Minority Coalition Governance in Denmark

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Abstract

In parliamentary situations where no single party wins majority coalition formation is a necessity. Three possible scenarios exist: 1) Formation of a majority coalition government; 2) formation of a single party minority government that governs through the formation of legislative coalitions; or 3) formation of a minority coalition government that governs through the formation of legislative coalitions. The latter is the most complicated situation because coalition coordination is needed within the government coalition as well as within the legislative coalitions, including at least one party outside government. Hence, the coordination of the government coalition may be disturbed by coalition bargaining with parties in opposition. This complicated situation is common in the case of Denmark. By studying coalition governance in Denmark we learn how coalition coordination is handled in situations where coalition formation and coordination takes place on different – and sometimes conflicting – levels.

A key element in coalition coordination is coalition agreements, which to a varying degree constrains the behavior of the coalition partners. This paper explores the share of laws which were precisely defined in government agreements and/or legislative agreements, and sets out to explain variation in this share of coalition-agreement-based laws. The analyses are based on unique data on legislative as well as governmental coalition agreements entered into by three Danish governments which vary in terms of parliamentary strength. This study brings the blooming literature on coalition agreements one step further by including legislative coalition agreements and their interaction with governmental coalition agreements.
Introduction

In proportional parliamentary democracies single parties only rarely win majorities and coalition formation becomes necessary (Laver & Schofield 1990). Coalition formation has thus been a subject of general interest for political scientists (Bäck 2008). Coalition governance has caught a smaller amount of attention, even though coalition governance should be equally important to the understanding of the function of proportional multi-party democracies (Thies 2001: 580). In recent years, coalition governance has had a breakthrough in political science (Strøm, Müller & Bergmann 2000, 2008; Timmermans & Moury 2006; Moury 2010). According to Strøm and Müller one key component in coalition governance is coalition agreements (1999, 2008).

However, just as the study of formation of minority coalition governments lacked behind for a long time in the study of coalition formation (Strøm 1990), minority coalition governance now also seems to be lacking behind in the study of coalition governance. Studying minority coalition governance is important for empirical and theoretical reasons. Minority governments are not a rare or special phenomenon in Western Europe. About one third of all governments formed are minority governments (Laver & Schofield 1990: 70; Strøm, Müller & Bergman 2008: 8), and about 20 percent of all coalition governments are minority governments (Strøm 1990: 61), so it is important to understand how these governments function. Theoretically the study of minority coalition governance shows us how different types of coalitions may need to be managed differently. The study of coalition governance should be just as aware of the rich variation in coalition types as the study of coalition formation. The study of coalition governance under conditions of both majority and minority governments provide us with more general insight about coalition governance through coalition agreements.
This paper addresses minority governance by investigating, first, whether the strength of the government influences the extent to which enacted laws are included in coalition agreements and, second, whether coalition agreements and legislative agreements overlap in the sense that the same enacted laws are included in both agreement types, or whether minority governments need to abandon their pre-commitments in order to build parliamentary coalitions.

The tests are based on newly collected data on in total 1,784 laws enacted by three different Danish governments, which vary in terms of governmental strength. From 1945 to 1999 Danish parties formed 13 minority coalition governments out of 32 governments (Strøm, Müller & Bergman 2008: 8) making Denmark the country with the highest record of minority coalition governments. Indeed, after 1982 all Danish governments have been coalitions and only one from 1993 to 1994 had majority status\(^1\). Every enacted law is coded as included/not included in coalition agreements and/or legislative agreements (forlig) respectively. Hence, we test how often a government makes use of agreements when it passes legislation in parliament.

The paper consists of three main sections. In the following section we review the literature on coalition agreements and expectations regarding the influence of governmental strength on coalition agreements, and we discuss the possible relationship between coalition formation in government and in parliaments. In the subsequent section, we present and discuss the research design and data before we carry out the analyses and finally conclude upon them. We find that the majority government makes use of the coalition agreement more often than the minority governments. In contrast the minority governments are more likely to make use of legislative agreements, but this they do this in different ways depending on their minority status

\(^1\) During the period from 1993 to 1994, the government parties at times controlled only 89 out of 179 seats, but in these situations an independent member of the Folketing had publicly declared to support the government.
as either formal or substantial minority governments with the former more likely to carry out a log-rolling strategy.

