

Acknowledgements

Most academic publications have a history which, if told in full, would constitute a publication of substantial length in its own right. Comparative cross-national research projects invariably expand the story, often exponentially. This book is no exception. The idea of a collaborative cross-national research project concerning the relationship between municipal size and local democracy was originally aired at a summer school for doctoral students arranged in Oslo in 1997. While the idea was roundly endorsed, there was abundant recognition of the challenges involved. Hence, it was agreed that a pragmatic, two-stage research strategy should be pursued. The first stage would be to seek out and exploit existing data sets to the extent they could provide a basis for sound comparative analysis. But secondary analytic approaches rarely provide an optimal point of departure. It was therefore with a cautious sense of optimism that a second stage involving collection of new data more appropriately suited to the central research question was envisioned.

Publication of this book brings to fruition the seed planted in 1997. It has been a laborious process, taking much longer than initially foreseen. Reaching this goal would have been impossible without generous support received from many quarters along the way. The first major step was made possible by a grant under the Research Group Planning Session programme of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), a grant that brought us together in Uppsala, Sweden in October 1999. Efforts in pursuit of the first stage received financial support from the British and Norwegian research councils under a programme supporting collaborative research between scholars from the United Kingdom and Norway. A grant from the European Science Foundation (ESF) under the Exploratory Research Grant programme was also critical at this point. The first stage of the project ultimately resulted in a set of articles published as a special issue of *Government and Policy* in 2002.

In the interim, funding to pursue the second stage of our original plan was procured by means of grants from the national research councils of Denmark (grant number 870-28811), Norway (grant numbers 132339/

530, 134097/530 and 134471/530) and Switzerland (grant number 1215-063600) respectively, and the Faculty of Public Administration and Public Policy at the University of Twente. These funds made it possible to conduct national surveys in all four countries using a common template and sampling design. We are deeply grateful for these grants, without which this book would not have seen the light of day.

The collection of data is only one step on a long path. In addition to the grants from national research councils, financial support for costs associated with processing and analysing the data was provided by our home institutions.¹ The Klitgården Refugium in Denmark also gave stipends to two of the authors providing them with an opportunity to spend a week together at the Klitgården Refugium in the summer of 2006.

Every bit as important as financial support is the ‘army’ of individuals who have provided encouragement and assistance at different points during our journey. Several persons deserve a special word of recognition and thanks in this regard. Jørgen Elklit from the University of Aarhus participated in a seminar during the project’s first stage and provided constructive comments on preliminary drafts of the articles which were subsequently published in the aforementioned special issue. In conducting and documenting the Swiss and Danish surveys, Marc Bühlmann and Annie Gaardsted Frandsen, respectively, played pivotal roles. Marc also co-authored the book on size and local democracy in Switzerland based on the Swiss project data (Ladner & Bühlmann 2007). Ulrik Kjær made a similarly important contribution in co-editing a book on size and local democracy in Denmark (Kjær & Mouritzen 2003).

Peter Geurts from the University of Twente was not only responsible for coordinating data collection in the Netherlands, but also provided inestimable methodological assistance at several junctures. Henrik Lolle from Aalborg University in Denmark also offered valuable methodological advice. In critical phases of the project, Kurt Houlberg, now at KORA, the Danish Institute for Local and Regional Government Research, helped in establishing the survey template and a procedure for our subsequent multilevel analyses. Outstanding assistance in pooling the four country data sets was provided by Martin Schwarz in Norway. Later on Christina Pihlkjær Jensen did an excellent job in registering and helping us in the interpretation of multilevel results, while Anne Maren

¹ At the time Michael Goldsmith was a professor at the Department of Politics and Contemporary History, University of Salford, and received support for the project through the Campaign to Promote the University of Salford (CAMPUS) at the university.

Aabøe was masterful in helping to prepare a final draft of the manuscript for publication. The quality of our results has been greatly enhanced by all of these people.

There are numerous others to whom we are grateful, including those among the Edward Elgar staff who have so professionally transformed a draft manuscript into a polished final product. Although not specifically named here, we are nonetheless mindful of these contributions and express our sincerest gratitude. Indeed, hartelijk dank, hearty thanks, herzlichen dank, mange tak and hjertelig takk to all of you.

Finally we want to thank our wives – Carolien, Anne, Colette, Lene and Leslie – for their enduring patience and understanding, stretched at times to the limits as the case may be. The nature of the project itself and the cumulative analytical approach adopted resulted in what may have seemed like a never-ending round of project meetings, late nights and long weekends. But this is another story to be told another time. The bottom line is that we are all still married to the women that have been – and continue to be – so special for us!

Hengelo, Wilbarston, Zurich, Odense and Oslo
April 2014

