Resources count, but votes decide?
From neo-corporatist representation to neo-pluralist parliamentarism – the case of Norway

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Introduction

Numerous comparative studies rank Norway as one of most corporatist countries in the world. In Schmitter’s analysis (1979: 21), Norway is referred to as one of the best examples of societal corporatism, and the country tops the list of thirty-six democracies presented by Lijphart (1999: 177). Together with Crepaz, Lijphart has constructed a ‘composite measure of corporatism’ based on the ‘combined wisdom’ of ‘twelve neo-corporatist scholars’ (Lijphart and Crepaz, 1991: 238). According to their calculations, the degree of corporatism in Norway is very high, surpassed only by Austria. Siaroff (1999: 198) came to the same conclusion on the basis of analyses of corporatism in twenty-four different countries (cf. Armingeon, 2002: 155).

The question has been raised as to whether corporatism is in decline (e.g. Crepaz 1994; Lewin 1994). Lijphart (1999: 173) argues, however, that the ‘decline of corporatism’ usually means that the efficacy and frequency of the use of corporatist structures ‘have decreased, not that these structures themselves have disappeared or are being dismantled’. According to Lijphart, ‘to the extent that there has been a decline in some countries, it has been merely a matter of degree’. With regard to Norway, there are no changes in the ‘integration scores’ calculated by Siaroff (1999: 198) from the late 1960s to the late 1990s.

What I will argue, however, is that important changes in Norwegian corporatism did occur during the last part of the 20th century. In a comparative perspective, Norway is a stable democracy, and changes may be regarded as ‘matters of degree’. Nevertheless, even ‘stable’ democracies develop and adapt to new circumstances. Sometimes institutions ‘drift great distances through combinations of modest steps’ (March and Olsen, 1995: 187). Summing up various modest changes, we will see that the character of the political institutions and the way political actors operate in Norway is changing.

The ongoing changes in the Norwegian political system can be related to what we may call the processes of pluralisation and parliamentarisation and their strategic implications. We will take a closer look at five interrelated dimensions of change in the Norwegian political system. The first two dimensions, I) the concentration of private power and II) the concentration of public power, are directly related to the process of pluralisation. The process of parliamentarisation is related to dimension III) executive-legislative relations and dimension IV) corporatism versus lobbyism. Finally, the strategic implications are related partly to the fourth dimension and partly to dimension V) the generalisation of interests and coalition building.

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1 I would like to thank Arild Farsund, Trygve Gulbrandsen, Ruth Johnson, Olaf Langhelle, Torgeir Aarvaag Stokke and Øyvind Østerud for their advice and assistance.
Concentrations of power and government systems

Government systems may be described in various ways. In their study of private interests in national policy-making, Heinz et al. (1993: 395f) focus on the degree of concentration of private and government power. Combining these two dimensions, they attain a fourfold typology of government systems: corporatism, private government, pluralism, and state directed systems. In order to capture recent changes in the Norwegian government system (and probably other systems as well), this typology needs some elaboration. We may distinguish between two types of concentration of power: public as well as private power may be concentrated in a monolithic or a sectorised or segmented way. We should, however, also take into consideration that concentrations of power are continuous – not categorical – variables. A more differentiated typology is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Concentrations of power, government systems and the Norwegian development

According to Schmitter (1979: 18), corporatism is found in countries with ‘singular, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered, sectorally compartmentalized, interest associations exercising representational monopolies and accepting (de jure or de facto) governmentally imposed or negotiated limitations on the type of leaders they elect and on the scope and intensity of demands they routinely make upon the state’. Such interest associations have attained a quasi-legal status and a prescriptive right to speak for their segments of the population. They influence the process of government directly, bypassing parliament.
Schmitter (1979:21f) differentiates, however, between two forms of corporatism: state corporatism and societal corporatism. The term state corporatism refers to the ‘strong’ version defined above. In Figure 1, I use the label corporatism for the ‘strong’ version characterised by monolithic concentrations of power, leaving out the sectoral compartmentalisation in Schmitter’s definition.

Societal corporatism, on the other hand, ‘is found imbedded in political systems with relatively autonomous, multilayered territorial units; open, competitive electoral processes and party systems; ideologically varied, coalitionally based executive authorities – even with highly “layered” or “pillared” political subcultures’. Societal corporatism is ‘best exemplified by the cases of Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark’. In Figure 1, I use the term neo-corporatism more or less synonymously with Schmitter’s societal corporatism.

The term segmented state, which was introduced by Egeberg et al. (1978), labels government systems characterised by sectorised concentrations of power. Political segments may be found within particular economic areas such as agriculture, fisheries and industry, or around functions like health care, communications, education and defence. Participants may come from various institutions such as ministries, parliamentary committees, interest organisations, research institutions, the mass media etc. The participants within a segment ‘are assumed to share certain basic values and perceptions, such that their models of the world coincide more with one another than with those of representatives of other segments’ (Christensen and Egeberg, 1979: 253). Political segments bear a clear resemblance to concepts like ‘sub government’ and ‘policy communities’ in the family of ‘policy network’ concepts covering the spectrum from strong and closed ‘policy communities’ to loose and more open ‘issue networks’ (see König 1998 for an overview).

Finally, I use the term neo-pluralism to distinguish ‘modern’ pluralism from ‘classic’ pluralism. The State in a modern pluralist welfare state like Norway is much stronger and plays a more comprehensive role than the traditional and rather weak ‘nightwatch state’ under classic pluralism and liberalism.

