



Local Government
and Public Service
Reform Initiative

Faces of Local Democracy

Comparative Papers
from Central and
Eastern Europe

Edited by

Gábor Soós

and

Violetta Zentai



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GÁBOR SOÓS AND VIOLETTA ZENTAI

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Introduction

Gábor Soós, Violetta Zentai

1. RATIONALE FOR MONITORING DEMOCRACY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Local democracy and the transformation of the local government system have often remained in the shadow of more appealing topics related to the larger political transformations in the post-socialist context. Councilors of local municipalities or municipal decision-making processes rarely capture the attention of researchers and analysts in contrast to, for example, the ideological struggles of ascending and descending political parties or the power struggle between a prime minister's office and line ministries. Yet, no one would deny that strengthening the pillars of local democracy is an essential aspect of the broader democracy-building endeavors in the societies concerned. This self-evident conception receives a closer scrutiny from those research and developmental organizations whose mission is to study and enhance democratic governance on the local level, which is often no less complicated than on the central level.

The Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI), in partnership with the Tocqueville Research Center (T-RC) in Budapest, has been conducting a multi-year project entitled 'Indicators of Local Democratic Governance' (hereafter: 'Indicators'). The project aims to help decision-makers and researchers assess and explain the state of local democracy in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. While there are numerous international research initiatives examining the condition of democracy on a national level, only a limited number of comparative inquiries have been launched at the subnational level. The 'Indicators' project is a modest but perhaps unique enterprise, having three broad aims: (a) the generation of original survey data and collection of other relevant statistical data; (b) regular reporting on the state of local democracy in Central and Eastern Europe; and (c) the dissemination of results and standardized datasets to inform developmental and policy reform initiatives.

Local government systems take a very different shape in 'old Western democracies' depending on historical and political circumstances.¹ European Union integration, despite having some important effects on these systems, does not stipulate particular political and administrative structures for the national and subnational levels. On the contrary, it values diversity of traditions. Certain principles are spelled out, but those

do not stipulate systemic changes for the old or new member states. In CEE, SEE, and CIS countries, local government systems are in the making, replacing the old hierarchical territorial structures of the single party state (although in the latter group authoritarian structures are still prevalent). In some countries, mostly in the new EU member states, the reform or the radical rebuilding process (including constitutional and legal changes; elections, institutional, and public finance reforms; property restructuring) started more than a decade ago and has resulted in different but more or less democratic governance systems. In several states of SEE and the CIS, local governments are in a transient state, often subject to progressive or nonprogressive changes, or simply stuck in national political stalemates. They exist, but their autonomy is frequently formal and their mandates and governance structures are undecided or unstable. The study of the latter geographical group is equally as important as the former. The first of the large, multi-year initiatives of the 'Indicators' project has a prime interest in countries that are beyond certain stages of democratization and modernization of their government systems. The study remains open to further geographical and conceptual expansion at a later stage.

The 'Indicators' initiative is working on the underlying assumption that building core institutions of democracy has a genuine value on its own, and it is also a precondition for efficient policymaking at both the central and local levels. Practical experience from both the Western and post-socialist contexts, however, shows that, on the one hand, democracy is often not a guarantee to efficient policymaking, and on the other, satisfactory policy performance is at times supported by political systems that are not democratic or are only partially so, or even worse. Nonetheless, as a holistic and normative concept, we propose that democratic political institutions are public goods in themselves, whereas their actual local configurations have different potentials for efficient policymaking to promote social and economic progress.

The conceptual frame of the 'Indicators' initiative addresses those pillars of democracy that local governments build within their own bodies and processes, and also those that the social environment offers. Local communities (in the most neutral sense of the term) do produce or cultivate institutions that help to build local democracy. Some elements of administrative and policy performance are included in the 'Indicators' inquiry, but the main emphasis is elsewhere. Primarily, the initiative promotes a *democracy-monitoring* exercise to the benefit of researchers, policymakers, and local administrators. It is expected that further research initiatives, whether affiliated with the 'Indicators' project or not, could use the methodology and the data to seek correlations between democracy and policy performance in the case of particular local governments or whole governmental systems.

Though local pillars of democracy provide the focus of its investigations, the 'Indicators' initiative resonates with a recent conceptual shift that emphasizes *governance* in addition to, in combination with, or often instead of government.² Governance embraces other social actors in decision-making and policy-implementing practices. Governance

highlights processes and outcomes instead of putting trust solely in institutional structures empowered to govern. By the same token, some balance between institutions and process-driven thinking is important to maintain. In this part of the world, the fear of bureaucratic and power-driven governance is prevalent and justified. But this fear should not make one blind to the value of democratically empowered institutions; that is, structures that are not like drawings in the sand. Ultimately, the 'Indicators' project investigates the potentials of local democratic governance in CEE as characterized by institutions as well as by actors, processes, and outcomes that go beyond the realms of local governments.

Despite the differences in the pace and scope of systemic changes, all countries in our inquiry are influenced by the dominant paradigm of *decentralization*.³ Decentralization has been accepted as an unavoidable direction of reforms, yet the connotations and policy impacts of the concept differ. In addition to the devolution of power, the meanings of the term embrace democratization, reform of the policymaking process, and administrative and public finance reform. Sometimes decentralization represents a deliberate shift to enhance subnational layers of power and administration; in other instances it is a consequence of the shrinking or weakening state. As the most common trend in the region, decentralization signifies the growing importance of local governments as they obtain larger mandates but not necessarily adequate financial resources and democratic incentives. Decentralization undoubtedly creates possibilities for enhancing local democracy, but this is far from being a self-evident, causal relation.

Decentralization distinctively alters relations between levels of government. The 'Indicators' project intends to address some of the issues of intergovernmental relations, but strictly from the perspective of the local level and not delving into the complexity of mid-tier levels of government. The project does cast light on how local democratic governance creates and relies on distinctive *interfaces* between national and subnational forces in a democracy. Most notably, local governance embraces political parties, is dependent on national civil service regulations, and is influenced by media property structures and general NGO regulations. Our inquiry intends to study the subtleties of these interfaces without subscribing deterministic or dependency theorems.

It is often noted that even more developed government structures in the region are embedded in the frailty of political institutions, slowly-moving public administration reform, haphazard or frozen territorial restructuring, debated civil service reform, not to speak of battles over election reform and party systems. Nonetheless, there has been a general belief in a wide democratization process that reaches all corners of the post-socialist world as well as other places in the post-cold-war international context. In the new millennium, this belief started to fade with the rise of populism in the CEE countries; the tensions that European integration have generated in the former 'socialist block'; the uneven potentials for democratic change in the postwar western Balkans; the anti-democratic arrangements of consolidated presidential power in Russia; and,

the clearly authoritarian trend in many Central Asian countries, just to name a few experiences. The export of democracy has become more difficult due to the growing discontent with the workings of international development organizations and the highly controversial profile of the only superpower in the world.⁴ In the shadow of these larger concerns, the perplexities of newly established local government systems in CEE have also started to reveal themselves.

The belief that power practices within and for smaller communities must be more democratic than those on the societal level (since they are closer to the public eye) has become challenged. Simplified accounts of local democracy-building have been undermined by instances of local power elites with great autonomy to privatize public assets being caught in improper deals, paralyzing in-fights in elected bodies, and lack of transparency in decision-making justified by democratic elections. Careful studies must examine the extent to which structural causes allow the misuse or abuse of power, in contrast to simply pointing fingers at leaders with character faults. We believe that the 'Indicators' project will contribute to these studies and will create incentives to go further in democracy-building, rather than allowing it to slow down due to discontent or disappointments accumulated over a decade and a half.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, DATA AND OUTCOMES

Democracy is a contested term. The 'Indicators' project draws on Beetham's conceptualization of democracy, nowadays one of the most frequently used frameworks in democracy evaluations.⁵ Beetham argues that democracy implies decision-making about collectively binding rules and policies. A decision-making process is democratic to the degree that it is "subject to the control of all members of the collectivity considered as equals."⁶ Therefore, the two key principles of democracy are *popular control* over decision-making (or at least decision-makers) and *political equality*. For the purpose of evaluation, democratic audits break down these two principles into four criteria.

- a) *A guaranteed framework of equal rights*. This includes access to justice and the rule of law, the basic civil and political rights. Citizens' rights and their enforcement also provide limitations on government.
- b) *Institutions of representative government*. Free and fair elections are a basic instrument of democracy to promote popular control. Elections are democratic if they are meaningful, inclusive, fair, and uninfluenced by government power. The idea of meaningful and fair elections also includes competition amongst political forces, which have equal access to communication.
- c) *Institutions of open and accountable government*. A democratic government is transparent, and politically, legally, and financially accountable to other bodies. The power of democratic government is limited by other formal institutions.

- d) *A civil or democratic society.* Independent associations have the potential to encourage government responsiveness to public opinion and to increase equality among citizens. An organized society with a democratic political culture is a powerful instrument of democracy.

These four dimensions can be also adapted as a monitoring framework for local democracy. Nevertheless, they are not of equal importance in the analysis of local democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, and they must be adapted to the specific properties of local government systems. The 'Indicators' project devotes more attention to mapping the contribution of civil society to local democracy than, for example, to analyzing the problem of civil rights, which are better researched by other initiatives and show less variance in CEE.

The assessment of local democracy requires two additional dimensions. The first comes from the local nature of the subject of analysis. A distinctive feature of local governments is their *autonomy*, i.e., their freedom from the direct involvement of external forces. If local administrative units have no legal, political, and financial autonomy, the term 'local (self-) government' loses its meaning. The degree of autonomy is a crucial element in the assessment of local democracy. Swedish audits of democracy point to the relevance of a second criterion in addition to the above. As the history of regime collapse in the 1930s demonstrates, a viable democracy requires a certain level of *effectiveness*. Consequently, policy performance is a crucial dimension of a local democracy assessment. In sum, local democracy is conceptualized as a local government that is autonomous, effective, open, and representative, surrounded by a civil society in the framework of guaranteed political rights.

The 'Indicators' project collects two types of quantitative survey data: (1) data on the major actors in local democratic governance (2) comprehensive, longitudinal and cross-national data on local democratic governance. The Local Government Survey (LGS) collects comprehensive data on local governance such as objective information about the activities of local governments (especially concerning inclusive decision-making) and their social and political environment (parties, NGOs, and local media). In 2001 administrative leaders of (in total) 2024 municipalities in Latvia, Poland, Hungary, and Romania were interviewed in the framework of LGS. The questionnaire was updated in 2002. The T-RC and its local partners completed a second round of data collection in all the municipalities in Estonia, Bulgaria, and Slovakia in 2003–2004.

The data on local politicians is derived from the Local Representative Survey (LRS), which focuses on the activities, values, opinions, and demography of local councilors. In 2001 a pilot was conducted in Hungary to test both the questionnaire and the mail survey method. The mail surveys of LRS were conducted in Estonia, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria in 2002–2004. The currently available multi-country database includes the responses of approximately 5,000 local councilors and mayors from within the surveyed countries.⁷

The initiative has resulted in two sets of *country reports* on the state of local democratic governance in seven countries. The first volume, published in 2002, portrays Hungary, Latvia, Romania, and Poland.⁸ The second volume, describing Bulgaria, Estonia, and Slovakia, will come out in 2005. Following this conceptual framework, the structure of the country reports is organized around six pillars or dimensions of local democratic governance. As those are not equally important in the political reality of Central and Eastern Europe, two dimensions (representation and civil society) are given more attention. The first part of the country reports covers four components of local democracy (autonomy, effectiveness, rights and the rule of law, and transparency and accountability). The conciseness of this discussion is explained by the availability of other publications (e.g., decentralization and effectiveness are covered by other LGI initiatives and publications) and the focus of the original data gathered by the surveys of the project. The second part of the country reports highlights issues of representation (local elections and referenda, local parties and factions, local representatives, and responsiveness), and the third part addresses civil society components (local media, local civil society organizations, and citizens' political culture). Country report writers used not only the actual survey data of the 'Indicators' project, but available statistical data and information derived from secondary analysis as well.

3. COMPARATIVE INQUIRIES

The conceptual framework and the survey data generated by the 'Indicators' initiative inspired LGI and T-RC to commission comparative analyses on various distinctive pillars or dimensions of local democratic governance. Comparative inquiries were invited to explain country-specific correlations between different variables of the research and to explore variances across the region. An open call for proposals was announced, to which numerous applicants responded, and the selected authors completed their analyses independently in 2003–2004. Authors were to embrace at least three countries from the pool and to use survey data in correspondence with their thematic choice and initial hypotheses. The topical and geographical interest of the proposed analyses turned out to be naturally diverse without any intervention. The current volume presents the seven best studies prepared in the framework of the first comparative analytical phase of the 'Indicators' project.

In chapter 1, Pawel Swianiewicz and Adam Mielczarek explore the roles of *political parties* in forming local democracies through observation of a complex set of variables. Their analysis partially proves the hypothesis that the role of political parties in local politics has gradually increased over the last twelve years. This increase has been faster in countries with more consolidated territorial systems (Poland, Bulgaria rather than Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, and Slovakia). The size of the local government appears as a

very powerful variable explaining the importance of parties in local politics. The role of parties is more significant in countries with proportional electoral systems than in countries with one-ward, majority local council elections. The analysis of survey data shows that popular beliefs of both politicians and experts overestimate the impact of the mayors' nomination method on the role of parties in local politics. Political fragmentation and the volatility of local councils is significant in the countries observed, and may weaken the management capabilities of local governments. The party orientation (sympathy and membership) of local councilors and mayors is only loosely correlated with their political culture and policy preferences. Finally, the examination of the ideological landscape of local party factions upholds left-right cleavages, with variations in the meanings of left and right across countries. The authors suggest that cleavages are much more coherent than one might expect on the basis of popular beliefs concerning the chaotic character of the political scene in CEE countries, but it is also far from fully logical and consistent.

In chapter 2, Zsolt Nyíri and Richard Vengroff examine gender differences, particularly the so-called *gender gap* among local representatives in five countries: Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. The authors assert that women are relatively well represented in local government in the region. Male and female locally elected officials in these countries share common educational backgrounds, a sense of optimism regarding their respective municipalities, and belief in democracy as the best form of government. Although there are gender-related differences in commitment to core democratic values, these differences are relatively small. Female officials are more likely to be independent rather than formal members of political parties, indicating that their political bases and electoral support are built on personal networks as well as associational groups. This is further reinforced by ideological self-placement, which shows women generally to the left of their male counterparts and growth in this gap from generation to generation. The inquiry found that even among members of the same political party there is a small but persistent difference between male and female councilors, with women again tending to the left. Even when the analysis controls for a variety of other factors, such as education, postmaterialism, age, trust in government institutions, ideology, democratic values, organizational memberships, and country, gender remains a significant but by no means the strongest predictor of political perceptions of the preferred role of government.

In chapter 3, Tania Gosselin illuminates the linkages between *local media* and the decisional performance and inclusive policy-making practices of local governments, respectively, in Hungary, Latvia, Poland, and Romania. The author's first set of hypotheses articulates that localities endowed with more media outlets, where the ownership structure is more diverse, where the quality of coverage is higher and where more citizens consume local media, are expected to display better democratic performance. The mixed findings are explained by a potential threshold effect: the number of media appears to

have an effect on performance only above a certain threshold; in turn, once a local media system's ownership structure is diverse enough, it may 'take over' the positive impact of the number of local outlets. The analysis also shows that the impact of the media features identified, notably the positive effect of coverage quality on democratic performance, is quite robust. The second stage of the analysis explores three potential channels of media effects on democratic performance. Accordingly, the presence and dynamism of civil society enhances the impact of media on democratic performance. The number of NGOs in the locality and citizens' public interest-oriented activities also enhance the impact of media features on democratic performance. The chapter concludes that further research is required to better understand local media, to formulate more precise hypotheses about their effects, and to interpret findings with greater accuracy.

In chapter 4, Daniel Pop addresses the systematic relationship between *municipality size* and citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters in Hungary, Poland, and Romania. The author argues that the state of local democracy in these three countries seems to be rather weak in terms of system capacity to respond. A common finding for all three countries is that municipalities are highly dependent on central government transfers, and therefore there is not much incentive for citizens to participate. The general trend found for all three country-cases is that the smaller the municipality, the higher its expenditure rigidity. Larger municipalities are more likely to have higher rates both of citizen participation and citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters. Participation becomes minimal only in very large units, but the three countries concerned do not have many of these large units. In conclusion, the success of citizens' participation depends on the structure of the municipal system in these countries. By reducing the share of extremely small municipalities, in which the citizens' effectiveness is the lowest, it would be possible to create opportunities to build a more vibrant and dynamic community life. The editors stress that these findings will be somewhat surprising but very instructive to those, in particular, who believe unconditionally in the democracy effects of extreme decentralization.

In chapter 5, Georg Sootla and Kristina Grau seek quantitative evidence for the existence of different *models of local government* in different countries, using the examples of Estonia, Hungary, and Latvia. Even if the main variable accounting for differences among the countries is the legal frameworks, the authors find considerable variation among local governments within one country, indicating that rather different patterns of actual behavior and attitudes do exist in the same legal framework. The analysis uncovers clear differences between Estonia and Latvia in institutional configurations, the distribution of authority, and patterns of behavior under different legal contexts in those two countries. In Estonia the strong role of the executive and in Latvia the strong role of council is emphasized. Accordingly, consistent committee and cabinet systems produce internally more homogeneous local governance in comparison with the council-mayor system. In Hungary such differences are caused not only by political variables but also

by differences in the legal context at elections in both small and large communities. The authors formulate a question for further analysis: does this flexibility of institutional and role configurations contribute to the effectiveness of local democracy?

In chapter 6, Philip Franek examines the links between the concept of *delegates and trustees*, classifying local councilors and their declared representation of national vs. local interests.

