Party Member – Voter Congruence in Denmark and Norway. Will party organizations support democratic representation?1

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Representation is the essence of modern democracies.2 Members of elected representative institutions are expected to reflect the political interests of the citizens (Manin 1997). In this paper we look at the voter interests as perceived by the voter themselves, not as defined by their representatives in so-called “virtual representation” (Wahlke et al. 1962; Pitkin 1967). To know the voters’ perceived interests, the representatives need some form of linkage to the voters. In theory, democratic institutions like elections produce a high level of congruence between the policy preferences of voters and their representatives. In elections, the voters are free to choose parties and candidates according to their political preferences.

Elections, however, does not alone guarantee the policy congruence implied by democratic theory. Election also carry some congruence-divertive elements, most importantly it forces the voters to prioritize numerous issue positions into one vote. This presumably goes to the party that is closest to the voters own preference profile, the closest in terms of both issue priorities and issue positions. Other factors work in the same divertive direction – like media’s framing and agenda setting, selective campaign-money and candidate personality factors. There are also the new issues, emerging in-between elections, or the issues that must be seen in a different light as the context changes. Here the voters cannot be heard directly, they must be “present” via opinion polls or through the expected voters’ reactions at the next election. The parties – with their election programs and candidate nominations – can

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1 Due to illness, we were not able to finalize the paper completely. The Tables 7 and 9 will be supplemented later. We believe, however, that the general message in this paper still come through.

2 An earlier version of this paper was presented at a seminar in Department of political science, University of Oslo, March 21. 2017. The discussions brought up important points, which has been addressed in this version. Unfortunately, the paper is not quite finished. Due to illness, we are still lacking the two tables on congruence in education and occupation in the Danish data. These will be included in a later version.
contribute to strengthen as well as to divert congruence between representatives and voters. Parties may avoid necessary policy priorities, duck difficult issues, make contradictory promises and nominate unrepresentative candidates (May 1973). But the party organizations may also create cohesive program packages making voters’ choice more simple and meaningful. Moreover, they may pick up voter opinions through their members and channel them to the party politicians through the party organization – also in-between elections.

Are parties and in particular party members part of the solution to channeling voters preferences, or are they part of the problem? In the following, we discuss descriptive representation through party membership as a supplementary linkage between representatives and the represented. Empirically, we look at changes in voter-member congruence in Denmark and Norway 2000 – 2010. Both countries have experienced a strong decline in overall party membership. Such decline could lead to declining congruence. In the paper, we first discuss possible consequences of party change in general and in Norway and Denmark in particular in order to formulate hypotheses. The second part introduces the data and the methods for the study. In the third to the fifth parts, we present the empirical analyses before concluding.

1. Party decline and party change

Our point of departure is a recent book on the changing representative capacity of Norwegian political parties (Allern et al. 2015). This study found no trend towards a weaker voter-member congruence in Norway. Does the same apply to Denmark? Different parties may have different representative capacities. Is it the difference in party types, rather than membership decline in general that explain differences in levels of voter – member congruence?

The argument supporting the general thesis is that for the party members to provide linkage and contribute to increased policy representativity, the background characteristics of the representatives and those active in the representative channels – like age, gender, education etc. – must mirror those of their voters. Decision-makers matching the background of their voters know more about the daily realities of their constituents. These politicians are better prepared to interpret their voters’ policy interests than politicians coming from different social, economic and cultural backgrounds. Even if the representatives later in life have travelled in social circumstances, they can more easily identify with the lives of their constituents. If this social match declines, congruence in opinions may decline as well. Descriptive representation is important for another reason as well, expressed in the term “the politics of presence” (Phillips 1998). Social congruence between representatives and represented is an important symbol of democratic decision-making and adds to the normative legitimacy of democratic institutions.

In countries with strong parties, the representative linkage will operate both through the elections and through the party organizations. In the old, pre-1950 democracies, there has been a decline in traditional political participation (Dalton 2014). This is also the case for
party membership (van Biezen et al 2012; van Haute and Gauja 2015). Has decline in party membership led to less representative parties and a less effective party linkage? Declining party membership is, however, not the only factor influencing the ways parties operate and represent. Parties may also change following a new media situation or in their financial basis (Kirchheimer 1966; Katz and Mair 1995).

In short, we expect the party organization to be a supplementary channel linking the voters and their political representatives. The effectiveness of the party channel in promoting a high voter – MP congruence, will depend on how the party organization operates. Both the character of internal party democracy as well as the party’s attachments to civil society are clearly important. Here we consider three arguments.

