study are local municipal councilors. Potentially, this would seem a liability in the present setting: Responses, one may argue, are not from respondents (local voters) that would normally make the final decision on municipal mergers (in referenda that are nevertheless not formally mandatory nor binding). The overarching concern is nonetheless that the present study does not analyze *actual* mergers. Might analysis of preferences still give some clues as to actual decision settings? For one thing, one may assume that politicians are much better informed than voters about local economic and political conditions that would potentially influence public preferences for merging or not. Besides, Klausen's (2004a) study of actual merger processes shows that voters and politicians are by and large in line when it comes to relevant decision criteria.[146] Given that the present study analyzes mere preferences, it is likely an advantage that respondents are (more or less) experienced and informed politicians rather than voters.

The important question presented to respondents in the present study is the following:

Do you feel that your municipality should merge with the neighboring municipality/municipalities?

Since respondents do not specify *which* neighboring municipalities they have in mind when answering the question, grouping of municipalities into merger projects is to some extent flexible. Even so, the present study groups municipalities in the merger projects proposed by Langørgen et al. (2002), and motivates this on the following grounds: First, the proposed merger projects are deemed *plausible* in that they involve municipalities with road connections within the same economic region. Second, Moisio (2003) shows positively (in the Finnish case) that distance between municipalities is a strong and significant determinant for merging propensity. Third, as mergers are by and large off the Norwegian local political agenda, one may argue that the merger projects proposed by Langørgen et al. (2002) are to some extent hypothetical *fait accomplis* to be taken seriously by respondents. Fourth, to the extent that the applied merger projects do not systematically run counter to projects grounded in greater local familiarity and knowledge, empirical results should reveal plausible, albeit possibly vague, tendencies.[147]

Finally, a few comments as to the sample of surveyed municipal councilors are in order. First of all, the survey recording responses to the question on municipal mergers was carried out by the Norwegian School of Management/the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research in the fall of 2002. The response rate was generally acceptable (58 per cent) and

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[145] That is, efficiency gains (1998 figures) and household fees and property taxes (1999 figures) are deflated according to the municipal consumption price index. See Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (2002b: Appendix 5).

[146] Voters and politicians being clearly in line in terms of relevant arguments for or against merging in six out of totally eight municipalities (*ibid.*).

[147] In addition, when a simple model (specifically, specification I in table 1 below) is estimated *exclusively* with surveyed municipalities that *do* figure in Langørgen et als. (2002) projects, on the one hand, and then with the addition of those surveyed municipalities that do *not*, on the other, the former sample gives the clearer effects and the better fit. To some degree this is an indication that the proposed merger project are plausible (for an illustration of this effect, see Monkerud (2004:43)).

there are no serious biases in response tendencies along potentially relevant categories (partisanship, membership on the executive board, gender; for additional documentation see Monkerud (2003)). The survey also records responses to questions on the following: Party affiliation, this the basis for differentiating political gains effects along the lines of hypotheses *H4b* and *H4c* (see above); membership on the executive board, as may be taken as an indication of a vested local position; and municipal employment background, as may be seen as an indication of strong identification with municipal producer groups (see note 139). All the mentioned individual level variables are further documented in table A5.1 and A5.2 in the Appendix. The survey contains 121 randomly sampled municipalities, although large localities (more than 10,000 inhabitants) are (deliberately) overrepresented so as to reflect conditions where most people live (Monkerud 2003:6). When crossed with Langørgen et als. (2002) sample of 335 municipalities the final analysis sample counts 80 municipalities,[148] and within municipality sample sizes vary from 5 to 39.

5.4 Analysis: The determinants of merger propensity

As was mentioned above, previous research on Norwegian local eagerness for municipal mergers has found that politicians and administrators in richer municipalities tend to go against mergers (Jacobsen 2004)[149] and that the local citizenry in smaller municipalities are more opposed to mergers than are their counterparts in larger municipalities (Baldersheim et al. 2003:26-28). For ease of comparison with these results, below (table 1) is estimated a simple model where local councilors' preferences for merging one's own municipality with neighboring municipalities (=1) is determined by municipality size, local economic conditions and partisan affiliation.[150] In line with Baldersheim et al. (2003:27) municipality size is categorized, with the construction of dummy variables for population sizes '3,000 to 6,000', '6,000 to 12,000' and 'more than 12,000' (municipalities with less than 3,000 inhabitants the reference category). This procedure will split the sample in near equal sized categories, and will allow for inspection of non-linear relationships between municipality size and opinions.[151]

In addition, the variable tapping local economic conditions is a Statistics Norway index measuring block grants and local taxes per capita adjusted for expenditure need.[152] First of all, this will exclude from the relevant comparison criteria any earmarked grants that would

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[148] The municipalities of Våle and Ramnes were merged into one (Re municipality) in 2002 and Ølen muncicipality is from the same year part of Rogaland county rather than Hordaland. The mentioned municipalities, as well as the two municipalities that are grouped for merging with Ølen (Sveio and Etne) in Langørgen et al. (2002), are excluded from the analysis.

[149] Assuming that the *general* question asking whether "there should be fewer municipalities in Norway" (Jacobsen 2004:181) is a valid proxy for opinions on mergers that involve one's own municipality (see note 134).

[150] All models are of the logistic regression type and are estimated by use of the GLIMMIX macro in the MIXED procedure in SAS version 9.1.

[151] See table A5.2 in the Appendix on size categories. Baldersheim et al. (2003:27) find (in the case of public opinion) that there is a clear negative and linear relationship in their 1996 survey, while the relationship is still negative but not nearly as linear in their 2003 survey.

[152] Importantly, the measure includes income from property taxes and local power sales, both sizeable sources of revenue for many smaller municipalities. Figures are available in St.prp. 82 (2000-2001) (government white paper). See Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (2003:Appedix 9) for definitions. The index is standardized and centered so as to reflect per cent deviation from the mean adjusted income (=100). See table A5.2 for descriptive statistics.

presumably stay much the same in the event of an actual merger. Next, the index will importantly better gauge local *disposable* income after any minimum spending needs have been taken into consideration.[153]

Finally, on the individual level, variables tapping partisan affiliation are constructed with one dummy variable coded one for respondents from traditional socialist parties (the Red Electoral Alliance, the Socialist Left Party and the Labor Party; zero otherwise) and another coded one for rightist parties (the Conservative Party, the Progress Party; zero otherwise. The reference category is accordingly center parties: the Center Party, the Liberal Party and the Christian People's Party). While a simple dichotomous specification would in principle have sufficed as viewed up against the simple socialist-rightist distinction of hypotheses *H4*b and *H4c*, the trichotomy applied here will in itself be more informative and will also tap possible ideological and intrinsic stances on the question of local mergers.

Table 5.1: Politicians' attitudes towards merging own municipality with neighbor(s). The impact of municipality size and economic conditions. Logit-regressions of positive response (t-values).