In an extremely simplified interpretation, we may say that Norway has moved from a neo-corporatist position in the 1950s and 1960s, via the position of a segmented state in the 1970s, to a neo-pluralist position in the 1980s, 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century (cf. the arrows in Figure 1). However, I hasten to add that the indication of time is rough and that the Norwegian system is a mixture of elements of neo-corporatism, segmentation and neo-pluralism. At a given point in time we find all three kinds of government systems in Norway. The balance between them varies between sectors and policy areas, but it seems quite clear that the centre of gravity has moved in the pluralist
There is, in other words, a process of pluralisation going on in contemporary Norway.

It should be emphasised that neither (neo)corporatism nor (neo)pluralism – nor the case of Norway – should be regarded as normative ideals. In this article, I use these terms as analytic-descriptive categories only.

**The process of pluralisation and the dispersion of power**

To define and measure power is a complicated task and there is, of course, no perfect correlation between pluralisation and the dispersion of power. However, it seems likely that pluralisation will tend to lead to a diffusion of power. The process of pluralisation and the dispersion of power in Norway may be illustrated by trends and developments of various indicators related to the public and private sectors and civil society. For the sake of simplicity, I will relate the dispersion of power to two dimensions: private power, including civil society, on the one hand, and public power on the other.

**Private power**

The overall development of the Norwegian society can be illustrated by referring to various editions of the standard work ‘Det norske samfunn’ (Norwegian Society). The first edition was published in Norwegian in 1968 and in English in 1974 (Ramsøy, 1968; 1974). In his analysis of ‘Norway in the world community’, Galtung (1974) characterised Norway as a ‘highly homogenous’, ‘highly static’ and ‘extremely anti-pluralistic’ country. A revised edition of the book was published in 1986. In the preface, the editors stated that ‘all chapters could have had subtitles containing the expression “social change”’. They made it clear that ‘Norway is not at all a homogenous society’ (Alldén et al., 1986: 5).

Another revised edition was published in 2003. In their introduction, the new editors write that a different Norway has emerged towards the new millennium, a more prosperous Norway, characterised by greater heterogeneity and other attitudes than the industrial society which the earlier editions related to (Frones and Kjølsrød, 2003: 13). In the same volume, Bjørkås (2003: 454) asks whether it is justified to say that the Norwegian ‘monoculture’ is changing in the direction of increased cultural pluralism. His answer is ‘unquestionably yes’.

The immigrant population was one of the indicators Galtung used to document his characterisation. According to Statistics Norway, the ‘immigrant population’ (people born abroad, or having two parents born abroad) has increased from 1.5 per cent in 1970

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2 One may raise the question of whether the described phases reflect the political ‘reality’ or the political scientists’ perceptions of ‘reality’. In my opinion, the strength of corporatism in the 1950s and 1960s and of segmentation in the 1970s has been overstated by many political scientists. ‘Reality’ was more nuanced than perceptions. I do believe, however, that the ‘real’ changes are significant enough to substantiate my characterisations.
to 6.6 per cent in 2001. In 2001, 19.4 per cent of the population of the Norwegian capital, Oslo, consisted of immigrants. An increased proportion of the immigrant population comes from faraway countries. In 1970, almost 45 per cent of the immigrant population came from other Nordic countries while only six per cent came from Africa, Asia, South and Central America or Turkey. The latter group’s share increased to more than 51 per cent in 2001, while the Nordic share decreased to 18 per cent.3

Membership in religious denominations was another indicator used by Galtung (1974). In the 1950s and 1960s, 96 per cent of the Norwegian population were members of the Lutheran State church, and religious denominations outside the State church were mostly Christian. By the turn of the millennium, membership in the State church was reduced to 86 per cent of the population, and 23 per cent of the members of religious denominations outside the State church belonged to Islamic communities.4

Immigration and religious membership clearly indicate that the Norwegian society is less homogeneous and more pluralistic, and that ‘religious power’ is less concentrated than before. A process of pluralisation and dispersion of private power is also indicated by the fact that the number of nationwide interest organisations in Norway has doubled since the 1970s. In 1976, 1,182 organisations were registered. In 1983 and 1992 the figures were 1,683 and 2,392 respectively (Andersen and Lauritsen, 1990: 14; Hallenstvedt and Trollvik, 1993: XI). A similar trend can be observed among trade unions. The dominant position held by the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) in the 1950s has been superseded by intensified competition between various organisations, cf. Figure 2.

In 1956, approximately 49 per cent of the employed labour force were members of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO). Ten per cent were members of independent trade unions. Two new confederations of unions were established in the 1970s, the Confederation of Vocational Unions (YS) and the Confederation of Academic and Professional Unions (AF). AF was split (and later dissolved) as a new Federation of Norwegian Professional Associations (Akademikerne) was set up in 1997. In 2001, the Confederation of Higher Education Unions (UHO) was established. The new unions defy the power of LO, and in 2002 UHO organised 8.4 per cent of the employees, YS 7.4 per cent, Akademikerne 4.4 per cent, and independent unions 5.6 per cent. LO membership was reduced to 26.5 per cent of the employees.5

Parallel to this development, the character of collective wage bargaining has changed. In the 1970s, the State was directly involved in so-called ‘combined’ wage settlements or tripartite negotiations with employers’ associations and trade unions. The bargaining process was highly centralised. Since 1980, the State has not been directly involved in tariff negotiations. In 1992, after an economic setback, the employers, the employees

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3 Statistics Norway, [www.ssb.no](http://www.ssb.no).