The correlation was present in the case of all three countries observed (Bulgaria, Estonia, and Hungary). The author found that councilors who declared a preference for solving local problems rather than pursuing national goals voted more often according to their own opinion (trustees), gave less special consideration to the party, had no aspiration for a future political career on the national level, and in the case of Hungary, did not have professional political training. At the same time, there was no correlation between preference for national vs. local goals and political party membership. This result suggests that the dividing line between councilors who are oriented to local or national goals is more related to the concept of delegates or trustees than to party membership. The data for Bulgaria and Hungary show that party membership has an influence on the relation between the other variables. The comparative analysis tried to identify how delegates and trustees differ in terms of civic engagement, embeddedness in the municipality, professional political training, and plans for the future, but no significant links were captured.

In chapter 7, Cristina Nicolescu and Amelia Gorcea explore the factors influencing the approach that *local representatives* take towards their constituency by comparing Bulgaria, Estonia, and Poland. Besides considering the notion of social capital, the analysis relies on other variables, such as value orientations and socialization of councilors, and some context influences. As for social capital, the tested models have shown that institutional trust and generalized trust have different explanatory impacts, supporting those scholars who propose to approach the two concepts separately as they are of different origins. The three country cases show differences in the determinants that have an impact on the relationship between the representatives and their constituents, even if the dependent variable shows the prevalence of the same approach of local representatives towards their constituency in all countries. The Estonian case shows unexpectedly that an overwhelming majority of local representatives relate to their constituency horizontally, whereas at the other end, the Polish representatives showed a highly balanced distribution of behavior. The authors suggest that the combination of factors that stimulate local representatives to act as citizen-oriented decision-makers is far from being exhaustively explained by their study.

The selected comparative studies offer some general lessons for scholars, critics, experts, and advocates of local democratic governance in post-socialist countries. The editors value, in particular, those findings that reveal the shortcomings of some mainstream scholarly beliefs. These beliefs often replicate popular accounts when making

strong statements on the nature of local governance systems (e.g., the role of political parties, the nature of ideological cleavages, and the impact of electoral systems) with little evidence or based on simplified analogies with national political systems. The study, which reveals that citizens' interest and actual involvement in shaping the decisions of local governments are lowest in the extremely small municipalities (mainly due to their lack of financial autonomy which, realistically, will remain the state of affairs in this region for some time), also undermines some frequently voiced political convictions. The editors stress that these findings will be somewhat surprising but very instructive to those, in particular, who believe unconditionally in the ultimate democracy effects of the maximum degree of decentralization.

The analyses published in this volume powerfully demonstrate that there are some aspects of local democratic governance that are poorly researched, and the 'Indicators' project provides much needed data for their study. The problem of gender and media are cases in point. Nonetheless, the authors of both the gender and the media topics argue that a more refined inquiry and more ambitious data generation would be essential to produce subtle analyses of local governance structures in the region in their respective problem areas. This commonality stands in spite of the fact that the gender issue has had a relatively lower profile than the media in recent broader democracy debates.

This volume sends a strong invitation to both researchers affiliated with the 'Indicators' project and to any external collaborating parties to identify further measurable components of local democratic governance. These might explain, for example, the different role models (delegates and trustees) and leadership styles of local representatives that have a crucial impact on the quality of local democracy and of policymaking processes. The editors stress that, in addition to finding the missing variables of political culture, the 'Indicators' inquiry should also contemplate developing case studies in the countries already researched, that portray the subtleties of interplay between different variables of the quantitative analysis.

Finally, through the work of the authors in this volume we are shown not only the achievements of the 'Indicators' project, but also its lacunae. Topics of autonomy in the context of intergovernmental relations, the significance of transparency, mainstream and experimental forms of inclusive policymaking, and the correlation of democracy performance and policy effectiveness should be addressed in all areas where the project is generating knowledge: data gathering, analyses, and advocacy as well.

4. BEYOND RESEARCH

Democracy-monitoring projects could and should have an impact beyond the wider research community. The ‘Indicators’ project has concentrated so far on gathering and analyzing data indispensable for evaluating the performance of local democracies. In the next phase of the project, the sponsoring and implementing institutions will mobilize interest on the part of various national and subnational actors who have some leverage to inspire the prime actors in local governance to reflect critically upon their practices. Along with other potential instruments, the survey data could also be used to rank the performance of local democracy within particular countries, thus stimulating some healthy competition among cities/municipalities. The monitoring methodology could, for example, be adopted as a collective exercise to be used by associations of local municipalities within a particular country. Individual municipal governments seeking accessible and affordable self-evaluation methods could also apply the methodology for their own purposes. National governments could rely on it as a measure of the outcomes of major political and policy reform initiatives. International organizations could add their governance assessment outcomes to the results of the ‘Indicators’ project, to produce more comprehensive data. Finally, regular reports on the status of local democracy in any post-socialist country should be seen as a serious effort to shed light on the fundamental issues of social and political transformation.

NOTES

- ¹ See Mouritzen, E. and J. Svara (2002). *Leadership at the Apex*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press; Page, E. and M. Goldsmith (1987). *Central and Local Government Relations*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage; John Peter (2001). *Local Governance in Western Europe*. London: Sage; Hesse, J.J. and L.J. Sharpe (1991). Conclusions. In: J.J. Hesse (ed.). *Local Government and Urban Affairs in an International Perspective*. Baden-Baden.
- ² See a comprehensive analysis of the paradigm shift in: Pierre, Jon, and B. Guy Peters (2000). *Governance, Politics, and the State*. London: MacMillan Press.
- ³ Horváth, Tamás M. (ed.) (2000). *Decentralization: Experiments and Reforms*. Vol. 1 of the Local Governments in Central and Eastern Europe. LGI Books. Budapest: Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, Open Society Institute–Budapest.
- ⁴ Carothers, Tom (2004). *Critical Mission. Essays on Democracy Promotion*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. See in particular Section 4.
- ⁵ The most important democratic audit projects: The UK Democratic Audit (http://www.fhit.org/democratic_audit/index.html), International IDEA’s program on the “State of Democracy” (http://www.idea.int/ideas_work/14_political_state.htm), The SNS Democratic Audit of Sweden (<http://www.const.sns.se/dr/english/>), The Canada Democratic Audit

(http://www.mta.ca/faculty/arts/canadian_studies/audit.htm), The Democratic Audit of the Institutions of European Integration (<http://www.one-europe.ac.uk/cgi-bin/esrc/world/db.cgi/proj.htm?id=29>), The Democratic Audit of Australia (<http://democratic.audit.anu.edu.au/>)

- ⁶ David Beetham (ed.) (1994). Key Principles and Indices for a Democratic Audit. In: *Defining and Measuring Democracy*. London: SAGE. p. 28.
- ⁷ Survey instruments as well as the anonymous aggregate data of surveys can be viewed electronically at the website of the Tocqueville Research Center (<http://www.t-rc.org>). Individual data can be obtained in SPSS format from T-RC, with the permission of LGI.
- ⁸ Gábor Soós, Gábor Toka, and Glen Wright (2002). *The State of Local Democracy in Central Europe*. Budapest: Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, Open Society Institute–Budapest.

Parties and Political Culture in Central and Eastern European Local Governments

Paweł Swianiewicz, Adam Mielczarek

ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses issues related to the presence and significance of parties in the local politics of seven countries of Central and Eastern Europe. First, we look at how many councilors and mayors belong to parties or use party support in election campaigns, and then we consider the relative importance of party politics in the local decision-making process. As there is a great variation among the seven countries on this issue, we have tested the variation against some possible institutional factors: the nature of the electoral system (proportional or majoritarian), the position and method of appointment of mayors (strong mayoralty versus collective leadership), and the type of territorial organization (fragmented or consolidated systems). Our analysis confirms that territorial organization and electoral systems have a significant impact, but fails to find convincing evidence on the impact of the mayor's position. We also examine political fragmentation of local councils and find that it is usually significantly higher than in Western European countries.

Another factor germane to our topic is the political culture of individual parties and its possible influence on the views of the local councilors. Our approach was to check the views of councilor-members of different parties on certain topics: their self-location on the left-right political scale, market individualism, social individualism, egalitarianism, elitism (paternalism), and their acceptance of the general direction of political transformation. We conclude that the most vital cleavage still seems to be the division between post-communists and groups rooted in the former democratic opposition. But the parties themselves are not homogeneous—councilors from the same party differ significantly in their views related to political culture, and this variation is not much lower than it is among all the councilors from various parties.

Parties and Political Culture in Central and Eastern European Local Governments

Paweł Swianiewicz, Adam Mielczarek

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of party politics in local governments in Central and Eastern Europe has not yet received the attention it deserves. An unspoken and rather naive assumption persists that party politics on a local level is not (and should not be) important. Facts and events that obviously contradict this assumption are treated as embarrassing distortions rather than as a natural part of the fabric of local politics.

But in classical theories of representative democracy, political parties are treated as an essential aspect of pluralist societies (Dahl and Tufte 1973; Dahl 1961). In his comparative study of urban community power structures, Clark (1967) suggests that having a strong system of political parties increases the chances for pluralist, as opposed to elitist, local decision-making. And party politics is increasingly being seen as important at the local government level in various countries. Sundberg (1987) noted the politicization of municipal elections in Nordic countries, where the role of political parties in the nomination of local councilors increased consistently over time. His study shows that between the 1930s and 1990s the proportion of councilors in parties increased from less than half to over 90% (see table 1.1).

Another example of highly politicized local government is found in the UK, where several studies have confirmed the role of parties in making policy choices. Perhaps the most comprehensive was a study of Sharpe and Newton (1984), who argued that party color had an increasing importance on spending patterns during the 1960s and 1970s. They came to the conclusion that parties “*are not mere transmission belts of majority interests or needs, but they have views of their own as to what policies they wish to pursue, and they only modify these views if forced to do so because they have a close competitor*” (p. 202). Several other studies have confirmed these observations (e.g., Barnett et al. 1990, Page et al. 1990, Hoggart 1984, Hoggart and Shrives 1991).

The role of parties in local government has been somewhat weaker in southern Europe, although Balme (1989), for example, shows that political color has been an

Table 1.1
Proportion of Councilors Elected from Party Lists in Nordic Countries [%]

Year	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
1915	34	NA	38	NA
1925	57	NA	50	NA
1935	58	NA	62	NA
1945	63	62	66	70
1955	60	79	77	99
1965	58	89	85	98
1975	86	96	91	98
1985	90	98	95	99

Source: Based on Sundberg (1987).

important factor explaining policy choices in France. A study by Hoffman-Martinot (1998) shows that over 97% of Norwegian or Finnish mayors were members of political parties in the 1980s, while in France the proportion was considerably lower (below 85%). In Belgium, 90% of mayors belong to political parties (Steyvers 2003). In addition, it appears that cities with strong party organizations (SPO) differ significantly in their policy choices from local governments in which parties are weak (Miranda 1987).

But a diminution of the role and social prestige of parties has become evident in several newer analyses. This process is seen as one element of the crisis of traditional representative democracy, and it concerns both the central and local political scenes (Franklin et al. 1992, Clark and Lipset 1991, Clark and Lipset 2001, Clark 2000, Gabriel et al. 2002). Denters (2002) shows that in the Netherlands, membership in parties dropped from around 10% of the adult population in the 1950s and 1960s to just over 2.5% in the 1990s. Local politics no doubt reflected this process as well.

While the crisis of parties in Western local democracies is connected to an extent with the values and attitudes of postmodernism (as described by Back, 2003), the situation is quite different in Central and Eastern Europe. The political arena is extremely unstable, where new parties are created and disappear every year, and many splits and mergers occur on a regular basis. One very simple but powerful indicator of the weakness of political parties is the low party membership in this part of Europe (see table 1.2). In all four CEE countries included in this table, party membership is lower than the mean, and in Poland it is the lowest among the 20 countries in the study. Some authors also claim that the traditional left-right dimension is increasingly irrelevant and that the differences between parties in Central and Eastern Europe are often difficult to define. Last but not least, the reputation of political parties among the general public in Central and Eastern Europe is low—they are seen as pursuing selfish goals rather than taking care of the public wealth.

The picture is even more chaotic at the local level. Low membership rates make the role of political parties in local politics especially problematic. A study of local governments in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, conducted in the early 1990s by the Local Democracy and Innovation Project (LDI), concluded that “party membership” was seen as one of the least important qualifications for local councilors (Baldersheim et al. 1996). This observation was confirmed by a second wave of LDI projects conducted in 1997 in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia.

In this chapter we attempt to map and analyze the role of political parties in local governments in an empirical, comparative setting of several countries of Central and

Table 1.2
Party Members as a Percentage of Voters

Country	Year	Total membership base	Membership/electorate ratio [%]
Austria	1999	1,031,052	17.66
Finland	1998	400,615	9.65
Norway	1997	242,022	7.31
Greece	1998	600,000	6.77
Belgium	1999	480,804	6.55
Switzerland	1997	293,000	6.38
Sweden	1998	365,588	5.54
Denmark	1998	205,382	5.14
Estonia	2002	14,400	4.90
Slovakia	2000	165,277	4.11
Italy	1998	1,974,040	4.05
Portugal	2000	346,504	3.99
Czech Republic	1999	319,800	3.94
Spain	2000	1,131,250	3.42
Ireland	1998	86,000	3.14
Germany	1999	1,780,173	2.93
Holland	2000	294,469	2.51
Hungary	1999	173,600	2.15
United Kingdom	1998	840,000	1.92
France	1999	615,219	1.57
Poland	2000	326,500	1.15
Mean			4.99

Source: Mair, van Biezen (2001) quoted after Walecki (2002), with the exception of Estonia which is based on Sikk (2003).

Note: Bold font indicates Central and East European countries.

Eastern Europe. The first part of the analysis focuses on the changing role of political parties in Central and East European local governments, as well as the differences both between and within individual countries. The second part looks at differences in the political cultures of parties present in local governments, as measured by the values and opinions declared by the local politicians who are members of these parties.

1.1 Approaching the Topic: Research Questions

The very wide range of questions asked in our research prohibits discussion of every single issue in depth. But rather than limit the scope of the analysis, we decided to take a broad approach. Since this topic has never been the subject of a comprehensive analysis, we feel it is more valuable to explore wide-ranging aspects of it, even if (due to space and data limitations) some of our conclusions must be regarded as temporary and needing confirmation through more detailed analysis in the future. Four basic research questions, discussed below, provided the direction for our study.

1.1.1 What Is the Role of Political Parties in Local Politics?

In looking at this issue we want to discover, first, if parties are present (i.e., do they have their councilors and mayors) and second, how influential they are (i.e., do they play a role in local decision-making).

The second question is asked in several ways. First, we use the “reputational” method derived from Hunter’s classic community power study (1953) to determine whether political parties are seen as important actors in local politics. Second, we ask councilors and mayors to what extent they consider the opinion of their party committees when they make important decisions. Third, we ask how important the parties are to councilors and mayors as a source of information on local policy issues.

As mentioned earlier, party membership is at a low level in Central and Eastern Europe. We also know that parties are rather disliked by the general public and that the dominant ideology of local government reform has been anti-partisan. A typical slogan used by many reformers but also by local leaders is that “a hole in the bridge is not a political issue.” This supposes that the issues local governments deal with are politically neutral or “objective” and do not leave much space for partisan or ideological debate. The slogan itself is highly controversial. One could argue that while a “hole” may not be political, the question of who should fix it, or how, can be easily connected to ideological value choices. Based on the results of a 1991 LDI project survey, Baldersheim et al. (1996) has noted that “not being a member of a political party” was among the most desirable characteristics of an “ideal local councilor.” A 1997 LDI survey showed

quite similar results. However, new parties are gradually establishing their place in the political system, and local government is an important field for their activity.

These observations lead us to hypothesize that:

- *The role of political parties in local politics is not very important (e.g., the membership rate among mayors and councilors is significantly lower than in countries of the European Union), but has been gradually increasing during the last twelve years.*

1.1.2 What Is the Variation in the Role of Political Parties in Different Municipalities?

The essence of local democracy is variation. What is true and important in one town can be irrelevant in another, and the same applies to the role of political parties. One can expect that the shape of local politics varies from one country to another, but also from one municipality to another within one country. The variation may be accounted for by a number of factors, loosely grouped as:

- (i) country-specific factors, such as political culture, and
- (ii) the institutional features of the local government system.

We have focussed on the latter group, and particularly on the factors mentioned at the beginning of this section.

Parties, like other organized groups, are usually more numerous and more active in larger communities (Dahl and Tufte 1973, Clark 1967). Also, as noted in the introductory section, political parties are usually more significant in the territorially consolidated countries of northern Europe than in southern Europe which is more geographically fragmented. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the rapid increase in the level of party membership of councilors in Nordic countries (see table 1.1) occurred at the same time as the territorial amalgamation reforms.

These observations have led to our next two hypotheses:

- *The increase in the role of parties in local politics is faster in countries with more consolidated territorial systems (Poland, and Bulgaria rather than Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, and Slovakia).*
- *The increase is also faster in big cities (in which party organizations often play a decisive role in local politics) than in small communities (where parties are often still nonexistent and most councilors as well as mayors are elected as independents).*

Proportional representation forces the candidates to be organized in larger electoral lists, and such a system requires that the groups have recognizable labels that voters can vote for. For this reason our fourth hypothesis expects that:

- *The role of parties is bigger in countries with proportional electoral systems than in countries with one-ward, majority local council elections.*

Comparative studies of the local government systems of CEE countries (Horváth 2000, Kandeva 2001) indicate that most of the analyzed countries belong to the first group (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Romania), while Slovakia represents the majority system (although elections are organized in multi-councilor wards). Hungary and Poland are more complicated, as election is based on the majority principle in municipalities with a population below 10,000 in Hungary and below 20,000 in Poland. The larger Polish local governments have a proportional system, while in the larger cities of Hungary the system is more complex and could be classified as mixed. This may strengthen the difference between small and large units, as we suggested earlier. However, the experience of EU countries suggests that a high intensity of partisan politics in local governments may also coincide with majoritarian electoral systems (e.g., local governments in the UK).