Constant	-1.60 (-1.23)
Rightist party affiliation	1.47 *** (7.62)
Socialist party affiliation	0.51 *** (3.31)
3000-6000 inhab. (=1)	-0.09 (-0.02)
6000-12000 inhab. (=1)	1.17 *** (2.75)
More than 12000 inhab. (=1)	1.29 *** (3.13)
Adjusted exogenous income	0.01 (0.72)
τ	0.92
N (representatives)	1374
N (municipalities)	80
Deviance	1445.35

***) p<0,01, **) p<0,05, *) p<0,10.

Whereas there seems to be some controversy as to where exactly in the political landscape fault lines run,[154] the lesser disagreement is over center parties' positions of relative skepticism towards local mergers.This is also in line with previous characterizations of national party positions to the effect that parliamentary representatives from center parties

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[153] As one may reason that minimum spending needs too will stay much the same in the event of a merger. The local economic conditions variable may thus be contrasted to Jacobsen's (2004:182) measure of total unadjusted municipal income.

[154] In the case of public opinion Baldersheim et al. (2003:30-33) suggest that rightist and moderate left party preferences should be contrasted to center party and radical left attitudes. While they do find a tendency that the former group significantly favors mergers more than do the latter, Jacobsen (2004:184) suggests a finer analysis and finds that attitudes of leftists are quite close to center party opinions (and even more so for radical leftists).

will rely more strongly on conceptions of "allocative efficiency through proximity" (Bukve 2002:278).[155]

The results corroborate those found in earlier research: First, municipality size is clearly decisive and substantial in this specification. For instance, in comparison to a municipality with less than 3,000 inhabitants where, say, 25 per cent of councilors are in favor of merging (an odds of 0.33), the model would predict that in a large municipality (more than 12,000 inhabitants) the share would grow to $(0.33 \cdot e^{1.3})/(1+(0,33 \cdot e^{1.3})) \cdot 100 = 55$ per cent. The comparable effect of a size of between 6,000 and 12,000 inhabitants is also significant and only somewhat smaller while municipalities with between 3,000 and 6,000 inhabitants do not differ significantly from the smallest of municipalities (less than 3,000 inhabitants). Second, partisanship matters: Typically, if 25 per cent of center party representatives are pro merger (an odds of 0.33), the prediction is that as much as $(0.33 \cdot e^{1.5})/(1+(0,33 \cdot e^{1.5})) \cdot 100 = 60$ per cent of rightist party representatives will be so. The effect of socialist party affiliation is also positive and significant, but slighter nevertheless than that form rightist party affiliation. Third, even though the effect of the economic condition variable is positive (which is against expectations), it is nevertheless not significant and it is also weak in substantive terms.[156] One reason for this is likely that size is strongly correlated with economic conditions, and additional analysis (not reported) with size variables omitted has the effect come out negative, albeit insignificant and not very substantial ($\beta = -0.01$, p=0.18).

The table also reports the estimated variance in responses (on the logit scale) *between* localities (τ). While preliminary analysis suggests that specifications in which responses are assumed to vary across localities provide better fits than does that which assumes responses *not* to systematically vary from one locality to the next,[157] the estimated τ is also suggestive: First of all, in terms of the portion of variance explained by between locality variation, one may as an approximation lay to ground the logistic distribution variance of $\pi^2/3 = 3.29$ along with a τ of around 1.0 and estimate the *intraclass variation* to be near the $1.0/(1.0 + 3.29) \cdot 100 = 23$ per cent level. This is substantially greater than the rule-of-thumb 5 per cent or less criterion for rejecting a two-level structure (as is assumed in the present models), and failure to take account of relevant levels in data may in many circumstances yield misleading results (Singer 1998:329-330). Second, as the estimated τ is reduced to 0.92 (from the 1.04-1.19 level) there is indication that the entered variables explain some of the variance between responses in different localities.[158]

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[155] My translation. In addition to the fixed (mean) party effects reported in the tables, models are also specified with a *random* party effect (i.e. the effect of partisanship is assumed to vary across localities). More detail on this is given in connection with the testing of hypotheses *H4b* and *H4c* below. Importantly, though, results do not change when the random effect is not specified.

[156] As viewed up against the standard deviation of 14.6 or even the difference between maximum and minimum values (see table A5.2).

[157] That is, as evaluated by significant reductions in the appropriate log-likelihood statistics. See Monkerud (2004:37) for an illustration of this effect and the accompanying τ estimates.

[158] In terms of model fit, the reported deviance (of 1445.35 with p=0.07 on df=n-b=1374-6=1368 in a χ^2 distribution, where n is the number of respondents and b the number of independent (fixed) effects) indicates that the simplified model does not have a significantly worse fit than the saturated model with all combinations of entered variables, although this is with a lenient α of less than 0.07. The more interesting measure, however, is of improved fit from the one model to another: Since all models are nested, the difference in deviance may be evaluated against a χ^2 distribution on df=b (where b is the number of additional fixed effects in the richer model), a significant reduction indicating that additional variables explain some of the variance in responses.

Although economic conditions are likely important in deciding whether or not to merge with neighboring municipalities – with mere needs for improving one's situation less pressing as conditions are fair – one may also ask of the specific gains or losses that might result from specific mergers. Accordingly, the next step in the analysis (table 2) enters into models the suggested gains variables (ΔZ_j): Potential efficiency gains, economic redistributive gains or losses in the income and wealth taxes and block grants area and in revenues from hydroelectric power activity and potential political changes in the household property taxes and fees area. The presented models also include another locality specific gains measure that would potentially be of some importance: As an indicator of municipal debt increase resulting from a merger, annual net interest payments per capita is recorded for each municipality and then contrasted to levels in the entire merger project by way of the same procedure as was applied to reach the other ΔZ_j variables. The expectation is that rising debt levels will dampen local enthusiasm for merging with neighboring municipalities.

In model specification I in table 2 one sees that effects from entered gains variables (save the debt change indicator) all have the expected signs and most are also significant at conventional levels: An increase in efficiency gains or in potential revenue from personal taxes and block grants in the order of NOK 1,000 per capita would raise the odds of favoring a merger by a factor of $e^\beta = e^{0.11} = 1.12$. Only the latter of these effects is significant at conventional levels, though. Possibly, efficiency gains are viewed by respondents as much more of a guess of a future state of affairs, whereas current revenue levels are more easily grasped as given. An interesting question pertaining to the distributive gains variable is nevertheless whether respondents view different components as more or less likely to materialize in the event of an actual merger. Specifically, since particular grants are deliberately fashioned to compensate for diseconomies of scale in smaller municipalities, respondents may fear that such components would disappear along with the original rationale in the event of (many) mergers going through. Accordingly, the distributive gains variable is potentially invalid as an indicator of a realistic decision criterion. And, even though the official national policy is that municipalities will in effect keep any such gains in the event of a merger,[159] there is still the issue of how credible such central assurances are in real terms.

This problem is analyzed in Sørensen (2006): In analyses of the same data that is put to use here, he finds that there is somewhat greater effect from distributive gains when compensating grants do not enter into gains calculations, but also that models that include such grants in the gains measure make for the better fit to the data. Presumably, respondents may view central assurances as credible and perceive the *status quo* of the current central transfers regime as sufficiently robust.

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[159] Technically, grants that are geared towards compensating for diseconomies of scale are replaced by a structural grant for a 10-15 year period (see e.g. Langørgen et al. (2002:3)).

Table 5.2: Politicians' attitudes towards merging own municipality with neighboring municipalities. The impact of prospects for efficiency gains, redistributive consequences and political differences. Logit-regressions of positive response (t-values).

