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.

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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.\footnote{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.} 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.

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