The position of mayor is another important factor. There is a clear distinction between countries where the council elects the mayor (Estonia and Latvia) and those where a popular election by the general public occurs (all remaining countries). Poland is a particularly interesting case, as the system was changed in 2002, and an open goal of the electoral reform was to limit party influence on local governance. In the UK, the introduction of direct election of mayors resulted in non-partisan mayors in half of the communities that adopted this institutional arrangement (Elcock and Fenwick 2003). Mayor Ken Livingstone in London is perhaps the best known example of this phenomenon.

However, empirical data from OECD countries are inconsistent on this question. Mouritzen and Svava (2002, 176, 184–190) note that in “strong-mayor” systems (parts of the USA, France, Italy, and Portugal), the role of local politician as a spokesperson for a party is usually perceived as much less important than it is in “committee-leader” or “collective-leader” systems¹ (Sweden, Denmark, the UK, and the Netherlands). Countries with “council-manager” systems (parts of the USA, Finland, and Norway) are much more diversified, but on average they are closer to weak than strong with respect to the role of the spokesperson for a party. Although this observation is made on the basis of Chief Executive Officers’ (CEOs) opinions on the characteristics of an “ideal politician,” Mouritzen and Svava note that “the attitudes of CEOs do not determine the behaviour of elected officials, but they presumably contribute to the definition of norms of appropriate behavior that elected officials seek to meet” (185). On the other hand, Mouritzen and Svava discovered in the same research that in CEOs’ perceptions of the actual roles performed by mayors, partisan leadership was the most frequent in the committee-leader form, followed by the strong-mayor system, while it was weakest in countries with council-manager and collective forms of government (69–71). (It

is interesting that the council-manager form is perceived as the least partisan in both instances.)

Of all the CEE countries analyzed, Estonia, Latvia, and Poland before the 2002 reform have the closest to a collective form of leadership (although in many respects the situation in Poland before 2002 was similar to the committee-leader form). Hungary, where the council plays a strong role and where most executive functions are performed by the CEO, is not far from the council-manager form, although the direct election of the mayor and a more than ceremonial role for him or her is a deviation from the ideal model. The situation in Bulgaria, Poland (after 2002), Slovakia, or Romania is more difficult to classify. It is definitely close to the strong-mayor system, but a frequent lack of control of the majority of the council is an important difference from the description provided by Mouritzen and Svava. The same applies to limitations on the hiring or firing of key persons in the administration, which are not too severe in Slovakia or Romania, but considerably limit the power of mayors in Poland (where approval is needed for the nomination of the city treasurer or city secretary) or in Bulgaria (where council appoints deputy mayors). Perhaps this form could be called “strong-mayor with a strong control by the council,” which is closer to “sharing leadership”—to use the label of Getimis and Grigoriadou (2003).

Disregarding the conflicting conclusions which may be drawn from the Mouritzen and Svava study, and considering instead the frequently stated goals of executive power reforms in CEE local governments, a fifth hypothesis emerges:

- *The role of parties in local politics is larger in countries with collective forms of leadership (Latvia, Estonia, Poland before 2002) than in countries closer to the strong-mayor system (Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland after 2002), and even larger in Hungary where the system is closest to the council-manager form.*

1.1.3 How Fragmented and Volatile Is the Local Political Scene?

The political environment is an important condition shaping the capacity of local governments to act effectively. We can expect that a very fragmented local council as well as frequently changing governing coalitions will make implementation of long-term policies extremely difficult. Mouritzen and Svava (2002) cite data according to which chief administrators see conflicts between political parties as one of the significant factors having a negative effect on their performance. Although party fragmentation is not the only factor influencing the intensity of conflicts between countries (e.g., the absence or presence of a consensual style of politics is also important), there is no doubt that conflicts within highly consolidated councils are less likely to occur. Our earlier study suggests that political fragmentation in local governments in Polish cities is much larger than in the cities of Western Europe (see Swianiewicz and Klimska 2003, as well as

Gabriel et al. 2002). We expect that the same may be true in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, so our next hypothesis states that:

- *Political fragmentation and volatility of local councils is significant (more than is typical in West European cities) and may be potentially dangerous for the management capabilities of local governments.*

Another factor that may potentially influence the capacity to implement coherent long-term policies is the volatility of political parties in local elections. We expect that this is quite high in Central and Eastern Europe. This expectation is based on the general observation that rapid changes occur in the political arena of the analyzed countries.² This high political volatility is well documented in Polish local governments (see Swianiewicz and Klimska 2003 for comparison of 1998 and 2002 local election results), but unfortunately our data do not permit extending this analysis to other countries as well.

1.1.4 Do Different Parties Represent Distinct and Coherent Political Cultures?

Are local parties significantly different from each other? Do local councilors who are members of or declare support for different parties have distinct values and different policy preferences? What are the typical features of the political culture of supporters and members of various parties?

Earlier attempts to answer these questions have not produced a very clear picture. An analysis of the variation of political cultures of the supporters of different parties in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, based on a 1991 survey, was rather inconclusive (Swianiewicz and Clark 1996). However, a few years later, an analysis of a Polish local government election in 1994 gave an unexpectedly coherent picture of the variation between local party members (Swianiewicz 1996).

In our analysis we distinguish between several dimensions of political culture:³

- the left-right self-location of local politicians;
- market individualism;
- social individualism;
- egalitarianism; and
- elitism (paternalism).

In addition to this set of general values local leaders believe in, we take into account three dimensions that are particularly important in Central and Eastern Europe at the present time:

- the level of “acceptance for general system changes” after 1990 (measured by acceptance of a democratic system and integration with the European Union);
- “communist roots/path dependency” of party members; and
- modernism (measured by education level and Internet use).

The general picture of the political arena in the analyzed countries is often somewhat chaotic. Frequent changes of party maps, unexpected changes in governing coalitions, and unclear ideological differences between the main political opponents on important policy issues are all typical elements of the picture in Central and Eastern Europe. These observations lead us to a further hypothesis that:

- *The party orientation (sympathy, membership) of local councilors and mayors is only loosely correlated with their political culture and policy preferences. Nevertheless, parties differ from each other and our report will attempt to map these differences.*

Also, we propose that:

- *There is not a clear international pattern of differences between parties. Parties that use similar labels (such as liberal, social-democrat, and in particular left- and right-wing) in different countries are not necessarily similar to each other.*

1.2 Sources of Data

The Indicators of Local Democratic Governance Project (ILDGP) survey, conducted in 2000–2003, has provided the most important source of data. The ILDGP project included an extensive survey of councilors and mayors (Local Representatives Survey—LRS), and another of chief executive officers, from which we derive information on the political composition of local councils as well as the political position of mayors.

Some supplementary, comparative data have also been drawn from surveys in 1991 and 1997 that were part of the Local Democracy and Innovation project (LDI).⁴

Most of the analysis is based on a survey of councilors and mayors conducted during 2002 and 2003 in five countries: Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. A survey of chief administrative officers conducted in 2000 and 2001 within the same project has made it possible to extend our data in some cases to Latvia and Romania. Historical analyses based on LDI surveys are limited to Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. Table 1.3 illustrates the sources of data and the sample size in individual surveys.

Table 1.3
Data Sources and Sample Size in Individual Surveys

	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary	Latvia	Poland	Romania	Slovakia
Survey of councilors—Indicators of Local Democratic Governance Project (2002–2003)							
N	956	983	982	NA	759	NA	890
Survey of mayors—Indicators of Local Democratic Governance Project (2002–2003)							
N	95	77	70	NA	38	NA	109
Survey of Chief Executive Officers—Indicators of Local Democratic Governance Project (2000–2001)							
N	189	291	646	241	579	557	413
Survey of mayors—Local Democracy and Innovation Project							
1991	NA	NA	206	NA	503	NA	167
1997	NA	NA	NA	NA	521	NA	313
Survey of councilors—Local Democracy and Innovation Project (1991)							
N	NA	NA	206	NA	395	NA	330

2. ARE PARTIES PRESENT IN LOCAL POLITICS?

2.1 PARTY MEMBERSHIP

Despite the crisis of partisan politics discussed earlier, party membership of local councilors in several of the EU countries is quite high, and usually much higher than in Central and Eastern Europe, as table 1.4 shows.

Interestingly enough, the ranking in table 1.4 does not fully correspond with the ranking of party membership presented in table 1.2. In the UK, Ireland, and the Netherlands, the proportion of voters that are members of political parties is relatively low, but their local councils are highly politicized. Territorial organization is a very important factor, and we should note that the EU countries included in the table are mostly located in northern Europe, where they are usually more territorially consolidated. According to Loughlin (2001), the situation is slightly different in the more fragmented parts of southern Europe. In France, political parties are virtually nonexistent in small localities, and the national parties exert real control over local coalitions only in towns over 30,000. In both Italy and Greece, most councilors traditionally belong to parties, although the picture has begun to change recently in Italy.

The differences found among European countries are confirmed by data on the party membership of local mayors (see table 1.5). The level of partisanship is lowest in Central and Eastern Europe, while it is most often highest in countries traditionally associated with north European local government systems.

Table 1.4
Party Members as Percent of Total Local Government Councilors
in EU and Central and Eastern European Countries

EU countries		CEE countries	
United Kingdom (1997)	90.4	Bulgaria (2002)	86.4
Ireland (1991)	90.4	Estonia (2002)	49.4
Germany (1997)*	90.0	Slovakia (2002)	44.9
Sweden (1998)**	94.6	Poland (2003)	34.9
Denmark (1997)**	96.7	Hungary (2002)	34.7
Finland (1996)**	93.2		
Netherlands (1994)**	75.0		

Note: * Municipalities over 10,000 population.
** Excluding small, local parties.

Source: EU countries—Loughlin (2001), CEE countries—ILDGP surveys.

The position of Bulgaria in the CEE ranking seems to confirm the relationship between territorial fragmentation and the partisan character of local councils. Bulgaria has both the largest local governments and the highest proportion of party councilors. But Poland, which also has large local governments, does not confirm this simple model. Similarly, Slovakia is not last in the ranking of party membership rates, even though it has the most fragmented territorial system. To analyze this relationship more carefully, we need to present more precise data about the relationship between councilors' party affiliation and the size of local governments (table 1.6).

As we expected, the party membership of councilors is much more frequent in big cities than in small, usually rural communities. The strongest correlation was found in Hungary, where fewer than one in ten councilors belong to a political party in municipalities of below 2,000 population, but almost nine in ten in cities over 50,000. The only exception is Bulgaria, where party membership is equally high in all size cohorts.

Table 1.6 also shows that national averages may be misleading to a large extent. Analyzed variables are often highly dependent on the size of the local government, and size structure is different in different countries. For easier comparison, we calculate the "size-standardized mean"⁵ in this and the following tables (i.e., the value that would be found if distribution of local governments among size groups were identical in all analyzed countries). A comparison of party membership rates for councilors in Poland and Hungary provides a good illustration—the mean is similar in both countries, but when local governments of similar sizes are compared, the membership rate is significantly higher in Hungary (and this difference is reflected in the size-standardized index).

Table 1.5
Party Affiliation of City Mayors in European Countries

Country	Size of the sample	Percent of mayors who are members of political parties	Percent of mayors elected as representatives of political parties
Sweden	139	100	NA
Holland	256	99	NA
England	122	96	96
Germany	632	79	76
Switzerland	111	95	NA
Belgium	139	98	99
France	181	82	NA
Italy	253	79	89
Greece	138	82	NA
Czech Republic	78	78	86
Hungary	92	62	76
Poland	230	40	61

Source: 2003 survey of “European Mayors” international research project.

Note: Data concern local governments with over 10,000 residents.

According to the data in table 1.6, party councilors are the most common in Bulgaria and the least common in Poland. The situation in Hungary, Estonia, and Slovakia is similar, but in Hungary membership is definitely less frequent in small local governments, while in the larger ones it is even more common than in Slovakia and (to a lesser extent) in Estonia.

We expected that in countries with indirect election of mayors, party membership among mayors would be higher than among councilors, while in countries with direct, popular elections there would be no difference, or even lower membership among mayors than among councilors (this might occur in countries with direct election of mayors and proportional elections to the council). Our data on mayors’ party affiliation are also presented in table 1.6 (this data includes two more countries—Romania and Latvia).

The first observation is that the relationship with size is identical to but not as strong as the case of councilors: membership increases with growing population size. Correlation coefficients are highest in Hungary and Poland, but they are also statistically significant in Estonia, Latvia, and Slovakia. Only in Bulgaria and Romania (the two countries with the highest politicization of local governments) is there no relationship between the two variables. But how do differences between the membership rates of mayors and councilors fit with our theoretical expectations? The summary of our hypothesis and its verification is presented in table 1.7.

Table 1.6
Presence of Political Parties in Local Governments (2000–2003)

	Bulgaria		Estonia		Hungary		Latvia		Poland		Romania		Slovakia	
	Coun- cils	Mayors	Coun- cils	Mayors	Coun- cils	Mayors	Mayors	Coun- cils	Coun- cils	Mayors	Mayors	Coun- cils	Coun- cils	Mayors
Percent of councilors/mayors who are members of political parties														
Mean	86.4	76.4	59.4	81.3	34.7	18.4	32.0	34.9	46.3	94.2	94.2	44.9	44.9	47.7
Size-standardized mean	85.3	78.4	56.9	80.2	40.5	25.3	47.7	29.4	41.7	95.0	95.0	53.9	53.9	47.8
Pearson correlation between size and membership rate			***	**	****	***	**	****	***			***	***	**
Percent of councilors/mayors who declare in the last election they were supported or recommended by political parties														
	Coun- cils	Mayors	Coun- cils	Mayors	Coun- cils	Mayors	Mayors	Coun- cils	Mayors	Mayors	Mayors	Coun- cils	Coun- cils	Mayors
	(N=956)	(N=95)	(N=983)	(N=77)	(N=982)	(N=70)	(N=241)	(N=759)	(N=38)	(N=557)	(N=557)	(N=890)	(N=890)	(N=109)
Mean	94.4	96.8	76.4	75.3	44.5	35.7	NA	59.4	71.1 (2)	NA	NA	78.4	78.4	67.9
Size-standardized mean	95.5	96.8	80.6	78.9	53.8	59.9	NA	53.7	71.9	NA	NA	83.0	83.0	63.0
Pearson correlation between size and membership rate			***		****	****	NA	***			NA	***	***	

Note: * means correlation significant at 0.05 level; ** at .01 level, *** at 0.001 level, and **** at 0.0001 level. Blank spaces mean insignificant correlations.

(1) Data in the table concern 2001 (before the introduction of the direct election of mayors). In 2003 the ratio dropped in Poland to 36.8; however, these data are based on a small sample of 38 mayors and therefore need to be treated with caution.

(2) Data from 2002 local elections (direct election of mayors).

Sources: Mayors' membership in political parties—LDGP survey of Chief Executive Officers (2000–2002), remaining data—LDGP survey of councilors (2002–2003).

We expect that direct election of mayors pushes down and indirect election pushes up party membership among mayors. Similarly, a proportional electoral system pushes up and a majoritarian system pushes down party membership among councilors.

Basically, our hypotheses have been confirmed. The most telling case is Poland, where the first of the analyzed surveys was conducted before 2002 and the second after 2002, when the direct election of mayors was introduced. After the reform the proportion of mayors that are party members dropped, and in big cities (with a proportional electoral system for councils) it is lower nowadays than among councilors (the opposite was true before the 2002 reform). Indeed, we can find numerous examples of successful mayoral candidates who run without the clear support of any party, or even against the will of the apparatus of their former party (Swianiewicz and Klimska 2003). A huge difference between membership rates among councilors in small (with majoritarian) and big (with a proportional system) local governments in Hungary and Poland also confirms our theory.

But country specific factors matter too. If institutional factors were solely valid, we would observe the highest party membership rate among Estonian, Latvian, and Polish (before 2002) mayors. In reality it was still relatively low in Poland and highest in Romania, with its direct elections of mayors. In addition, institutional factors cannot explain big differences between membership rates in small local governments in Hungary and Slovakia.

2.2 Party Support in Local Elections

Occasionally a candidate in a council or mayoral election is not a party member but is still closely connected with a political group, which recommends or supports him or her in the campaign. The lower part of table 1.6 confirms that using a “party flag” or party organizational machinery in the campaign is much more frequent than formal membership.

With councilors in Bulgaria and Hungary, the difference between the proportion of party members and those using partisan support in the election is not large. But in Poland, Estonia, and Slovakia it is quite significant, especially in relatively small local governments. The support probably takes a different form depending on the electoral system. In Estonia (with proportional elections) the candidates, not being formal members, are included on official party lists. In Poland and Slovakia (with a majoritarian system in small local governments), formally independent candidates receive financial and organizational support from parties.

With respect to mayors, the difference between formal membership and party support is greatest in Poland and Slovakia and least in Estonia. The difference is probably explained by the indirect election of mayors in the Baltic countries and the direct system in Poland and Slovakia. In direct elections there is more space for formally independent candidates to use organizational support from a political group.