**Coalition agreements as policy programs**

Coalition agreements are contracts, which specify to varying degrees the procedures and policies of the coalition. Hereby the agreement eases the communication inside the coalition and hopefully contains conflict, which makes the coalition more viable and more effective (Müller & Strøm 2008; Timmermans 2006; Moury 2010). Public coalition agreements also address the external audience of voters (Müller & Strøm 2008: 165) and, thus, they constitute pre-commitments made by party-leaders and coalition parties to each other and also to the voters. Moreover, coalition agreements are the policy-program of the government (Timmermans 2006), and hence coalition agreements can be seen as the contract to which the government can be held accountable in situations of coalition governance where party programs need to be compromised in order to establish parliamentary majorities.

The status of coalition agreements as policy documents has been debated. Scholars have argued that since it is irrational for political leaders and coalition parties to publicize intra-coalitional conflict and make compromises reached through coalition bargaining even more binding, public coalition agreements can only be analyzed as symbolic documents without important substantial content (Luebbert 1986: 68-69; Laver & Schofield 1990: 191-92). However, others argue that coalition agreements do have important implications as they govern the relationship between coalition parties and reduce the risk of agency loss in the delegation from parties to ministers (Strøm & Müller, 1999; Strøm & Müller, 2008; Moury, 2009, 2010).
Empirical evidence shows that a majority of the pledges made in coalition agreements are transferred into cabinet decisions (Timmermans & Moury 2006; Moury 2010), coalition agreements are related to inter-party conflict (Timmermans 2006, Christiansen, forthcoming), and they are good indicators of which issues will be dealt with in the government period (Walgrave, Varone & Dumont 2006). Hence, so far evidence suggests that coalition agreements are not merely symbolic papers but substantial, significant policy documents designed to facilitate inter-party cooperation and to chart the policy course of the government.

However, especially in cases of minority coalition governments the coalition agreements need further negotiation to be enacted. In these situations, at least one party, which is not part of the government – a party with no representatives in cabinet –, has to be involved in legislative coalition formation. Hence, coalition formation and coordination take place on different levels and at different times. This probably makes minority coalition governments the most difficult ones to manage.

Minority coalition agreements

As policy programs coalition agreements must be hard to write for a minority government, which does not control the needed parliamentary majority to enact the coalition agreement. Minority governments need to be aware that in order to enact the coalition agreement further legislative coalition formation which includes parties in opposition is needed. Therefore, when writing coalition agreements, minority coalition governments can either water down their promises risking that the contract becomes a merely symbolic paper without substantial constraining impact on coalition parties, or they can formulate explicit and precise contracts risking to be unable to deliver the promised parliamentary decisions.
In general, the evolution of coalition agreements across West European countries shows similar trends. Most often coalition agreements started out as intra-coalitional papers not meant for the public and evolved into public papers, which increasingly deal with policy rather than procedures and distribution of office. Moreover, generally coalition agreements tend to get longer over time. One interesting observation in countries with records of relatively many minority governments (Italy and Ireland besides Denmark) is that public coalition agreements only became a norm relatively late in history. Since 1973 coalition agreements have been the norm in Ireland, and only since 1993 it has been a norm in Denmark (Damgaard, 2000). However, in Norway and Finland, which have also witnessed comparatively many minority coalition governments, coalition agreements have been public ever since 1963 and 1945 respectively (Müller & Strøm, 2000).

In the recent empirical work of Müller and Strøm there is also no clear tendency to what minority governments write in coalition agreements. Danish coalition agreements are somewhat shorter than average, but 87 percent of the content of these coalition agreements concerns policies. Moreover, Danish coalition agreements are among the most comprehensive agreements dealing with relatively many policy issues – even though we do not know how precisely these policy areas are described (2008:172-6).

Moury includes one Italian minority government in her study and shows that the amount of precise pledges fulfilled is lowest in this minority situation, but the amount of precise pledges not fulfilled is not significantly different in this situation from cases of majority coalition governments (2010: 9). Moreover, Moury finds that the two Italian cases are surprisingly similar since the minority government led by Prodi does not adopt more ‘spontaneous’ decisions than the majority government led by Berlusconi (2010: 11). Given the sparse evidence so far, there is
no reason to expect minority governments to be less able to enact coalition agreements than
majority governments. However, the way coalition agreements are enacted by coalition
governments may depend on the parliamentary strength of the government.

