

Second, this chapter shows the structural and behavioral inertia of local parties, which limits their ability to exploit their natural advantage. Given the spatial proximity of their supporters, we would expect that local sections are prone to informal, personalized activities like door-to-door canvassing, whereas supralocal parties would focus more on indirect contacts such as direct mail or through various media. But empirically, such expectations are not fully borne out: informal contacts are found to be rare, and mediated forms of communication are used almost to the same degree as supralocal party levels. Jensen shows that communal parties "cling to the old ways" even in the face of shrinking memberships (see also Ladner, Chapter 9, and Scarrou, Chapter 6). At the same time, local political parties have again "inherited" many former activists set free by the decline of their respective (e.g., antinuclear or pacifist) movements. Thus, Jensen concludes that local parties have again gained momentum and reached the same level of activity in the 1990s that they had twenty years earlier. Finally, Jensen argues that local parties tend to occupy an important budgetary role in local policymaking because they are often the only groupings aiming to reduce public expenses, whereas all other groups (voluntary associations, and so on) try to increase public spending in some specific area (see also Magnier, Chapter 8).

In the 1970s and the 1980s, it was widespread among political commentators, politicians, political scientists, and others to talk about party decay and the crisis of parties and party systems.¹ A much-quoted book was *The Party's Over*, written by the American journalist David Broder (1971). And there were many developments that could be interpreted as signs of a crisis. The increase in volatility could be interpreted as a breakdown of the link between specific parties and specific social or class segments of the electorate (Pedersen 1983). From the beginning of the 1960s, party membership declined dramatically. In 1947, 27 percent of the Danish voters were organized in political parties; in 1994, only about 7 percent were party members (Elklit 1991a, 60). Research into interest groups and corporatism demonstrated the power of interest groups and the bureaucracy and, with this, the relative lack of power of politicians and political parties. Many saw interest groups, corporative arrangements, and new social movements as institutions that could replace the political parties.

This chapter will discuss—critically—the claims of party crisis in relation to the Danish case, but it will also provide a historical and current comprehensive view of local party organizations in Denmark. The chapter proceeds by describing (1) the growth and development of local party organizations since the 1850s, (2) the links between local party organizations and supralocal party levels, and (3) the actual behavior of local party organizations in local politics. Finally, the question of crisis and the possible future course of local party organizations is discussed.

10

Local Party Organizations in Denmark

Crisis or Adaptation?

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Editors' note: Several factors in this chapter illustrate the workings of the theoretical framework. First, Jensen observes a political pattern similar to that in Switzerland and Germany, where parties strive for compromise and look for policies supported by all political groupings in the community. As expected, this is especially true in smaller communities, where inhabitants tend to suppress political conflict or believe that community problems are nonpolitical and are to be solved by professional expertise according to the criterion of "technical efficiency." The traditional political culture of small towns initially made it difficult for national parties to colonize the countryside because these communities stressed values of personalized trust and community reputation (see also Schneider, Chapter 5). As in Great Britain and Germany, the spread of local parties and contested partisan elections since the 1970s was preconditioned by territorial reforms that resulted in diminishing the numbers and raising the average size of communities all over the country. Although municipal reorganization, proportional representation, and public financing have strengthened local branches of national parties, other events such as the movement to unranked party lists and the decentralization of formal authority to administrative units have weakened them.

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Studies of local party organizations in Denmark are limited in two ways, because studies are restricted both in number and by size.² Only one major study has been conducted, in 1982. This study focused on economic questions in a central-local perspective, and the parties were primarily studied only as far as they were relevant to these problems. Two small publications presented the most important results from a survey mailed to all local party organizations in a representative sample of forty municipalities (Villadsen 1985; Madsen, Schou, and Villadsen 1985). This chapter will be based on that survey, historical accounts, party history, and various studies that, directly or indirectly, have used or accumulated data about local party organizations in Denmark.³

The Growth and Development of Local Party Organizations

The difficulty of finding an acceptable and usable definition of political parties—for instance, one that is able to demarcate parties from fractions or movements—has been debated for decades. The number of proposed definitions seems to be equal to or even higher than the number of scholars studying parties. One recurrent feature among the countless definitions is represented by the following definitions:

The role of all these institutions is to win political power and exercise it. (Duverger 1964, xxiii)

A party is any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office. (Sartori 1976, 64)

Parties as political organizations oriented to elections and aiming to hold office . . . (von Beyme 1985, 13)

None of these definitions is unproblematic, and they can be criticized for various reasons. A combination, clarification, and further minimization of the minimal definitions given by Maurice Duverger, Giovanni Sartori, and Klaus von Beyme could lead to the following: "A party is any group that nominates candidates at elections."⁴ This definition can of course also be criticized. The perfect definition of parties probably does not exist, but if this definition is used as the starting point, it becomes obvious that elections are the genesis of modern political parties. The emergence of local party organizations in Denmark must be sought for during or around the first national or local elections—but first, a few words about local politics in predemocratic Denmark.

In the Middle Ages, there was a high degree of self-government in the Danish provincial towns. This self-government disappeared with the ab-

solute monarchy that was established in 1660. Under the absolute monarchy, local affairs were governed by the local agents of the king: in the cities, the mayor and the aldermen; in the country, the priests and different kinds of prefects and bailiffs. It was a centrally governed system without democratic elements, but with some local consultative functions. The primary function of the local political system was to implement decisions made by the king, decisions about military preparedness and maintenance of roads but also about matters concerning the poor, health, and, later on, the providing of basic education (Christensen 1991, 13–15).

In the 1820s and the 1830s, the absolute monarchy came under pressure because of, among other things, the democratic developments in Germany and France and capacity problems with handling the growing number of tasks. Local politics were also affected. A number of laws from 1837–1841 increased local autonomy. Local self-government was part of the first democratic Danish Constitution in 1849. With the constitution, the first local and national elections were established. These were, of course, not democratic elections in a modern sense—the young, women, and the poor had no right to vote, and property qualifications secured wealthy citizens the majority in the new democratic institutions. Only in 1915 was universal suffrage adopted.⁵

The Development of the Local Party Organization

It is characteristic that the many laws establishing democracy did not mention the political parties at all. The first local and national elections were to a high degree elections of individuals—well-known individuals from the local community, in whom the voters had confidence. In the Constituent Assembly, informal groups of like-minded people who often voted together were already established (Nannestad 1972). But political parties were perceived as a threat to the new democracy. The popularly elected assemblies should be assemblies of trusted individuals—"the best men in the kingdom"—and not assemblies of parties. The chairman of the Parliament even interfered and reprimanded the members of Parliament if they used the phrases "my party" or "your party." Thus, members of Parliament instead used phrases like "me and my friends" or "me and like-minded colleagues" (Thorsen 1953, 30).

Political parties only existed as loose networks of popularly elected members of Parliament and local councils, and there was a total lack of the bureaucratic organization that is characteristic of parties today. To the—very limited—extent that there were local party organizations, these were loose networks of notables—in the words of Duverger, "caucus parties" (1964, 17).

TABLE 10.1 Average Percent of Total Voter Support for the Four Old Parties in Six Time Periods

Period	Number of Elections	Total Support
1920-1929	4	96.9
1932-1945	5	92.0
1947-1957	5	88.4
1960-1971	5	86.1
1973-1981	5	63.5
1984-1994	5	72.9

SOURCES: 1920-1971: Dangaard (1974), 106; 1973-1990: Calculations on the basis of Bille, Nielsen, and Sauerberg (1992), 21, and preliminary results from the election held on September 21, 1994.