	I	II	III	IV
Constant	-1.76	-1.77	-1.67	-1.69
	(-1.25)	(-1.26)	(-1.18)	(-1.20)
Rightist party affiliation (**R**)	1.49 ***	1.44 ***	1.44 ***	1.41 ***
	(7.62)	(7.10)	(7.10)	(7.00)
Socialist party affiliation (**S**)	0.53 ***	0.49 ***	0.49 ***	0.50 ***
	(3.37)	(3.00)	(2.99)	(3.08)
3000-6000 inhab. (=1)	-0.57	-0.59	-0.61	-0.62
	(-1.41)	(-1.45)	(-1.50)	(-1.52)
6000-12000 inhab (=1)	0.48	0.48	0.45	0.45
	(0.96)	(0.95)	(0.88)	(0.90)
More than 12000 inhab. (=1)	0.80	0.79	0.78	0.78
	(1.60)	(1.58)	(1.54)	(1.55)
Adjusted exogenous income	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(1.03)	(1.03)	(1.02)	(1.08)
Distributive tax and grants gain	0.11 *	0.11 *	0.11 **	0.11
	(1.70)	(1.67)	(1.70)	(1.66)
Change in revenue from hydroelectric industry	0.28 **	0.28 **	0.28 **	0.28 **
	(2.27)	(2.27)	(2.27)	(2.28)
Efficiency gain	0.11	0.12	0.12	0.12
	(0.95)	(1.00)	(1.01)	(1.00)
Change in household property taxes (**HPT**)	-0.53 **	-0.53 **	-0.52 **	-0.53 **
	(-2.18)	(-2.12)	(-2.12)	(-2.13)
Change in technical sector fee levels (**TFL**)	-0.36 *	-0.38 *	-0.39 *	-0.38 *
	(-1.85)	(-1.95)	(-1.96)	(-1.94)
Interaction: **R·HPT**		-0.04	-0.02	-0.02
		(-0.01)	(-0.05)	(-0.05)
Interaction: **S·HPT**		0.12	0.13	0.16
		(0.37)	(0.37)	(0.47)
Interaction: **R·TFL**		-0.44	-0.44	-0.45
		(-1.21)	(-1.23)	(-1.26)
Interaction: **S·TFL**		-0.39	-0.39	-0.37
		(-1.44)	(-1.43)	(-1.37)
Indicator for increase in municipal debt	0.00	-0.00	-0.01	0.00
	(0.01)	(-0.01)	(-0.03)	(0.00)
Executive board member (=1)			-0.22	-0.21
			(-1.58)	(-1.51)
Municipal employee background (=1)				-0.41 **
				(-2.19)
τ	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69
N (representatives)	1374	1374	1374	1374
N (municipalities)	80	80	80	80
Deviance	1445.29	1435.71	1432.17	1430.70

***) $p<0,01$, **) $p<0,05$, *) $p<0,10$.

Effects for the other economic distributive gains variable is even more substantial: Potential changes in tax and sales revenues from the local hydroelectric power industry in the order of NOK 1,000 per capita will typically raise the odds for favoring a merger by a factor of $e^{0.28} = 1.32$.[160] While effects from gains in the personal tax and grants area and from efficiency gains are roughly of the same order – presumably because these revenue sources are in a basic sense equivalent – the effect from gains in hydroelectric industry related revenues is much larger. One possible explanation for the latter gains source to be viewed differently is that hydroelectric power resources stand out (to politicians and voters) as more visible and tangible signs of local wealth.[161] All in all, with reference to the hypothesized relationships, results seem to clearly support the hypothesis that distributive gains matter (*H2*) while they also give credence, albeit vaguely, to the hypothesis that efficiency gains are important (*H3*).

Turning now to the variables tapping potential political changes, one sees that effects are even more substantial still. Since measures in the household property taxes and fees area are in NOK 1,000 per *household*, comparing effects directly with those from other variables is difficult. Even so, if multiplied by a factor of four (as the standard household consists of four persons) an approximate per capita increase in household property taxes of NOK 1,000 would change the odds of favoring a merger by a factor of $e^{4 \cdot (-0.53)} = 0.12$. In probability terms this would reduce an initial propensity for merging of P=0.25 to a mere P=0.04. The effect from potential changes in the household fees area is also much larger scale than those from distributive changes, although it is somewhat smaller than the household property taxes effect. The strong sensitivity in the household taxes and fees area (shifts *possible* in the event of a merger) is in line with the cited research documenting that citizens' role as tax payer is important (Pettersen and Rose 1997; see note 130). Also, the visibility of local taxes will likely add to the effect: Presumably, tax levels are easily observed within and across (neighboring) municipalities. Finally, locally as well as nationally, tax policy simply *is* a controversial issue, as may be seen from various journalistic accounts of local political processes.[162] In terms of model fit, furthermore, the drop in the intraclass correlation measure (τ) from 0.92 to 0.69 suggests that the addition of the gains variables helps explain a substantial portion of the between municipality variance.[163] So far in the analysis the conclusion is fairly clear: With respondents evidently opposing mergers as fee and tax levels would rise in the event, hypothesis *H4a* is clearly supported by empirical results.

A final observation from patterns in model I is that the size variables lose much of their thump: From the simple model where patterns were much clearer (table 1), effects for the two larger size categorical variables are now reduced to between two thirds and one half of the original effect, whereas municipalities with between 3000 and 6,000 inhabitants are now

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[160] In probability terms this is equivalent to a rise from P=0.25 to P=0.30.

[161] Earlier analysis (Monkerud 2004) included instead of the present measure of property taxes and power sales a variable tapping membership in the national organization for municipalities endowed with hydroelectric resources (LVK). The effect from changes in the latter variable harder to interpret, it nevertheless comes out positive, albeit insignificant.

[162] For instance, the Labor Party's proposal to reintroduce property taxation in the capital of Oslo spurred among parties strong and traditional left-right positioning (see Aftenposten 2003). Also, tax and fee issues figure directly in public debates over mergers, as in the case of the Hobøl-Spydeberg project where one observer warned of consequences in a previous merger to the effect that "fee levels have risen, and even people in the way out in the countryside have to pay property taxes" (see Smaalenenes Avis 2003).

[163] Also, the deviance measure falls only slightly (from table 1 to model I in table 2). However, the correct procedure for evaluating improved model fit with additional fixed effects is to estimate models using Maximum Likelihood (ML), and not Restricted Maximum Likelihood as is used here (REML) (Singer 1998:352). In ML-estimations the deviance drops from 1454.26 to 1404.19, which is highly significant on df=6 (see note 157).

found to be the most skeptic towards mergers ($\beta = -0.57$). Effects are on the whole moderate and none are significant at conventional levels (although the effect for the largest category of $\beta = 0.80$ is not without some substance nor is it very insignificant). A likely explanation for this is the combination of block grants that *over*compensate for diseconomies of scale and the existence of large hydroelectric power resources in particular small sized municipalities, these effects rendering smaller municipalities quite vulnerable in mergers either with larger and poorer municipalities or even with smaller and merely half rich neighbors. At any rate, hypothesis *H1* does seem to gain very clear support in the data: The clear positive relationship between locality size and opinions towards mergers that has previously been documented (Baldersheim et al. 2003) is very likely due to confounding resource disparities between small and large localities.[164]