Coalition agreements in government and in parliament
Minority governments choose different strategies when building legislative majorities (Strøm
1990). The strategies differ in terms of the degree to which agreements will bind the
governments and opposition parties, and in terms of how stable the coalition of parties is. The
coalition may vary across policy areas or consist of the same parties in more stable support party
relations. No matter the form of the agreements, research indicates that these legislative coalition
agreements are important to the laws enacted in parliament (Christiansen 2008; Christiansen &
Damgaard, 2008).

The relationship between minority governments and parties in opposition affects the
status of the government. Minority governments with a very stable and explicit support party in
parliament is a so called formal minority government (Strøm 1990: 94). This government is
strong as it is very difficult for the opposition to bring down. However, often the support party
demands loyalty in order to maintain its support and hence, the formal minority government
lacks flexibility in legislative coalition formation and need to take the wishes of the support party
into further consideration.

Substantial minority governments on the other hand lack stable support in parliament and
are more vulnerable in terms of maintaining office. Uncertainty about where to find support for
their policy, including the program outlined in their coalition agreement, means that they must be
ready to negotiate and compromise their agreement in order to get it enacted. In writing their
coalition agreements, it is more difficult for substantial minority governments to anticipate which parties they will enact the agreement with, and therefore we expect the coalition agreements of substantial minority governments to have a different status in relation to legislative agreements in the legislative work of the government.

Legislative agreements are defined as agreements between the government and at least one party not in government. Empirically these agreements may vary from rather formal, written agreements about one or more policy issues to less formal, oral agreements. However, a defining characteristic must be that an agreement is made as a result of bargaining where parties have different ideal policies. The parties do not only spontaneously cooperate because they agree to begin with. Moreover, the agreement must contain some minimum of regulation as for instance voting commitments or at least the commitment to respect the agreement. Thus, legislative agreements are devices meant for coalition regulation in a similar way as coalition agreements (Christiansen 2008).

The relationship between coalition and legislative agreements may at least take two different – yet not excluding – forms. First, the legislative agreement may serve as an enactment agreement of the coalition agreement. In this case, the coalition agreement sets the agenda of the parliament, but the content of the coalition agreement is renegotiated and settled in parliament by a legislative agreement in which parts of the coalition agreement may be compromised. We call this strategy the compromise-strategy. Second, legislative agreements may serve as payment for the support of the coalition agreement (Strøm 1990: 98). In this case coalition agreements are enacted without being compromised in parliamentary negotiations but the support of parties in opposition is bought via legislative coalition formation on issues not included in the coalition agreement. This strategy we call the logrolling-strategy (Carruba & Volden 2000; Buchanan &
Tullock 1962). Here, the government manages to enact its coalition agreement but in exchange it hands over some legislative agenda setting power to the parties in opposition, which wins legislative agreements in exchange for their support of the coalition agreement.

We argue that the use of legislative agreements depends on the status of the government. Majority governments are not very likely to use legislative agreements at all, as they can enact their coalition agreement themselves. Consequently, we would also expect these agreements to be enacted primarily on the basis of the majority constituted of the governing parties without the support of parties in opposition. Formal minority governments are most likely to use the logrolling-strategy enacting its own coalition agreement but leaving policy space free to the support party. In exchange for its explicit and stable support, the support party gets legislative agreements on issues put on the agenda by primarily the support party – that is issues not regulated by the coalition agreement. We expect the coalition agreement largely to be enacted by the majority constituted of the support party and the governing parties. Finally, substantial minority governments are likely to use the compromise-strategy as they are free to negotiate with the parties in opposition which demand the smallest concessions and they are less able to know which policy issues to leave free for possible legislative coalition partners. Instead, the government sets the agenda through its coalition agreement but the content of the agreement is renegotiated and enacted through legislative agreements. As long as the content is not compromised beyond the purpose of the coalition agreement, coalition agreements and legislative agreements will overlap in the sense that laws included in the coalition agreement are also included in legislative agreements. Therefore, it is also less likely that a stable majority as in the case of formal minority governments enacts the coalition agreement, since the agreements are further negotiated with possibly different parties in opposition.
Hence, we argue that depending on the status of the government the status of coalition agreements in the legislative work of a government varies. Majority coalition agreements are policy programs setting the agenda of the parliament and enacted by the governing majority without further negotiations in parliament. Formal minority coalition agreements are policy programs set by the government and enacted by the majority constituted of the government together with the support party/parties without important compromises. In exchange the support party can bring in new issues and win policy concession primarily on these issues. Finally, substantial minority coalition agreements serve as agenda setting devices but the content of the agreements is compromised through renegotiations in parliament. These expectations will be investigated in the following.