This solid system was dramatically changed by the "landslide election," or the "electoral earthquake," of December 4, 1973, an election with one of the highest aggregated electoral volatilities in Western Europe since World War II (Pedersen 1983). Five new parties entered Parliament: Three of them—the Christian People's Party, the Center Democrats, and the Progress Party—were completely new, and two older parties, the Communist Party and the Justice Party, which had both left Parliament with the election in 1960, returned (Pedersen 1988). Explanations of the 1973 election have been debated ever since. Mogens Pedersen (1988) reviewed the many explanations and concluded that four sets of factors were of vital importance. First, a fundamental structural prerequisite was evident in the legal frameworks. In electoral law, the barriers for nomination (a number of signatures equivalent to 1/175 of the vote in the latest parliamentary election) and gaining representation (2 percent of the vote) are low, and the system gives almost exactly proportional representation to the parties. Another important factor was the legal regulations that give all parties the same amount of free time on Denmark's Radio, the national TV and radio station, which at that time had a monopoly on radio and TV in Denmark. Second, television, which was becoming increasingly important in the election campaigns and which was used very skillfully by some of the new party leaders, was a catalyst for the change. Third, two fundamental long-term factors were (1) the deterioration of the bonds between parties and the social cleavages and (2) rising political distrust, or, in the words of Pedersen, the "loss of support for the governments and for the politicians as political leaders" (1988, 266). Fourth, there were important short-term factors, including a large list of laws passed in the years before 1973 on tax reform, municipal reform, liberalization of pornography, liberalization of the right to have an abortion, economic support for the creative arts, and government of the universities. All these

Many organizations, interest groups, industrial organizations, trade unions, and newspapers supported individual politicians and groups of politicians and were in this way important for the outcome of elections. And because many of the notables came from such associations and newspapers, they were important for the formation of the caucus parties (Thorsen 1953, 34ff.).

In the early 1870s, organizing of the rapidly growing worker class began. In October 1871, the International Workers Association in Denmark was founded, as a combined party and trade union, and in 1872, a health insurance society was added (Winblad and Andersen, 1921, 3ff.; Hansen 1974, 52ff.). In 1878, the movement was subdivided, and a separate Social Democratic Party was founded, established outside Parliament and local councils; in Duverger's words, it was an extraparlimentary-originated party (1964, xxx ff.). The Social Democratic Party gained strength and succeeded in getting candidates elected to Parliament (1884) and local councils (the first parish in 1888; the first city in 1892). The two dominant parties in Parliament also started organizing national networks of local organizations, especially the Conservative Party (Højre), whereas the Liberal Party more often relied on the other organizations mentioned above. For a long period, the organizations in all parties were small and weak. Even the Social Democratic Party, on its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1896, could only claim 23,000 members organized in 239 local branches, compared to the 42,000 members and 713 branches of the trade unions (Winblad and Andersen 1921, 110).

The Development of the Party System

After a number of party formations, splits, and amalgamations at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the party structure stabilized as a four-party system, in which the four parties, today called the "four old parties," represented the basic social cleavages in Danish society: the Social Democratic Party representing the workers; the Liberal Party, the farmers; the Conservative Party, the world of commerce and higher-level civil servants; and the Social Liberal Party, agricultural laborers, smallholders, and a group of active social-liberal intellectuals.

In the September election of 1920, the four parties—or "the four great constants of Danish politics," as one scholar has called them⁶—polled 96 percent of the votes, an electoral dominance that was maintained for the next fifty years, with a slight decline to 86 percent for the five elections during the period 1960-1971 (see Table 10.1). This four-party system was modified to a five-party system in 1960, when the Socialist People's Party entered Parliament.

laws created intense public debate, were criticized by large parts of the population, and resulted in the formation of new divisions in the electorate. The explanation for the election in 1973 is not simple. A complex and interacting web of changing social, economic, political, legal, and cultural factors contributed as well.

In the 1970s, the number of parties in Parliament remained over ten. In the 1980s, the number declined slightly, and in the latest three parliamentary elections, "only" eight parties have gained representation. The four old parties have also regained some of their strength (see Table 10.1). In fact, three of the old parties at the election in 1990 gained almost exactly the same number of seats in Parliament as before the election in 1973. Only the Social Liberal Party was still 5–10 percentage points below its performance before 1973. At the November 1993 election, the four old parties polled 77.5 percent, and they had the best election since 1973. Party identification has increased since the rapid decline in 1970–1973 and was, in 1990, almost at the same level as in 1970 (Holmberg 1992, 24). Also, the percentage of bills and resolutions adopted unanimously in Parliament is noticeable: In the 1945–1965 period, 58 percent (Pedersen 1967); in 1972–1973, 56 percent; and immediately after the 1979 election, 35 percent (Damgaard 1977, 115). After a further decline in the late 1970s (Damgaard 1992, 44), the percentage increased in the 1980s, and in the beginning of the 1990s, the percentage reached 40 percent, for the first time since 1973 (Wittrup 1994, 52). It seems as though the effect of the 1973 electoral earthquake is diminishing and the Danish political system is moving in the direction of some of the structures seen before 1973.

This development raised doubts about the long-term explanations for the 1973 election and gives support to short-term explanations and to the importance of skillful new party leaders using TV. Perhaps the emergence of many new parties can be explained by the structural prerequisites and long-term factors, whereas the strength of parties (the big electoral success) can be explained by short-term factors and skillful leaders.⁷ This could explain the resurgence in the 1980s. The new parties are still alive because of the long-term factors and the structural prerequisites, but their strength has diminished because they have been weakened by short-term factors: The "newness" of the new party leaders has gone, but the other parties have found ways to match the new parties and their skillful leaders.

The Danish national parties have, since the 1970s, been divided into three groups according to size. The first group has 30,000–90,000 members and includes three of the old parties: the Social Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, and the Conservative Party. The second group ranges from 5,000–10,000 members and includes one old party, the Social Liberal Party, and three new parties, the Socialist People's Party, the Christian

People's Party, and the Progress Party. The last of the new parties, the Center Democrats, formed its own group with less than 2,000 members (Bille 1991). This means that in the small parties the local branches may have only a handful of members. The larger parties typically have 50–200 members in each branch.

Local Lists and National Parties in Local Politics

In 1970, just before the electoral earthquake, a municipal reform was implemented. The number of municipalities—which had remained almost unchanged since the 1840s—was reduced from more than 1,200 cities and parishes to 275 municipalities. The new and larger municipalities were assigned more and larger tasks and spheres of competence.

A major consequence of the reform was to push a step further a development that had been under way since the beginning of the century: the electoral defeat of local lists and the prevalence of the national parties at municipal elections. Electoral success in the municipal elections has come to the national parties in three stages.

The first stage came during the period 1909–1921. The national parties increased their share of the local politicians from 25 percent to almost 65 percent. Two main reasons for this development can be identified. First, the broadening of the electorate made the Social Democratic Party stronger, thereby drawing voters from Socialist local lists. Second, the new proportional representation system removed barriers to gaining representation so that it became important for all the national parties to have branches in all parts of the country.