Table 1.7
Comparison of Party Membership of Mayors and Councilors: Expectations and Results

		Factors influencing theoretical expectations		Empirical findings	Verification of hypothesis (1) and (2)
		(1) Election of mayor	(2) Council election		
Bulgaria		Direct	Proportional	Membership higher among councilors	Confirmed
Estonia		Indirect	Proportional	Membership similarly high among both groups	Confirmed
Slovakia		Direct	Majoritarian	Membership similarly high among both groups	Confirmed
Hungary	Below 10,000	Direct	Majoritarian	Membership similar in small local governments, but higher among mayors in bigger towns. Huge difference between rates among councilors in small and big local governments.	Confirmed
	Over 10,000	Direct	Mixed		
Poland	Below 20,000 before 2002	Indirect	Majoritarian	Mayors' membership dropped after 2002; in big cities, a higher rate among mayors before 2002 and a higher rate among councilors after 2002; in small local governments, a higher rate among mayors all the time. Huge difference between rates among councilors in small and big local governments.	Confirmed
	Below 20,000 after 2002	Direct	Majoritarian		
	Over 20,000 before 2002	Indirect	Proportional		
	Over 20,000 after 2002	Direct	Proportional		

2.3 Which Parties?

Having considered the extent of party affiliation in general, we would also like to know which parties are the most popular among local government politicians. We approached this question in two ways: by determining which group has the largest proportion of councilors and mayors, and by establishing the net sympathy of councilors and mayors for individual parties. For this, respondents were asked to define their attitude towards major parties on a seven-point scale, with net sympathy being the difference between the percentage of those who selected six or seven and those who selected one or two.

The results are presented in figures 1.1 and 1.2, and include all parties having more than fifteen members among the councilor-respondents.⁶ Only five parties have members constituting more than 10% of each sample of councilors. Two are Bulgarian—the socialist BSP (at 29% the clear leader in our classification) and the UDF. Next is the Polish SLD (Alliance of the Democratic Left) at 18.7% followed by the Hungarian Socialist Party (14.7%) and the Estonian People’s Union (12.3%). It is worth stressing that three of those five parties have roots in the previous system (the Bulgarian, Hungarian, and Polish socialists/social-democrats). Only one of them (the UDF) is related to the anti-communist opposition.

But high membership does not imply general sympathy towards the party. For example, almost 20% of councilors in Poland belong to the post-communist, social-democratic party (the SLD), but it is one of the most disliked parties by other local politicians. On the net sympathy⁷ measure it scored –31%; only the Estonian Pro Patria Union has a worse score. Another of the “top five”—the Estonian People’s Union—has only a marginally positive net sympathy (+3%). The only instance of high party membership co-existing with a high average level of sympathy among councilors is that of the Hungarian socialists. Both Bulgarian parties with a high level of membership among councilors (the post-communist BSP and the UDF with roots in the democratic opposition) scored negatively in net sympathy among the councilors in our sample. The BSP enjoys a very modest positive net sympathy among Bulgarian mayors, but this is not true for the UDF.

It is important to note that political parties are rather disliked in most of the analyzed countries. The net sympathy is positive in only four of 25 cases (the socialist and MDF parties in Hungary and the People’s Union and Res Publica in Estonia). In Poland, Slovakia, and to a large extent Bulgaria, all parties are generally disliked.

Our sample of mayors⁸ (figure 1.2) includes two more countries and many more parties with a significant membership rate. The absolute leader is the Romanian Social Democratic Party, which counts almost half of Romania’s mayors among its members. This is followed by the Bulgarian socialists (BSP) at 29.6%, the Bulgarian UDF at 22.2%, and the Estonian People’s Union at 20.6%. One more Estonian (Center) party and two Polish (the SLD and PSL) parties have more than 15% membership of all mayors in

Figure 1.1

Party Membership and Net Sympathy of Councilors toward Political Parties (2002–2003)

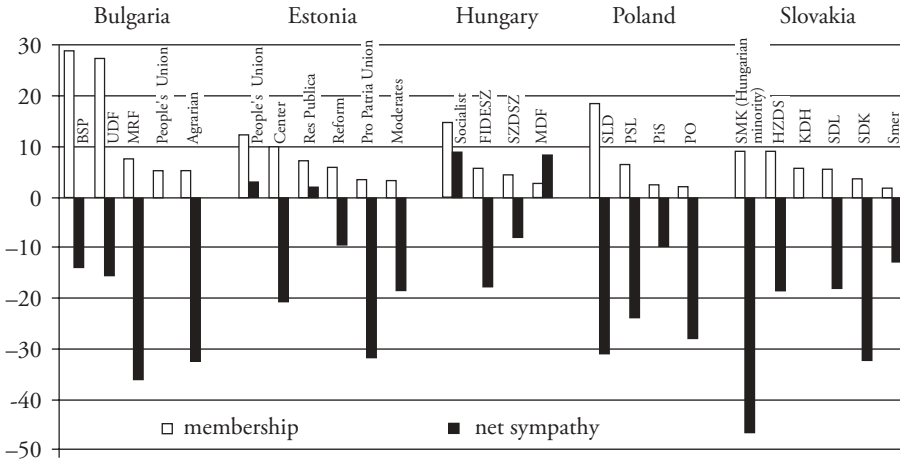
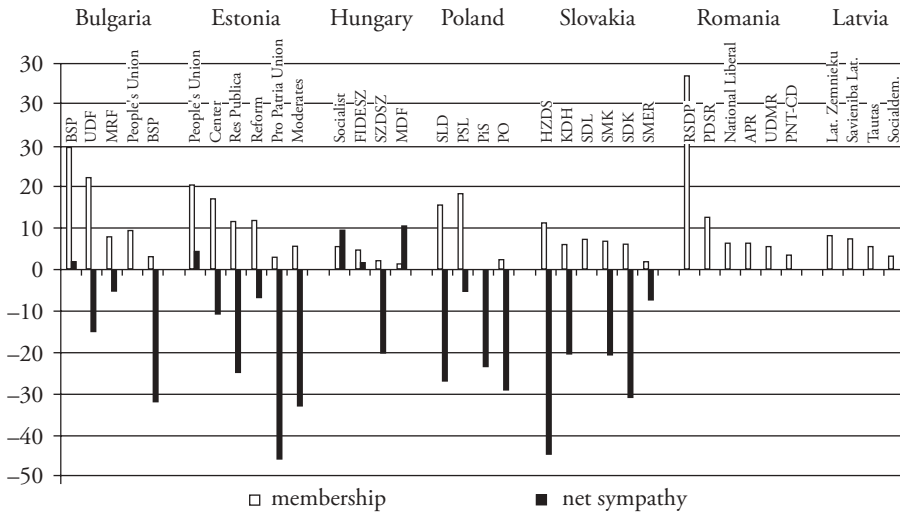


Figure 1.2

Party Membership and Net Sympathy of Mayors toward Political Parties (2000–2002)



their respective country's sample. Among this group, only the Estonian People's Union and the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) enjoy a net sympathy⁹ of all mayors. But the remaining "big parties" of local mayors—the Estonian Center Party as well as the Bulgarian UDF, Polish PSL and SLD—are rather disliked (the negative value of the index is the most significant in the last case).

2.4 Historical Evolution

We noted earlier that we should expect a gradual growth in the role of political parties in local governments. Can we find empirical confirmation of this expectation?

The answer is not straightforward. There is definitely a growing (although still low) party membership among Polish local politicians. The 1990 elections were organized just as the political transformation in Poland was beginning, and they could be described as “non-party” elections. In 1990 the old (post-communist) parties were mostly compromised and the new ones had not yet had enough time to develop. Local elections were dominated by Civic Committees (*Komitety Obywatelskie*) rooted in the Solidarity movement. Kowalczyk (1991) offers data showing that the Civic Committees won over 40% of all seats in local councils. Political parties were able to win (either independently or in coalitions) only about 8% of seats, and independent candidates won almost 40%. The low share of party councilors winning elections may be related to the fact that only 23% of councilors elected in 1990 had ever served as councilors before the 1990 political turn-over (“Radni pierwszej kadencji” 1994). Most of the remaining 77% came from the opposition movement, which had not yet started to organize political parties at that time.

The 1994 Polish local elections could be characterized as “hidden” partisan. The politicization of the election was a very clear trend in the large cities. In most cities with a proportional system, the majority of the seats in local councils was divided between three blocks: the SLD (post-communist social-democrats, often in coalition with the PSL), the Democratic Union (at that moment the strongest of the parties to emerge from the Solidarity movement) and coalitions of smaller rightist parties. This situation gave room for a variety of local coalitions. The relative balance between the blocks was one reason for the very long and difficult process of electing executive bodies (e.g., in Warsaw it took almost three months to elect the mayor). About 30% of candidates country-wide, but 60% in medium and big cities, were nominated by political parties (Halamska 2001).

But this does not mean that party labels were highly visible during the 1994 election campaign. Especially in small towns, candidates tried to avoid admitting to any political orientation. Responding to the popular disappointment with party politics, candidates most frequently used a strategy that assumed the “ideal” candidate did not belong to any party and represented no one except the community as a whole. Only such a candidate could be accepted by a considerable part of electorate as “our man” (i.e., not belonging to “them”—in this case the political elite). An anecdote from one of the medium-size cities illustrates this well. Two interviewed candidates unwillingly admitted they were members of the political party but immediately stressed that this membership had absolutely nothing to do with their electoral program or with what they planned to do as councilors (Swianiewicz 1996). Even in large cities, it was often

difficult to find any trace of party activity. Because of the proportional electoral system, candidates obviously needed to organize in groups, but they tried to avoid any party labels and used local names instead. In most cases a well-informed voter could easily recognize which party was hidden behind the name of a particular “local committee,” but candidates still considered it safer to avoid having the party name spelled out. The election campaign in Kraków provides a good example of this cautiousness: the major parties used committee names that communicate as little as possible, such as Your City, Self-governing Kraków, Alliance for Kraków, etc. (Swianiewicz 1996).

The 1998 local elections were more clearly dominated by national political parties. This time they used their own names, at least in the big cities. Although we do not have any precise statistics, we know that the majority of seats in the councils were divided between the post-communist SLD and a coalition of rightist post-Solidarity parties called the AWS (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność*—Electoral Action Solidarity), with the centrist Union of Freedom (UW) sometimes playing an important role in the big cities and the agrarian PSL in the smaller municipalities. As in the previous elections, independent candidates—at least, those who did not formally expose their party affiliation during the election campaign—played an important role in smaller municipalities, but in big cities the domination of the major political parties was very clear. Data provided by Halamska (2001) shows that in the whole country the AWS won 14% of council seats, the SLD 11%, the PSL (in coalition with two other small parties) 6%, and the UW 1.5%, although it remained very important in major cities. In 2003 almost two-thirds of councilors were still not members of any political party.

Similar changes occurred with the political affiliations of mayors. An unprecedented turnover of mayors took place in 1990. Almost none of the former communist executives in cities over 40,000 and only about 15% in smaller local governments kept their positions after the first democratic elections (Swianiewicz 1996). Almost 60% of new mayors came from the Solidarity Civic Committees (Baldersheim et al. 1996). A majority of Polish mayors interviewed in 1991 declared they were not members of any political party (Bartkowski 1996), and a large proportion had no clear party preference. In 1991, when asked for whom they would vote in a parliamentary election, over 30% answered they did not know! In 1997, 73% of mayors (and over 65% of mayors in municipalities with a population over 20,000) still declared they were not members of any political party. According to the 2000 IDLG survey, the proportion of non-partisan mayors dropped to 54%, but in 2003 (after the reform introducing direct election of mayors) it increased again to 63%.

The growth in partisan affiliation among local councilors and executive mayors in Poland during the 1990s may seem to be a natural evolution of local politics in times of transition and the building of a new party system. However, it is interesting that this phenomenon is not as strong in some other Central and Eastern European countries. In Slovakia there is a very clear difference between trends in council and mayoral elec-

tions. The percentage of Slovak deputies who ran as independents (i.e., neither members of parties nor recommended by any party) dropped from as much as 16% in 1990 to 9% in 1998 (Bernatova et al. 2001). A parallel situation is not observed among mayors in direct elections in Slovakia, where LDI project data suggest that the proportion of mayors who are members of political parties has remained relatively stable. Also, if we disregard those councilors who are recommended by political parties but are not members, the membership rate dropped after 1990 and has remained relatively stable during the last two elections.

In Hungary, also, the partisan affiliation ratio of mayors dropped after the extension of the direct election system to all local governments in 1994, while for councilors it remains at a relatively stable level. To be more precise: the ratio of independent councilors seems to slowly increase in small local governments (with a simple majority electoral system), while there is a slight opposite tendency in larger cities. This is illustrated by table 1.8.

Summing up, an increase in party involvement of local politicians is neither obvious nor common for all countries of Central and Eastern Europe. A summary of available survey data on the recent situation is presented in table 1.9.¹⁰

3. HOW INFLUENTIAL ARE THE PARTIES?

We know the extent to which parties are present in local governments, but how influential are they? Do they play a major role in crucial decisions? Do councilors take into account their party's perspective when voting on important issues? We attempt to answer these questions using the classic "reputational" method in which we ask councilors about their perception of the role of various actors in local decision-making. Tables 1.10 and 1.11 illustrate their opinions on the influence of parties on important decisions.

A comparison at the level of countries shows the influence of parties is definitely strongest in Bulgaria, followed by Poland (the two countries with the most territorially consolidated systems). Bulgaria is the only country in which more respondents think that parties are very influential than those who think parties' influence is very low (22% and 14%, respectively). The opposite is true in Poland, but the difference is not very large (16% think parties are very influential and 29% think their influence is very low). In the remaining three countries the number of those who believe parties' influence is very low is several times larger than those who think the opposite.

Party influence is significantly correlated with the size of local government, and this relationship has been found in all the analyzed countries.

We get similar results when we compare the perceived influence of parties with the influence of other actors. Councilors were asked to assess the importance of each of fifteen groups. In Bulgaria parties ranked fourth in influence, but in Slovakia they placed second-last in the ranking.

Table 1.8
Proportion of Independent Mayors and Councilors in Hungary [%]

	Mayors	Councilors		
		Total	Simple majority system (local governments below 10,000 residents)	Mixed system (local governments above 10,000 residents)
1990	80	NA	NA	NA
1994	84	69	81	9
1998	85	74	86	9
2002	85	73	87	6

Source: *Az önkormányzatok döntéshozói, 1990–2002* (2003), Budapest: Hungarian Statistical Office.

Table 1.9
Changes in Party Membership Rates—Councilors and Mayors [%]

	1991	1997	2000–01	2002–03
Mayors				
• Hungary	26	—	18	23
• Poland	—	27	46	37
• Slovakia	48	40	48	48
Councilors				
• Hungary	34	—	—	34
• Poland	8	—	—	35
• Slovakia	67	40	—	45

Source: 1991, 1997—LDI Project, 2000–2003—ILDGP surveys.

If our comparison across countries is limited to local governments of a similar size, the results are slightly different. Bulgaria remains the country with the strongest influence of parties, confirming the opinion that Bulgarian local governments are the most politicized. But it is more complicated to identify the countries where parties are seen as the least influential. If we consider small local governments (below 2,000 citizens), the least influence is found in Hungary and then in Slovakia. In both of these countries the local election system is based on the majoritarian principle, and this may contribute to the noticeable difference from Estonia, which has a proportional electoral system (although the results in Poland, where councils in small municipalities are also elected on this basis, do not quite fit with this explanation). If we consider big local governments (with populations above 10,000), the influence of parties is lowest in Estonia, followed by Slovakia, i.e., two countries with different electoral systems.

Table 1.10
Councilors' Perceptions of the Influence of Parties on Local Decision-making [%] (2002–2003)

	Bulgaria		Estonia		Hungary		Poland		Slovakia	
	Very high influence	Very low influence	Very high influence	Very low influence	Very high influence	Very low influence	Very high influence	Very low influence	Very high influence	Very low influence
Mean	22.4	13.5	9.0	43.5	11.0	53.7	16.2	29.4	6.0	52.9
Size-standardized mean	20.3	22.3	10.5	41.6	12.6	47.5	14.8	38.8	12.2	38.5
Correlation between perceived importance of parties and population size	***		***		****		***		***	

Note: * Means correlation significant at 0.05 level, ** at 0.01 level, *** significant at 0.001 level, and **** significant at 0.0001 level.

Source: LDGP survey of councilors (2002–2003).

Table 1.11
Parties' Influence on Local Decision-making as Ranked among Fifteen Possible Actors

	Bulgaria	Poland	Hungary	Estonia	Slovakia
Total	4	10	11	10	14
• Below 2,000 citizens	NA	NA	15	12	14
• 2–10,000	7	13	12	11	14
• 10–50,000	4	12	7	8	7
• over 50,000	3	5	5	7	6

Source: ILDGP survey of councilors (2002–2003).

We also expected that the influence of parties might be larger in countries with a collective form of leadership where the mayor is nominated by council (Estonia) than in countries with direct, popular elections (the remaining four countries in tables 1.9 and 1.10). However, such a relationship is not supported by our data.

Finally, we expected that the influence of political parties has grown gradually during the last decade, together with clarification and stabilization of the new political map. We may only partially verify this opinion thanks to LDI surveys conducted in Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia in 1991 and 1997. Since mayors responded to the LDI surveys and councilors were included in our newer data sets, the data are not fully comparable. We need to be careful in drawing conclusions; nevertheless, our hypothesis seems to be confirmed to a large extent.

The change is clearer in Hungary, where parties' influence ranked 14th in 1991 but 11th in 2002, and in Poland with a ranking of 15th in 1991 and 1997, but 10th in 2003. The former case mainly applies in bigger towns, and the latter predominantly in smaller municipalities where parties have gradually come to play a role in local decision-making. In Slovakia the increase of party influence is less visible (a ranking of fourteen in all three surveys), but it may be noted in medium-size and big cities as well (a ranking of eight in cities over 50,000 in 1997, but six in 2002).

The perceived importance of parties relative to other actors in decision-making is not the only way we can learn about their influence. Respondents—councilors and mayors—were also asked whose opinion they usually take into consideration when making important decisions. They were asked to assess the impact of eight different groups, of which parties were one.