Research design and data

The analyses are based on data collected on Denmark. Denmark has the highest record of minority governments, and it has a century long tradition of including opposition parties in informally binding legislative coalitions (forlig) in which parties commit themselves to certain policies (Pedersen 2011; Christiansen 2008). In Denmark governments only began writing and publicizing regularly in 1993, hence we only select governments from 1993 and onwards (Damgaard, 2000). Three Danish governments are selected that vary in government status. The first government from 1993 to 1994 was a majority coalition government, which was led by the Social Democrats in coalition with three smaller center parties. The government was a center government with three parties to its right and one party to its left.

The second government was a substantial minority coalition government governing from 1998 to 2001. This government was also led by the Social Democrats in coalition with the Social
Liberals. It was a substantial minority government as its primary parliamentary majority included the Red-Green-Alliance which is an extreme left-wing party not always supporting the government. Its support could not be taken for granted on cabinet issues. The third government in focus here was a formal minority coalition government in office from 2005 to 2007. It was led by the Liberals in coalition with the Conservatives and was supported by the Danish Peoples Party. This government’s relation to its support party (The Danish Peoples Party) was much more explicit and well established than was the case of the Social Democratic government in 1998.

To investigate the status of the coalition agreement under these different governments we examine the extent to which governments use coalition coordination devices such as coalition or legislative agreements when they pass legislation. Hence, we study the extent to which passed laws were included in coalition agreements and to what extent these laws were included in legislative agreements. In all 1,784 laws were coded based on four coalition agreements. The coding procedure was as follows. First, the coalition agreements were carefully read through listing out all subjects and promises. Second, for every enacted law it was decided whether the law was included in the coalition agreement or not. The decision was based on the law text, the résumé of the law and the presentation of the law. The clearest evidence was if it was mentioned that a law was a direct implementation of the coalition agreement but unfortunately this was not very often the case. Rather the decision had to be based on the judgment of the coder. Three student coders were involved. After their first coding, we performed reliability tests of randomly selected 20 percent of the laws for every government. In two of the cases the reliability was strong after the first coding (kappa > 0.7). However, in the last case (1998-2001) we needed to code all laws once again before satisfying reliability was obtained (kappa > 0.7). The bad results
on the first coding was due to the coding of very imprecise promises in the coalition agreements such as “in every decision we make we will take the environment into consideration” (Coalition agreement 1998 – our translation) which led to too much uncertainty in the coding.

The coding of legislative agreements includes the data material reported in Christiansen (2008) for the first two periods supplemented with new coding for the 2005-2007 period. The procedure was almost the same as for the coalition agreements based on remarks to the law at its presentation or during the parliamentary reading. The political agreements usually deal with specific policy items, and as a consequence there is less judgment involved in the coding process. Every coding has been checked by two coders with very high levels of reliability.

We define a bloc majority as a situation in which a government passes legislation with the minimal winning bloc of parties supporting the government voting in favor of the bill. The bloc-majority was thus constituted of the governing parties in the majority coalition from 1993 to 1994. From 1998 to 2001 it was the minority coalition government and the two smaller left-wing parties: The Socialist People’s Party and the Red-Green Alliance. Finally, from 2005 to 2007 the bloc majority was the minority coalition government together with the right-wing support party: The Danish People’s Party.

**Does governments’ strength affect the amount of coalition-agreement-based laws?**

The first analysis shown in table 1 investigates whether government status influence the extent to which governments make use of coalition agreements when they legislate – that is, how large the proportion of the laws passed is regulated by coalition agreements. Table 1 shows the share of agreement-based laws relatively to laws not included in the coalition agreement.
Table 1. The share of coalition-agreement-based laws, percent (absolute).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Not included</th>
<th>Included</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority (1993-1994)</td>
<td>62.7 (251)</td>
<td>37.3 (149)</td>
<td>100.0 (400)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantial minority (1998-2001)</td>
<td>77.1 (608)</td>
<td>22.9 (181)</td>
<td>100.0 (789)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal minority (2005-2007)</td>
<td>78.4 (467)</td>
<td>21.5 (128)</td>
<td>100.0 (595)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A one-way ANOVA analysis shows that the difference between the majority and the minority governments is significant (p<0.001), whereas the difference between the minority governments is not significant (p=0.644).