The second and third stages occurred during the period 1974–1981, as a large increase in 1974 and as a more gradual increase in the following years. Since 1981, the local lists' share of the local politicians has been less than 10 percent. The large decline for the local lists since the municipal reform is due to two main causes: a strategic dilemma for the local lists and the strategic goals of the national party headquarters.

One effect of the reform in 1970, with the new larger municipalities consisting of two, three, four, or in some cases even more of the old parishes, was fewer local politicians. The result of having fewer politicians in the local councils was that each candidate needed more votes to get elected. This was not a problem for the local branches of the national parties, which could present a common list for the whole municipality or could make electoral pacts between their organizations in the old parishes. The fine-meshed organizational web of the national parties made adaptation rather uncomplicated.

The local lists were in a more difficult situation. Electoral pacts would only be effective if there was a local list in all or most parts of the new

municipality. A single list for the whole municipality would often be impossible because of the conflicting interest of the old parishes. And even if electoral pacts or a single list were established, there was still the problem of how the local list could convince its voters to vote for a candidate from their old parish if the vote, because of an electoral pact or single list, could ultimately get a candidate from the neighboring parish elected. Furthermore, it was difficult to claim to represent the local interests of an amalgamation of very old and often antagonistic local communities that was being established from day to day. The local list was in a strategic dilemma: Amalgamation or incorporation was necessary, but amalgamation or incorporation raised fundamental questions about the local lists' *raison d'être*. Another aspect of this dilemma was that after the reform, the national parties gained a strong argument against the local lists because these lists could be accused of representing the special interest of the old parishes and neglecting the common interest of the new municipality (see Figure 10.1).

The other reason for the defeat of local lists stems from the electoral earthquake of 1973. The higher level of competition among the national parties, which was one of the effects of the electoral earthquake, has encouraged the central party headquarters to make it their strategic goal to put forward candidates at local elections in as many municipalities as

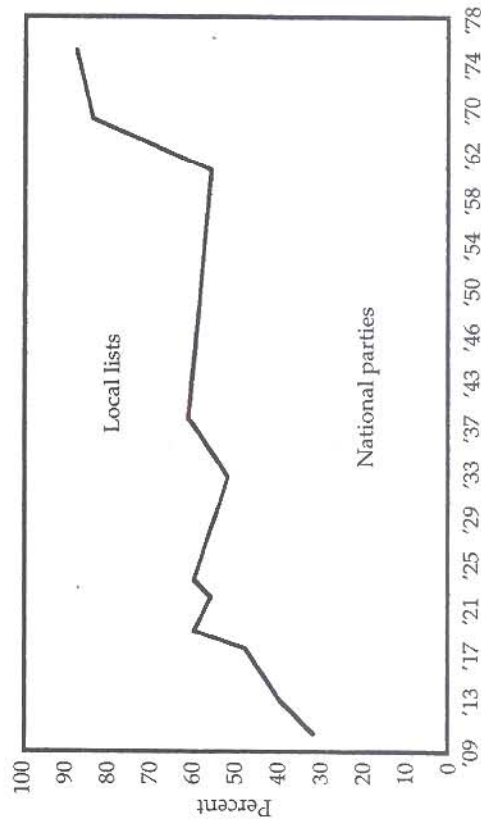


FIGURE 10.1 Politicians in Local Councils (distribution by election on national party lists or local lists), 1909-1978.

SOURCE: Bentzon (1981), 143.

possible—if for no other reason than to “wave the flag” at the local election—with the next parliamentary election as the real goal. With only 275 municipalities, the desire to wave the flag everywhere was made more manageable. This strategy of having candidates in as many municipalities as possible during local elections, and even in those municipalities where there is no chance of getting any candidates elected, is a rational strategy because of the proportional representation system used in parliamentary elections in Denmark. Every vote counts and can be decisive for the composition of the Parliament, and this makes it sensible to use local elections as part of the strategy for the parliamentary elections.

To sum up, the strength of the local lists has clearly been weakened, while the local branches of the national parties have become stronger. This phenomenon can be explained by the municipal reform of 1970 (the strategic dilemma for the local lists) and the electoral earthquake (the strategic goal of the national party headquarters).

Another trend that has developed since the 1970s is that the traditional local lists have lost ground not only to the national parties but also to so-called alternative lists, which are issue oriented and raise questions about, for example, the environment, women's rights, and participatory democracy (Bentzon 1981, 145ff.).

The Number of Nominating Parties and Candidates

The electoral earthquake in 1973 and the new national parties have led to an increase in the number of nominating lists (including both the branches of national parties and local lists). From 1970 to 1974, the number increased 45 percent to about 1,960 lists, and since then, the number was stable around this level until the latest election in 1993, when the number increased further to almost 2,100 nominating lists.

The many new nominating parties in 1974 also led to an increase in the number of nominated candidates. But the number of candidates did not increase as much as the number of lists. This resulted in a sharp cut in the average length of each candidate list. In the 1980s, the average number of candidates per list declined even more, from an average of twelve persons per list in 1981 to only eight persons at the election in 1993. From 1970 to 1993, the average number of candidates per candidate list has been reduced by 50 percent. The number of candidates has declined by about one-fifth, dropping from 21,612 candidates in 1970 to 17,688 candidates in 1993 (see Table 10.2).

The reduced number of candidates has attracted intensive public attention. In a survey taken in 1993, almost two-thirds of the local chairmen in five national parties agreed that the decline in party membership had made it more difficult to recruit candidates (Buch Jensen 1994, 12). Table

tions and party systems were consolidated. After 1920, the national parties—and especially the four so-called old parties—have completely dominated parliamentary elections, not least because the electoral system has made it almost impossible for local or regional parties or single persons to get elected. Municipal politics was until the 1970s characterized by competition between local lists and between local lists and national parties. After the municipal reform in 1970 and the electoral earthquake in 1973, the local-list form of electoral organization declined dramatically, dropping from 40 percent of the elected local politicians in the 1960s to less than 10 percent in the 1980s and 1990s. The increased competition has resulted in a more than 50 percent increase in the number of lists competing in the local elections, while the number of candidates has declined.

The Local Political System

The local party organizations function within an environment with a number of socioeconomic and political structures. This section examines the tasks and organizational system of the most important structure in the local party organization's environment: the local political system.

Danish municipalities have on average 18,000 inhabitants, compared to English and Swedish municipalities that have averages of 120,000 and 30,000 inhabitants, respectively. There are also a number of countries with smaller municipalities, for instance Norway, with an average of 8,800, and France, with an average of only 1,300 inhabitants (Goldsmith 1992, 8). If the size of the municipalities is middle-range, their tasks and authorities are far-reaching. Denmark has, in comparative terms, a large public sector, and the municipalities use almost 70 percent of the public expenditures (Larsen and Offerdal 1994, 15). They also employ about 70 percent of the public employees (Goldsmith 1992, 11). The Danish and other Scandinavian municipalities are "wide-ranging multi-purpose service-providing agencies" (Goldsmith 1992, 10). The municipalities have a high level of autonomy in relation to regional and national levels, but with variation between different policy areas. Specialized political agencies found in many other countries are very seldom used in Denmark. Almost all functions are concentrated in the unitary municipal administration.