Models II through IV include interaction terms for the political gains variables crossed with partisanship variables so as to test hypotheses *H4b* and *H4c*. For ease of interpretation partisan variables (**R** and **S** in the table) have been centered around the locality mean:

$$X_R = D_R - \overline{D}_{Rj}$$
$$X_S = D_S - \overline{D}_{Sj},$$

where D is the original dummy variable (indexed *R* for rightist parties and *S* for socialist parties). For instance, respondents from rightist parties in locality *j* are coded with an X_R value of one minus the share of rightist representatives in municipality *j*, and with an X_S value of minus the share of socialist representatives in the same municipality. Interaction effects are not significant at conventional levels, although there is some indication that both socialist and rightist representatives are more sensitive in the fee area than are center party representatives (as seen from the effects of *S·TFL* and *R·TFL* respectively): Presumably, rightist respondents are opposed to tax and fee rises however they are assembled, as is also indicated by their relative level of opposition to household property tax increases (i.e. it does not deviate substantially from the mean and fairly large opposition of $\beta_{HPT} = -0.53$). Socialists are in their turn somewhat less sensitive than average towards increases in property taxes. Whereas the overall typical opposition is $\beta_{HPT} = -0.53$, typical *socialist* opposition is $\beta_{HPT} + \beta_{S·HPT} = -0.53 + 0.12 = -0.41$. In terms of typical differences between partisan responses, the (logit scale) deviance of rightist opinions from the typical socialist response of $\beta_R - \beta_S = 1.44 - 0.49 = 0.95$ is narrowed by $-(\beta_{R·HPT} - \beta_{S·HPT}) = -(-0.04 - 0.12) = 0.16$ for every NOK 1,000 increase in potential property tax change. With an increase in household property tax changes of one standard deviation (NOK 490; see table A5.2 in the appendix), the typical difference is reduced by a mere 0.08 in logit terms. Thus, the effect is not very substantive: For any reasonable manipulation of the property tax change variable, rightist respondents will all the same favor mergers much more than will their socialist counterparts. All in all, since effects are not all to clear in terms of significance or substance, hypotheses *H4b* and *H4c* are not supported by empirical results, the first of these gaining relatively little support since socialists are among those that oppose opportunities for revenue raising policies the most (in the fees area), the second hypothesis also discredited as they are (in isolation) neither very

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[164] This is also in line with the weak effect found in Jacobsen's (2004:186) study of local politicians' and administrators' attitudes: The (linear) effect of municipality size is found to be $\beta = 0.014$ points per 1,000 inhabitants on a 0-4 "agree"-"disagree" scale dependent variable, yielding a mere 0.14 increase in preferences for merging for every 10,000 increase in local population.

keen on acting substantively on opportunities for redistribution through potential changes in more progressive taxes (household property taxes).[165]

Finally, models III and IV include in the analysis two control variables that have previously been considered to have some effect (NRK 2003; Jacobsen 2004; Baldersheim et al. 2003). First, in model III a variable recording membership on the executive board is included, and its effect is not without substance: Executive board members are on average more skeptic towards mergers than are ordinary council members. In odds ratio terms the effect is $e^{-0.22} = 0.80$, which would reduce an ordinary representative's propensity of, say, P=0.25 for being in favor of a merger to P=0.21 in the case that he or she became a member on the executive board (the effect not very insignificant, with p=0.12). This is in accordance with the proposition that vested positions are also at stake when respondents consider the consequences of mergers. Also, the variable recording whether the respondent has a municipal employee background (introduced in model IV) has a substantial effect and it is also highly significant: Politicians that have previously been or currently are municipal employees are on average more reluctant towards mergers than are those with no such background, the effect in odds ratio terms $e^{-0.41} = 0.66$ (equivalent to a drop in propensity from P=0.25 to P=0.18). While earlier research has found no connection between local public sector or private sector association and willingness to merge, these results seem to go against such conclusions and instead support the proposition that employment consequences from mergers do seem to matter.

One likely explanation for these discrepancies is this: First, it is likely that *elite* politicians to a greater extent than ordinary voters will tend to (have been or) be employed in administrative positions rather than hands-on service producing positions, the latter group less exposed in terms of job risks since mergers will most likely involve cuts in the administrative areas. This is in essence the *specific* explanation offered by Jacobsen (2004:178) for the lack of *voter* sectoral employment effects in Baldersheim et al.'s (2003:31-33) study, and most likely this is also the *general* mechanism behind the pattern detected here. Still, Jacobsen (2004:186) does not find any substantial employment background effects in *his* study of local politicians' and administrators' preferences. Why is this so? More than being simply a question of *personal* sectoral background, individuals will presumably identify strongly with groups other than those socialized with at the actual work place, families and networks of friends and acquaintances the sets that come naturally to mind.

Second, then, since Jacobsen's (2004) study might be burdened with responses from particularly *small* localities,[166] the finding of no effect from personal sectoral background may not be too surprising: In smaller localities the local public and administrative sector is quite logically large,[167] and, since polities are smaller, networks and groups will tend to be

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[165] Also, in terms of improved model fit from specification I to II, the ML-deviance drops insignificantly from 1404.19 to 1401.79 on df=4. In addition, as models are estimated with random partisan effects (not reported), inspection of changes in the variance components - i.e. the variance of partisan variables **R** and **S**, the covariance between them, the covariance between the partisan variables and the random locality term and, finally, the variance of the locality term (τ) - will give further information as to possible variation explained by added interaction variables. However, none of the variance components change substantively over models II through IV.

[166] With a small municipality sample size (N=30) from the southern region of Norway (Jacobsen 2004:177). The present study, moreover, is benignly biased in this respect, with responses from large localities even overrepresented. See p. 90.

[167] This, of course, is very much the motivation for advocating mergers among small localities (i.e. the existence of economies of scale in administrative services).

more inclusive of the entire polity in question. Thus, since there is a tendency in smaller municipalities that "everybody knows somebody in the municipal administration", personal background from the local public sector is less a prerequisite for developing the relatively *strong and general* public sector identity that would persist in smaller localities. The above reflections on the more personal sides of merger preference formation (vested institutional positions and sectoral identities) very much auxiliary in the present analysis,[168] we nonetheless note that none of the effects of economic and political factors change considerably as such aspects are controlled for (from model II to models III and IV).

5.5   The obstacles to Norwegian local government reform

The foregoing analysis has shown that individuals (politicians) will consider potential redistributive gains and also possible political ramifications when they form opinions on merging with neighboring municipalities. While theory would have one predict that efficiency gains from mergers should also matter, this study nevertheless finds no significant effect from potential gains of this sort. In addition, party affiliation in itself seems to be important, with center party representatives on average opposing mergers much more than do representatives from socialist and rightist parties, a result that is in line with previous characterizations of partisan positions on this question. Finally, it seems that politicians also take into consideration their institutional positions and their sectoral identities when forming preferences for merging with neighboring localities.

The result with regards to the redistributive gains effect is in accordance with Brink's (2004) finding that municipal secessions are more likely as income disparities between municipality parts rise. In contrast to Brink (2004), however, the present study also finds that political differences between municipalities is a crucial issue. Specifically, such differences matter in the following important ways: First, individuals seem to be *more sensitive* towards changes in local tax policies than towards changes in municipal economic resources. This is *theoretically* reassuring inasmuch as previous and traditional accounts have tax policy a particularly controversial policy area. Secondly, the fact that tax policy ramifications from mergers *do* seem to matter is *normatively* important because it conforms to the ideal of local political organization: The land *should* be partitioned into localities of different political standpoints so as to enhance system-wide allocative efficiency (Oates 1972). That politicians and voters oppose mergers on the grounds that neighboring localities pursue different policies is merely a logical consequence of such a viewpoint.