As expected, more laws were included in the coalition agreement in the case of the majority coalition government from 1993 to 1994. Here, 37 percent of the laws were included in the coalition agreement. However, also in this case the majority of laws are not included in the coalition agreement. Many Danish laws concern technical details and implementation of EU regulation and such laws are not likely to be pre-negotiated in coalition agreements. If all laws passed with unanimity in parliament are excluded, the share of non-agreement-based laws is reduced to fewer than 50 percent in all periods. Moreover, new issues may emerge during the life span of a government, which cannot be foreseen in the coalition agreement. The majority status of the government does indeed influence the amount of coalition-agreement-based laws. However, there is no variation between formal and substantial minority governments.

Consequently, the type of minority governments does not seem to influence how much of the legislative work of the government that is regulated by pre negotiated coalition agreements. Minority governments – no matter their type – are less likely to use coalition agreements as coordination devices when they pass legislation.
The relationship between coalition and legislative agreements

As outlined above legislative agreements may serve two different purposes. They can either serve as 1) enactment agreements of the coalition agreements in which the coalition agreement may be compromised, or 2) as pay-off for supporting the coalition agreement. In the first case the government sets the agenda and the opposition parties influence the precise content of the issues discussed. In this case laws included in the coalition agreement is also included in a legislative agreement. In the second case the opposition is paid to support the coalition agreement through policy concessions on issues not regulated by the coalition agreement. For instance, an opposition party may support the economic program of the government in exchange for concessions on environmental policies. In this case, laws will be either included in the coalition agreement or in a legislative agreement.

Table 2 shows how laws are regulated by coalition agreements. A law is either 1) not included in any agreement, or 2) solely included in coalition agreements entered into by the parties in government, 3) solely included in legislative agreements entered into by a parliamentary coalition constituted by the government and at least one party out of office, or 4) included in both coalition and legislative agreements.

Table 2. Laws regulated by coalition and/or legislative agreements, percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Not included in any agreement</th>
<th>Included in coalition agreement</th>
<th>Included in legislative agreement</th>
<th>Included in both</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority (1993-1994)</td>
<td>58.0 (232)</td>
<td>34.0 (136)</td>
<td>4.8 (19)</td>
<td>3.2 (13)</td>
<td>100.0 (400)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantial minority (1998-2001)</td>
<td>57.4 (454)</td>
<td>12.4 (98)</td>
<td>19.7 (156)</td>
<td>10.5 (83)</td>
<td>100.0 (789)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal minority (2005-2007)</td>
<td>47.3 (282)</td>
<td>13.1 (78)</td>
<td>31.0 (185)</td>
<td>8.6 (51)</td>
<td>100.0 (595)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the case of the majority government, laws are most likely to be either included in the coalition agreement or not included in any agreement. Only 4.8 percent of the laws are solely included in legislative agreements and only 8.7 percent (13 out of 149) of the laws included in the coalition agreement are also regulated by legislative agreements. The majority government sets the agenda and enacts its coalition agreement without compromises through legislative agreement. The majority government enacts its coalition agreement or it passes legislation through parliament mostly without making new constraining legislative agreements.

In the cases of minority governments, agreement based laws are more equally distributed between coalition agreements and legislative agreements indicating that minority governments cannot force legislation through parliament. Instead they have to (re)negotiate legislation with parties out of office and - more importantly - make informally binding agreements in order to pass laws.

The most important difference between the formal and the substantial minority government is that the formal minority government passes more legislation solely through legislative agreements (31 percent). This fits with the expectation that in order to enact its coalition agreement the government pays off the support party with concessions on policy issues not included in the coalition agreement. This function of legislative agreement is more frequently used for formal minority governments than for substantial minority governments².