Each municipality is headed by the local council, which has between nine and thirty-one members and full authority to decide all questions within the legal framework. Of course, many routine decisions are delegated to the administration, but each member in the council can demand that a decision be debated and decided by the council. The mayor, who occupies a full-time and salaried position, is elected by the council at the first meeting after elections, which are held every fourth year. At this

TABLE 10.2 Number of Nominating Lists, Numbers of Local Candidates, and Average Number of Candidates Per Party at Elections, 1970–1993

	1970	1974	1978	1981	1985	1989	1993
Number of nominating parties	1,353	1,960	1,983	1,966	1,987	1,946	2,083
Number of candidates	21,612	24,199	23,821	23,789	21,758	19,593	17,688
Average number of candidates per list	16	12	12	12	11	10	8

SOURCE: various *Statistical Yearbooks*.

10.2 documents that the complaints about the difficulty of recruiting candidates raised by the local party chairmen were well founded. The length of the candidate lists has declined dramatically. But Table 10.2 also documents that the decline is less dramatic when viewed from the perspective of the political system as a whole. The 50 percent decline in the average length of the candidate lists is "only" equivalent to an 18 percent decline in the number of candidates. This should at least encourage caution before accepting the claim, raised by the parties themselves, that they and the local democracy are in a crisis that needs to be countered. Regardless of how the decline should properly be interpreted, it is a fact that (1) the complaints of the local parties have been heard in public and in Parliament, and (2) the decline has been perceived and interpreted as a crisis for the local parties and for the local democracy. Recently, this has led to a report from a committee of state and local representatives. The report suggests that better financial remuneration for the local politicians and better organization of the work in local councils is necessary (Betténknig 1994). These suggestions were presented in Parliament in 1995 and were adopted as law.

Despite the increase in the number of nominating parties and the ensuing higher competition and polarization one could expect, the general picture of Danish local politics is dominated by consensus. Denmark is still a good example of what Michael Goldsmith labels the Scandinavian or North European model, which is the "product of a broadly based political consensus across party lines" (1992, 18).

To summarize: Danish local party organizations have grown out of the early national and local elections. The development started with the almost simultaneous extraparlimentary formation of the Social Democratic Party and intraparlimentary formation of the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party at the beginning of the 1870s. The development of regular party organizations with branches in all parts of the country was slow, but by the beginning of the twentieth century, the party organiza-

meeting, the seats on the committees are also decided by a vote. A proportional representation system is used. Until the beginning of the 1980s, the municipalities were rather uniform and had five standard committees: economic, social, technical, culture, and real estate. In the 1980s, the municipalities were given the opportunity to experiment with their administrative structure, and were urged to do so (Bogason 1995, 10–11). In the period 1979–1992, the average number of committees in each municipality declined from 4.5 to 3.6, and the variation between the municipalities also increased (Larsen 1993, 9). The committees are the central arena for the formulation of policies, and the council generally follows the suggestions of the committees. The position of committee chairman is also a central position and partly salaried according to very complex rules.⁸ In sum, many Danish municipalities are characterized by the depth and extent of their municipal tasks and by their autonomy in the definition and conduct of these tasks.⁹

Local and National Party Organizations

The organizational structure of the Danish national parties reflects the political administrative and electoral systems in Denmark. The chart in Figure 10.2 shows the structure of the Liberal Party, which is representative of the other national parties.

The Danish political system is divided into three tiers: local, regional, and national. These three levels are reflected in the three party organs: local branches, regional organizations, and national conference.

In the minor parties, the local branches often cover a whole municipality. Some of the large parties (the Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party) have more than one branch—up to around ten—in each municipality. The boundaries of the municipality are an administrative border, as well as a border in terms of the election law. All parties have regional organizations, which follow the political and administrative boundaries of the county. The county is an administrative unit governed by the elected County Council.

The constituency organization is in a sense an unnatural unit, compared to the local and regional branches, which mostly follow the administrative boundaries. The constituency is only a technical division established by parliamentary election law—and the constituency consists of one to three municipalities, except in the case of some of the larger municipalities, which are divided into several constituencies.¹⁰ The organizational structure of the national parties is thus mainly a reflection of the political and administrative divisions and the divisions in the electoral law.

After the municipal reform, a clear tendency was seen: The parties were adapting to the new political-administrative structure through

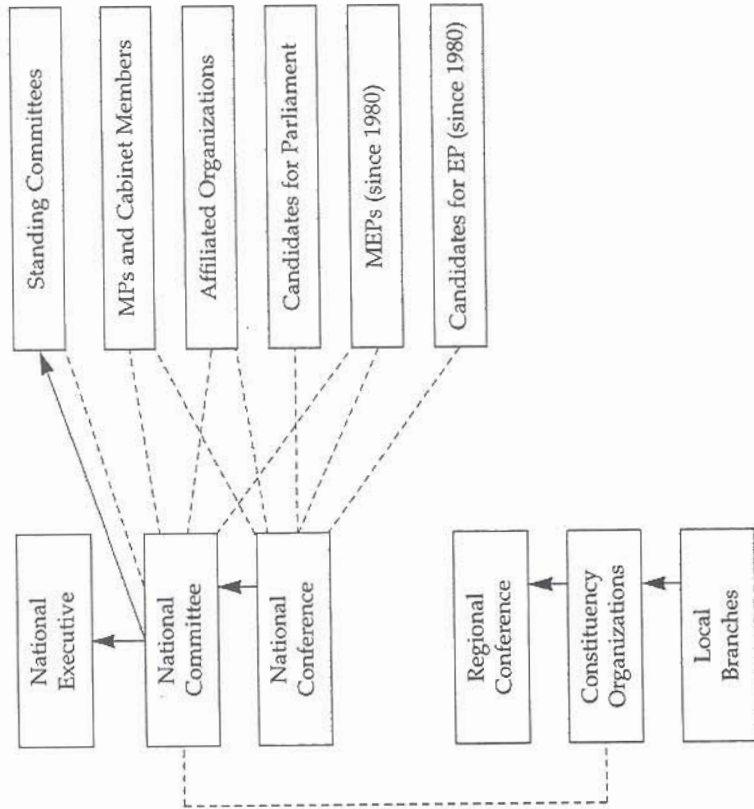


FIGURE 10.2 Organizational Chart of the Liberal Party

SOURCE: Bille (1992a), 230.

amalgamations of local branches to larger units corresponding to the new municipalities. This concentration was also made necessary by the large decline in party membership. The autonomy of the local branches in relation to the higher levels of the parties has never been studied systematically, but the impression is clearly one of high autonomy. Four indices will be reviewed here.

First, all Danish governments have been fighting to keep the activities (and taxes) of the municipalities down. The municipalities have the right to impose taxes, and the local parties have used this right. One reason for this taxation could be the many minority governments in Denmark—in fact, all governments from 1973 to 1991 have been minority governments (Damgaard 1992, 30). The increasing local activities and taxes could then

ing relations with the national executive, also have a lower ranking than more locally oriented tasks.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that there are clear signs that the local party organizations have a very high degree of autonomy in relation to the national party headquarters. Mouritzen's conclusions above also show clear signs of an undeological "politics of consensus" and give support to Goldsmith's description of the Scandinavian model. In other words: The local autonomy of the party organizations is used to establish policies that are supported by a large part of the parties, if not by all parties, in the municipality. A former county mayor said that in reality, "it is more important to get your proposals passed than to get them in the press, and a realistic analysis of the way to get the support of others will encourage one to avoid profiling press.... One cannot seek results, unless one also seeks compromise" (Tiedemann 1990, 90) (my translation).