5 Stokke (1995: 11) and updated information given by Torgeir Aarvaag Stokke.
and the State agreed on a so-called ‘solidarity alternative’. Wage settlements should be moderate in order to reduce unemployment. The economy gradually improved and unemployment decreased, as did the legitimacy of centralised wage bargaining both within LO and especially within unions outside LO. Attitudes towards centralised wage settlements are somewhat ambiguous among employers and employees, but a growing portion of the total wage increase is now arranged through decentralised settlements. The intensified competition between LO and other unions has contributed to this development (cf. Fennefoss and Høgsnes, 2003).

![Trade union membership](image)

**Figure 2. Trade union membership**

However, in the 2004 wage negotiations trade unions demanded an agreement on an occupational pension, but the employers refused. The negotiators asked the Government for help to break the deadlock, and the Prime Minister declared that the Government would consider a statutory occupational pension as an element in a forthcoming reform of the Norwegian pension system.⁶

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⁶ Letter of 31 March 2004 from the Prime Minister to the Federation of Norwegian Manufacturing Industries (TBL), the Federation of Norwegian Construction Industries (BNL), and Fellesforbundet (an amalgamation of five former unions and the largest union in the private sector).
Most often, attention paid to private business enterprises focuses on the concentration of power represented by large company mergers. Oligopolistic tendencies can be observed within some of the business sectors. The retailing of consumer goods has in particular changed dramatically. The trade once dominated by independent merchants controlling small corporate entities is now dominated by four groups of nation-wide retail chains controlling a large part of the value chain (Haugland and Ness 2000, Stræte and Jacobsen 2002).

However, business power is also undergoing diffusion. According to the Norwegian Register of Business Enterprises at the governmental Brønnøysund Register Centre, 187,000 enterprises were operating in Norway in 1991. In 2002, the number of enterprises had increased by 67 per cent and more than 313,000 enterprises were registered.7

At the same time the largest Norwegian enterprises prospered. From 1990 to 2000 there was a thirty per cent increase in the number of employees in the thirty largest Norwegian manufacturing concerns, although this expansion occurred abroad. In Norway, the number of employees in the thirty largest companies was reduced by 15 per cent (Engelstad et al. 2003: 63), thus indicating a reduction in the ‘domestic employer power’. Interesting too is the fact that in 2004 one of the largest industrial concerns in Norway, Norsk Hydro, demerged.

The dispersion of private power that accompanies the increased number of business enterprises may be compensated for by intercorporate networks. However, studies of the networks of interlocking directorates in Norwegian companies in the period from 1970 to 2000 indicate that the density and degree of centralisation of such networks have diminished. Overlapping memberships in the directorates of Norwegian companies are less widespread (Grønmo and Løyning, 2003).

**Public power**

The developments outlined above clearly indicate that organised and private interests are more varied and numerous in contemporary Norway. Similar trends are found within the public sector and among political parties. The first political parties in Norway, the Liberal and Conservative Parties, were established in 1884. Since then, manifestations of new cleavages have led to the formation of several new parties. (Rokkan, 1967; Rokkan and Valen, 1964).

In the elections from 1945 to 1973, five or six parties were represented in the Norwegian Parliament (the Storting). Norwegian politics was dominated by the left-right cleavage and characterised by a two-block system – socialists versus non-socialists – in Parliament. By the end of the 1980s however, the Norwegian party system became more fragmented and the two-block system disintegrated. In the elections from 1989 to 2001, seven or eight parties were represented in the Storting. The level of

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7 www.brreg.no and personal communication with the Register Centre.
fractionalisation, measured by Rae’s F, increased from 0.63-0.69 in 1945-1961 to 0.75-0.77 in 1989-1997 and 0.81 in 2001 (Rommetvedt, 2002a, 2003).

In a political system based on the principle of parliamentarianism, fractionalisation has a significant impact on government formation and duration. Table 1 shows the time in office for different government types. As we can see, the parliamentary basis of the governments has gradually become weaker. Single-party majority governments dominated from 1945 to 1965. Since 1986, all Norwegian governments have been minority governments, and minority coalitions have governed one-third of the time. Single-party majority governments represent, of course, the highest concentration of government power. On the other hand, minority governments and government coalitions have to share power with opposition parties in parliament.

Table 1. Months in office for government types, June 1945 – December 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority single-party</td>
<td>191 (78%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>191 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority coalition</td>
<td>4 (2%)</td>
<td>92 (37%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>96 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority single-party</td>
<td>48 (20%)</td>
<td>135 (55%)</td>
<td>144 (68%)</td>
<td>327 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority coalition</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
<td>20 (8%)</td>
<td>68 (32%)</td>
<td>89 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>244 (100%)</td>
<td>247 (100%)</td>
<td>212 (100%)</td>
<td>703 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can also observe a dispersion of power within the executive. In 1947, the Norwegian central administration was organised in a total of 290 units such as ministries, departments, bureaus, directorates etc. Fifty years later, the number of organisational units within central government was 546 (Rolland, 1999: 173). Another aspect of the dispersion of public power is decentralisation and the delegation of public authority and responsibility. Local government has expanded far more than central government. In 1962, 50 per cent of the full-time equivalent persons in public administration were employed by local government administration. The corresponding figure in 2001 was 74 per cent.