Still, the foregoing analysis is merely an illustration of how typical respondents would reasonably react to different *given* prospects from mergers, however the latter might be characterized (as economic gains, efficiency gains or political changes). In other words, respondents might be overtly sensitive towards tax increases, but seldom get to react to pending opportunities for changes in tax policies. The question is this: Is overall local opposition towards mergers due to the fact that neighbors are differently endowed with economic resources, richer localities standing to lose in the redistributive rearrangement of resources *ex post*? Or has the observed widespread opposition more to do with political differences, the smaller and politically eccentric localities *deservingly* opposed to merging

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[168] Also, in terms of improved model fit, executive board membership and municipal employment background seem to make a difference: ML-deviances drop from 1401.79 in model II to 1397.85 in model III, and from this again to 1395.93 in model IV, the first drop with p-value 0.05, the second with 0.16 (both on df=1).

with larger neighbors? What is the typical configuration of type of locality and contextual situation?

To get at an answer to this question, below is presented results from simulations in data in which estimated parameters from the previous analysis are applied. Specifically, estimated effects parameters (β) from model III in table 2[169] are used, first, to predict the probability P_{ij} for favoring a merger for each individual i in municipality j. Second, individual probabilities for merging are aggregated[170] within each municipality to reach the expected share of council representatives in favor of merging: $E_j = \Sigma P_{ij}/n_j$, where n_j is the actual number of representatives in municipality j. Third, since any successful merger project needs compliance from the partner with the *least enthusiasm for merging*, E_j predictions are recorded for least enthusiastic partners in the 115 merger projects found in Langørgen et al. (2002).[171] Fourth, this procedure is applied to the following situations:

- original observed variable values remain unchanged,
- efficiency gains are set to zero,
- economic distributive gains (changes in income and wealth taxes and block grants and changes in property taxes and local power sales revenue) are set to zero,
- political changes (changes in household property taxes and fees) are set to zero.

Figure 2 presents results form the simulations in terms of illustrating the cumulative distribution of merger projects on least enthusiastic council shares in favor of merging with neighboring municipalities. With the plain solid line representing predictions from observed values and estimated parameters, one observes, first, that efficiency gains seem to play a role: When efficiency gains are set to zero, least enthusiastic partners will typically become even *less* enthusiastic – as can be seen from the shift in the cumulative distribution (the dotted line) to the *left*: Relatively *larger* parts of the distribution will consist of projects with *extremely low preference* least enthusiastic partners.

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[169] Since no complete and locality specific figures on local politicians' sectoral backgrounds are available, this will preclude out-of-sample predictions from model IV.

[170] With individual predicted probabilities aggregated to actual council shares of categories (partisanship crossed with executive board membership/non-membership) rather than sample shares (the former as retrieved from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD)).

[171] That is, from the total of 117 projects (Langørgen et al. 2002:15), the two projects mentioned in note 148 are excluded from the analysis.
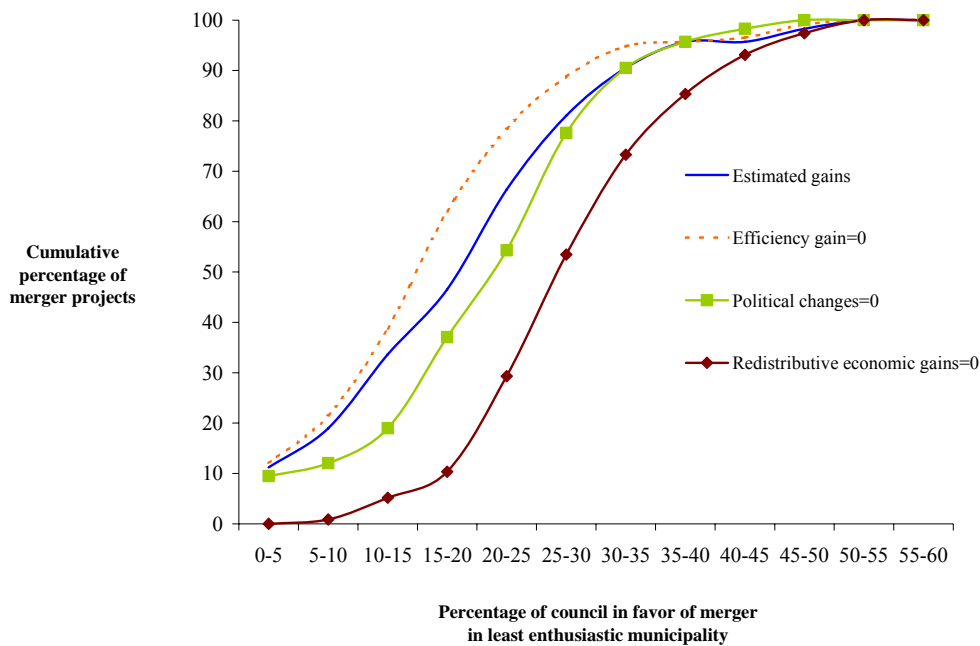
Figure 5.2: Simulated share of council in favor of merger in project's least enthusiastic municipality. Effects of prospects for efficiency gains, political changes and redistribution. (N=115).

When political changes do not need to be considered, i.e. when values for political change variables are set to zero, the distribution shifts to the *right* (the solid square markered line): Relatively *fewer* projects will be burdened with extremely low preference least enthusiastic partners. The principal barrier to greater overall merger rates seems nevertheless to be local disparities in economic resources: As can be seen from the shift in the cumulative distribution (from the plain to the diamond markered solid line), when changes in economic resources are made irrelevant to local merger decisions, *relatively fewer projects still* will be characterized by very low preference most unenthusiastic partners. Additional analysis reveals that total per capita revenue from household taxes and fees varies *regionally* to a considerable extent.[172] In other words there is a tendency for neighboring municipalities to pursue much the same policies in the household taxes and fees area. In any case, and to the extent that any operational and specificational shortcomings in the present analysis is not too serious, it seems that, in Norway, local opposition to municipal mergers generally has more to do with economic differences between localities than with the purposeful voicing of political diversity.

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[172] That is, in analyses of variance with total per capita household taxes and fees the dependent variable and with independents dummy variables for the merger project groups as applied here, the adjusted R-square comes out at 0.35. No such patterns prevail in analogous analyses with per capita exogenous economic resources as dependent variable.

5.6   Conclusions

The present study has sought to delineate the determinants of local decisions to consolidate the Norwegian local democratic system. In analyses of municipal councilors' preferences for merging their own municipality with those of their neighbors, it is found that the greatest sensitivity is of a political character: Differing tax and fee policies from the one locality to the next seems to be the most controversial issue when local decisions are to be made. Moreover, local preferences seem to be informed very much by *general opposition* to prospects for rising tax and fee levels in the wake of potential mergers: Analyses do not detect patterns of different views on impending tax increases for different groups within localities (i.e. different partisan groups). Possibly, this has also to do with methodological issues: As tax policies tend to be similar in neighboring localities, estimation of finer subdivisions of reaction patterns is difficult. The wider upshot of general political diversity taken up below, we note at this point that the observed pattern is in any case in agreement with numerous accounts of tax policy as a particularly controversial policy area.