Inside the Black Box: Activities in Local Party Organizations

Thus far in this chapter, the local party organizations have been treated as black boxes. This section and the following briefly move inside the black boxes and review the internal activities of the organizations. The functions or tasks of the local organizations are primarily managing recruitment, selection, education, and training; nominating candidates to all three political levels; agitating for the party's goals; campaigning at elections; arranging political activities for and educating the members; engaging in contact with politicians; and sending delegates to the higher levels of the party. However, social activities are also important: Christmas meetings, meetings on Constitution Day, and visits to local public or private business or cultural activities.¹¹

Although the local party organizations give high priority to tasks connected with elections, they also emphasize communication between the members and the parties' local politicians and between these politicians and the public. Fifty-seven percent of the party organizations have working committees on local issues, especially on high-cost issues (Madsen, Schou, and Villadsen 1985, 13, 18), that is, the same welfare issues over which the parties try to exert their influence in the budget process, a subject dealt with more fully below.

The numbers of members and active members are difficult to measure because of the problems already mentioned by Duverger: the problem of parties being unwilling or unable to publish membership figures and the unreliability of the published figures (1964, 79ff.). Because in the Danish context all parties are today both able and willing to publish figures, the primary problems are those of unreliability. Parties usually want to present the largest possible figures both for members and active members,

be interpreted as a sabotage of the minority governments' economic policies by the majority in Parliament. But the suspension of the expansion of local activities and taxes has been supported by a large majority in Parliament, so this explanation does not hold. The national party leaders have been unable to control the local branches—and have probably not even tried to.

Second, in a comprehensive study of the developments in the municipalities' expenses, Poul Erik Mouritzen reached this conclusion (1990, 331): "The ideologically conditioned differences in the preferences of the politicians... are not leaving any traces in the (economic) behavior of the municipalities" (my translation). Clearly, the national party leaders and organizations do not have enough control over the local branches to form a united political line in the municipalities.

Third, many examples can be given of "unholy" alliances. For instance, after the local elections of 1993, the first-ever mayor from the Socialist People's Party was appointed with the support of the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party, at the expense of the Social Democratic Party. A county mayor from the Social Liberal Party was appointed and was supported by all the parties of the right wing, at the expense of the Social Democratic Party, despite the fact that the Social Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party were partners in the national government. Many such alliances can also be found in the electoral pacts at local elections.

Fourth, Table 10.3 clearly shows the low ranking of the national executive. It is perceived as more important to communicate from the bottom to the top, from members to the party's national executive, than it is to use the channel from top to bottom, from the party's national executive to the municipal administration and the local public. Other tasks, includ-

TABLE 10.3 Danish Voters' Participation in Local Politics, 1993

Effort	Percent
Tried in some way to influence the local politicians	19.0
Had contact with the mayor	3.9
Had contact with other members of the local council	5.7
Attended a meeting in the local council	2.7
Had contact with the local administration	6.4
Was active within a local party organization	1.6
Was active within other associations or organizations	2.3
Attended a public meeting	4.4
Signed a petition	3.4
Wrote a letter to the editor	2.7
(N)	(1,002)

SOURCE: Calculations on the basis of Kjær (1994), 28–30.

so the figures must be viewed as maximums. In 1982, the share of members who participate in the party's member meetings was calculated at about 17 percent, with slightly lower figures in the big cities and with almost 30 percent active in the small municipalities (Madsen, Schou, and Villadsen 1985, 5-6). In a 1993 survey of all local party chairmen in five parties, 60 percent of the chairmen stated that the percentage of active members in their local branch ranged from 1 to 30 percent. Including all chairmen, the average was 31 percent. The question asked not only about participation in meetings but also, for instance, about committee work, participation in social arrangements, and campaign activities (Buch Jensen 1994, 17). These results are supported by representative voter surveys. Thus, in a survey from 1979, 16 percent of the party members indicated that they often participated in the party's arrangements, whereas in a survey from 1990, this figure had increased to 26 percent (Goul Andersen 1993, 53). These figures seem to indicate that there was an increase in activity and active members, but because during the same period the total number of party members declined, the higher percentages are probably due to a small denominator and not a larger numerator. Keeping in mind the tendency of parties (and voters) to exaggerate membership and activity, it is safe to say that only about 20-25 percent of party members are active members.

The Behavior of Local Party Organizations in Local Politics

As I mentioned earlier, Danish municipalities are characterized by both the depth and extent of their municipal tasks and by their autonomy in the definition and conduct of their tasks. This produces the expectation that Danish local parties are active and engaged in local politics. This expectation can be tested in two ways.

First, the local parties can be viewed as a channel for the voters and other actors and as an instrument for other political actors. Participation in local politics declined from a total share of 20 percent active citizens in 1978 to only 13.5 percent in 1981 (Mouritzen 1990, 206). A survey taken in 1993 shows that the level of active citizens has increased again. Nineteen percent of the voters are active in one or more category of activity (see Table 10.3).

The local party organizations are clearly not the channel preferred by voters when they want to influence local political decisions. This could be a sign of low interest in local politics. This interpretation is supported by developments in voter turnout.

Before 1950, the turnout at local elections was just above the turnout at parliamentary elections, but after 1950, the local turnout declined, whereas the national turnout increased. In recent elections, the figures

have converged, but the overall course of development during the last fifty years suggests that interest in local politics is slightly lower than national politics. By contrast, the turnout at any of the European Parliament elections is much lower than the turnout at local elections.

The fact that only a small proportion of the voters are using the parties as a channel for influence does not preclude the parties' being active and influential, because the parties can also be viewed as independent actors. The parties are much more active than other associations and organizations. Thus, almost 60 percent of the other associations and organizations are passive, sleeping "participants," whereas only 30 percent of the parties are passive in relation to the budgets and the budget process in the municipalities. Although the local party organizations' attempts to exert their influence are primarily associated with expenses, they also involve themselves with the income side, whereas other organizations direct their attempts almost entirely toward influencing the budget against increasing expenditures. Furthermore, the parties direct their pressure at the most expensive sectors—schools, child care, the care of the old and infirm—whereas other organizations direct their pressure against the less expensive sectors, among them unemployment policies, the maintenance of roads, planning and administration, and water, electricity, and heat supply (Mouritzen 1990, 212ff.)¹² (see Figure 10.3).

The limited number of active voters and the fact that one-third of the local party organizations are passive are surprising in the light of the

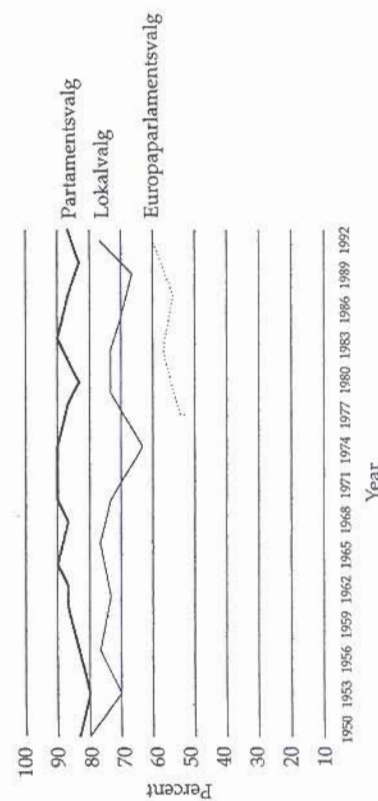


FIGURE 10.3 Voter Turnout at Parliamentary, Local, and European Parliamentary Elections, 1950-1994

SOURCE: Goul Andersen (1993), 48, and preliminary results from the 1993 local elections and the 1994 parliamentary and European parliamentary elections.

large depth, extent, and autonomy of municipal powers. Is there a crisis of local parties in Denmark? This question will be addressed in the next section. But first a brief look at the local party organizations' election activities follows.