A. Membership decline

Size of party membership is part of this picture. The party members contribute to channeling the policy-preferences of their voters into the party’s election program and influences the nomination of candidates to electoral office. The expectation is that a decline in party membership would lead to a party channel more loosely linked to ordinary voters. Fewer members from «civil society» will reduce the effectiveness of parties as linkages between state and society. When the recruitment of party members from the party’s voter segment declines, one would expect a lower level of social congruence between voters (V) and party members (PM).

Allern, Heidar and Karlsen studied changes in the «representative capacity» of parties in Norway 1990-2010 (Allern et al. 2015). Norwegian parties had almost halved their overall membership since 1980, and the expectation was that the members and party leaders reflected voters less well towards the end of the period than at the start. The findings, however, did not support these expectations. The conclusion was that in Norway “decline of mass parties has not led to a decrease in the representative capacity of party organizations in terms of intra-party activity and social and political congruence” (p. 119). They also found that Norwegian party members had not changed into «the outer ring of an extended political class» as hypothesized (p. 122, see van Biezen et al 2012: 39). The authors suggested three potential explanations working alone or together. First, Norwegian parties, in spite of their decline, had still a sufficient number of members to provide an effective linkage. Second, the membership still reflected well the social characteristics of their voters and, third, the electoral competition was effective in keeping the MPs in line with voter preferences.

A single-country analysis, however, cannot substantiate a general conclusion. In this paper, we look at congruence in two countries, Denmark and Norway. These countries are – admittedly – analyzed because we have comparable data (see part 2). But both countries have also experienced a dramatic fall in party membership (part 3) while at the same time sharing basic similarities in terms of institutional setting, economy, culture and party families. The Scandinavian countries (including Sweden) are often taken as a setting for studies based on a “most similar systems design”. If declining membership were a central factor in creating declining party organizational linkage, we would expect party member – voter congruence to decline in both countries. If not, adding Denmark to Norway as a negative finding, this will
support the conclusion that membership size as such is not the crucial factor, or, at least not membership decline above a certain “threshold” level.

H1a: Decline of party members will reduce V-PM descriptive congruence on all relevant indicators.

H1b: This will not be the case for parties that have not experienced a decline in membership.

B. National democracy

Studies of the general power structure and democracy in Denmark and Norway indicate a (slightly) more democratic Danish system. There are institutional (preferential voting) and behavioural data (voting turnout) supporting this conclusion, although the differences are small. The two parallel “democratic audits”, i.e. large scale research programs on power and democracy, also reached this conclusion, although there was expressed an uncertainty as to whether this difference was the outcome of research study designs and reference standards or real differences (Christiansen and Togeby 2006; Østerud and Selle 2006). Assuming that the Danish system operates more democratically than the Norwegian one, we would expect the Danish party channel also work better than in Norway.

H2: V-PM congruence in general descriptive background variables is higher in Denmark than in Norway.

C. Party types

Social and political cleavages gave rise to political parties in Western Europe as new voting rights were introduced in the late 19th, early 20th centuries. After universal suffrage, the room for new parties narrowed, party systems “froze”. The party systems started to change in the 1970s, as cleavages softened and voters «started to choose» (Rose and McAllister1986). Citizens changed and turned less stable in terms of party identification, voting practice and policies (Dalton 2014). Following the decline of cleavage politics one would expect less distinctive cleavage parties and increased voter volatility. Declining cleavage lines could potentially also trigger decreasing voter – party member congruence.

The party families are roughly the product of cleavages, ideologies and charismatic politicians. These families are fairly similar in the two countries, even though the Danish party system is a bit more fragmented. In other words, differences in party systems should not affect the expected higher congruence and give a stronger resilience against decline in congruence in Denmark. Mainstream parties are often described as changing from «mass parties» via «catch-all parties» to «cartel parties» (Katz and Mair 1995). Mass parties are tightly organized parties with a democratic internal structure and a clearly defined membership role. Catch-all parties are top-down, electorally oriented parties with members supporting rather than deciding. The cartel parties are even less dependent on members but highly dependent on public subventions. Recent debates on party organizations have emphasized the rising power of the party leadership and the top-down decision-making. Lately, there has also been a rise in less committing, «multi-speed» membership arrangements (Scarrow 2015).
Different party families vary in ideologies and organizational types (von Beyme 1985). The old «caucus» parties – the conservative and liberal parties of the 19th century – were more elite-centered from the start. Even if these parties – after the introduction of universal voting rights – came closer to the mass party type, they still differed from “mass parties” in the way they developed policies as well as in the position of party members (Panebianco 1988). Social-democratic and Christian Democratic parties were mass parties turning catch-all during the 1950s and 1960s. Parties formed after 1970 emerged as a “new breed” compared to the old ones. In particular, the green parties, with their loose «movement» character, but also some populist right-wing parties, with their orientation towards a strong leadership, differed from the old party models (Ignazi 1996).