8 In theory, the index varies between 0 and 1. It is zero if all MPs belong to one party and 1 if all MPs represent different parties, cf. Rae (1967).

9 Statistics Norway, www.ssb.no. It should be added that in 2002 the responsibility for the public hospitals was transferred from the county councils to the central government. As a consequence, the local share of public employment dropped to 60 per cent. It should also be added that local politicians criticise central government for giving them less leeway.
Executive-legislative relations and the process of parliamentarisation

Researchers within the corporatist tradition tend to ignore legislatures and focus on the relationship between organised interests and the executive. As already mentioned, in corporatist systems organised interests are supposed to influence government directly, bypassing parliament. Or, as Rokkan (1966: 107) put it in his analysis of numerical democracy and corporate pluralism in Norway: ‘The crucial decisions on economic policy are rarely taken in the parties or in Parliament: the central area is the bargaining table where the government authorities meet directly with the trade union leaders, the representatives of the farmers, the smallholders, and the fishermen, and the delegates of the Employers’ Association’. Kvavik (1976: 15, 120, 118) who studied the role of Norwegian interest organisations in the 1960s, observed that ‘legislation was shaped in the administration; once in parliament, the lines were fixed’. On the basis of interviews with leaders of interest organisations, he concluded that parliamentary institutions received ‘an exceedingly weak evaluation’.

Using the terminology in the previous section of this article, we may say that in corporatist systems public power is concentrated in the hands of the executive. Corporatist researchers would subscribe to the ‘decline of parliaments’ thesis. This thesis accords well with what have been widespread opinions of executive-legislative relations in Norway and many other countries. It is interesting to notice, however, that the thesis about the segmented state does not ignore parliament. Members of parliamentary committees are included in the list of members of political segments together with representatives of interest organisations and government ministries etc. (Egeberg et al., 1978; Christensen and Egeberg, 1979).

According to Olsen (1983:42, 72), ‘variations in the political significance of the Storting do not follow a pattern of decline from a peak during the 1880s’. Instead, he suggested an ‘ebb-and-flow perspective’. His interpretation was that ‘during the last part of the 1970s the Storting became a more rather than a less significant institution’. More recent studies clearly indicate that during the 1980s and 1990s the Norwegian Parliament has strengthened its position vis-à-vis the executive (Rommetvedt 2002a, 2003). The process of pluralisation of the Norwegian society seems to be paralleled by a process of parliamentarisation of the political system.

In political systems based on the principle of parliamentarianism, the parliamentary basis of the government is assumed to have a strong impact on executive-legislative relations. In short, majority government means weak parliament and strong government, whilst minority government means strong parliament and weak government. As we will see however, the potential increase in the power of the Norwegian Parliament was not manifested when Labour lost its parliamentary majority in 1961. The Storting did not become more active until the last half of the 1970s, and the most significant changes took place in the 1980s and 1990s.

Why, then, didn’t the opposition parties in the Norwegian Parliament use the potential power they had at their disposal when the first post-war minority government was
formed in 1961? Institutional inertia may be part of the answer, but lack of political and administrative capacity was perhaps an even more important factor. In 1971, the 150 Norwegian MPs had a staff of only 174 persons. In 2004, the number of MPs was 165, the staff had grown to approximately 540 people, and they had much better office facilities and equipment at their disposal.\footnote{The figures include people employed by the Storting and the parliamentary parties. Sources: The Storting’s administration, the internal telephone book of the Storting and Rommetvedt (2003: 59).} The consequence of this development was a substantial enlargement of the political capacity of the Parliament. Gradually, the acquisition of resources enabled the Norwegian Parliament – or to put it more precisely the opposition parties – to exert their potential power. There has accordingly been a substantial increase in the level of activity and conflict in the Norwegian Parliament.

Most of the issues dealt with by the Storting are initiated by the Government. There are four major types of issues tabled by the Government: reports to the Storting or white papers on general policy principles, propositions to the Storting regarding more specific matters, propositions to the Odelsting (bills) regarding new laws and amendments to old laws\footnote{The Norwegian Storting is a semi-bicameral Parliament. Most issues are dealt with by the Storting in plenary sessions, but when it comes to legislation the Storting is split into two chambers: the Odelsting and the Lagting. Propositions concerning laws are first dealt with by the Odelsting and then by the Lagting, cf. Rommetvedt (2003: 43ff).}, and budget propositions. In addition to the initiatives taken by the Government, MPs have two ways of putting an issue on the parliamentary agenda: asking government Ministers questions and putting forward private members’ bills.

There has been a dramatic growth in the number of questions raised by MPs (Rommetvedt, 2002a, 2003). Here, however, we will concentrate on private members’ bills and reports and propositions from the Government. From 1984-85 to 2000-01, the number of private members’ bills increased from 15 to 133. In 2001-02 and 2002-03, 156 and 136 private bills were tabled by MPs. The numbers of governmental reports and propositions have fluctuated, but broadly speaking the number of propositions to the Odelsting has increased, while the numbers of propositions and reports to the Storting have decreased (budget propositions not included.)