The activities described until now have been peacetime activities—activities between elections. With elections and campaigning as the means for the genesis of party organizations, it is clear that a large part of the activities in the local party organizations is related to elections.

With this in mind, it is paradoxical that studies of electoral campaigning in local party organizations have been almost nonexistent in Denmark until recently. Exploratory case studies were conducted at the local elections in November 1989 (Elklit 1991b). New case studies (Elklit and Pedersen 1995) and several surveys of voters, candidates, and local party organizations (Kjær 1994 and several under publication) were conducted during the 1993 November local elections.

The local party organizations have very limited economic resources: "Often the office of the organization is the desk (or less than that) of the chairman" (Elklit 1991b, 228). The campaign is very often coordinated by a separate election committee, but in the larger municipalities or in the large parties, this committee can have specialized subcommittees on economics, contacts with the press, political manifestos, distribution of election pamphlets and posters, and so forth. Some party organizations—often the large parties in the large municipalities—use professional marketing firms, but this seldom occurs (Elklit and Pedersen 1995). In many cases, in small parties and small municipalities, experts of different kinds will be involved without payment, if they are members of the party. In general, the members have permission for their extensive use of telephone, fax, expertise, computers, printing, and photocopying facilities, for very low cost or even free.

The campaign methods are primarily distribution of election pamphlets to some or all parts of the municipality, participation in public meetings, and placement of advertisements in the local newspaper or the local advertisement weekly. Door-to-door canvassing is used very seldom. In the seven municipalities studied by Jørgen Elklit in 1989, only one party organization used this method, and further, in the nine municipalities studied in 1993, there was only one organization that used door-to-door canvassing (Elklit and Pedersen 1995).

In general, the content of the campaigns and the electoral manifestos is characterized by broad statements like the following: "We want the best possible child care" or "The city council must behave in an economically responsible way." In many instances, these statements come close to being nonpolitical, in the sense that very few segments of the electorate would disagree with them. The politics of consensus, noted above, pro-

vides an explanation for this tendency. The broad consensus, with many policies adopted by all or almost all members of the municipal council, makes it difficult to have intense conflicts and debates. And as many local politicians and party chairmen comment: "We must work together after the election, so we do not end up in trench holes during the election."

The Future of Local Party Organizations in Denmark

The description of local party organization so far has indicated progress as well as stability and decline. The evidence for stability, or even progress, can be seen in four points. The old national parties regained much of their strength in national elections after the setback in the election in 1973. Turnout for Danish elections remains stable and at a high level in comparison to other countries. Recently, the turnout at local elections has increased. The national parties have crowded out local lists, and the fear (or hope) of parties being replaced by issue-oriented movements has proved to be groundless. Finally, the local party organizations are much more active than other associations and organizations in attempting to influence local political decisions. Signs of decline are primarily seen in the problems of recruiting candidates for local elections.

Another sign of crisis, closely related to the recruitment problems, is declining party membership. In 1950, 600,000 voters were members of political parties; in the 1990s, the figure is under 250,000 members. During the same period, the electorate has increased from 2.5 million voters to 4 million voters due to population growth and a declining electoral age, making the relative decline—from 25 percent party members to less than 7 percent—an even more dramatic one than is indicated by the absolute numbers. In international terms, Denmark is the country with the highest absolute and relative decline in the proportion of members to the electorate as a whole (Katz et al. 1992, 334; Buch Jensen 1994, 7) (see Figure 10.4).

A study of declining party membership was conducted in 1993, which included a survey of all local chairmen in five Danish parties and interviews with the national secretaries in all eight parties in Parliament. The study showed that the parties perceived the decline to be structurally caused by: changes in social, educational, and demographic structures; a new media structure; new political journalism; and higher volatility. However, the causes did not stress the parties themselves: Less often mentioned were inferior offers to members, traditional recruitment campaigns, and high membership fees (Buch Jensen 1994, 15–16). It is not surprising that the parties emphasized structural causes, which are important (Elklit 1991a; Tøgeby 1992), but it is surprising that the parties were almost totally uncritical of their own performance.

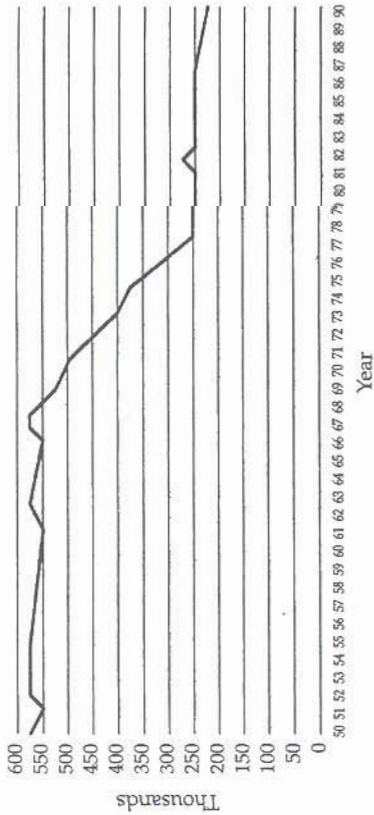


FIGURE 10.4 Total Number of Party Members in Eight Danish Parties, 1950–1990

SOURCE: Bille (1992a), 102.

It is difficult to measure the quality of the activities and the offers given by the parties to their members, but the parties' competition has no doubt become more intense and qualified with the advent of professional producers of leisure time offers over the last few decades. The activities the parties offer to their members primarily seem to be "business as usual." It looks as though the parties have done very little to develop the "product" since the membership peak in the 1950s.

Another indication that the parties' themselves influenced declining party membership can be found in their recruitment activities. Twenty-six percent of the local party organizations do nothing at all to recruit members. The 74 percent of organizations that are active generally implement one or two recruitment activities, as Table 10.4 shows.

TABLE 10.4 Local Party Organizations Active in Recruitment, 1993

Number of Implemented Recruitment Activities	Percent Active in Recruitment (N = 388)
0	26
1	27
2	27
3	14
4	4
5	2

SOURCE: Buch Jensen (1994), 19.

Table 10.5 shows that the most common recruitment activity is personal contacts, in the sense that the local chairman or the members of the local branch board try to recruit family, friends, colleagues, and others with whom they are in contact. The next most common activity is the active/visible branch, which includes political meetings, writing letters to the editor, and so on. It is surprising that many chairmen report these activities as recruitment activities—reporting the active/visible branch as a recruitment activity is almost the same as saying that having an organization with activities is a recruitment strategy. Eleven percent of the local chairmen only mentioned personal contacts or the active/visible branch. This means that only 63 percent, not 74 percent, of the local branches have implemented proper recruitment activities. But even this must be viewed as a high level of activity. Also noteworthy is that the activities are all very traditional: distributing pamphlets to some or all parts of the geographical area of the branches, engaging in street activities, putting advertisements in the local newspapers or weekly magazines, and participating in local or national campaigns of different kinds.