H3: V-PM congruence is higher in traditional cleavage line parties, the old mass parties, than in the new (post 1970) parties. The old caucus-parties are expected to be in the middle. Both the old mass parties and the old caucus parties are expected to show declining congruence, but the caucus parties not as much as the old mass parties.

2. Data and research design

We will in the paper test all three hypotheses: That the voter – party member (V-PM) congruence decline in both Denmark and Norway (H1); that the level of congruence is lower in Norway (H2); and whether the new (post-1970) parties are keeping up their congruence levels better than the old “mass”, cleavage parties (H3). We consequently need data on both the voters and the party members at two points in time (at least) to answer these questions and to test these propositions.

For Denmark and Norway, we have data from the national election studies and surveys on party members, in both countries with roughly a ten years interval – around 2000 and around 2010. As we shall see in the next part, the member decline was the steepest in the pre-2000 period, although for most parties it continued into the first decade of the new century. Ideally, we should have analyzed changes from the 1970s onwards, but we lack comparative data before 2000. Why expect declining V-PM congruence 2000 – 2010? First, because the overall membership levels continued to decline, and, second, because we could expect a lagged effect due to declining membership in the decades before 2000. The lag could be expected since replacement of party memberships is continuous, and it takes time before the old-timers among the members, with their established civil-society contacts, leave the parties.

In Denmark, the voter data is from the national election studies of 2001 and 2011. The party member data are from the Bille/ Nielsen/Kosiara-Pedersen and Kosiara-Pedersen/ Møller Hansen surveys from 2000 and 2012. The Danish membership data included members from all parties represented in parliament. In Norway, the voter data analyzed are from the national election studies in 2001 and 2009. The party data are from the party membership surveys in

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3 More references needed to this paragraph!
2000 and 2009. The party surveys included all parties represented in parliament, which means that the Greens are not included. This party was elected to parliament in 2013 (with one MP).

Comparing the party voters at one election with party members in (roughly) the same year, makes the comparison vulnerable to electoral changes effecting that particularly party. The school and tax issues, which dominated the 2001 election in Norway, probably influenced the social profile of the parties’ voters in that particular year. A party could win or lose votes from new social groups and as a result experience decline in V-PM congruence. The party members would be grounded in the social groups traditionally supporting the party, while its voters would be more volatile. Whatever the reason, however, the party members were less able to channel the policy preferences of these new voters, making a declining congruence measure reflecting realities. Nevertheless, this “particular election” bias introduce an uncertainty in our measurements.

We measure levels of congruence in 2 countries and 16 parties (9 in Denmark and 7 in Norway) at two points in time. We follow the approach adopted in Allern et al. 2015 (p. 76) adopting a numerical measure that indicate how the distribution on a variable within one group (voters) match the distribution in the other. For example, what is the congruence (“the match”) between the share of male voters and the share of male members for a party? If the percentages are the same – e.g. 60% male voters and 60% male party members – the V-PM congruence is complete. If on the other hand, the male voters are at a 70% level and the male members in the party make up 90% of the total party membership, there is not a complete congruence. How can we numerically reflect these differences between two groups?

Social representativeness is often studied by differences in percentages or difference in central tendencies. In the 70/90 example above the difference is minus 20 for women representativeness. This measure is a simple and adequate description and will be one measurement used in the following. When looking at nominal or ordinal level variables with more than two values, however, we need an alternative. Usually this will be the case when presenting levels of education or different occupational backgrounds. In these cases, we will use an inverted version of the Gallagher’s index of disproportionality (least square index/GDI). The GDI was created to measure the disproportionality of an electoral outcome: that is, the difference between the percentage of votes received and the percentage of seats a party gets in parliament. In our view, it can also be used more generally to measure the difference between the distributions of two groups. The index takes the square root of half the sum of the squares of the difference between the group percentages, and differs between zero (perfect congruence) and 100 (no congruence).

GDI:

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4 The National Election Study (NES) in 2001 operated with an N=2052, response rate 70%, and in 2009 with N=1782, response rate 61%. The Party membership study in 2000 had N=1721, response rate 61%, and in 2009 N=3314, response rate 49%. For details on the data, see Allern et al. 2015.
5 For more details on the Norwegian data, see Allern et al. 2015.
\[ LSq = \sqrt{\frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^{n} (V_i - S_i)^2} \]

V= voters S= seats (or in this paper: party members)

One weakness of this index is that we cannot see the direction of group inequalities. Noting a GDI-level of 10 in educational discongruence, we would not know whether the higher or the lower levels of education was disproportionally represented among the members. The direction of discongruence, however, can be seen from the background tables necessary to calculate the index. It will demand too much space to give all the background tables here, but we shall inform the reader on the substance/direction of the discongruence as needed.