Figure 3 shows the number of government and MP initiated issues in relative terms. Here we can see that the initiatives taken by MPs have increased – not only in absolute numbers as shown above, but also in relative terms compared to government initiatives. We must emphasise that in most cases the issues raised by MPs are related to minor and more specific matters. In general, government initiated issues are ‘bigger’ and ‘broader’. Nevertheless, we must conclude that Parliament has become relatively more active and the Government relatively less active with regard to agenda setting.

Normally, governmental bills and reports and private members’ bills are first submitted to one of the standing committees of the Parliament. The committees prepare recommendations to be dealt with by the plenary assembly (or the Odelsting in matters concerning legislation). Each recommendation may be unanimous or contain dissenting remarks and alternative proposals put forward by majority as well as minority factions.
We can use dissenting remarks in committee recommendations as an indicator of the level of activity and conflict in Parliament.

Figure 3. Issues dealt with by the Parliament

Figure 4 shows that from 1945 to 1973 there was a fairly stable number of committee recommendations with dissent. Since then, the frequency of dissent has grown considerably. On the other hand, the total number of recommendations has dropped after a peak in the mid 1970s. As a consequence, the proportion of recommendations with dissent has quadrupled. In the period from 1945 to 1973, only 16 per cent of the recommendations contained dissenting remarks. In 1973-89 the proportion with dissent grew to 30 per cent, and in 1989-2001 dissenting remarks and alternative proposals occurred in 62 per cent of the committee recommendations.12

The increasing number of dissent and alternative proposals in committee recommendations represents a challenge to the Government, but the most conspicuous manifestation of parliamentary power is governmental defeat in parliamentary voting. Figure 5 shows that Norwegian governments in the second half of the 1980s and in the 1990s confronted non-governmental majorities in the Storting more often than before.

In 1979-81 the governments lost less than one vote per active month in Parliament. During Gro Harlem Brundtland’s second and third governments, the governing Labour Party lost 10 and 11.4 votes per month respectively. Thorbjørn Jagland’s Labour government lost 35.8 votes per month, but his period was very exceptional. In 1997, the budget procedures in the Parliament were changed. Consequently, we cannot compare the total number of governmental defeats during Kjell Magne Bondevik’s premiership in 1997-98 with the preceding government periods. Excluding votes concerning the budget, we find that the frequency of governmental defeats under Bondevik was slightly higher than during last two Brundtland governments.

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13 The Storting is assembled from October to June. Consequently, calculations of governmental defeats per month are based on nine months per year, cf. Rommetvedt (2002a: 79).
Summing up the developments with regard to executive-legislative relations, we find that the concentration of public power in the hands of the executive has been reduced in recent years. Norwegian governments have been forced to share more of their power with the Parliament, and the Parliament has strengthened its position. The Storting of today is more active, less predictable, and more powerful than before. It seems natural to assume that such a process of parliamentarisation will have consequences for the relationships between organised interests and public authorities as well.

14 Østerud et al (2003) conclude that Parliament has lost power due to privatisation and the increased importance of international treaties and conventions. Norway’s agreement with the European Union on a European Economic Area implies that EU directives should also be implemented in Norway, even though Norway is not a member of the EU. Power has no doubt been transferred from national parliaments to international organisations. This transfer is motivated, however, by the wish to overcome collective action problems at international level, and the loss of national parliamentary power is possibly overestimated. In the first half of the 1980s, one per cent of the new laws and law amendments in Norway were made with reference to commitments governed by international law. In the last half of the 1990s, this proportion increased to 15 per cent, but still 85 per cent of the new laws and amendments had no reference to international commitments (Statskonsult 2000). According to traditional constitutional theory, foreign affairs is a prerogative of the executive. In recent years, however, the Norwegian Parliament has become more actively involved with international relations, for example the WTO negotiations (Langhelle and Rommetvedt 2004). At least we may conclude that the Norwegian Parliament’s share of the power that is still controlled by national political authorities has increased.
From corporatist representation to parliamentary lobbyism

In this analysis, a distinction will be made between two different forms of political participation or methods of exerting influence on the authorities: corporatism or corporatist representation on the one hand, and lobbying or lobbyism on the other (cf. Christiansen and Rommetvedt 1999). Needless to say, corporatist representation is related to (neo-)corporatist government systems as described above. Lobbyism is more relevant in (neo-)pluralist government systems.

In simplified terms, corporatism can be defined as a highly institutionalised and formal method of political participation and influence, often with negotiations and agreements implying mutual obligations for the participants. One important element of the corporatist system is the formal representation and participation of organisations on governmental boards, committees and councils, while tripartite negotiation between labour unions, employers’ associations and the State is another.

Lobbyism is a form of political participation and influence that is less institutionalised, less formal and without negotiated obligations.15 Lobbyism is a means of political influence that is practised through personal relationships, telephone conversations, informal meetings, correspondence etc. However, informal relations are not necessarily equivalent to occasional and sporadic relations. Lobbyist relations may be both frequent and stable, but often more ad hoc based than the formal and institutionalised corporatist relations.

One of the conditions for corporatism is that the authorities establish institutional arrangements and bodies involving participation by affected organisations. Such bodies are not necessary for lobbyism. Interest organisations and other lobbyists can lobby on their own initiative. Hence, lobbyism is a more flexible strategy than corporatism.