The results are summarized in table 1.12. As we might expect, Bulgaria confirms its opinion of having the most partisan local government system. But in the remaining countries respondents (perhaps with the exception of Slovak mayors) declare consideration of parties' opinions more often than one might expect, judging on the basis of the answers on the relative influence of parties on local decision-making. The largest difference is in Estonia, where the perceived influence of parties is relatively modest, but most of the respondents admit to serious consideration of parties' opinions when making important decisions. This difference, which is especially big in small municipalities, could be related to the proportional system of elections (while in Hungarian or Slovak villages of identical size, elections are based on the majoritarian principle). If the chances of a councilor in the next election depend to a large extent on his or her position on a party list, then considering party opinion while making crucial decisions is a highly advisable strategy. A comparison of the answers of Estonian, Slovak, and Hungarian mayors also suggests that consideration of parties' opinion is more frequent if mayors are nominated by the council (as in Estonia) than when they are elected directly by all citizens (as in Hungary and Slovakia). Bulgaria does not quite fit with these conclusions, but as Bulgarian local governments are much more politicized than

those of other countries, a large part of the difference may lie in political culture, not in institutional factors.

The observation on the impact of the formal position of mayor on the consideration of parties' opinions is quite similar to the observation made by Mouritzen and Svava (2001, 71) about Western Europe and America: "*Relatively few mayors emphasize the promotion of the party program and the interests of the party members... one out of five is characterized as a strong partisan leader.*" Mouritzen and Svava notice a close relationship with the form of government. They classified 70% of mayors in council-manager systems (which in our research is relatively close to the Hungarian system) as "weak partisan leaders," but only 38% in strong-mayor systems (close to the situation in Slovakia or to a lesser extent in Bulgaria) and 29% in committee-leader systems (characteristic in Estonia). On the basis of Mouritzen and Svava's theory we might expect that mayors would consider party opinions most often in Estonia, followed by Bulgaria and Slovakia, and least often in Hungary. With the exception of Bulgaria (the country most dominated by partisan politics), the variation between the remaining countries largely fits with our theoretical expectations.

As we might expect, consideration of parties' opinions is more significant in bigger local governments.

Finally, councilors and mayors were asked where they seek information. They were asked to assess the importance of ten different sources, political parties being one. A summary of their answers is provided in table 1.13.

The conclusions from table 1.13 are similar to those we have already discussed, and may be summarized as follows:

- Parties are usually not seen as an important source of information for local politicians. They are closer to the bottom than to the top rank of the various sources considered;
- Bulgaria is the clearest exception to this rule, and even more so in the case of councilors than mayors. Perhaps an institutional factor does play a role here: Bulgarian mayors are directly elected while the council electoral system is proportional, which strengthens the party links of elected representatives;
- Poland is at the other extreme. While it is not rare to consider parties' opinions, Polish local politicians indicate parties as a source of information considerably less often than their colleagues in other countries. This is especially visible when local governments from the same size cohort are compared;
- The importance of parties as a source of information grows with the size of local governments. Having a population above 50,000 or sometimes even above 10,000 makes a big difference. With Hungarian, Estonian, and Slovak councilors this is particularly obvious.

The same question was asked in a 1997 mayors' survey in Poland and Slovakia. In Slovakia the difference between 1997 and 2002 is very slight. In Poland, however, the

Table 1.12
Importance of Party Opinion in Decision-making Ranked among Eight Possible Influences (2002–2003)

	Bulgaria		Hungary		Estonia		Slovakia	
	Mayors	Councillors	Mayors	Councillors	Mayors	Councillors	Mayors	Councillors
Total	3	3	8	4	4	4	8	4
• up to 2,000 citizens	NA	NA	8	8	4	4	7	6
• 2–10,000	3	3	6	6	4	4	8	5
• 10–50,000	3	3	4	4	3	3	8	4
• over 50,000	3	3	NA	3	NA	3	NA	4

Source: ILDGP survey of councillors and mayors (2002–2003).

Table 1.13
Parties as a Source of Information—Rank among Ten Different Groups (2002–2003).

	Bulgaria		Estonia		Hungary		Poland		Slovakia	
	Mayors	Councillors	Mayors	Councillors	Mayors	Councillors	Mayors	Councillors	Mayors	Councillors
Total	8	5	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9
• below 2,000 citizens	NA	NA	10	10	10	10	NA	NA	10	10
• 2–10,000	9	5	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9
• 10–50,000	8	5	10	10	8	7	10	10	10	6
• over 50,000	8	5	NA	6	NA	4	9	8	NA	5

Source: ILDGP survey of councillors and mayors (2002–2003).

role of parties as a source of important information has significantly decreased. Most likely this shift is associated with a change in the way mayors are nominated (by the council before 2002 and in popular elections since then).

4. THE ROLE OF PARTIES IN LOCAL POLITICS: A SUMMARY MODEL

How we can summarize the influence of parties on local political life in Central and Eastern Europe? First, we have created an index of party importance based on a weighted sum of the following indicators:¹¹

- Party membership rate of councilors
- Party membership rate of mayors
- Party support for councilors in the last election campaign
- Party support for mayors in the last election campaign
- Perceived influence of parties on local decision-making
- Parties as a source of information for local councilors.

(Due to missing data for Poland, the question on consideration of parties' opinion while making important decisions was excluded from the index.)

Table 1.14 presents the results of the calculations. The highest significance of political parties is in Bulgaria, while in the remaining four countries it is much lower. In all countries it is significantly correlated with the size of local government—i.e., the index grows with the size of municipalities.

Although the correlation is significant at the 0.001 level in each of the countries, it is weakest in Bulgaria and highest in Hungary. In Bulgaria, Estonia, and Slovakia the relationship is relatively flat (i.e., there is growth in party significance with increasing size, but the change is relatively slow), while in Poland and especially in Hungary it is very steep.

The significance of parties is lowest in small Hungarian municipalities (below 2,000 citizens), a few times lower than in Estonian or Slovak local governments of comparable size according to the index. In the next size cohort (2,000–10,000) the index for Hungary is still lower than for Estonia or Slovakia, but in the two remaining groups (over 10,000 citizens) it is far higher in Hungary, and only marginally lower than in Bulgaria.

The size-standardized index allows a comparison of the significance of political parties regardless of differences in the size structure of the samples in individual countries. On average it is the lowest in Poland, somewhat higher in Hungary, and by far the highest in Bulgaria. This means that the highest value of a “normal index” mean cannot be reduced to just the territorial consolidation of the Bulgarian local government system.

How we can explain the variation? To answer this question and to test our initial hypothesis we constructed a regression model in which “party significance index” is

Table 1.14
Index of Party Significance in Local Politics

	Bulgaria	Poland	Hungary	Estonia	Slovakia
Mean value	73.6	47.6	33.9	50.8	49.5
Size-standardized mean	70.9	43.3	44,5	53,0	48,9
Correlation of the index with population size	***	***	****	***	***

Note: 0—means no significance, 100—a very large significance of parties in local politics.

Note: * means correlation significant at 0.05 level, ** at 0.01 level, *** significant at 0.001 level, and **** significant at 0.0001 level.

Source: Own calculations on the basis of the ILDGP survey of councilors and mayors (2002–2003).

a dependent variable. Independent variables in the model might be clustered in two groups:

- National political culture—represented by dummy variables for each of the countries;
- Institutional factors represented by:
 - Population size of the local government (territorial consolidation);
 - Method of mayors' nomination (by the council in Estonia and by popular elections in the remaining four countries);
 - Method of council election (proportional in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungarian¹² governments with over 10,000, and Polish over 20,000 population, and majoritarian in Slovakia and smaller Hungarian and Polish municipalities).

The weakness of the model (at least in relationship to our data) is the fact that the manner of mayors' nomination differs from popular elections in one country only (Estonia). Therefore, we cannot statistically distinguish the impact of "Estonian culture" from the impact of the method of nomination of mayors.

The results from the testing of our model are briefly presented in table 1.15. First of all, the model proved to be highly statistically significant, i.e., the selected independent variables explain much of the variation in party significance.

If controlled for other variables, the most significant are the method of council election and the size of local government. As expected, in big cities and in councils elected by the proportionality principle the importance of parties is higher.

Interestingly, Slovak political culture seems to favor party influence. In spite of Slovakia's majoritarian electoral system, party influence is relatively high. Bulgarian culture also has the effect of increasing the importance of parties, but in this case the influence is lower, since the high scores for Bulgaria may be partially explained by its

proportional electoral system and high level of territorial consolidation. In both Poland and Hungary the political culture seems to weaken party significance.

But curiously, the index shows a low correlation with net sympathy towards political parties, as discussed earlier in this chapter. In Slovakia, where party influence is relatively strong, parties are rather disliked. In Poland, where party importance is very low, they are also disliked. On the other hand, in Hungary parties enjoy a larger net sympathy.

The impact of the method of nomination of mayors, which was not very strong but nonetheless significant, works in an opposite direction to what was expected. But as mentioned above, we are not able to say to what extent this is due to the factor investigated and to what extent it is related to the “Estonia factor.”

Our problem with determining whether the method of mayors’ election has an impact on local government politicization may be partially solved by analysis of the Chief Executive Officers’ surveys conducted in seven countries in 2000–2001. Our data do not allow the computing of a similar index of party significance, but we may check the impact of the same set of independent variables on mayors’ party membership rates (see right column of table 1.15). In this survey data we have more cases where mayors are nominated by a council: Estonia, Latvia, and Poland (where the survey was conducted before the 2002 reform which changed the method of Polish mayors’ election). As a

Table 1.15
 Factors Influencing Parties’ Role in Local Politics—Regression Model Results

	Party significance index	Mayors’ party membership
R	0.5860	0.5890
R square	0.3430	0.3440
Significance of the model	0.0000	0.0000
Independent variables:		
Proportional elections	+++	+++
Size of local governments	+++	+
Direct election of mayor	+	
Bulgaria	++	++
Estonia	NA	+++
Hungary	–	---
Poland	–	+
Slovakia	+++	+++
Romania	NA	+++
Latvia	NA	---

Notes: + means positive and – negative relationships. Number of pluses or minuses refers to significance of the variable. +++ means significance on 0.001 level, ++ significance on 0.01 level, and + significance on 0.05 level. Independent variables are ordered from the most to the least significant.

Source: Own calculations based on ILDGP surveys.

result, we can distinguish the impact of the mayors' election factor from the impact of the country variable.

But we found that the method of mayors' nomination remained insignificant when controlled for other independent variables. Other results are not very much different than what has already been presented in the party significance index. Proportionality in elections is confirmed as an important factor. This result may look surprising since it is not directly related to mayors' party membership. But in countries where the mayor is elected by the council, the method of council election is definitely very important—a more partisan council elected in a proportional system is more likely to nominate a partisan mayor. The council election system may also have an indirect impact in countries in which the mayor is directly elected by all voters. Even in this case, a mayor needs to cooperate with the council. We should remember that the position of directly elected mayors in CEE countries is usually relatively weak. For example, they have to rely on council approval in appointing important staff members. However, party mayors have a better chance of success in cooperation with highly partisan councils elected in a proportional system. In countries with majoritarian electoral systems, councils are more likely non-partisan and they may cooperate more easily with an independent mayor.

There are also country-specific variables that remain important. Estonia, Romania, Slovakia, and to a lesser extent Bulgaria are more likely to have partisan mayors. In Latvia and Hungary, independent mayors are more likely to be elected, assuming that the impact of other (institutional) factors is eliminated. There is an interesting difference between the impact of the "Poland" variable in both regression models. "Poland" had a modestly negative impact on the 2003 party significance index, while the impact of the same variable on the 2000 mayors' partisanship analysis was modestly negative. The change of sign might be related to the 2002 reform of Polish mayoralty election methods (although, as mentioned earlier, this variable's high significance has not been confirmed).

Do our results shed light on whether there are parties that govern in Central and East European local politics? The proper answer is—it depends where and when. We have been able to identify countries in which there is a tendency for strong party influence (Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania). But institutional factors also play a role—especially the territorial fragmentation of the local government system and the method of council election.

5. POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION WITHIN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

In addition to the question of whether councilors are party members or politically independent, the number and size of the various factions in a local council are important issues for the management of local governments. Is there one group with a clearly

dominant position that can easily implement its policies, or are there several small groups that necessitate stable or *ad hoc* coalitions for each decision that is made? To measure levels of political fragmentation we use an index called the Rae-Taylor fragmentation index. The formula for this index is:

$$\text{FRA} = 1 - \sum s(i)^2,$$

where FRA is a fragmentation index for the council, and $s(i)$ is a share of mandates possessed by the faction.

One can find two versions of this index (see Gabriel et al. 2002): the “electoral fragmentation index,” which reflects fragmentation of votes in the election, and the “parliamentary/council fragmentation index,” which takes into account the division of seats among party groups. The former better reflects the variation in citizens’ political options. But we will concentrate on the latter, as it illustrates the environment for day-to-day local government management.

The index differs from 0 to 1, where 0 means a situation in which all seats in the council belong to the same political group (or all voters voted for one party, if we take the “electoral” version of an index), while 1 means that each councilor is independent and there are no factions in the council (or every councilor belongs to different political party).

Table 1.16 illustrates the fragmentation of local councils in seven CEE countries. The analyzed countries may be divided into those with a high or low fragmentation index. The overall fragmentation was by far the highest in Hungary with an average score above 0.9, then in Poland (0.818), and in Latvia (0.809). In the group with a low fragmentation index we find Romania (0.727), Slovakia (0.731), Bulgaria (0.744), and Estonia (0.747). But if we take into account differences in the size of local governments, the lowest score is for Slovakia.

We expected that fragmentation would be lower in the big cities, where parties play a more important role and there are fewer independent councilors who do not belong to any faction. The last row in table 1.16 shows that this is definitely the case in Hungary, to a slightly lesser extent in Poland, and much less in Slovakia. In the remaining countries the correlation is insignificant (Bulgaria, Romania, and Latvia) or even points weakly in the opposite direction (Estonia).

The data on a fragmentation index is static and cannot show changes over time. But as the party system in Central and Eastern Europe is far from stable, we can expect that fragmentation within the council changes significantly during the term of the council. Some groups and coalitions break down after the election and new factions are formed, which increases the level of fragmentation. The opposite can also happen, but our observations suggest this is much less frequent. We cannot verify this in a systematic way, but the hypothesis can be partially confirmed by data from Poland. The index of fragmentation calculated in 1998 for all Polish cities above 100,000 citizens was 0.614

Table 1.16
Council Fragmentation Index (2000–2001)

	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary	Latvia	Poland	Romania	Slovakia
Mean	0.744	0.747	0.967	0.809	0.818	0.727	0.731
Size-standardized mean	0.730	0.770	0.918	0.798	0.830	0.731	0.693
Correlation between fragmentation and size of local government		*	(-) ^{****}		(-) ^{***}		(-) [*]

Note: * means correlation significant at 0.05 level, ** at 0.01 level, *** significant at 0.001 level, and **** significant at 0.0001 level. Blank spaces mean insignificant correlations. (-) means negative sign of the correlation coefficient.

Source: Own calculations based on ILDGP survey of CEOs (2000–2001).

(Swianiewicz and Klimska 2003). The same index, calculated for the same group of cities two years later (still in the same term) was 0.680, i.e., it was considerably higher.

Polish data also suggest that the level of fragmentation has increased in the current term compared to the situation after the previous elections. At the end of 2002, the mean score for cities over 100,000 was 0.670, while after 1998 it was only 0.614 (Swianiewicz and Klimska 2003). Other observations tend to confirm this. For example, in the 1998 elections 54 committees or factions won seats in 42 big cities, while in 2002 the number increased to 98. The other indicator of increasing fragmentation in Polish cities is the diminishing number of councils in which one party received an absolute majority of votes. Of 42 cities over 100,000 citizens, 22 had a clear majority in the council after the 1998 elections; after the 2002 elections this number decreased to 11 (Swianiewicz and Klimska 2003). Interestingly enough, the increase in fragmentation was usually the highest in cities with a high electoral turnout. A well-known observation of Lipset (1981)—that a high level of voter activity is often correlated with a demand for political change—might offer an explanation. Unfortunately, we cannot compare this data with changes in other CEE countries and in smaller local governments.

How does the level of fragmentation in CEE countries compare with the situation in EU countries? We can analyze this only in an indirect way. A study published in 2002 includes fragmentation indices for big cities in eight EU countries (Vetter 2002). But those indices were calculated for electoral data, not on the basis of information on the distribution of seats in the council. An electoral fragmentation index will always be higher than parliamentary fragmentation, so direct comparison with our scores in table 1.15 is impossible. But in 2002 an electoral fragmentation index was calculated for the 20 largest Polish cities (Swianiewicz and Klimska 2003). The score ranged from 0.669 in Gdynia and 0.760 in Sosnowiec to 0.873 in Krakow and 0.878 in Szczecin. With the exception of Gdynia, the scores were much higher than those for cities of a similar size in the EU. Of all the cities analyzed by Vetter, only Helsinki (0.82) and some Dutch

cities (e.g., Amsterdam) showed values similar to those in Poland. But the fragmentation of votes in cities in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the UK, France, and Germany was much lower. For example, in the six biggest English cities the score ranges from 0.60 in Manchester to 0.65 in Liverpool. It is also very low in several French cities—0.569 in Tours, 0.572 in Nantes, and 0.584 in Bordeaux (Hoffman-Martinot 2002).

From our data we know that the parliamentary fragmentation index in Polish cities over 100,000 citizens is usually lower than in other big cities of Central and Eastern Europe (except in Slovakia). Indirectly, therefore, we may conclude that the level of political fragmentation in CEE cities is much higher than in most of the EU countries.

It appears that weakness in the party system in CEE countries leads to considerable fragmentation of local councils and can potentially produce complications in local management. Another potential complication is that the mayor does not always have a majority in the council—the opposite of the situation resulting from recent reforms in southern Europe. This may lead, and actually often does lead, to serious management problems when a mayor faces a majority opposition on council. Recalling the connection between low stability and high fragmentation of political parties in CEE countries, we can expect numerous cases in which effective decision-making may be difficult. Only seven mayors in the 42 Polish cities with a population over 100,000 have the clear support of the majority of councilors. In most of the remaining cases the mayor needs to rely on more or less stable coalitions. In five cities the situation is even more complicated—the majority in the council is held by a group that is definitely in opposition to the mayor (Swianiewicz and Klimska 2003). Similar problems are reported in other countries. Sometimes they concern major cities such as the Romanian capital, Bucharest, or the Albanian capital, Tirana. But this issue goes beyond the scope of our analysis here.