The general finding of inter-locality political sensitivity is nonetheless important because it conforms to the ideal of local democracy. Specifically, it shows that the normatively benevolent mechanism of geographically diversified political stances is in full operation. If allocative efficiency is any guide, such differing stances should to a considerable extent inform the (re)structuring of local government. Still, while political differences are found to be important, and while neither potential efficiency gains nor municipality size in itself is found to be very decisive, the study also finds that disparities in economic resources are essential for decisions on whether or not to merge with neighboring localities. What's more, additional analysis suggests that general opposition to boundary reform has much more to do with current resource disparities than with real political differences: While neighboring municipalities are likeminded when it comes to important policies, they are certainly not equals in terms of resources. What are the implications of these findings for the future of Norwegian local government? Specifically, is reform really warranted? In other words, what are the wider *normative* consequences flowing from the present study, besides it being a positive analysis of likely (low) merger rates?

First of all, and from a pure societal economic point of view, it seems that the overall synergetic gains that may obtain from sensible mergers in Norway are not very large in any case: Mergers that are rational in this sense will, per definition, involve only tiny parts of the total population, most of which will live in large and efficient localities anyway. Pushing the matter with a view to *very* large overall gains seems a dead end. Second, mergers may still be viewed as sensible on the margin. If so, there is little need to see current opposition as much else than the voicing of local fears of redistributive effects. As such, a wider reform that is economically sensible on the margin and that does not seem to go much against local political diversity is hampered by mere bickering over existing resources.

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Appendix: Data sources, descriptive statistics and variable definitions

Tabell A2.1: Regionbefolkningens gjennomsnittlige selvplassering på høyre-venstre-aksen (HV$_{kt}$) (0=helt til venstre, 9=helt til høyre). Etter valgperiode.

Stortingsvalg	N	Gjennomsnitt	Standardavvik	Maksimum	Minimum
1977	11	4.86	0.26	5.18	4.40
1981	11	4.69	0.19	5.09	4.40
1985	11	4.55	0.33	5.07	4.06
1989	11	4.50	0.38	5.03	3.79
1993	11	4.67	0.38	5.14	4.15
1997	11	4.63	0.30	5.03	4.15
2001	11	4.91	0.35	5.41	4.20

Kilde : NSD/SSB.

Tabell A2.2: Regionbefolkningens gjennomsnittlige selvplassering på høyre-venstre-aksen (HV_{kt}) (0=helt til venstre, 9=helt til høyre). Etter region.

Region	N	Gjennomsnitt	Standardavvik	Maksimum	Minimum
Akershus	7	4.89	0.17	5.14	4.66
Oslo	7	4.87	0.20	5.18	4.68
Hedmark og Oppland	7	4.25	0.32	4.74	3.79
Østfold og Vestfold	7	4.93	0.28	5.41	4.56
Buskerud og Telemark	7	4.71	0.13	4.91	4.56
Aust-Agder, Vest-Agder og Rogaland	7	5.06	0.11	5.19	4.90
Hordaland og Sogn og Fjordane	7	4.81	0.22	5.08	4.55
Møre og Romsdal	7	4.71	0.32	5.15	4.36
Nord-Trøndelag og Sør-Trøndelag	7	4.43	0.23	4.74	4.15
Nordland	7	4.39	0.33	4.86	4.06
Troms og Finnmark	7	4.51	0.29	5.14	4.31

Kilde: NSD/SSB.

Tabell A2.3: Partienes oppslutning i fylkestingsvalg i opptellingskretser (V^P_{ikt}) (kommuner). Etter valgperiode.

		SV	DNA	Sp	V	KrF	H	Frp
	N	403	404	404	404	404	404	401
	Gjennomsnitt	**0.04**	**0.35**	**0.16**	**0.06**	**0.13**	**0.22**	**0.02**
1979	Standardavvik	0.03	0.13	0.09	0.04	0.08	0.09	0.01
	Maksimum	0.19	0.70	0.48	0.40	0.38	0.58	0.10
	Minimum	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.05	0.00
	N	404	404	404	404	404	404	403
	Gjennomsnitt	**0.05**	**0.39**	**0.14**	**0.05**	**0.11**	**0.20**	**0.04**
1983	Standardavvik	0.03	0.13	0.09	0.04	0.07	0.08	0.03
	Maksimum	0.20	0.73	0.41	0.34	0.38	0.52	0.16
	Minimum	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.05	0.00
	N	404	404	404	333	404	404	404
	Gjennomsnitt	**0.05**	**0.38**	**0.13**	**0.05**	**0.11**	**0.18**	**0.08**
1987	Standardavvik	0.03	0.12	0.09	0.04	0.07	0.07	0.04
	Maksimum	0.29	0.72	0.43	0.30	0.36	0.45	0.22
	Minimum	0.01	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.04	0.01
	N	404	404	404	404	404	404	404
	Gjennomsnitt	**0.11**	**0.31**	**0.20**	**0.04**	**0.10**	**0.16**	**0.05**
1991	Standardavvik	0.05	0.11	0.11	0.04	0.07	0.07	0.03
	Maksimum	0.33	0.69	0.61	0.34	0.53	0.48	0.16
	Minimum	0.02	0.06	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.00
	N	404	404	404	403	404	404	404
	Gjennomsnitt	**0.06**	**0.32**	**0.22**	**0.05**	**0.10**	**0.14**	**0.07**
1995	Standardavvik	0.03	0.10	0.11	0.05	0.07	0.07	0.04
	Maksimum	0.28	0.66	0.58	0.52	0.35	0.49	0.23
	Minimum	0.01	0.08	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.01
	N	404	404	404	403	404	404	404
	Gjennomsnitt	**0.07**	**0.29**	**0.17**	**0.05**	**0.12**	**0.15**	**0.10**
1999	Standardavvik	0.04	0.10	0.10	0.04	0.07	0.08	0.05
	Maksimum	0.33	0.69	0.55	0.39	0.39	0.49	0.32
	Minimum	0.01	0.07	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.02
	N	404	404	403	403	404	404	404
	Gjennomsnitt	**0.10**	**0.28**	**0.17**	**0.04**	**0.09**	**0.12**	**0.15**
2003	Standardavvik	0.05	0.10	0.11	0.05	0.07	0.07	0.07
	Maksimum	0.31	0.70	0.61	0.47	0.48	0.39	0.51
	Minimum	0.01	0.08	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.04

Kilde: NSD/SSB.

Tabell A2.4: Partienes oppslutning i kommunestyrevalg i opptellingskretser (V^P_{ikt}) (kommuner). Etter valgperiode.