The attempts of interest organisations to exert influence on policy making may be directed towards administrative as well as parliamentary actors. Combining the two dimensions, institutionalisation and direction, produces the fourfold typology shown in Figure 6.

Strictly speaking parliamentary corporatism is based on functional representation in the legislature. With a few exceptions, parliamentary corporatism is not a relevant category in contemporary Norway. The composition of the Norwegian Parliament is based on territorial representation from the counties. On the other hand, corporatist bodies such as public boards, councils and committees have been dominated by civil servants and representatives from interest organisations. In some instances, even MPs have been appointed members of public committees or commissions with the mandate to discuss and develop new policies in problematic areas. In general, however, the Norwegian type of corporatism can be characterised as administrative corporatism.

15 This definition does not preclude the regulations of lobbyism that many countries have implemented. However, such regulations imply a certain degree of institutionalisation of lobbyism.
Originally, lobbying was connected with the lobby of the Parliament where outsiders could meet the elected representatives. In this article the phrase *parliamentary lobbyism* is used as a label for informal and less institutionalised relations between organised interests and MPs. Informal relations directed towards civil servants and attempts made by the interest organisations to influence them will be referred to as *administrative lobbyism*. In Norway, as indicated by the arrows in Figure 6, an extensive administrative corporatism has been replaced – partly at least – by increased parliamentary and administrative lobbyism.

Corporatist representation with good working committees and efficient negotiations presuppose a limited number of participants. Consequently, the process of pluralisation represents a problem with regard to corporatist representation and negotiations. As we have seen, from 1976 to 1992 the number of nationwide interest organisations doubled and there is every reason to believe that this development has continued. We may therefore assume that the number of ‘relevant’ interests in relation to the development of new policies is growing. Nonetheless, the number of corporatist arrangements such as public councils, boards and committees with members from interest organisations has been considerably reduced in Norway. By the end of 1997, both the total number of public boards and committees and the number of committees with members from interest organisations were less than half the corresponding figures in 1979, cf. Figure 7.16

The combined effect of these developments is a substantial reduction in accessibility to public authorities through institutionalised corporatist arrangements. We would therefore expect organised interests to increase their lobbying efforts directed towards public administration, and especially towards parliament.

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16 Sources: Nordby (1994: 80ff); Roness (1981: Table 5); Christensen et al. (2002: 139). The figures are uncertain but the trends are trustworthy.
Figure 7. Public boards, councils and committees

Data from 1982 and 1992 clearly indicate that Norwegian interest organisations do engage in administrative and parliamentary lobbying more often than before. Table 2 shows the frequencies and importance of contacts between interest organisations and public authorities based on surveys among nationwide interest organisations.\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{Table 2. Frequency and importance of contacts between organisations and different public authorities (percentage of organisations that responded both years)}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority:</th>
<th>Contact at least once a year</th>
<th>Contact are important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parliament / Parliamentary committees</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs / party groups</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Parliament</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministries</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agencies</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{17} The surveys comprised all Norwegian organisations. However, we concentrate here on the 363 organisations that completed the question forms in both 1982 and 1992, cf. Holmefjord (1998).
As we can see, both the frequency and importance of contacts with Parliament increased substantially. Interest organisations had more frequent contacts with ministries and agencies, but the frequencies of such contacts were quite stable in this period and there was practically no increase in the importance of contacts with governmental ministries and agencies (Holmefjord, 1998: 44, 98).

In a survey among Norwegian power elites, nearly two thousand top leaders of Norwegian institutions and organisations were asked whether they in 1999 or 2000, through their position, had in fact tried to exert influence on public decisions with regard to a specific issue of great importance to their activities. Most of the respondents, 71 per cent, confirmed that they had tried to exert political influence on such decisions (Gulbrandsen, 2002: 226ff).

The respondents were also asked who they contacted in order to communicate their views on the issue in question. In Table 3, the results are specified for the twelve different elite groups that were included in the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elite group</th>
<th>Parliament</th>
<th>Political leadership of ministries</th>
<th>Civil servants in ministries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest organisations</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass media</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public business enterprises</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities, research institutes</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private business enterprises</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperatives</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police, legal system</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central public administration</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parliament was most frequently contacted by other politicians, leaders of interest organisations, mass media and public business enterprises. Leaders of private business enterprises and cooperatives most frequently contacted the political leadership of the ministries. Civil servants were contacted most often by leaders of the central public administration, the police and persons in the legal system, defence, universities and research institutes, and cultural institutions. As we can see, however, most leaders contacted the Parliament, the political leadership of the ministries, and the civil servants in order to communicate their views on the important issue.
A survey among Norwegian MPs in 1995 corresponds well with the information given by interest organisations (Rommetvedt 1997, 2003). Most MPs reported that they had frequent contacts with various types of lobbyists. Altogether, 68 per cent and 54 per cent of the MPs said that they were addressed weekly by business and industrial organisations and trade unions respectively. In addition, 64 per cent and 52 per cent respectively said that they were addressed more often than before by business organisations and trade unions. Similar but somewhat weaker trends were also found with regard to other lobbyists.

According to the thesis of the segmented state, we should expect lobbyists from a specific organisation to have contact with members of a specific parliamentary committee, i.e. the committee that is responsible for the policies that are most relevant to the organisation. The pattern of contacts with different kinds of lobbyists reported by members of the various parliamentary committees indicates, however, that the degree of segmentation is rather low, cf. Table 4.