6. COUNCILORS' PARTY AFFILIATIONS AND POLITICAL CULTURE

We turn now to party membership and its meaning. How do the party programs differ from each other? Are the programs really internalized by local party members who are municipal councilors? Are the parties groups of people believing in similar values and trying to achieve common goals? Or are they pragmatic groups of friends and colleagues whose reasons for coming together are not strongly related to ideological choices?

6.1 Setting the Context

The political party system in Central and Eastern Europe, as stated earlier, is far from stable. Of course, the situation differs from one country to another, but the general observation remains true throughout the whole region.

The most volatile is perhaps the party system in Poland. The rise and decline of AWS (initially a loose coalition of post-Solidarity groups and then a single political party), which won the 1997 parliamentary election only to almost completely disappear after the 2001 election, is the best but not the only example. UW (Freedom Union)—a party which until recently seemed to be a stable element of the Polish transition—has almost disappeared from the political scene since 2001. Among six major parties represented in the present Parliament, only two (the PSL and the SLD) were present in the previous term as well. These rapid changes are obviously reflected in local governments (see Swianiewicz and Klimska 2003).

Slovakia is not much more stable. Former Prime Minister Mečiar's HZDS, the Christian-Democratic KDH, the leftist SDL, or the Hungarian minority SMK have been active and significant for over ten years. But recently the strong position of some new parties such as the ANO or the SMER (the latter having the highest support of voters according to some polls from the summer of 2003) has contributed to a generally unstable picture. In both Poland and Slovakia the system does not seem to be moving towards greater consolidation, and this observation is connected, above all, to the right wing of a political scene that has a strong tendency towards instability and fragmentation.

In Bulgaria in 2001 the explosion of support for a newly created party of the former Tsar Symeon (National Movement) has totally demolished the relatively stable political scene.

Hungary and Estonia seem to be the most stable. It is interesting that three of the four parties identified by Swianiewicz and Clark (1996) as the most frequently represented in local councils in 1991 are still among the strongest political groups in 2002. (The fourth, currently among the strongest, is the post-communist MSzP, which was also the sixth largest among the councilors in 1991). But this does not mean that the picture has remained unchanged for over ten years. Apart from the growth of support for MSzP, we also witnessed a radical consolidation of the center-right. In 1994 there were four center-right parties in the Hungarian Parliament, each having between 7% and 12% support, while in 2002 the scene was clearly dominated by one group—the FIDESZ—with over 40% support (Fowler 2003). On the other hand the Christian Democratic KDNP, which was relatively strong ten years ago, completely disintegrated and disappeared from the political scene (C. Nikolenyi 2003).

For a long time Estonia might have been seen as the most stable among the countries that are the focus of our analysis. The list of “strongest parties” has been quite stable, and volatility indices have been clearly below CEE averages (Sikk 2003). However, the appearance of a strong new party—“Res Publica”—in the 2003 parliamentary elections seems to undermine the prior relative persistence of the party system (Sikk 2003). It should be added, however, that “Res Publica” had existed for a long time; during the 1990s it had connections to other political parties (Pro Patria and the Reform Party), and 2003 was just its first strong appearance as an independent player in the election game.

The older roots of “Res Publica” did not prevent it from basing its election campaign on anti-establishment rhetoric.

While these observations concern central level politics, much less is known about the parties in local governments. Table 1.17 lists the parties that are included in our analysis. Membership of these parties in *internationals*, indicated in the right column, should help us in establishing the parties’ ideological profile, which we will later compare to the councilors’ values as declared in the IDLG survey.

Looking first at the age of the councilors, we find that the average varies from 45 to 51 years. Those who are party members are usually a bit older than the independent councilors. Post-communist parties (the BSP in Bulgaria, the MSzP in Hungary, and the SDL in Slovakia) usually have older than average members. The youngest parties are those that evolved from the youth opposition movement like FIDESZ in Hungary and the recently established Res Publica in Estonia. (In FIDESZ, the average member-councilor is over ten years younger than his or her colleagues in other parties.)

The share of female councilors varies from below 20% in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland to slightly over 30% in Estonia. But there are more women among independent than among party councilors. In Poland the share of female councilors is more or less even across parties, unlike Hungary, where FIDESZ and MDF have a very low rate of women councilors (only 6% and 8%, respectively). Other highly masculinized parties are the Bulgarian BANU and MRF parties and the Estonian Pro Patria (with only one woman among 33 councilors!).

The proportion of councilors with a university degree is lowest in Slovakia (38%) and highest in Bulgaria (79%). This variation can probably be explained by the extent of territorial fragmentation, as councilors in big municipalities are often more educated than those in small, rural villages. In Hungary and Poland party councilors usually have a higher level of education than the independents. But the opposite is true in Bulgaria, and in Slovakia or Estonia there is no statistically significant relationship. Not surprisingly, a low level of education can be found in agrarian political groups and those of the national minorities.

Before turning to the subject of political culture, we will look at the characteristics of councilors who are members or supporters of individual political parties. Table 1.17 presents a summary of the demographic variation of supporters of the main parties in the analyzed countries.

The picture changes when we look at respondents who are sympathetic toward but not members of various political parties. Different demographic variables are significant in different countries. In Bulgaria, Estonia, and Hungary, support for parties is related to age—particular parties are supported by older or younger councilors and there are only a few for which this variable is not important. Hungary is also the only country in which gender is relevant: the Socialists (MSzP) and Liberals (SzDSz) are supported more often by women than by men.

Table 1.17
Political Parties Selected for Analysis

Name	Number of respondents	Membership in party internationals
Bulgaria		
• BSP (post-communist)	277	Socialist
• UDF	262	Christian-Democrat, Democratic Union
• MRF (Turkish minority)	74	
• People's Union	50	
• BANU (agrarian)	21	
Hungary		
• MSzP (post-communist)	144	Socialist
• FIDESZ	55	Christian-Democrat, Democratic Union
• SzDSz	43	Liberal
• MDF	26	Christian-Democrat, Democratic Union
Slovakia		
• KDH	82	Christian-Democrat, Democratic Union
• HZDS	82	
• SDL	50	Socialist
• SMK (Hungarian minority)	48	
• SDK	28	Liberal
• SMER	16	
Estonia		
• People's Union	121	
• Center Party	96	
• Res Publica	71	Liberal
• Reform Party	59	Christian-Democrat, Democratic Union
• Pro Patria	34	Socialist
• Moderates	33	
Poland		
• SLD (post-communist)	142	Socialist
• PSL (agrarian)	49	
• PiS	19	
• PO	16	

Source: Membership in party internationals: Lewis (2003).

In Poland and Slovakia age is not related to the sympathy of councilors towards parties, though the mean age of councilor-members of the various parties differs. In Slovakia cleavages are related to size of local government and to education—there are parties supported by educated and urban councilors and others supported by rural and uneducated respondents.

Poland is the most complex case. Only two of the important parties (the PSL and the PO) have councilor-supporters with a clearly defined demographic profile.

Two further questions are of interest here: (1) to what extent are members of political parties rooted in the communist system, and (2) what is the level of their modernization.

The communist roots factor is measured by the number of members of political parties before 1990, the number holding an official position in a political party before 1990, and the number of councilors before 1990. To analyze the variation between parties, we relate the communist roots factor to a national average. If the value is lower than 1, the role of communist roots among party members is lower than the average in the country; if it is higher than 1, then the members of that party have more communist roots.¹³

Membership in parties before 1990 is most frequently reported by members of “post-communist” groups, although this relationship is much weaker in the Polish SLD than in the Bulgarian BSP, Hungarian MSzP, or Slovak SD. Over 70% of BSP or MSzP members stated that they had belonged to “old” parties before 1990. Many members of former parties are also found in agrarian groups—the Polish PSL and Bulgarian BANU. One should remember that both agrarian parties existed before 1990 as satellites of communist, but formally independent parties.

The extent of communist roots is fairly uniform in Estonia. This may reflect the difference between the communist system in the Soviet Union and in satellite countries (especially in ones like Poland or Hungary) where some amount of democratic opposition could exist and party membership was slightly less of a *sine qua non* for holding public office. In all countries except Estonia, left-wing means more rooted in the communist system (see table 1.22).

Finally, we characterize political parties through the “modernism” of local councilors. The modernism index is measured by three variables: education, e-mail use, and Internet use.¹⁴

Estonian councilors are the most frequent users of e-mail and the Internet. In Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia usage of e-mail and the Internet is more frequent among party members than independent councilors, but in Bulgaria or Estonia no such relationship could be found (see table 1.19).

Computer usage is usually strongly correlated with level of education, although the SMK party in Slovakia is an exception, having a relatively low level of education but a high ratio of e-mail usage. In general, however, parties having less educated councilors lag behind even more in the use of e-mail. This relationship is clear both in countries where Internet use by councilors is not common (e.g., Bulgaria, Poland, and Slovakia), and in Estonia, where as many as 58% councilors’ declare they have access to the Internet (although 45% of members of the Moderate Party and 47% of those in the People’s Union report using it). In the Polish PSL 10% of members use the Internet while the national average is over 30%; in the Slovak HZDS the figure is 13% compared to the Slovak average of 32%; and in the Bulgarian MRF 13% and the BANU 17% compared to an average for Bulgarian councilors of 28%.

Table 1.18
Correlations between Demographic Characteristics of Councilors,
Party Membership, and Sympathy towards Political Parties

		Age in 2003		Level of education		Population size		Gender	
		Sympathy	Member	Sympathy	Member	Sympathy	Member	Sympathy	Member
Bulgaria	BSP	old	old		high	small			
	Turkish minority (MRF)	young	young	low	low	small	small		male
	BANU				low				
	PU								male
	UDF	young			high	big	big		
Estonia	Center Party	old	old	low					
	Moderates	young		low	low	small			
	People's Union	old	old	low	low	small	small		
	Res Publica	young	young				big		
	Pro Patria	young							male
	Reform Party	young	young	high	high		big	male	male
Hungary	MSzP	old	old		high	big	big	female	
	SzDSz	old			high		big	female	
	MDF		old				big		male
	FIDESZ	young	young	low	high	small	big		male
Poland	SLD								
	PSL			low	low	small	small		
	PO		young	high	high	big	big		
	PiS		young						
Slovakia	SDL	NA	old	NA		NA		NA	
	HZDS			low	low	small	small		
	SMER		old	low		small	small		
	SMK–MKP			high	high	big	big		
	SDK–SDKU	young	young	high	high	big	big		
	KDH			high	high	big	big		

Note: Only correlations significant at a 0.05 level are taken into account in the table. In this and the following tables parties within countries are presented in order from left- to right-wing on the political spectrum (measured by the self-assessment of councilors who are party members).

Source: ILDGP survey of councilors (2002–2003).

Table 1.19
Communist Roots and Modernism of Party Members:
Deviation from the National Mean

	Communist roots index (CRI)	Modernism index (MI)
Bulgaria—national mean	18.00%	52.00%
BSP	2.35	0.96
Turkish minority (MRF)	0.29	0.70
BANU	0.88	0.74
Peoples Union	0.33	0.87
UDF	0.18	1.15
Estonia—national mean	5.00%	71.00%
Center Party, United People Party	1.00	0.95
Moderates	0.76	0.92
Peoples Union	0.98	0.89
Res Publica	1.06	1.14
Pro Patria	1.10	1.24
Reform Party	1.06	1.28
Hungary—national mean	16.00%	67.00%
MSzP	2.63	0.93
SzDSz	0.58	1.12
MDF	0.24	0.92
FIDESZ	0.15	1.15
Poland—national mean	11.00%	62.00%
SLD–UP	2.05	1.04
PSL	1.61	0.59
PO	0.19	1.29
PiS	0.48	1.13
Slovakia—national mean	8.00%	51.00%
SDL	4.08	0.87
HZDS	0.71	0.76
SMER	1.04	1.37
SMK–MKP	0.17	1.08
SDK–SDKU	0.56	1.48
KDH	0.10	1.03

Note: For individual parties—a score of 1 means equal to the national average, while scores below 1 mean values lower than the national average.

Source: Own calculations based on ILDGP survey of councilors (2002–2003).

Members of post-communist parties are usually less “modernized” than the national average, but the Polish SLD is an exception to this rule. In general, right-wing councilors score higher on the scale of modernism in Slovakia, Estonia, and Bulgaria, while in Hungary and Poland there is no statistically significant relationship.

6.2 Self-identification on the Left-Right Axis

An analysis of councilors’ ideology should begin with their own stated location on the left-right political spectrum. Whether or not these terms adequately characterize the present political arena in Central and Eastern Europe cannot be discussed at length here, but it should be noted that quite often the meaning of “left-wing” and “right-wing” in CEE countries is different from the traditional interpretation based on the 19th century experience of European parliamentary systems. In this region of Europe, the terms left and right arise from a different context and different political debates.

For this reason we do not treat the terms as archetypal conglomerates of values, but as terms from the history of political ideas—terms that are learnt by people in the same way as other abstract terms and definitions. In Central and Eastern Europe the learning of these terms took place in a very concrete historical context, and their meaning was often the subject of political battles involving media and political groups.

In most of the analyzed countries, the terms left and right are used to distinguish between two main blocks: (1) post-communist, and (2) groups arising from the democratic opposition active during the communist period. Data from Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia clearly support this observation. In all of these countries there is also a significant correlation between membership in political parties before 1990 and present left-wing self-location. Members of post-communist groups (the BSP in Bulgaria, MSzP in Hungary, SLD in Poland, and SDL in Slovakia) are those who most often declare themselves as leftist, and this identification is much stronger than in any other party. It is a paradox that members of small parties who use “socialist” or “social-democratic” labels in their names, and whose program is often much more radical than that of post-communist groups, usually declare themselves centrist rather than leftist. The Bulgarian data provide a good example: in the case of Bulgarian Social Democracy, twelve of fourteen respondents declare themselves as centrist, not left, and nine out of ten in the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party declare themselves to be centrist. In the Polish Unia Pracy (Labour Union) the number is three out of four.

We are not claiming that post-communist parties are not leftist (the ideological content of individual parties will be discussed later), but we want to point out what the popular meaning of the term actually entails.

But the use of leftist rhetoric by post-communist parties is not a “historical necessity.” In Estonia, the term leftist has been strongly linked to communism and Soviet

dictatorship. Consequently, the party established by former members of the communist “nomenclatura” in Estonia is called the “Center Party” (Raun 1997; Kuczynski 2003) and councilors who are members of that party declare themselves as centrist. Ironically, in spite of the name of the party they are more leftist than other councilors in Estonia. The unwillingness to use the term “left” in Estonia is a very clear difference between Estonia and the other analyzed countries. In the remaining four countries the percentage of leftist councilors varies from 19% to 30%, but in Estonia it is only 5% (see table 1.20)! As we will demonstrate, this verbal resistance to the label of “leftist” is often but not always correlated with more liberal economic programs.

There is a strong correlation between self-location and membership in a particular party. The general rule is that most councilors prefer not to choose the extreme values on our scale (with the exception of Bulgaria). The tendency towards self-location in the center is most visible in Estonia and is clearly related to the negative attitude towards the term “left.” As we can see in table 1.20, the proportion of Estonian respondents choosing rightist affiliation is not significantly higher than in other countries. Although the mean value is the highest (most “rightist”) in Estonia, the highest number of respondents clearly declaring their rightist location is found in Bulgaria. The center location is also a very frequent choice in Poland. We tend to relate this phenomenon to the deep crisis recently experienced for various reasons by leading leftist and rightist political parties in Poland.

As for leftist values, Hungary is the country with the highest number of councilors declaring such values. As we will show later, the Hungarian left wing presents the most coherent set of values. Hungary is the only country in which more respondents declare left- than right-wing political affiliation.

Table 1.20 also indicates that centrist affiliation is most often chosen by non-party members. This indirectly supports our claim that self-location on the left or right wing of politics is less an expression of opinions on social or economic issues, and more a declaration of support for one or another of the dominant political groups. If we are right, a declaration of being in the center may simply mean unwillingness to choose between the main political parties. We assume that this logic lies behind the choices of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria (74% of those in the Movement for Rights and Freedom choose the center option), or of members of the populist protest party Samoobrona in Poland (all four members in our sample declare themselves as centrist). For various reasons, members of these groups want to show that they are far from both the post-communist left and their main opponents, the rightist parties. Several small parties also follow this rule. In Estonia such a relationship is not evident, but it is easy to understand why—if all major political parties locate themselves in the center, then demonstrating independence through a specific location on the left-right political axis makes little sense.

The relationship between party membership and left-right self-location is very clear in Bulgaria. As previously observed, it is a country with a very high level of party mem-

Table 1.20
Councilors' Self-location on the Left-Right Political Spectrum (7-Point Scale)

Own views left or right	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Mean value	4.11	4.62	3.73	4.05	4.18
Left (1–2)	27.0	5.2	29.6	19.7	19.1
Center (3–5)	41.0	68.0	50.6	59.9	52.9
• among party members	36.7	65.9	34.5	46.0	41.7
• among non-party members	68.9	70.1	58.7	67.3	62.2
Right (6–7)	32.0	26.8	19.8	20.4	28.0

Source: ILDGP survey of councilors (2002–2003).

bership among councilors (about 86%). At the same time, the proportion of centrist declarations is lowest there. One might expect that participation in the party system forces councilors to clearly locate themselves on one or another side of the barricade. The same factor (party membership rate) leads to a clearer left or right self-location of councilors in big cities, while in small communities the centrist option is chosen much more often. For these respondents “center” probably means “neither left nor right.”