Perfect congruence gives a figure of zero while complete discongruence gives a 100 score. When the GDI index is used to evaluate electoral systems and their ability to produce proportionality between votes and seats in parliament, the Netherlands scores 1.0 for the elections in the 2000s (Gallagher et al. 2011: 391). This is as close as it gets, when matching share of votes and share of MPs. Clearly, the score is so low because the Netherlands not only practice a PR system, but also have the whole country as the constituency. The much less proportional “first-past-the-post”, plurality system in the UK gives a score on 16.5. Norway and Denmark have scores on 3.0 and 1.4 respectively.

The GDI may create communication-problems when we discuss levels of congruence and not levels of discongruence. A low score on discongruence (GDI) means a high level of congruence between the groups. This will decrease the communicative usefulness of the GDI for this paper. We shall ease this problem by inverting the figure, creating a \textit{Gallagher Proportionality Index} (GPI) which is GPI= 100-GDI. The GPI score for the Dutch election system is therefore 99.0 while the UK score is 83.5. Then high GPI scores indicate high congruence.

To determine what is “high” and what is “low” social congruence based on GPI scores, however, is not straightforward. Yet, here we consider a GPI score over 90 as a high level of congruence and close to perfect congruence when approaching 100. Scores between 80 and 90 will be considered moderate to low congruence, and the closer to 80 (or below) the lower level of congruence.

How do we calculate whether differences between DPIs are statistically significant and whether changes in the scores are significant or not? We have not so far solved this issue. The input data are from two different surveys – on voters and party members – each with their different confidence intervals. At this stage we therefore only comment on fairly large differences/changes in the DPIs. If these are below 5 DPI units, we will consider the difference/change not sufficiently reliable. However, so far, this cut off point has not been validated.
In the tables, we present the party families in an approximate left-right sequence: Left socialists (SF+SV), Social democrats (S+Ap), Agrarians (V6+C), Liberals (RV5+V), Conservatives (K/LA+H) and far right/populist (DF+FrP). When presenting figures for Danish and Norwegian party members overall, the data are weighted according to the relative membership size of the parties.\footnote{The Danish Venstre and Radikale Venstre are difficult to place. RV is a social liberal party, while the V is a party with agrarian roots. Today, however, the Venstre is a right-wing liberal party which – to some extent – has replaced the conservative party within the Danish party system. However: The parties’ left-right placement is not a central issue in this paper.}

The following acronyms are used:

**Denmark**
- EL – Enhedslisten (The red-greens)
- SF – Socialistisk Folkeparti (The socialist peoples’ party)
- SD – Socialdemokratiet (The social democrats)
- RV – Radikale Venstre (The liberals)
- KD – Kristendemokratene (The Christian democrats)
- KOS – Det Konservative Folkeparti (The conservative peoples’ party)
- V – Venstre (The social liberals)
- DF – Dansk Folkeparti (Danish peoples’ party)
- LA – Liberal Allianse (Liberal alliance)

**Norway**
- SV – Sosialistisk Venstreparti (Socialist left party)
- Ap – Arbeiderpartiet (The labour party)
- Sp – Senterpartiet (The centre party)
- MDG – Miljøpartiet de Grønne (The greens)
- KrF – Kristelig Folkeparti (The Christian peoples’ party)
- V – Venstre (The liberals)
- H – Høyre (The conservative party)

### 3. Party member change in Denmark and Norway

Today the Danish and Norwegian populations both count around 5 million people. The Danish population is marginally larger than the Norwegian. In Figures 1 and 2 we see that in both countries, the number of party members was very high in the 1950s with more than half a million members in Denmark and close to 400,000 in Norway. This means that every fifth voter was a member of a party. In Denmark, the number of party members started to decline in the early 1960s and by 2015, the number was down to 150,000 – from 600,000. Their share of the electorate (PM/E) declined from 25% to below 5%. The Norwegian party

\footnote{Then all surveyed parties are included. However, when presenting the parties separately, we only include those with comparable, “family” parties in the other countries.}
membership were high until the mid-1980s when it peaked. The M/E ratio declined from just below 20% in 1980 to 6% in 2015.

Figure 1: Party members in Danish parties and P/E ratios, selected years 1955-2012.