Table 4. MPs addressed weekly by different types of lobbyists (no. per committee)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Energy, Environment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family, Culture,</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, Church</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrutiny, Constitution</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business, Industry</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Communications</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health, Social Affairs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The referred data include all kinds of contact. Since the number of governmental boards and councils has been reduced, the frequencies of corporatist contacts must have decreased and lobbyist contacts increased. Administrative corporatism has been substituted by administrative lobbyism, and parliamentary lobbyism has become more important in both absolute and relative terms. The observed trend towards increased parliamentary lobbyism corresponds well with the trend towards increased pluralism and the strengthening of the position of the Parliament vis-à-vis the executive. The tendency towards segmentation with regard to contacts between organised interests and MPs is rather weak.
The members of the Storting were also asked to assess the impact of lobbyism. Table 5 shows that lobbyists do have an impact on several of the activities of the MPs and that lobbying efforts may lead to changes in government proposals. Interviews among interest organisations and case studies related to specific decision making processes confirm the assessments made by MPs (Klausen and Rommetvedt, 1997).

**Table 5. Impact of lobbyism on actions taken by MPs and Parliament (percentage of MPs)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Seldom/never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary committees or committee members ask ministries for additional information/comments</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor amendments are made to governments’ proposals/guidelines</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major amendments are made to governments’ proposals/guidelines</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissent or faction remarks/proposals occur in committee recommendations</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs raise interpellations or question time questions</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs submit private members’ bills</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the MPs, lobbying activities have positive as well as negative consequences. On the positive side, 91 per cent of the MPs agree that they gain better access to alternative information and counter expertise in relation to the government and ministries. Furthermore, 81 per cent agree that Parliament gets better opportunities to ensure that the Government and public administration follow up parliamentary decisions and intentions. On the negative side, 93 per cent of the MPs agree that well organised interests become too influential compared to weakly organised interests, and 56 per cent agree that specialised interests become too influential in relation to a more comprehensive policy. The MPs were also asked to give an overall assessment of the positive and negative aspects of lobbyism. A vast majority, 86 per cent, said that the lobbying activities in Parliament have more positive than negative qualities.

The above findings represent a sharp contrast to the observations made by Kvavik (1976: 15, 120) in the 1960s. He found that ‘leaders of all the interest organizations reflected their preference for the corporate channel’, and he ‘was surprised to discover the absence of ‘lobbyists’’ in the Norwegian Parliament. Today, corporatist representation has been partly replaced and partly supplemented by parliamentary and administrative lobbyism.
Strategic implications: Generalisation of interests and coalition building

The increased emphasis assigned to parliamentary lobbying compared to corporatist representation is partly a consequence of the downsizing of the corporatist apparatus that has been carried out by the State and partly due to the strategic assessments of the power of political institutions made by interest organisations. Here we shall focus on two interrelated strategic implications of the development towards an increasingly pluralistic society characterised by dispersion of power among a multiplicity of organised interests, political parties, and public institutions: the need for coalition building and generalisation of interests.

In a (neo-)pluralist society political actors cannot simply resort to force and rely on their own power in the pursuit of self-interest. In order to gain majority – literally as well as figuratively speaking – political actors have to build coalitions. The more numerous the participants and interests in the political process, the broader the coalitions need to be. Consequently, political actors have to widen their appeal. General interests have a wider appeal and basis of legitimacy than self-interests, and generalisation of interests is thus a way to enhance legitimacy and win more support. Actors who are able to show, or to argue convincingly, that their viewpoints and suggestions promote the public good have better chances of obtaining general acceptance or of acquiring support from the necessary number and kinds of coalition partners.

Coalition building implies negotiations, and negotiations are dependent on the number of parties involved. Formal negotiations and bargaining are most appropriate when two or a limited number of parties are involved, and less convenient in situations with a large number of participants. Consequently, we may assume that bargaining is most convenient in corporatist systems with high concentrations of power. The concentration of power in the hands of a limited number of parties provides the actors with the resources they need to put forward reliable threats and promises. Threats and promises are most reliable when costs as well as benefits are related to specific actors.

In pluralising societies, ‘relevant’ participants become more numerous and bargaining more complicated. Changes in the character of communication between negotiating parties should therefore be expected. In this context, a distinction between bargaining and arguing can be fruitful. According to Elster (1992: 15, 18), to bargain is to ‘engage in communication for the purpose of forcing or inducing the opponent to accept one’s claim’. Bargainers rely on threats and promises, and bargaining power derives from ‘material resources, manpower and the like’. To argue, on the other hand, is to ‘engage in communication for the purpose of persuading an opponent, i.e. to make the other change beliefs about factual or normative matters’. The only thing that is supposed to count is ‘the power of the better argument’. In bargaining contexts, ‘one may appeal to impartial normative arguments, […] but one does not have to do so’. Bargaining can proceed without reference to any motives beyond self-interest. In argumentative situations, ‘one has to phrase one’s argument in impartial terms, as if one were arguing for the public good and not for one’s own self-interest’.