6.3 Party Membership, Political Culture, and Traditional Left-Right Values

The Local Government Survey provides an enormous amount of empirical material allowing for an analysis of councilors' values related to various social and economic issues. To limit the scope of our analysis we concentrate on a few indices. The most important questions we hope to answer are related to left-right cleavages as characterized earlier. We try to address the following issues:

1. To what extent does self-location on the political spectrum reflect traditional distinctions between leftist and rightist values?
2. To what extent do declarations of left-right self-location overlap with post-communist or anti-communist cleavages?

We have already shown that there is a clear link between left-right self-location and the communist roots of councilors. In the following section we will try to ascertain the attitude of the parties towards the present political system.

We will compare members' left-right self-location with certain values that are present in traditional ideological debates involving the left and right wings of the political spectrum. These are:

- **Market individualism (MI).** After Clark and Swianiewicz (1996, 144) individualism (as opposed to collectivism) is defined here as *support for political conditions that maximize the ability of all citizens to realize their private wishes... Market individualism involves support for minimal government intervention in private economic transactions.* The index of MI is calculated as the sum of the answers to three questions illustrating the attitude towards public ownership in the economy.
- **Social individualism (SI),** according to the definition of Clark and Swianiewicz, is *related to the freedom to attain more subjective, qualitative goals in the non-economic arena... social individualism emphasizes freedom of speech, press, assembly, religion and the liberty to make personal lifestyle choices* (144). In our analysis SI is an index based on three variables related to: (1) special protection of minorities, (2) acceptance of freedom of speech on controversial issues, and (3) tolerance towards extremist groups. The first of the three variables may raise some doubts, since it is non-correlated (and in some countries even negatively correlated) with the remaining two. But we suggest that it reflects a well-known controversy related to the idea of “freedom for the enemies of freedom.” Nevertheless, all three variables comprising the index are clearly related to universal values that can be easily considered social individualism. It is more difficult to relate this index to left-right cleavages than it is for market individualism or egalitarianism. On the one hand, Lipset (1981) provides arguments that “protection of minorities” is more often a feature of leftist parties, and members of minority groups vote often for left-wing parties. Also, some extreme rightist groups sometimes advocate censorship in controversial issues. On the other hand, in the CEE context of the last half-century, censorship and lack of social tolerance have been ascribed instead to left-wing politicians.
- **Egalitarianism (E)** is defined after Clark and Swianiewicz (1996, 144) as a *support for the use of government to equalize social, economic and political outcomes among all citizens... Egalitarians favor extensive government regulation of market transactions and extensive social service spending.* The index of E is obtained from the sum of answers on two questions related to the distribution of personal income and the redistributive role of the state.
- **(non)Paternalism/Populism (P).** Paternalism involves *support for the institutionalization of mediating structures between citizens and the executors of political decisions* (Clark and Swianiewicz 1996, 144). Populism, the opposite, is understood as directly and decisively referring to the voters’ will in any decision-making. The P index is calculated as the sum of support for the following opinions: (1) decisions should be based on the opinions of experts, (2) the wide participation of citizens in decision-making leads to unnecessary conflicts and loss of time, and (3) in the case of conflict between the opinion of a councilor

and of the majority of voters, the respondent would use his or her own judgment and would not follow the opinion of voters. The latter variable is clearly related to one of the classic dilemmas in the theory of representative democracy (see, for example, Pitkin 1972). This dilemma may be summarized briefly as *mandate doctrine* (*the representative must do what his/ her principal would do, and must act as if the principal himself/herself were acting-- Pitkin 1972, 144*) versus *independence doctrine* (*the representative as a free agent, a trustee, an expert who is best left alone to do his/her work—Pitkin 1972, 147*). This is another dimension, along with social individualism, that is more difficult to relate to the traditional left-right dimension. But one may expect that left-wing parties would represent paternalist values more often than their right-wing colleagues, at least in the Central and East European context.

Also, in case there are contradictions between councilors' abstract verbal declarations and their attitudes towards the practical issues they happen to be confronted with, we analyze the extent to which their market individualism translates into practical opinions on:

- The contracting out of services for which local governments are responsible.

We are also interested in the attitude of local party members towards the general direction of political changes during the last decade. Therefore, we created an index of:

- Acceptance for the new political system. This index describes approval for the general direction of changes in Central and Eastern Europe. Citizens of Central and Eastern Europe have experienced a long period of governments with a very low level of political legitimacy. But in the democratic system, general acceptance of the direction of the most important changes is a very important factor influencing the performance of the political system. We try to measure this level of acceptance through three indicators: (1) acceptance of the democratic system, (2) a comparison of the performance of present local governments with communist local administrations, and (3) approval for European integration.

Most of the variables were measured on a seven-point scale and the rest were converted to the same scale. We recoded some of them in such a way that a positive value will always mean more liberal choices (i.e., market or social individualist, non-egalitarian, and non-paternalist) and higher acceptance for political transformation, while negative values mean support for state intervention, paternalism, and lack of support for general changes in CEE. We may also expect that high values in the indices will coincide with a right-wing location and lower values with a left-wing orientation. However, as explained above, in the case of social individualism and paternalism/populism this relationship is less obvious than it is for market individualism, contracting out, egalitarianism, or system acceptance.

Table 1.21 presents a summary of the results. Taking into account popular opinion on the incoherent character of ideological differences between parties, the scores for market individualism are surprisingly consistent with left-right self-location. At the level of countries, Hungarian councilors declare themselves to be the most leftist and they are also the least market individualist. Estonians, who are closest to the right wing of the political spectrum, are second in market individualism (after Bulgarian councilors).

Table 1.22 shows that the correlation between the two indices is statistically significant in all five countries, with the highest occurring in Bulgaria and Slovakia. Only in Hungary (where it is the weakest) is it not significant at the 0.01 level. In Hungary we also find the only examples where councilors from the party declaring a radical right-wing orientation are leftist in their market orientation (FIDESZ), and also the opposite—councilors from the SzDSz party, located left-of-center, are radical market individualists (in the Hungarian context). Post-communist parties (the BSP, SLD, and SDL parties) that are the furthest left in their countries also have below-average scores on market individualism. The only exception comes again from Hungary—where post-communist MSzP councilors declare themselves to be radically left, but their score on market individualism is just above the national average.

But on the issue of the contracting out of local services—a practical test of readiness to implement market values—the picture is less coherent. Bulgarian councilors who declare the most radical market-individualist values are the most sceptical about contracting out. Estonians, who in their self-assessment are by far the most distant from the left wing, are just after Bulgarian councilors in opposing market solutions in urban services. The opposite is true of Hungarian local politicians, who support privatization of urban services even though they are sceptical of market values in general and declare themselves to be leftist more often than respondents from the other countries.

The variation is just slightly more coherent when we consider individual countries separately. In Bulgaria, Estonia, and Poland the correlation between left-right self-location and support for contracting out is statistically significant. But this relationship exists in neither Hungary nor Slovakia. In Hungary, councilors from the rather leftist SzDSz are the strongest supporters of the privatization of urban services, while rightist councilors in the MDF are the most frequent opponents. The leftist MSzP is above the average national score of this index, and also above the score of the most right-wing of the analyzed parties, FIDESZ. In Slovakia, although the two parties with the most declared supporters of contracting out are the rightist SDK and KDH parties, the third in the rank is the post-communist and leftist SDL.

An anti-market attitude does not seem to be most typical for post-communist groups. In Slovakia the most anti-liberal in economic terms is the Slovak SDL, but the HZDS is not much different. In Poland, the agrarian PSL is more radically anti-market than the post-communist SLD. In Hungary, MSzP support for market solutions is clearly above the national average, while rightist FIDESZ is closer to the opposite extreme. The

Table 1.21
Values of Councilors and their Membership in Political Parties

	Left-right self-location	Market individualism	Contracting out	Social individualism	(Non) Egalitarian	Populism	System acceptance
Bulgaria national mean	4.11	4.69	3.75	3.34	4.59	4.15	5.60
BSP	-2.18	-0.73	-0.28	-0.09	-0.71	-0.06	-0.87
Turkish minority (MRF)	0.04	0.21	-0.13	-0.07	-0.25	-0.12	0.48
BANU	0.56	0.26	-0.20	-0.36	-0.45	0.19	0.05
People's Union	1.27	0.64	0.03	+0.03	0.57	0.17	0.71
UDF	1.97	0.68	0.28	+0.11	0.77	0.14	0.86
Estonia national mean	4.62	4.62	3.89	3.81	3.98	4.17	5.13
Center Party	-0.54	-0.47	-0.45	-0.37	-0.12	0.13	-0.11
Moderates	-0.45	-0.38	0.52	+0.25	-0.50	0.01	0.36
People's Union	-0.41	-0.21	-0.16	-0.05	-0.45	0.01	-0.41
Res Publica	0.35	0.36	0.13	0.15	0.14	-0.04	0.32
Pro Patria	0.97	0.93	0.59	0.34	0.35	-0.20	1.19
Reform Party	1.15	0.31	0.27	0.12	0.90	-0.11	0.72
Hungary national mean	3.73	4.11	4.55	4.05	3.75	3.54	5.67
MSzP	-2.00	0.05	0.13	-0.13	0.02	0.05	0.46
SzDSz	-0.47	0.75	0.43	0.38	0.33	0.29	0.67
MDF	1.46	0.22	-0.10	0.10	0.33	-0.15	0.34
FIDESZ	2.22	-0.07	0.03	0.23	0.41	-0.07	0.13
Poland national mean	4.05	4.47	4.16	3.77	4.34	3.83	5.36
SLD-UP	-1.52	-0.21	-0.07	-0.03	-0.02	0.01	0.33
PSL	-0.35	-0.61	-0.38	-0.41	-0.69	0.39	-0.43
PO	1.28	1.09	1.54	0.56	1.38	-0.65	0.46
PiS	2.17	1.58	0.58	0.32	0.27	-0.17	0.91
Slovakia national mean	4.18	4.47	4.30	3.60	3.68	4.49	5.35
SDL	-2.57	-1.12	0.09	-0.04	-0.11	0.03	-0.40
HZDS	-0.80	-0.53	-0.12	-0.07	-0.45	-0.27	-0.47
SMER	-0.68	0.20	-0.17	0.07	0.07	0.02	-0.32
SMK-MKP	0.97	0.24	0.06	0.13	-0.25	-0.12	0.55
SDK-SD KU	1.55	0.70	0.30	0.16	1.62	0.07	0.79
KDH	2.07	0.62	0.28	-0.12	0.35	0.18	0.94

Note: National means represent the absolute values of an index, while values for individual parties represent a variation from national means.

Source: Own calculations based on the ILDGP survey (2002–2003).

Table 1.22
Correlations between Left-Right Self-location and Indices of Political Culture

	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Market individualism	+++	+++	+	+++	+++
Contracting out	+++	+++		++	
Social individualism	+		++		
(non)Egalitarianism	+++	++++	++		+++
Populism	+	+	-	++	
System acceptance	+++	+++	--		+++
Modernism	++	++			+++
Communist roots	----		----	----	----

Note: “+” or “-” refers to the sign of correlation coefficients, while the number refers to statistical significance (0.05, 0.01, 0.001, 0.0001). A blank space means insignificant correlation. “+” means that the scores of an index are higher for right-wing councilors.

Source: Own calculations based on the ILDGP survey of councilors (2002–2003).

post-communist BSP in Bulgaria is also the most anti-market party within the analyzed countries. In Estonia, too, the most left-wing group is also the most strongly opposed to market solutions, but in this country none of the analyzed parties is clearly rooted in the previous political system, as noted earlier.¹⁵

We expected that issues related to social individualism may be more difficult to connect to the categories of left and right wing, and the data in table 1.22 confirm this expectation. The correlation is quite strong in Hungary, weak in Bulgaria, and not significant in any of the remaining countries. If there is any relationship, it is that right-wing councilors are more social individualist than leftist ones. Councilors’ scores on the social individualism scale are highest in Hungary and lowest in Bulgaria. It is also worth stressing that all four post-communist parties are below the national average on this scale.

The least egalitarian are the Polish and Bulgarian councilors, while the most egalitarian are the Slovak and Hungarian. This means that on a national level egalitarianism is not related to left-right self-location. The only country where the position on both scales is similar is Hungary. But Estonian councilors that are the most right-wing, for example, are in the middle range of the scores on egalitarianism.

If we look at each country individually, we find that the picture changes. There is a very strong correlation between declared left-right orientation and egalitarianism in Bulgaria and Estonia, and only a slightly weaker one in Slovakia and Hungary. Poland is the only analyzed country where such correlations are found. There is an even closer relationship between declared egalitarianism and market individualism (correlations are significant on a level of 0.001 in all five countries). Post-communist parties are the most

egalitarian in their countries. This is very clear in Bulgaria and Slovakia. In Poland, the SLD follows the agrarian PSL in this respect, but the scores of both parties are higher than the national average. Hungary is a special case. The MSzP score on the egalitarianism index is the lowest of the parties analyzed, but all parties have positive scores (i.e., above the national average). This suggests that the remaining councilors (independent or belonging to small parties of marginal importance on the national level) are much more egalitarian than those from the four “establishment” parties. A similar phenomenon shows up in the analysis of Hungarian scores on market individualism and the acceptance of system changes (discussed below).

Slovakia is the highest on the populism scale, while Hungary and Poland are at the other extreme (paternalism). This dimension is only loosely connected to left-wing self-location. In Poland and to a much lesser extent in Bulgaria and Estonia, rightist councilors are also more populist. In Hungary the correlation goes in the opposite direction, although it is weak. Inter-party differences are the strongest in Poland, where the agrarian PSL is the most populist, while the liberal PO is at the other extreme. On the populism index, the PO also has the lowest score among all 25 parties analyzed.

Finally, we attempt to measure the level of general acceptance for the direction of political and economic transformation (the last column of table 1.21). The index may help us to see whether there is a real consensus on the general direction of system evolution and to identify parties whose attitude differs from that general consensus.

In general, our data suggest that the support for changes is quite high. In each of the countries the average score is above five on a one-to-seven scale. The consensus is broadest in Hungary—the mean value of the index is the highest, and the standard deviation of answers is very low. Also, the standard deviation of answers within individual parties is low, which means that there is a high homogeneity of opinions within parties.

The second country with a high level of consensus (low standard deviation of answers) is Estonia. At the same time, Estonia is the country with the lowest mean value on the system acceptance index. This is related to a very low level of acceptance for European integration (the average opinion is just above neutral and the value for the most enthusiastic party on this issue—Pro Patria—is below six on the one-to-seven scale).

The situation in the remaining countries seems to generate more potential conflicts. In these countries the standard deviation of answers is much higher—from 1.82 in Bulgaria to almost 1.95 in Poland and Slovakia. In Bulgaria, the post-communist BSP questions the direction of changes the most often. BSP members question the view that present local governments work better than the former communist administration, but they are also sceptical on other issues.

In Poland both the post-communist SLD and groups rooted in the former democratic opposition accept the most important system changes. But this consensus is not shared by the agrarian PSL nor by members of small, “other” parties (which are not presented in our summary tables). In the latter case the index has a negative value, i.e.,

more councilors have a negative than positive attitude towards the direction of system changes. This means that in Poland, more clearly than in other analyzed countries, we can identify the opposition, which is reflected in the party system (although not in the mainstream parties) and which questions the general direction of changes in Central and Eastern Europe.

Hungary is another country in which a post-communist party (MSzP) accepts the main directions of political transformation. As in Poland, Hungarian councilors who are either independent or belong to small “other” parties are much more critical in their evaluation of system changes than local politicians from the main “establishment parties.” (But as mentioned above, the general acceptance of systemic changes in Hungary is much higher than in Poland, and consequently this anti-system opposition has a less radical character—the average score for “others” and “independents” is just above neutral.)

In Slovakia the index of system acceptance and measures of homogeneity have even lower values. But political cleavages take a different shape. The specificity of Slovakia is due to the presence of a very strong party (HZDS) which questions, to a large extent, the general direction of changes. Another party with a clearly critical attitude is the post-communist SDL. In different ways, in both Poland (PSL) and Slovakia (HZDS and SDL) the anti-system opposition is clearly reflected by the party system.

Generally speaking, the index of system acceptance has the highest values in parties rooted in the former democratic opposition or in currently governing parties such as the post-communist parties in Hungary and Poland. Being in power and not in opposition, it is much easier for them to accept system changes. In parties having roots in the former system the acceptance is much lower, especially if those parties are now in opposition (e.g., the BSP in Bulgaria or the SDL in Slovakia).

In such circumstances, the shape of the relationship between left-right self-location and general acceptance of systemic changes should not be surprising. As we can see in table 1.22, there is much stronger support for changes among right-wing councilors in Bulgaria, Estonia, and Slovakia. But there is no such relationship in Poland, and an opposite correlation in Hungary.

6.4 Typology of Parties' Political Culture

The typology of parties (viewed through the declarations of their councilor-members) is based on the indices discussed above, using Ward's hierarchical cluster analysis. To minimize the impact of country specific factors, we took into account each party's variation from the national average (e.g., how much lower or higher from the national average the index of market individualism for a given party is).

Before we discuss in detail the results of the typology, we should make one important methodological observation. Ward's cluster analysis method (as any other formal typology

method) produces classes that are relatively homogenous (i.e., differences within group members are lower than between groups), but that does not mean that all the characteristics of a group mean are always true for every group member. Analysis of intra- and inter-group standard deviations suggests that the results of our typology reflect very well the differences in left-right self-location, in communist roots of party members, and to a slightly lesser extent in market individualism. But it is less ideal from the point of view of variation in the indices of populism, social individualism, and modernism.

Figure 1.3 illustrates the results of the typology, while figure 1.4 summarizes the identified groups' main characteristics. By applying Ward's hierarchical method, we distinguish five types of political party whose main characteristics are presented in Figure 1.4. The most internally homogenous are groups V and I, while groups IV and III are more heterogeneous. However, in the latter case intra-group differences are obviously substantially lower than the average variation among the analyzed parties.