On the one hand, the parties have a high level of activity, with recruitment activities being undertaken by more than 60 percent of the local organizations. On the other hand, much more could be done—by activating those branches that do not try to recruit members at all, through more activities in each branch, and by using more modern methods of recruitment.¹³ The conclusion the facts indicate is that it is very difficult to ascertain unambiguously whether the parties are in crisis or not. But how do the parties themselves see the situation?

The party secretaries all rejected the view that declining party membership is a sign of crisis because decisions are taken on various policies, the parties are nominating candidates, and so forth, and because high turnouts, for instance, indicate that the voters clearly support the system (Buch Jensen 1994, 9). The local party chairmen were less optimistic.

TABLE 10.5 Local Party Chairmen Active in Recruitment, 1993 (in percent)

	Yes	No	(N)
Personal contacts	36	64	(278)
Active/visible branch	34	96	(278)
Distribution of leaflets	31	69	(278)
Advertisements in newspapers	22	78	(278)
Street activities	13	87	(278)
Telemarketing	9	91	(278)
Campaigns	8	92	(278)
Other activities	9	91	(278)

SOURCE: Buch Jensen (1994), 20.

TABLE 10.6 Local Party Chairmen's View of Three Statements About the Consequences of Declining Party Membership (in percent)

	Agree or Partly Agree		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Disagree or Partly Disagree		Total	(N)
	Agree	Partly Agree	Disagree	Neither	Disagree	or Partly Disagree		
The parties are in crisis because they have fewer members	43			15	42		100	(383)
The parties have a problem because they have fewer members	83			5	12		100	(395)
In general, the parties have no problem because they have fewer members	18			6	76		100	(383)

Source: Buch Jensen (1994), 11.

More than 40 percent agree that democracy is in crisis, and a clear majority see problems for the parties as a result of declining party membership (see Table 10.6).

The question of whether democracy is in crisis or not cannot be answered with a clear yes or no. Depending on the focus, one can find decline, stability, or even progress. In the light of the many death sentences that have been pronounced concerning the parties—even by Danish scholars, one of whom called the parties “the political dinosaurs of our time”—the general picture must be characterized as positive. Many scholars have clearly been too quick to diagnose “crisis,” and we are in exactly the situation described in 1968 by J. Robinson:

Because of its varied meaning the term “crisis” has not been useful in building “systematical knowledge” about social phenomena. Terms that cover almost any situation are not helpful in analyses that emphasize variables and the relations among variables. If many different kinds of situations are labeled crisis, then the factor becomes a constant and cannot be related to variations in other aspects of social process. (Robinson 1968, 510)

A crisis is a threat to the stability of an organization or a political system, a threat that, if it does not disappear or is not countered, will lead to the breakdown of the organization or to structural changes of fundamental character (Svensson 1986, 133ff.). If this definition is taken as the starting point, the conclusion must be that there are no signs of breakdown. Neither are there many signs of changes of fundamental character. On the contrary, the general impression is that the national parties and the local party organizations have succeeded in maintaining business as

usual. Because of limited financial resources (see below), a professionalization of local parties has not occurred as it has in several other countries. Local party organizations in Denmark are still based around volunteers. Danish local party organizations do what they did forty years ago, only with fewer participants and especially with fewer passive supporters. From a normative democratic ideal, having fewer party members is a problem. Yet it is clear that there are few, if any, signs of breakdown of national and local parties in Denmark.

The most logical prediction for the future is probably stability. But some of the most recent developments can modify this prediction for future developments. The first relates to the electoral system, the second to the introduction of public financing of local party organizations, and the third to a wave of decentralization within the municipalities.

New Nomination Rules

A change in the local election law in 1984 made it possible for each party to nominate the candidates on an unranked list, where only the numbers of votes for each candidate decide whether the candidate is elected. Prior to 1984 all parties were obliged to nominate on a ranked list (where the candidates were elected in rank order), unless a candidate got enough votes to break the rank order.¹⁴ Since 1984, the local party organizations in each municipality must choose what kind of nomination they will use (see Table 10.7).

There has been a clear development since this change. In 1981, all parties used ranked lists; but already in 1985, at the first election with the new option, half the local organizations changed to the new unranked lists, and at the latest election in 1993, more than two-thirds of the lists were unranked. The implication of this change for the local party organizations is—viewed from the cost-benefit perspective advocated by Richard Katz (1990)—a weakening of an important benefit of party membership: influence over who gets elected. The unranked lists give more influence to voters than to party members, compared to the ranked lists.

TABLE 10.7 Use of Ranked and Unranked Lists at Local Elections, 1985–1993 (in percent)

	1985		1989		1993	
Unranked list		48		61		69
Ranked list		52		39		31

SOURCES: 1985 and 1989: Official election results; 1993: The election book from each municipality.

Financial Support for the Parties

In 1986, the parties in Parliament almost unanimously passed an act on public financial support for parties. Until then, only each member of Parliament and the party groups in Parliament were supported (Pedersen and Bille 1991). After 1987, the party organizations also received money. The support is based on the latest electoral results, and with some minor exceptions, each year the national party organization is given about \$3.00 per vote at parliamentary elections, the regional party organization receives about \$0.40 per vote at regional elections, and the local organizations get about \$0.60 per vote at local elections. From a cost-benefit perspective, the public financing is of benefit to parties that follow a strictly vote-maximizing strategy. Until 1987, it was very difficult to run party organizations without a large number of members. For instance, the Center Democrats, who entered Parliament after the electoral landslide in 1973, have had a very fragile economy, with less than 2,000 members, but the new subsidy markedly improved the economy of that party. In 1995, the Center Democrats had 1,400 members, and 80 percent of the national party organizations' budget was financed by the public subsidy.¹⁵ With the 1986 law, it became easier for a party to survive with very few members. But it must be stressed that the financial support is limited, compared, for instance, to the Swedish or Norwegian party subsidy. It is impossible to find anything near the professionalization of local parties, with hired staff, as exists, for instance, in Norway.

The Decentralization Wave Within the Municipalities

The Danish municipalities have changed considerably since the municipal reform in 1970, especially since the mid-1980s. The number of committees and the number of administrative units within the local administration has declined, a new public management has been introduced, national government now tries to control the economic activities in the municipalities—and the European Union will bring new challenges to the municipalities.

Of special interest to the local party organizations is the decentralization of competence from municipal politicians and the central municipal administration to the boards of municipal institutions: schools, kindergartens, and so on. In 1989–1990, no less than 61 percent of the municipalities decentralized economic competence to institutions (Larsen 1993, 15; see also Larsen 1991). The result is a weakening of the politicians (Larsen 1993, 14, 29) and thereby also a weakening of the local party organizations, which are very active in trying to influence political decisions made in the municipal councils. The logical response from the par-

ties would be to try and place their members on the boards of the institutions. No systematic studies have been completed of the many new institutions, but the impression is that the parties have done very little to try to get their members elected. This wave of decentralization brings decisionmaking closer to those who are affected by the decisions, but it also raises many problems: institutional egoism; the problems of trying to take unpopular decisions when facing well-organized user boards; and the problems of the power of the leaders of the institutions and the staff, who are also represented on the boards, compared to the layperson members.¹⁶ In short, is this democracy for the users, or is it democracy for the professionals? In relation to the parties, another problem is the creation of a new competitor. The critical question for each voter is this: Why bother to be a member of a party or to be active within your party if you can get elected to the boards of the municipal institutions that are relevant to you and the ones you get services from? A more positive interpretation of the wave of decentralization would argue that the boards will give the citizens a new interest in politics and operate almost as political schools.