21
In segmented systems, each segment may ‘live its own life’ more or less independent of other segments. The basic values and perceptions shared by members of a political segment facilitate argumentative communication within the segment. Bargaining is more likely to occur if the members of a segment have to negotiate with members of other segments. In pluralist systems, with a multiplicity of actors and interests, we may assume that negotiations will become less formal. The new problems that arise do not always correspond with fixed viewpoints and cleavages. More argumentative processes are needed in the search for new solutions. Efficient communication and critical mass media enhance contact, openness and transparency in modern pluralist societies (Rommetvedt, 2002a). Consequently, ‘everything depends on everything’ and, as Elster noted, ‘one has to phrase one’s argument in impartial terms, as if one were arguing for the public good and not for one’s own self-interest’ more often than in corporatist systems.

In this context, the negotiations on agriculture within the World Trade Organization may serve as an illustration (cf. Langhelle and Rommetvedt, 2004). Due to harsh natural conditions and a scattered population, Norwegian agriculture has been dependent on public support, and Norway would like to protect its agriculture from trade liberalisation. With almost 150 member countries, the number of negotiating parties in the WTO is extremely high, and there is a pressing need for coalition building. The Norwegian strategy of generalisation of interests is clearly illustrated by negotiating positions based on ‘multifunctional agriculture’ and ‘non-trade concerns’ (NTCs).

According to a Norwegian proposal submitted to the WTO Committee on Agriculture, ‘NTCs include agriculture’s multifunctional contributions to the viability of rural areas, food security, the cultural heritage and environmental benefits such as the agricultural landscape, agro-biological diversity, land conservation and high standards of plant, animal and public health’. Norway argued that ‘most NTCs are unique to agriculture and have public goods characteristics that may justify government intervention’. Consequently, Norway called for ‘continued special treatment of the agricultural sector within the multilateral trading system’.18

In other words, special treatment of the agricultural sector is legitimised by reference to agriculture’s multifunctional contributions to the public good. Multifunctional arguments and generalisation of interests are important elements in the domestic legitimisation of the public support of Norwegian agriculture as well. Agriculture is still, however, one of the most corporativistic sectors of Norway. Public support is settled through yearly negotiations between the farmers’ and smallholders’ associations and the government (Rommetvedt, 2002b).

The above argumentation on generalisation of interests and coalition building is not in line with ‘the conventional wisdom which states that interest groups primarily lobby legislators who already support their positions’ (Smith, 1995: 100). It is possible, however, that the ‘conventional wisdom’ was more adequate in the relatively homogeneous Norwegian society of the 1960s. In his analysis of the functional-economic conflicts in Norway, Rokkan (1966: 93) presented a model of electoral fronts related to three poles: the labour movement (including trade unions and the Labour Party); business interests, business associations and the Conservative Party; and finally farmers, farmers’ associations and the Centre (formerly Agrarian) Party. According to ‘conventional wisdom’, we would expect each kind of interest organisation to lobby the party at the same pole.

The 1995 survey among Norwegian MPs gives us reason to believe, however, that the traditionally strong ties between the organisations and parties at respective poles have weakened. Table 6 shows the percentage of each party’s MPs that were addressed weekly by different types of organisations. The overall impression given by this table is that interest organisations lobby several parties, not only their ‘natural’ allies. Lobbyists try to build broad coalitions in order obtain support from a majority of the Parliament. The high level of fractionalisation in Parliament leads to minority and coalition governments and necessitates communication with MPs from various parties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Business organisations</th>
<th>Trade unions</th>
<th>Environmental organisations</th>
<th>Non-profit and other organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Left</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian People’s Party</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre Party</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average, all MPs</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under minority parliamentarianism, various forms of generalisation of interest are involved. In order to obtain necessary majorities in parliamentary voting on specific issues, government parties have to build ad hoc coalitions with opposition parties in the Parliament. In the process of building such coalitions, government parties have to widen the scope of interests taken into consideration in order to make compromises and deals with opposition parties. In minority governments, ministries also have to take anticipated reactions from opposition parties into account when they draw up their bills and proposals.
Concluding remarks

The political changes that have occurred in Norway in the last part of the 20th century may at first sight seem trivial compared to ‘big world events’ like the breakdown of the Soviet Union or the apartheid regime in South Africa, or the transitions to democracy in East and Central European countries. However, we should not overlook the fact that important developments take place in stable democracies as well. Stable democracies are not static. If new democracies in the consolidation phase want to look to old democracies for inspiration, they should make sure that inspiration is not taken from an outdated situation. If they want to look to Norway, they should take a critical look at an updated picture.

The overall picture produced by the mosaic of indicators presented in this article shows that significant changes have occurred in Norwegian politics during the last part of the 20th century. Entering the 21st century, Norwegian society has become more heterogeneous, the Parliament has strengthened its position vis-à-vis the executive, the corporatist apparatus has been downsized, organised interests have increased their parliamentary and administrative lobbyism, and political actors have strengthened their appeal to general interests in order to build broader coalitions. In short, what the updated picture shows us is that Norway has become less corporatist and more pluralist.

Once again, it should be emphasised that the terms (neo)corporatism and (neo)pluralism have been used as analytic-descriptive categories only. Neither (neo)corporatism nor (neo)pluralism – nor the case of Norway – should be regarded as normative ideals. Space does not allow us to go into the many challenges and normative problems related to recent developments in the Norwegian political system. Concentrating on the analytic description of these developments, we have seen that the centre of gravity has moved from neo-corporatist representation to neo-pluralist parliamentarism. Nevertheless, the Norwegian system is still a mixture of different forms of government and governance. Votes may decide policies, but other resources are also important.

References