Moreover, the legislative practice of the formal minority government is actually the most agreement-regulated one. Only 47 percent of the legislation is not regulated by any agreement. This is the result of the logrolling-strategy in with issues not included in the coalition agreement

² The difference across the formal and the substantial minority governments regarding the use of the logrolling-strategy is significant (p<0.001) whereas the difference across the two governments regarding the use of the compromise-strategy is not significant (p=0.119)
are more likely to be included in legislative agreements. Hence, the majority government is the government which regulates most of its legislation by coalition agreements; but the formal minority government is the one which over all regulates most of its legislation even though the regulation takes place later in the coalition formation process through legislative agreements.

The use of ‘bloc-majority’

Finally, we argued that government status mediated by the different legislative strategies should affect how majorities were built in parliament. A majority government was expected to use its majority to pass legislation without giving concessions to other parties, and oversized coalition should mostly be found in relation to non-agreement based legislation and least in relation to coalition-agreement-based legislation. A formal minority coalition was also expected to use its ‘bloc-majority’ to implement its coalition agreement and also to use it in relation to legislative agreements in which the support party gets paid for its support of the government. Finally, the substantial minority government was expected to use its bloc-majority less frequently to enact its coalition agreement, as negotiations with more parties were likely to take place.

Table 3 shows the share of non-included and included laws passed by the pure ‘bloc-majority’ which in the case of the majority government is the governing parties, in the case of the formal minority government is the government plus its support party, and in the case of the substantial minority government is the government plus the parliamentary basis of the government – the two left-wing parties. In general, Danish governments do not use the bloc-majority very often. The majority government used its bloc-majority on only 6.5 percent enacted laws. However, in the few cases where the government did use its majority it clearly did this in relation to coalition-agreement-based laws. The formal minority government used its bloc-
majority on 2.9 percent of the coalition-agreement-based laws whereas the substantial minority government only used its bloc-majority on 0.5 percent of the coalition-agreement-based laws. Hence, as expected the majority coalition government is most likely to use its bloc-majority to enact its coalition agreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Not included in any agreement</th>
<th>Included in coalition agreement</th>
<th>Included in legislative agreement</th>
<th>Included in both</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority (1993-1994)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.5 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantial minority (1998-2001)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>7.1 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal minority (2005-2007)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>12.2 (73)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, however, the majority coalition government is not the government most likely to use its bloc-majority. The logrolling-strategy of the formal minority government makes this government the most likely one to use its bloc-majority. Hence, the legislation of the formal minority government is not only the most regulated one but also the one most likely to be based on bloc-majority decisions.

The relatively low degree of bloc-majority decisions in the case of the majority government may be due to the fact that given the definition of bloc-majority used in this article the majority government is based on a center-bloc whereas the two minority governments are based on wing-blocs. Hence, it is more likely that parties out of the bloc may support the policy of a centre-government than a wing-government.
If we follow the identification procedure of Green-Pedersen and Thomsen (2005) on bloc-majorities, the left-wing Socialist People’s Party is defined as part of the majority-bloc of the majority government. Using this definition, the majority government uses its bloc-majority most frequently: 16.8 percent of the laws were passed by bloc-majority, whereas 12.2 percent of the laws were passed by bloc-majority in the case of the formal minority, and only 7.2 percent of the laws were passed by the bloc in the case of the substantial minority government.

The expectation that the formal minority government used legislative agreements to pay off their support parties more frequently than substantial minority government is supported in table 3, which shows that the bloc-majority was used more often to enact legislative agreement under the formal minority government than in the case of the substantial minority government. In contrast, the substantial minority government used its bloc-majority more often on laws included in both coalition and legislative agreement. This indicates that the extreme left wing parties were not bought to support the coalition agreement of the government through concessions on other issues but were (also) frequently included in negotiations on concessions to the coalition agreement enacted through legislative agreements.

The share of coalition agreement based laws passed by a stable ‘bloc-majority’ is larger for stronger rather than weaker governments. Moreover, the overlap between coalition and legislative agreements is substantial in the two cases of minority governments. However, the formal minority government seems to log-roll more often than the substantial minority government by entering legislative agreements not planned in the coalition agreement. In exchange of this agenda setting power, the formal minority government is less likely to compromise its coalition agreement through legislative agreements.
Looking at legislation on different policy-areas (not shown), the log-rolling practice of the formal minority government becomes clearer. The support party of the formal minority government was the Danish Peoples Party with a very strong anti-immigration profile. Looking at agreement-based-laws on immigration, the majority government and the substantial minority government either made solely coalition-agreement-based laws on immigration or non-agreement-based laws. No laws on immigration were based solely on legislative agreements or on both coalition and legislative agreements in these two cases. However, in the case of the formal minority government, 25.0 percent of the laws on immigration were based solely on legislative agreement, hence, not pre-planned in the coalition agreement but rather put on the agenda by the support party in exchange for its explicit support.