Figure 2: Party members in Norwegian parties and P/E ratios, selected years 1955-2012.

We must treat these figures with a solid dose of skepticism. The membership registers in both countries were clearly not up-to-date in the early period. The social democratic parties also filed a number of collective members from the trade unions, members that did not always know about the membership. There were few incentives for the parties to remove members not paying their dues, from the registers. The Norwegian figures in Figure 2 show until 1990 what we may call “nominal members”. The numbers include members that once found their way into the registers, but many did not keep up their membership by paying their membership dues. Part of the decline is therefore about parties getting their register in a proper shape. This was improved when electronic membership registers were introduced from the late 1980s onwards. We see the difference clearly in Norway. Here we present one series of «old» membership reports up to 1990 and another series based on individual dues-paying members from 1990. The drop in membership from nominal membership to dues-paying membership is close to 30%. In spite of the uncertainty about the real numbers, there can be little doubt about the general trend in party membership in the two countries. The downward trend is also documented in population surveys reporting on party membership (Allern et al. 1915: 42)

The decline is part of a general (but not universal) trend among the old European democracies. Even with this steep decline in party membership, more up-to-date comparative membership figures show that both Norway and Denmark still score around the European average in Party Member/Electorate ratio (PM/E) (Delwitt 2011: 31; Biezen 2012: 28). In these studies, with the most recent data from around 2006 and 2008, Norway is a little above, Denmark slightly below the PM/E average of about 5% (e.g. Biezen et al. 2012: 28).

Table 1: Changing party membership in Denmark 1955-2015. Percent

Table 2: Changing party membership in Norway 1955-2015. Percent

In tables 1 and 2 we report party-specific trends for selected intervals. Most relevant for our discussion here, are the changes after 1990. Overall, we find substantial decline in both countries during the 1990-2000 period, 19% decline in Denmark, 32% in Norway. For the years 2000-2015 the decline continues with a 19% drop in Denmark and 12% in Norway. There are, however, substantial differences between the individual parties. The «old» parties
– social democrats, conservatives, agrarians and Christian parties - loose a huge part of their membership. Three Danish parties lost more than half their membership in the post-2000 period: The small Christian Democrats (KD), the Conservative party (CONS) and the Venstre (V) party. The Danish Venstre is liberal in economic issues, but an «old» party with agrarian root. Today it is very different from the agrarian Norwegian Centre Party.

The (old) social liberal parties (RV in Denmark and V in Norway) both decline significantly in the 1990s, but recovered after 2000. We find the same pattern with the left socialist parties in both countries – decline before, growth after year 2000. The «new» parties, the right-wing populists and the greens, in both countries have all increased their membership in the 2000-2015 time span. When looking at specific parties the figures show that we cannot easily differential between old versus new parties on the one hand or mass, “cleavage” parties versus populist, movement parties on the other. In general, however, the new, populist parties increased their membership while the old, mass parties continued to decline after 2000. We should, in other words, expect a decline in general member-voter congruence in the post-2000 era, although also some variation between the parties.

4. Congruence: Gender and age

Women in politics is one of the most researched – and debated - issues both within the scholarly literature and in politics in general (e.g. Phillips 1995; Inglehart and Norris 2003; Lovenduski 2005; Krook and Childs 2010). The debate brings to the center the basic premises and questions within the descriptive representation literature: Does it – in terms of policy representation, legitimacy and attachment – matter whether the representative is a man or a women? The increased presence of female politicians in Europe in general, and in the Nordic countries in particular (see Teigen and Skjeie 2017), have also led to debates on what these interests are and on the causes of the lower female representation. These debates are closely tied to the follow-up discussions of the possible means – like quotas – to equalize gender representation.

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Table 3: Gender congruence V-PM in Denmark. 2000 and 2012. Percent difference.

Table 4: Gender congruence V-PM in Norway. 2000 and 2009. Percent difference.

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In tables 3 and 4 we see that among party members in both countries there is a male surplus when comparing voters and members. The difference is greatest in the Danish parties. Here there is an 18 percent-points male surplus in the membership figures. The party distribution is 59% men and 41% women. In Norway, the male surplus is lower with roughly 55% men and 45% women. Still the parties in both countries provide a better gender equality among their membership than what is sometimes considered an important threshold, namely 40%. We also note that there are no change from 2000 to 2015, only the one percent rise in female representation in Norway.