		SV	DNA	Sp	V	KrF	H	Frp
	N	213	399	358	266	364	381	82
	Gjennomsnitt	**0.05**	**0.35**	**0.17**	**0.08**	**0.13**	**0.21**	**0.03**
1979	Standardavvik	0.03	0.13	0.09	0.04	0.07	0.09	0.02
	Maksimum	0.21	0.71	0.45	0.25	0.33	0.57	0.07
	Minimum	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	N	241	403	363	298	358	390	138
	Gjennomsnitt	**0.06**	**0.39**	**0.15**	**0.07**	**0.11**	**0.19**	**0.06**
1983	Standardavvik	0.03	0.13	0.09	0.04	0.07	0.08	0.03
	Maksimum	0.21	0.73	0.47	0.34	0.31	0.51	0.20
	Minimum	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	N	256	403	355	277	342	381	155
	Gjennomsnitt	**0.07**	**0.37**	**0.15**	**0.07**	**0.11**	**0.19**	**0.11**
1987	Standardavvik	0.03	0.12	0.10	0.04	0.07	0.07	0.05
	Maksimum	0.20	0.72	0.48	0.28	0.35	0.45	0.24
	Minimum	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.00
	N	308	403	351	280	332	377	221
	Gjennomsnitt	**0.12**	**0.31**	**0.21**	**0.06**	**0.11**	**0.16**	**0.06**
1991	Standardavvik	0.05	0.11	0.11	0.05	0.06	0.08	0.03
	Maksimum	0.31	0.66	0.57	0.48	0.34	0.47	0.19
	Minimum	0.00	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.00
	N	294	400	373	279	313	363	180
	Gjennomsnitt	**0.07**	**0.31**	**0.23**	**0.08**	**0.12**	**0.16**	**0.09**
1995	Standardavvik	0.04	0.11	0.12	0.06	0.07	0.08	0.04
	Maksimum	0.27	0.71	0.61	0.43	0.36	0.47	0.20
	Minimum	0.02	0.08	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.01
	N	252	400	358	272	309	348	240
	Gjennomsnitt	**0.09**	**0.30**	**0.18**	**0.07**	**0.13**	**0.18**	**0.11**
1999	Standardavvik	0.04	0.11	0.11	0.05	0.07	0.08	0.05
	Maksimum	0.32	0.73	0.51	0.36	0.51	0.51	0.37
	Minimum	0.00	0.08	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.02
	N	309	400	359	268	308	350	302
	Gjennomsnitt	**0.11**	**0.29**	**0.18**	**0.06**	**0.10**	**0.15**	**0.15**
2003	Standardavvik	0.05	0.12	0.12	0.05	0.07	0.08	0.07
	Maksimum	0.38	0.70	0.55	0.40	0.40	0.50	0.46
	Minimum	0.03	0.04	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.03	0.02

Kilde: NSD/SSB.

Tabell A2.5: Fylkenes og kommunenes frie inntekter per innbygger$_{.at}$ (1000 NOK) 1980-2003.[1]

År	Fylker			Kommuner		
	N	Gjennomsnitt	Standardavvik	N	Gjennomsnitt	Standardavvik
1980	18	6.97	0.64	453	12.25	3.13
1981	18	7.30	0.73	453	13.28	4.42
1982	18	7.45	0.80	453	13.78	6.01
1983	18	7.19	0.82	453	13.76	6.15
1984	18	7.32	0.85	453	14.16	7.56
1985	18	7.78	0.90	453	15.35	8.96
1986	18	15.73	2.37	453	19.74	8.73
1987	18	15.80	2.41	453	20.02	10.00
1988	18	13.29	2.14	447	23.94	10.92
1989	18	13.76	2.26	447	24.50	10.32
1990	18	13.94	2.38	447	25.03	11.04
1991	18	12.70	2.37	447	23.53	7.40
1992	18	12.82	2.37	438	24.21	7.42
1993	18	12.60	2.11	438	23.85	7.10
1994	18	13.16	1.77	434	23.74	6.57
1995	18	13.20	1.77	434	23.23	6.46
1996	18	13.21	1.73	434	23.28	6.30
1997	18	12.89	1.62	434	24.72	6.78
1998	18	11.87	1.77	434	25.10	6.80
1999	18	11.76	1.98	434	25.59	7.08
2000	18	11.68	1.94	434	25.30	6.71
2001	18	11.88	1.92	434	25.48	6.80
2002	18	6.41	1.14	433	26.05	6.71
2003	18	6.31	1.11	433	25.89	6.58

Kilde : NSD/SSB.
1) Alle beløp er i 2000-kroner.

Tabell A2.6: Deskriptiv statistikk for variabler brukt i analyser av fylkestingsvalg. Perioden 1979-2003 samlet.

	N	Gjennomsnitt	Standardavvik	Maksimum	Minimum
ΔL_{ijt}	2418	-0.108	0.275	1.027	-1.404
$NEDG_{jt}$	108	0.194	0.398	1.000	0.000
$STYR_{jt}$	108	0.041	1.407	3.800	-1.200
ΔHVB_{kBt}	73	-0.037	0.459	0.738	-0.738
$INNT_{jt}$	108	1.000	0.142	1.452	0.820

Tabell A2.7: Deskriptiv statistikk for variabler brukt i analyser av kommunestyrevalg. Perioden 1979-2003 samlet.

	N	Gjennomsnitt	Standardavvik	Maksimum	Minimum
ΔL_{ijt}	2213	-0.100	0.341	1.425	-1.536
$NEDG_{ijt}$	2379	0.121	0.326	1.000	0.000
$VLIST_{ijt}$	2201	0.033	0.178	1.000	0.000
$STYR_{ijt}$	2283	-0.002	1.794	2.800	-2.200
ΔHVB_{kBt}	118	-0.003	0.285	0.738	-0.738
$INNT_{ijt}$	2379	0.981	0.314	5.489	0.385

Table A3.1: Local councilors' preferences for budget changes in primary schools, care for the elderly and the disabled, high schools and somatic hospitals 1995-1999. Frequencies (percentages).

	Municipalities		Counties	
	Primary schools	Elderly and the disabled	High Schools	Somatic hospitals
Reductions in excess of five per cent	28 (0.75)	14 (0.37)	7 (0.69)	16 (1.60)
Reductions in the range of one to five per cent	254 (6.77)	133 (3.54)	155 (15.33)	105 (10.48)
Same resources as this year	1187 (31.63)	1311 (34.93)	406 (40.16)	325 (32.44)
Increases in the range of one to five per cent	1805 (48.09)	1808 (48.17)	378 (37.39)	416 (41.52)
Increases in excess of five per cent	479 (12.76)	487 (12.98)	65 (6.43)	140 (13.97)
Total:	3753 (100.00)	3753 (99.99)	1011 (100.00)	1002 (100.01)

Table A3.2: Descriptive statistics for variables used in analyses in table 3.1 and 3.2.

	Municipalities					Counties				
	Mean	Standard deviaton	Max.	Min.	N	Mean	Standard deviaton	Max.	Min.	N
Member of committe responsible for education (=1)	0.17	0.38	1.00	0.00	3013	0.17	0.37	1.00	0.00	941
Member of committe responsible for health and social policy (=1)	0.16	0.37	1.00	0.00	3013	0.20	0.40	1.00	0.00	941
Member on execuive board (=1)	0.30	0.46	1.00	0.00	3758	0.28	0.45	1.00	0.00	1059
Party share of seats	0.17	0.12	0.67	0.01	1034	0.14	0.10	0.47	0.01	244

Note: N for party share of seats refers to number of local parties in the sample.

Table A4.1: Descriptive statistics for variables used in regression analyses in table 4.6.