Conclusion
Coalition governance is a difficult topic to investigate because it evolves during a government period. Inter- as well as intra-party relations may change and, hence, also the circumstances under which a coalition must govern. Coalition agreement is one possible way for parties to try to avoid too serious changes of inter- and intra-party relations – or at least regulate the changes that will come about. By pre-committing coalition partners the parties coordinate and regulate coalition governance. However, in cases of minority coalition governments possible challenges to coalition governance is even harder to foresee and hence to regulate and coordinate. Since minority coalition governments have to base their parliamentary decisions on cooperation with parties in opposition, the crucial majority coalition cooperation cannot be regulated by the coalition agreement entered into by only the parties which constitute the minority government.
This paper has addressed this difficult situation of minority coalition governance by investigating 1) the role of coalition agreements, 2) the use of legislative agreements, and 3) the use of bloc-majorities to implement agreements. The analyses are based on laws enacted by three different governments which vary in parliamentary strength.

The analyses have resulted in more interesting results. First, more laws are included in coalition agreements in the case of the majority government, which means that more of the government’s legislative work is pre-regulated by the coalition agreement. Majority governance is more foreseeable and easier to regulate because the circle of crucial coalition parties is well defined. Second, the use of legislative agreements varies across governments depending on their parliamentary status. Majority governments hardly use legislative agreements. Formal minority governments are most likely to use the logrolling strategy paying its support party off with concessions on issues not regulated by the coalition agreement. The substantial minority government also uses the logrolling strategy but is more likely to use the compromise-strategy including parties in opposition in coalition bargaining over policy issues already included in the coalition agreement. Hence, the legislative strategy and the use of legislative agreements vary across different types of minority governments. Coalition agreements are more likely to be passed without further concessions made in legislative agreements in the case of formal minority governments than in the case of substantial minority governments. Finally, the analyses show that governments do not hesitate to use their parliamentary power. The more well established the majority coalition, the more the pure bloc-majority is used to enact laws. This is especially clear in the case of coalition-agreement-based laws were the majority government uses its majority on 17.6 (33.8 if we include the Socialist People’s Party in the bloc) percent of the laws, the formal minority government in 21.8 percent of the laws, and the substantial minority government only
in 5.2 percent of the laws. Hence, the stronger the parliamentary status of the government, the more pre coordinated and the less consensual the coalition governance.

These results tell us that coalition governance varies across governments depending on its parliamentary strength. Even though governments may be equally capable of enacting their own coalition agreements independently of governmental strength (Moury, 2010), this paper contributes to the knowledge by showing that the enactment of these agreements does indeed vary. Minority governments are faced with the challenges of further coalition negotiations and the entering of new legislative agreements in their effort to enact their agreement. During these negotiations minority governments can compromise the content of the coalition agreement or offer concessions on policy issues not included in the coalition agreement. This study shows that the legislative practice varies across governments dependent on their parliamentary strength. This finding may be even clearer in other countries with lower frequency of minority governments. All Danish governments - independently of their parliamentary strength - are likely to be influenced by the strong tradition of legislative agreement formation and consensual practice.

Still many issues on coalition governance and especially minority governance need to be addressed in the future. We will just mention a few issues here, which we find especially important. First, we would learn from more studies on the content of coalition agreements. Moury’s (2010) study shows that the Prodi-minority-government in Italy formulated relatively fewer precise pledges than the Berlusconi-majority-government did. This indicates that the coalition agreement may indeed be a departure for further negotiations in the case of minority governments rather than in the case of majority governments. Second, if the preciseness of coalition agreements does vary across governments depending on their governmental status, this
may give coalition parties and party leaders in minority coalition more room for maneuver. It will increase the chance of realizing party goals on specific policy issues but also increase the risk of intra-coalition and intra-party conflict (Timmermans & Moury 2006). Hence, the level of conflict and possibly also the type of conflict resolution may differ between government with different parliamentary strength.
References


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