Looking at individual parties, three parties have large, continuous discrepancies (below the 40% threshold) between members and voters and they are all Danish: the Social liberals (RV), the Social Democrats and the Agrarian Liberals (V). Other parties have a good representation of their voters. Around 2010 that is the case for the new Danish parties EL and DF and in Norway the Christians, the Agrarians, the Progress and the Left Socialists. They all had a better reflection of the party voters than a 10 percent-points difference. This means that all the “new” parties were among the parties with the best gender balance. Only the Norwegian agrarians had, however, a substantial change towards improved gender representation in this period, declining from 20% to 7% male surplus. Most parties actually show declining congruence due to an increased male surplus.

No doubt, gender and age are the two most important biological factors in politics. These are for all practical purposes fixed by nature and cannot be manipulated. That does not mean, however, that their impact are the same in all societies, as the gender and age roles vary according to social and cultural context. The issue of gender balance have the most attention in current academic and political debate, even though it has not gone notices that both the very young and the 65+ generation are strongly underrepresented in parliaments and other representative institutions (e.g. Narud and Valen 2000; ?). In fact, “youth quotas” are practiced or are under discussion in some countries.10 The argument is similar to those favoring gender quotas: Life experience and social, economic and cultural interests vary not only between men and women but also over life span. Such biological and social inequalities also triggers the legitimacy argument and the need to mirror the population on important characteristics.

Tables 5 and 6 report what we have labelled the Gallaghers Proportionality Index (GPI) for three categories of age: 18-30, 31-50 and 51+. How to interpret these figures? As noted above, our view is that GPI scores above 90 indicate a high level of congruence11, with perfect congruence when the GPI approaches 100. Scores below 90 are considered a moderate level of congruence, and when approaching 80 they indicate a low level of congruence.

10 See for example publication from the Inter-Parliamentary Union - http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/youthrep-e.pdf
11 ...or a low level of disproportionality.
From the tables 5 and 6 we see that both in Denmark and in Norway the age congruence between members and voters indicate a low level of congruence. For the party members overall, the scores are close to 80 in both countries which means that the match between voters and members in general is low. Looking at the percentage for voters and members in the three age categories (not shown here), the Norwegian data show that the 51+ group is highly overrepresented and the young strongly underrepresented in the parties overall. The party members are older than the general electorate, which is not surprising given the declining trend in membership. One suspects that the members recruited earlier stay on as party members, and that the younger generations prefer either not to engage politically or to engage in other types of political participation (e.g. Dalton 2014:73). Therefore, the party channel is not operating well in bringing the policy views of different age groups into the political institutions. No party has scores in the 90s, and this is the case both in 2000 and in 2009/12. Only the Danish Peoples Party and the Danish liberals (RV) are moving notably in the right direction. The old parties are, largely, somewhat less able to reflect the voters’ age than the new parties are.

Table 5: Age congruence V-PM in Denmark. 2000 and 2012.


In terms of demography, the parties are therefore mirroring their voters largely in terms of gender than in age. One interpretation is that the general mobilization of women in politics and the efforts to do something about the gender inequalities have been stronger than the efforts to bring more young people into the political arena. This also, it seems, goes for the party organizations. As a result, the parties have a stronger base for reflecting the interests of women through the party organizational channel, than to channel the views of the young.

5. Congruence: Education and occupation

Table 7: Educational congruence V-PM in Denmark. 2000 and 2012. Percent difference and GDI. NOT PRESENTED

Table 8: Educational congruence V-PM in Norway. 2000 and 2009/12. Percent difference and GDI.

Table 9: Occupational congruence V-PM in Denmark. 2000 and 2012. Percent difference and GDI. NOT PRESENTED
Table 10: Occupational congruence V-PM in Norway. 2000 and 2009. Percent difference and GDI.

Table 11: Occupational sector congruence V-PM in Denmark. 2000 and 2012. Percent difference and GDI.

Table 12: Occupational sector congruence V-PM in Denmark and Norway. 2000 and 2009/12. Percent difference and GDI.

Regrettably, we do not yet have the tables for V-PM congruence in Danish parties for education and occupation (apart from occupational sector).

In Norway the educational congruence score is around 90 for the parties as a whole in 2000 and 2009, a score indicating a close match. The party members generally have higher education than their voters. For all parties – apart from the social liberal Venstre and the right wing, populist Progress Party – there are rising levels of congruence. The lowest match between voters and members are found in the Left Socialist party where the members have a much higher education than the voters. The Christian Peoples Party have significantly improved their match with the voters over the decade, rising as much as 19 GPI-points on the score.

The occupational congruence in Norway is lower than the educational. As the occupational variable is more fine-tuned in the sense of having more values than the educational, this could impact the scores and give lower scores on the GPIs. It is, however the change and the party differences that are central to our general discussion here, and we see that there has been a marked decline in congruence for the parties overall in the years from 2000 to 2009. The notable exception is the Progress Party, which has an increased match in 2009.