The most recent developments that affect the local party organizations may lead to fundamental changes for the local organizations. In particular, party membership can be expected to continue to decline. An important incentive to join parties—their degree of influence on who gets elected as politicians—has been weakened by the new nomination rules, and the public financing based on election results has created an added incentive, increasing the already intense orientation toward electioneering and the maximization of votes. The actors must stand against these incentives in order to arrest the decline in party membership.

If public financial support is increased, it is most likely to result in professional publicly financed organizations, with a small staff of professional employees. The local parties can survive being abandoned by the volunteers, who are still today the core of the organizations. The wave of decentralization can move political decisions away from local politicians and parties and can also create a new competitor for the political participation and activism of the citizens—adding to the many new movements that appeared in the 1970s and that still attract many activists.

Crisis and death sentences over the parties have been pronounced much too often and will not be repeated here. On the contrary, it is striking to see that the parties and their local organizations, in a totally changed environment, with new social, educational, demographic, and media structures, have survived and still monopolize a large part of the political power in Denmark. This endurance must be recognized, irrespective of how one evaluates it in relation to democratic ideals.

Conclusion

The first Danish local party organizations were established in the 1870s. By the beginning of the twentieth century, local party organizations were the central actors in both national and local elections. Parliamentary elections were dominated by the four old parties until the electoral earthquake of 1973. In contrast, municipal politics also had a large number of local lists competing with the national parties. After the municipal reform and the electoral earthquake in the beginning of the 1970s, the national parties also prevailed in local politics. The four old parties were defeated in the election in 1973, but they have since regained much of their electoral strength. This gives support to specific and short-term explanations of the electoral landslide in 1973. The many new national parties established in the 1970s have produced a 50 percent increase in the number of lists competing in the local elections, whereas the number of candidates has declined.

The organizational structure of the national parties reflects political-administrative boundaries and the geographic divisions in the electoral law. The autonomy of the local organizations in relation to the national organizations is high.

In the light of the depth and extent of municipal tasks and the autonomy granted in the definition and completion of these tasks, it is surprising that only one-fifth of the voters are active in local politics and that less than 2 percent of the voters use the party channel to influence local decisions. Compared to other local organizations and associations, the local party organizations are more active in their attempts to influence the decisions taken in the municipal council. The activities of the local party organizations are primarily directed toward elections. But the campaign activities are modest because of very limited economic resources. The activities are also very traditional: distributing pamphlets, participating in meetings, advertising in newspapers, and so forth. Door-to-door canvassing is used very seldom in Danish party organizations.

Whether local party organizations in Denmark are in crisis or not is very difficult to ascertain. If a strict definition of crisis is used, the conclusion is that it is difficult to see signs of breakdown or fundamental structural changes of the local party organizations. The local party organizations have tried to adapt to the rapidly changing environment and have to a large extent succeeded in maintaining business as usual.

The new nomination rules, the introduction of public financial support to the local party organizations, and the wave of decentralization from local councils to the institutions in the municipalities are new changes that will affect the local party organizations in the future. This will probably mean continued decline in party membership and a beginning of

professionalization of the local party organizations, with part-time employees and more reliance on paid assistance.

Notes

1. For a review of this literature, see Lawson and Merild (1988). See also Crotty (1984); Wattenberg (1990); Appelton and Ward (1995).
2. The limited number of studies of local party organizations is by no means an exclusively Danish phenomenon; see Frendreis and Gitelson (1993, 533).
3. In spring 1995, an elaborate follow-up study of the 1982 study was conducted. The data from this study were not available before the deadline for this book.
4. On minimal definitions, see Sartori (1976, 61).
5. See Svensson (1993) for a summary of the process of Danish democratization.
6. Thorsen, quoted in Miller (1968, 60).
7. One of the remaining three new parties from 1973, the Christian People's Party, lost its seats in Parliament, at the September 1994 election, but a new party the Unitylist ("Enhedslisten"—an association of small left-wing parties and single individuals) gained representation.
8. The four largest towns have a different system, with several powerful full-time and salaried vice-mayors or eldersmen, who are each responsible for one sector.
9. This autonomy should not be exaggerated. Many of the tasks are regulated by central agencies, for instance, the payment of social transfers. The central rules for this area are very detailed and leave a limited local autonomy. Other such areas are transfers to families with children, health insurance, and rent support. Mouritzen estimates that the expenditure in those areas amounts to about 30–35 percent of the total costs (1990, 583–585). For the other two-thirds of the budget, the degree of autonomy varies, being largest for libraries and roads, lowest for expenditures on schools (Mouritzen, 1990, 120–122).
10. For a full description of the Danish electoral system, see, for example, Johansen (1979) and Tonsgaard (1986); on municipal elections, see also Elklit (1991b, 220ff.).
11. On tasks and functions of political parties, see King (1969) and Pedersen (1994).
12. The high number of passive party organizations can be explained by the surveying technique used by Mouritzen: Because the survey also includes local parties without representatives in the local councils, it could be expected that more passive organizations would be found if they have no representative toward whom they can direct their activities and initiatives.
13. In Buch Jensen (1994, 20–21), an example of the effectiveness of telemarketing is quoted.
14. See King (1969) and Pedersen (1994) on the tasks and functions of political parties.

15. Calculated on figures published by the party in the newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, March 6, 1995.
16. See Sørensen (1995, 30ff.).

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11

The Local Party System in Poland

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Editors' note: The shift from authoritarian Communist regimes to more decentralized forms of democratic governance is highly instructive, as local parties will be critically important in conveying political information and socializing the population into the new framework of democratic values, norms, and institutions. This case and the case of Russia show the daunting challenges ahead. In these societies, the very term "party" (usually applied to competing political groups) was stretched to cover monopolistic institutions and provided the entire political system with basic forms of legitimacy and ideological orientations. This has surely been the case in Socialist Poland, where the party created the Parliament, government, and all other authorities. Consequently, the dissolution of such monopoly parties was sufficient to cause the decay of the whole governmental system erected on them. No "bottom-up" parties were readily available to restore the legitimacy of a national regime. In addition, the erosion of the national party leads to the political decay of all intranational party organizations (like local sections), because all these subunits have never been conceived to function without centralized guidance and support. Because communities in Poland never got the opportunity to develop endogenous parties, they have quickly become "colonized" by the newly founded national parties, which are eager to establish local mobilization agencies in order to gain a maximum number of voters. Thus, the relevance of local parties for political legitimization is actually illustrated by post-Socialist countries, where the breakdown of the national regime left many (particularly smaller) communities without organized groupings able to control the processes of political recruitment (see also Schneider, Chapter 5).

Communal Poland

The question of the participation of parties in many aspects of communal life is, first of all, the question of the functioning of the commune itself, or