Variable	Mean	Std. dev.	Max.	Min.	N	Comments and sources
Proportion of socialist seats:						
Norway	0.36	0.14	0.85	0.00	434	Norwegian Social Science Data Services
Denmark	0.41	0.13	0.82	0.06	273	Statistics Denmark
Socialist control:						
Norway	0.17	0.38	1.00	0.00	435	Norwegian Social Science Data Services
Denmark	0.23	0.42	1.00	0.00	273	Statistics Denmark
Socialist mayor:						
Norway	0.38	0.49	1.00	0.00	435	Norwegian Social Science Data Services
Denmark	0.39	0.49	1.00	0.00	273	Statistics Denmark
Share of representatives in favour of increase in income tax rate:						
Norway	0.31	0.14	0.60	0.00	113	Norwegian School of Management questionaire surveys to local politicians (2002)[1]
Income tax :						
Norway (hypothetical tax rate; tax preference in per cent)	12.82	0.42	14.53	11.75	113	Norwegian School of Management questionaire surveys to local politicians (2002)
Denmark (actual tax rate in per cent)	20.9	0.9	23.2	15.5	273	Statistics Denmark
Property tax:						
Norway (levies property taxes=1)	0.50	0.50	1.00	0.00	434	Dummy. Based on non-zero income from property taxes. Statistics Norway.
Denmark (tax rate in per thousand)	13.1	5.2	24.0	6.0	273	Statistics Denmark

[1] Responses aggregated to shares with weighting for local party representativeness.

Table A4.1 continued.

Variable	Mean	Std. dev.	Max.	Min.	N	Comments and sources
User charge:						
Norway	26.70	6.10	40.60	0.00	275	Charge for municipal pre-school child care. Percentage of costs. Satistics Norway.
Denmark	39.60	9.20	107.80	1.20	249	Charge for municipal child care for school children. Percentage of costs. Statistics Denmark.
Ratio of median to mean taxable income:						
Norway	0.85	0.04	1.00	0.59	434	Statistics Norway
Denmark	0.91	0.03	0.96	0.74	273	Statistics Denmark
Population size:						
Norway	10 445	29 981	512 589	233	433	Statistics Norway
Denmark	17 432	25 186	286 668	2 266	273	Statistics Denmark
Exogenous income and expenditure need:						
Norway	23 284	315	38 648	19 998	435	Exogenous income adjusted for expenditure need. NOK per capita. Statistics Norway.
Denmark	27 641	652	30 586	26 126	273	Local expenditure need + (distance to national average x equalization level). DKK per capita. Danish Ministry of the Interior and Health.
Mean private taxable income:						
Norway	154 271	21 608	271 000	111 700	434	NOK. Statistics Norway
Denmark	158 465	20 432	267 439	128 729	273	DKK. Statistics Denmark

Table A4.1 continued.

Variable	Mean	Std. dev.	Max.	Min.	N	Comments and sources
Party fragmentation:						
Norway	0.27	0.09	1.00	0.14	434	Herfindahl index ($\Sigma p_i{}^2$, where p_i is party i's share of council represenatives). Norwegian Social Science Data Services.
Denmark	0.32	0.07	0.58	0.16	273	Herfindahl index ($\Sigma p_i{}^2$, where p_i is party i's share of council represenatives). Statistics Denmark.
Property values:						
Norway: Mean appraised residence value (NOK)	58 573	15 895	131 399	22 565	434	Statistics Norway
Denmark: Land values (DKK per capita)	92 667	38 532	319 273	44 179	273	Danish Ministry of Interior.
Specific property types (controls in property tax analyses):						
Norway: Hydroelectric power production	0.35	0.48	1	0	434	Measures membership in hydroelectric power municipalities' national organization (LVK). Membership list.
Denmark: Summer cottages	0.08	0.17	1.14	0	273	Measured per capita. Statistics Denmark.

All data are from 2001 unless otherwise indicated.

Table A5.1: Definitions and sources of variables used in analyses in tables 5.1 and 5.2

	Source	Coding, definitions
Respondent level variables:		
Attitude towards merger	NSM/NIBR (2002)[1]	Question: "Do you feel that your municipality should merge with the neighboring municipality/municipalities?. Coding: "yes"=1; "no"=0.
Partisanship	NSM/NIBR (2002)[1]	Rightist party=1 if respondent represents the Progress Party or the Conservative Party, 0 otherwise; Socialist party=1 if respondent represents the Labor Party, the Socialist Left Party or the Red electoral Alliance, 0 otherwise.
Membership on executive board	NSM/NIBR (2002)[1]	Membership=1 if respondent reprorts to be regular member, 0 otherwise.
Municipal employee background	NSM/NIBR (2002)[1]	Question: "Are you or have you been employed in one of the following". Coding: "in a municipal body"=1, 0 otherwise.
Municipal level variables:		
Adjusted disposable income	St.prp. 82 (2000-2001) (government white paper)	Per capita revenues from personal income and wealth taxes, block grants, property taxes and local power sales, adjusted for spending needs
Personal taxes and block grants	NSD/Statistics Norway (2000)[2]	Local income and wealth taxes and central government block grants per capita.
Household property taxes and technical sector fees (water supply, sewerage, refuse collection and chimney sweeping).	NSD/*Norsk Familieøkonomi* (1999)[2]	Both measures are taxes and fees for a standard household as reported by municipality officials: *A house for four residents with a dwelling area of 150 m^2 and a basement area of 75 m^2. The house has two toilets, one bathroom, water consumption 200 m^3, electricity consumption 25000 kWh and one chimney. The house has a net value of NOK 750 000,- and the total household personal income is NOK 400 000,-*
Estimated efficiency gains	Langørgen et al. (2002)	Inrease in freely disposable municipal expenditure per capita.
Municipal debt indicator	NSD/Statistics Norway (2000)	Net municipal interests on debt per capita.
Hydroelectric power resources	Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (*Rundskriv H-2/02*) (2002a)	Total income from property taxes and local power sales per capita.
Municipality size	NSD/Statistics Norway (2000)[2]	Number of inhabitants

[1] NSM: BI Norwegian School of Management; NIBR: Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research.
[2] NSD: Norwegian Social Science Data Services; *Norsk Familieøkonomi* is a Norwegian conumer periodical.

Table A5.2: Descriptive statistics for 80 municipalities used in analyses in tables 5.1 and 5.2.

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Min.	Max.
Share of respondents in favor of merger	1374	0.48	0.50	0.00	1.00
Share of respondents affiliated with rightist party	1374	0.25	0.43	0.00	1.00
Share of respondents affiliated with socialist party	1374	0.40	0.49	0.00	1.00
3000-6000 inhab. (=1)	80	0.26	0.44	0.00	1.00
6000-12000 inhab (=1)	80	0.21	0.41	0.00	1.00
More than 12000 inhab. (=1)	80	0.26	0.44	0.00	1.00
Adjusted exogenous income[1]	80	101.58	14.55	87	162
Distributive tax and grants gain[1]	80	-0.33	3.02	-9.30	5.10
Change in revenue from hydroelectric industry[1]	80	0.03	1.07	-4.87	4.27
Efficiency gain[1]	80	1.45	1.14	-1.93	3.85
Change in household property taxes[2]	80	0.02	0.49	-1.50	1.88
Change in infrastructure fee levels[2]	80	-0.12	0.69	-1.99	1.44
Indicator for increase in municipal debt[1]	80	-0.07	0.49	-3.69	0.49
Share of respondents on the executive board	1374	0.30	0.46	0.00	1.00
Share of respondents with municipal empolyment background	1374	0.13	0.34	0.00	1.00

[1] NOK 1,000 per inhabitant, [2] NOK 1,000 per huosehold (4 persons).