In both countries, the parties have a better reflection of their voters in terms of occupational sector (Tables 11 and 12). Public sector employment is somewhat overrepresented among party members in general, although there is a small change towards a better match. In Denmark, the Danish Peoples’ Party and the Socialist Peoples’ party are in improving in terms of their GPI scores, while in Norway this is the case for the left Socialist and the Christian Peoples’ Party. The Norwegian Progress Party have a stable and very strong congruency with their voters on this variable.

6. The party channel in representative democracies

The main challenge for democratic systems is to create institutions that channel citizen preferences into public decision-making institutions. In representative democracies, elections is one such institution, political parties another. This paper have looked at the role of party members in promoting the representative capacity in democracies. The general expectation was that decline in party membership would make the party channel less effective.
In the best of all worlds, we should not only have the perfect study design but also fully reliable data. It is clear, however, that we have problems on both counts. Ideally, we would study two countries, one with a steep fall in party members – say over a 20 years period – and one with stable and high party membership. All other relevant variables should be equal. We should also have empirical data from at least two points in time to measure accurately the change in representative capacity.

Denmark and Norway are quite similar in terms of institutions, political culture and economic performance. There are, however, differences in electoral and party systems that may affect representative capacity. In both countries, we find a strong decline in party membership. We have no “control case” where things remain constant. We have data covering the time span from about 2000 to 2010. Changes in how parties operate, however, cannot be expected to move fast. Ideally, we should have a longer time span, for example a 20 years period or more. As for Denmark and Norway, time-series data for the period 1980 to 2010 would have been about right. We had to settle for the period 2000 – 2010.

When measuring levels of congruence, we believe that we cover the most important variables with age, gender, education and occupation. We could still do with more robust data, particularly for the voters. The voter support for a particular party change from one election to the next, making the voter base vulnerable to time-specific, electoral trends. We also lack a thorough evaluation on the robustness of the differences between the GPIs scores. The uncertainty inherent in comparing two surveys makes it difficult to calculate statistical levels of significance.

The argument for addressing these issues - in spite of the not optimal data and measurements – is that the study of the party organization as channel of voter influence is under-researched. In democracies with strong party organizations, where parties selects candidates and develops electoral programs, the parties can be seen as a channel – alongside the electoral – that brings citizen policies into the political institutions. However, parties are different. They may be “empty vessels” (Katz and Kolodny 1995), like in the US, where party membership play no important role in politics. In countries with strong parties, on the other hand, this gives the voters an arena for presenting and channeling policy preferences. Electorally, parties may be important linkage mechanism even if they are narrow elite organizations building policy platforms and selecting candidates in order to win elections. In order to be instruments for the party members, however, they also need to have an internal democratic structure. Internal party democracy alone is not sufficient to sustain the parties’ role as a supplementary channel in representative democracies. The party members also have to reflect the background and the polities of the voters. Is that the case for Danish and Norwegian parties in the first decade of the 21st century? More specifically, did our hypotheses find confirmation in the data?

First, we expected to find a declining congruence as the parties generally lost members during the period and the decade before. The data do not support this hypothesis. Only in terms of occupation in Norway, we do find a marked decline in the congruence score between 2000 and 2009. We also expected the parties without notable decline in membership to keep
up their congruence level better than the declining parties. It turned out that for the 2000s, the Red-Greens and Danish Peoples’ Party in Denmark and the Left Socialists, Labour and the Progress Party kept or increased their membership. However, the Norwegian Liberals, Labour and the Left Socialists also had a strong membership decline during the pre-2000 decade. Regardless, there was no clear tendency that these parties improved or had a higher level of congruence than the other parties had. On the other hand, they also had several scores pointing to higher levels or increased congruence. Hypothesis 1a must be rejected, on Hypotheses 1b there is no clear result.

Second, we hypothesized that congruence levels would be higher and more consistent in Denmark than in Norway. Although we only have data on gender, age and occupational sector to compare, this hypothesis must also be rejected. The levels of congruence are about the same in the two countries. On two indicators – gender and occupational sector – the congruence scores are actually higher in Norway than in Denmark.

Third, we expected the old cleavage parties to have a higher levels of congruence than the new issue parties, with the old caucus parties somewhere in-between. This was clearly not the case. More often than not, the new parties – the Red-Greens and the Danish Peoples’ Party in Denmark and the Progress Party in Norway – did have a higher level of congruence than the old parties (whether old cleavage or old caucus parties).

The question remains, however, whether the parties in Denmark and Norway on the whole can be said to provide a supplementary channel for voter influence via the party membership. The question cannot be answered fully with the data available. We also must remember the reservation that we only look at descriptive representativity. As there are no objective standards for levels of congruence to expect if proper democratic channeling is taking place, this is also an impressionistic exercise. It’s like judging the bottle ‘half full’ of ‘half empty’. The GPI scores are, however, rarely above 90. If we take the British GPI scores as the divide between god and bad – setting the cut-off point to 85 – we find that more than half the scores represent ‘bad’ congruence. On the other hand, knowing that the variation in the different parties’ voters are large and changing, this is perhaps not so bad. For the moment, we will leave it with that.

Red-Greens on gender, Danish Peoples’ Party on age and occupational sector, the Norwegian Progress Party on occupation. But this hardly makes a robust difference.
Bibliography


Appendix: Figures and Tables

![Graph showing the number of party members and the share of party members among voters from 1955 to 2012.](image)

Source: Party Member figures have been collected by Lars Bille and Karina Kosiara-Pedersen and are available on [http://www.projectmapp.eu/databases/](http://www.projectmapp.eu/databases/) og [www.ft.dk](http://www.ft.dk). Voter figures stems from the election records at each election and is accesible via Statistics Denmark ([www.dst.dk](http://www.dst.dk)).

**Figure 1: Party members in Danish parties and P/E ratios, selected years 1955-2012. Paid-up members.**

Figure 2: Party members in Norwegian parties and P/E ratios, selected years 1955-2012. Paid-up members.
Table 1: Changing membership in Danish parties 1955-2015. Percent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</table>

Number 2015 9,504 8,457 37,515 7,000 2,076 10,500 37,060 17,112 6,000 142,224

The table includes all parliamentary parties in the summary «All» column, but do not report the membership change for the Progress Party and the Center Democrats separately as these do not exist any more. The LA (Liberal Alliance) is included, although it did not exist in 2000, but it is included in member survey from 2012.

Table 2: Changing membership in Norwegian parties 1955-2015. Percent

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>Labour Ap</th>
<th>Centre Sp</th>
<th>Green MDG</th>
<th>Christian People’s KrF</th>
<th>Liberal V</th>
<th>Conservative H</th>
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<td>8,886</td>
<td>31,366</td>
<td>15,820</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

^1 Beregnet fra 1963-1981
^2 Beregnet fra 1957
^3 Beregnet fra 1956
^4 Beregnet fra 1981
^5 Beregnet fra 1995
^6 Beregnet fra 1993 fordi FrP ikke anser sine tall som reliable før det
Table 3: Gender congruence V-PM in Denmark. Per party. 2000 and 2012. Difference in % male members and male voters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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Note: Danish PM in 2000 compared with voters in 2001 and in 2012 compared with voters in 2011. Calculated as share of male voters – share of male members in each party. Voters weighted to make the sample representative according to age, gender and geography of the voters; PM weighted by the number of party members in each party to take variation in party size into account. Sources: DNES 2001; DNES 2011; PM 2000; PM 2012.

Table 4: Gender congruence V-PM in Norway. Per party. 2000 and 2009. Difference in % male members and male voters. Difference in % male members and male voters.

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Table 5: Age congruence V-PM in Denmark. Per party. 2000 and 2012. Gallagher’s Proportionality Index (GPI).

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* Sources: DNES 2001; DNES 2011; PM 2000; PM 2012. Weights according to table 3.


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GPIs are based on the following age classification: 18-30 + 31-50 + 51+ as in table for all members.
Table 7: Educational congruence V-PM in Denmark. Per party. 2000 and 2012. Gallaghers Disproportionality Index (GDI).


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GPIs are based on the classification in low, medium and high, se below

Low = compulsory primary and lower secondary school,
Medium = upper secondary school,
High = university college or university (started or completed degree).


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GPI are based on the classification of occupation (or source of subsistence):

- Worker = ordinary and trained worker, craftsman, and so on)
- White-collar low = subordinated level (shop assistants, clerks, and so on)
- White-collar medium = mid-level (teacher, nurse, engineer, and so on)
- White-collar high = superior/chief position at mid- or top-level in public or private unit.
- Primary industry (farmers, fishermen, and so on).
- Self-employed (company owners, independent professionals like dentists, lawyers, and so on)
- Pensioners
- Students
- Homemakers

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Note: DNES 2001; DNES 2011; PM 2000; PM 2012. Weights according to table 3.


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GPI’s are based on the classification 1. Employees in the private sector, 2. public sector, and 3. in various organizations. Pensioners, students, and homeworkers are excluded.