Type I includes four parties of the post-communist left (the Hungarian MSzP, the Polish SLD, the Slovak SDL, and the Bulgarian BSP). All of the parties classified within this cluster are members of the European socialist international (see table 1.16). Their most pronounced features are the strong leftist identification and communist roots of a large proportion of their councilors. They are also usually market collectivist (i.e., opposing market or individualist solutions) and egalitarian. Regarding other characteristics, the position of this cluster is less clear. As presented in figure 1.3, this type, in fact, consists of two sub-groups: the Hungarian MSzP and Polish SLD are very similar to each other, while their taxonomic distance from the SDL and BSP is considerably higher. The first sub-group might be called "reformed post-communist"—characterized by high system acceptance, a high level of modernism, and a more ambivalent attitude towards market individualism than the other sub-group. Again, it is important to stress that both of these parties currently hold power at the central government level.

The second sub-group (BSP and SDL) might be called "unreformed post-communist" and is characterized by a low level of acceptance for system changes, a low level of modernism of their councilors, and radical anti-market values.

Type II, which we call "anti-modernist left" (since it is characterized by the lowest modernism index, the lowest index of social individualism, and low acceptance of political transformation) consists of three Estonian parties (the Center Party, the People's Union, and the Moderates), two Slovak (HZDS and SMER), and one Polish (the agrarian PSL). An additional characteristic of this group is its strong egalitarianism and low level of acceptance for market solutions. This group could be also called "eurosceptics." Three of the six parties belonging to this group have been classified by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2003) as "soft eurosceptics" (the Estonian Center Party, the Slovak HZDS, and the Polish PSL). One could easily add the Slovak SMER to the same group. Two remaining parties—the Estonian People's Union and the Moderates—come from a country in which identified scepticism towards EU integration is the highest in general. We have already

Figure 1.3
 Typology of Political Parties' Political Culture (Ward's Hierarchical Method)

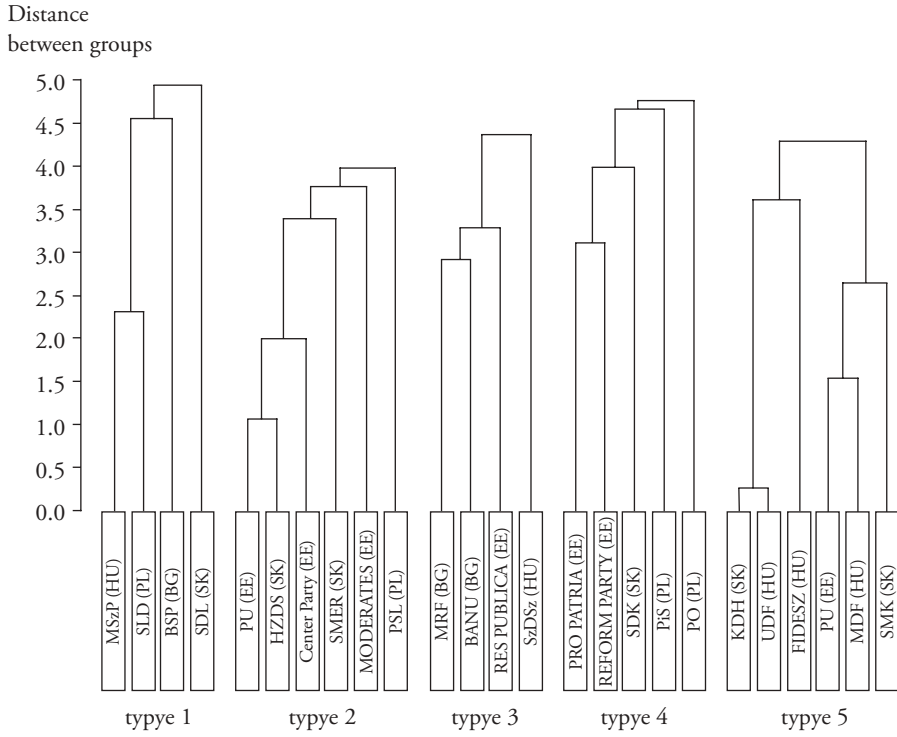
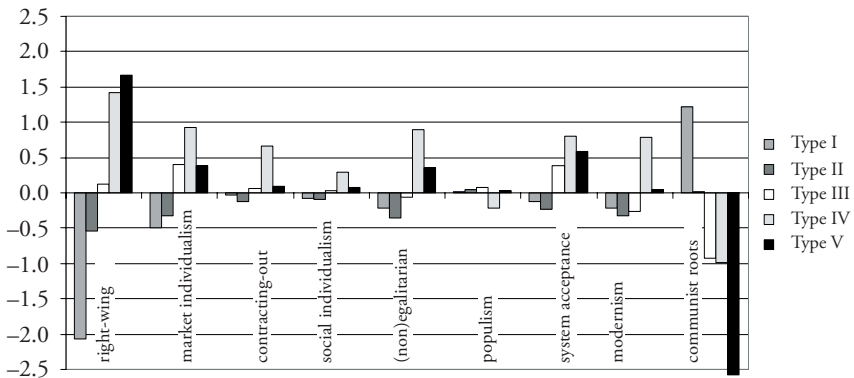


Figure 1.4
 Typology of Parties' Political Culture



mentioned the anti-system opposition in the Polish and Slovak party arenas, and most of these parties (apart from the small ones, which are not a subject of specific analysis here) fit Type II. With the exception of the Center Party, they are parties of councilors with lower education levels from small towns and rural villages (see table 1.17 above). Last but not least, these are parties which are usually the least internally homogenous, as we will show in the next section.

Type III consists of what appears at first glance to be a strange conglomerate of two Bulgarian parties that use anti-establishment rhetoric (the agrarian BANU and the MRF, a party of the Turkish minority), along with the Estonian Res Publica and the liberal Hungarian SzDSz (which belongs to the liberal international). This group is relatively heterogeneous—in political culture the two Bulgarian parties are very close to each other, while Res Publica and SzDSz are slightly different. Internal variation is especially visible in social individualism and modernism issues (Res Publica and SzDSz are more modernist and more in support of social individualism than the two remaining parties of this group). The group is quite homogenous on other scales in the analysis. It is somewhat market individualist and has weak communist roots, but on most of the issues the group mean is close to the average for the whole set of analyzed parties.

The remaining two types include parties whose members locate themselves clearly on the right wing of the political spectrum.

Type IV may be called “liberal right” and consists of two Polish parties (the PO and PiS), two Estonian (Pro Patria and the Reform Party), and one Slovak (the SDK). This group is the closest to liberal: as observed in table 1.17, two out of five parties (the Slovak SDK and the Estonian Reform Party) belong to the liberal international, and the Polish PO is also very close to this ideology (since it was established only recently, it does not yet belong to any international). Councilors of parties belonging to this group present values that are the most consistently rightist in the traditional meaning of this term, and their self-location is consistently right although not extreme. They declare the highest support for market solutions, measured both by abstract questions concerning market individualism and a more practical question about the contracting out of local services. They are the most strongly anti-egalitarian and their level of system acceptance is also the highest. They are the least populist, the most modernist and the most social individualist.

Type V includes two Bulgarian parties (the UDF and the Peoples’ Union), two Hungarian (the MDF and FIDESZ), and two Slovak (the SMK and KDH), and may be called “traditionalist right.” This group might be also called Christian-Democratic, since four out of five parties belonging to this class are members of the Christian-Democratic international (the Bulgarian UDF, the Hungarian FIDESZ and MDF, and the Slovak KDH). It is the most homogenous of the identified classes. As presented in figure 1.4, respondents from this cluster are the most right-wing in their self-location and were the least involved with politics under the communist period. But the values they declare are

not necessarily very close to the traditional meaning of the term “right-wing politics.” They support market individualism and are non-egalitarian, but not as strongly as the parties in Type IV (and in the latter case even less than Type III). However, it would not be fair to say that their right-wing orientation is only ideological. The mean score on most scales is substantially different from Types I and II (which are the closest to the extreme left of the scale), but not as different as one might expect on the basis of their own self-location and their non-communist past.

The typology shows that the political map of parties in Central and Eastern Europe is not one of chaos without any order. The opinions of councilors that are members of parties of similar character show many similarities across countries. The amount of order is actually surprising, given the turbulent political scenes observed in these countries. It reconfirms the observation that organizational changes (the emergence of new parties, splits and internal conflicts) are not necessarily the result of variation in ideological choices. They might also be the result of personal conflicts or the low organizational skills of party leaders. Nevertheless, the internal homogeneity of individual parties is relatively low as we will see in the next section.

6.5 Political Concurrence within Parties

It is assumed that the presence of parties helps to create order in political debate. In democratic theory parties articulate more or less coherent programs on behalf of voters and—if they successfully pass the electoral test—try to implement them. How close is this normative statement to the actual situation in Central and Eastern European local governments? How coherent are the opinions of local councilors from the same party?

We try to answer these questions by using a standard deviation of answers as well as an “index of party homogeneity”¹⁶ that takes into consideration the variation of all nine indices analyzed previously. In general, the variation of opinions is greatest in Bulgaria and Slovakia, and least in Estonia. The homogeneity index for individual parties is presented in table 1.23.

Usually the index values are below 1, which means that the variation of opinions within parties is lower than general among all councilors in the country. The Estonian People’s Union is the only exception to this rule. Other very heterogeneous parties are the Estonian Center Party and the Moderates, the Hungarian SzDSz, the Polish PSL, and the Slovak HZDS.

At the other extreme, the most homogeneous parties are the Bulgarian UDF and Peoples’ Union, the Estonian Reform Party, the Polish PO and PiS, the Hungarian FIDESZ, and the Slovak KDH. It can be easily seen here that the opinions of right-wing councilors are usually more homogeneous than those of their colleagues from

Table 1.23
Party Homogeneity Index for Individual Parties

Bulgaria	
BSP	0.91
Turkish minority (MRF)	0.87
BANU	0.92
Peoples' Union	0.84
UDF	0.78
Estonia	
Center Party	0.97
Moderates	0.95
People's Union	1.01
Res Publica	0.90
Pro Patria	0.88
Reform Party	0.84
Hungary	
MSzP	0.86
SzDSz	0.94
MDF	0.89
FIDESZ	0.83
Poland	
SLD-UP	0.91
PSL	0.96
PO	0.82
PiS	0.82
Slovakia	
SDL	0.88
HZDS	0.95
SMER	0.88
SMK-MKP	0.86
SDK-SD KU	0.86
KDH	0.82

Note: If an index is lower than 1, the variation within the party is lower than in the whole national sample, i.e., the lower the index, the more homogeneous the party.

Source: Own calculations based on the LGDP survey of councilors (2002–2003).

left-wing parties. Indeed, the correlation between the two indices is 0.58 (statistically significant on a 0.01 level). This is definitely a surprising finding.¹⁷ In Poland (but not only in Poland, as the same applies to the Slovak right, for example) rightist parties are famous for being undisciplined. The high number of disputes in these parties and the consequent splits and mergers make the right side of the political scene extremely unstable and chaotic. Their inability to act together is well known. Nevertheless, our research shows that members of these groups are similar to each other, and their opinions on important policy issues are more uniform than in other parties!

Even more surprising, the high homogeneity is sustained when we treat all councilors belonging to various Polish “center-right” parties as one group. The right-wing councilors’ homogeneity is usually higher than in post-communist groups, which have a reputation of being relatively uniform and disciplined. But in our opinion this observation is not necessarily in contradiction with the famous tradition of quarrels and turbulences in right-wing groups. Parties that have been created on the basis of the former democratic opposition have been based (at least historically) on common values and ideological choices. If they are not able to utilize this capital to build a stable political organization, the reason lies in their lack of practical skills and sometimes their inability to seek a consensus, but not in the lack of common ideological ground. On the other hand, our results confirm a claim that leftist groups (especially post-communist parties) are often glued by common interest, not by common ideas. Our analysis also confirms an observation of *Szczerbiak* (2003) that the splits and instability of Polish right-wing groups are related more to low institutional skills than to ideological inconsistency.

High homogeneity is typical for most of the parties classified by us in clusters IV and V. On the other hand, the most heterogeneous are the parties in Type II. These are groups that are afraid of the changes initiated by the 1990 political turn-over, and probably these fears provide the main glue for their organizations (rather than a common, coherent, positive program). These parties’ electorates often recruit from groups with a lower education, so the theoretical coherence of party programs has only limited importance for their voters.

In contrast to what *Clark* and *Swianiewicz* suggested in their analysis based on the 1991 data, party homogeneity is not a strong factor influencing their stability. There are several examples of groups among the parties analyzed in this chapter whose members have very diverse opinions on many issues, but which are still very stable.

But for most Central and East European parties the index is only slightly lower than 1. There is only one party (the UDF in Bulgaria) for which the index of homogeneity is lower than 0.80.¹⁸

7. CONCLUSIONS

We now refer back to the various hypotheses presented at the beginning of this chapter, and determine whether or not they have been confirmed by the analysis.

- *The role of political parties in local politics is not very important but has been gradually increasing during the last twelve years.*

First of all, the role of political parties is diversified—it differs among countries as well as between big and small municipalities. But the idea that it has been gradually increasing has only partially been confirmed. The trend of increasing partisanship in local elections and local politics has certainly been observed in Poland, but data from Hungary and Slovakia are much less conclusive. Unfortunately, we do not have time-series data for other countries. Thus, the first hypothesis has been only partially confirmed and its validity does not seem to be universal in all CEE countries.

- *The increase in the role of parties in local politics is faster in countries with more consolidated territorial systems (Poland and Bulgaria rather than Estonia, Latvia, Hungary and Slovakia).*

Yes, territorial consolidation definitely contributed to high scores in Bulgaria, while a high level of territorial fragmentation in Hungary led to low scores on the party importance index. But the role of parties depends also on “country-specific” variables, and in Poland, for example, it is much lower than one might expect on the basis of its territorial organization.

- *The increase is also faster in big cities (in which party organizations often play a decisive role in local politics) than in small communities (where parties are often still nonexistent and most councilors as well as mayors are elected as independents).*

Yes, the size of the local government proved to be a very powerful variable explaining the importance of parties in local politics. The correlation is stronger in some countries (e.g., Hungary) and weaker in others (e.g., Bulgaria), but it seems to be universal across the whole CEE region. The comparison of national means with “size-standardized means” is a very convincing illustration of this relationship.

- *The role of parties is bigger in countries with proportional electoral systems than in countries with one-ward, majority local council elections.*

Yes, definitely it is. In fact, proportional versus majoritarian electoral systems proved to be the most powerful explanatory variable in some of the regression analyses.

- *The role of parties in local politics is larger in countries with collective forms of leadership (Latvia, Estonia, and Poland before 2002) than in countries closer to the strong-mayor system (Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Poland after 2002) and even larger in Hungary where the system is closest to the council-manager form.*

We failed to find evidence to support this; on the other hand, neither did we find evidence that the opposite relationship (as suggested in some of Mouritzen and Svava's results) might be true. It seems that the popular beliefs of both politicians and experts overestimate the impact of the mayors' nomination method on the role of parties in local politics.

- *Political fragmentation and volatility of local councils is significant and may be potentially dangerous for the management capabilities of local governments.*

Yes, this proposition has definitely been confirmed. Data on volatility are only partial and mostly limited to Poland, but political fragmentation is clearly higher than in most EU cities, and cases of management problems, which might be related to this fragmentation, are often reported.

- *The party orientation (sympathy, membership) of local councilors and mayors is only loosely correlated with their political culture and policy preferences. Nevertheless, parties differ from each other and our report will attempt to map these differences.*

The question of the strength of the relationship between individual party membership and opinions on various policy issues is probably the most difficult to answer in a definite way. We do not have fully comparable data from countries in other regions, but we suggest that there is usually low homogeneity in the analyzed parties of Central and Eastern Europe. In one of the parties (the People's Union in Estonia) the variation in opinion within the party was even higher than in the whole national sample of councilors. In some others such as the Slovak HZDS, the Polish PSL, and the Estonian Center Party and the Moderates, it is just a little bit lower. In other parties the internal variation is lower, but nevertheless very high. However, as we noted earlier, one cannot make predictions about the stability of the party system simply on the basis of their internal homogeneity. Sometimes parties that are not homogenous on policy issues (such as most of the post-communist parties) are much more stable than more homogeneous rightist groups.

Finally, we have noticed that differences between parties in Estonia and to a somewhat lesser extent in Hungary are lower than in other countries. Summing up, it would not be fair to say that party membership of councilors or mayors is only loosely related to their political culture. But at the same time, low homogeneity of party members'

opinions on crucial issues leaves us unable to call the present party system clearly and fully coherent.

There is not a clear international pattern of differences between parties. Parties that use similar labels (such as liberal, social-democrat, and in particular left- and right-wing) in different countries are not necessarily similar to each other.

The most vital cleavage still seems to be a division between post-communists and those that are rooted in democratic opposition groups. Except for Estonia, this line is to a large extent identical with the division between politicians who declare their orientation to be right-wing or left-wing. This distinction is largely reflected in ideological choices on such issues as market individualism or egalitarianism (i.e., values that are important dimensions of the traditional left-right cleavages). But there are important exceptions to this general rule. For example, left-right location is not significantly correlated with market individualism in Hungary or with egalitarianism in Poland. At the same time, “leftist” or “rightist” orientations are much more weakly reflected in more concrete policy choices. In the case of willingness to contract out local services (which may be interpreted as a practical test for market individualism) the correlation with the left-right dimension is problematic in most of the analyzed countries. In Hungary, “left” and “right” parties have similar opinions on the economy, but economic liberalism is characteristic for councilor-members of SzDSz, which is close to the center.

At the same time, applying a formal classification method brought more or less coherent results. We were able to group the analyzed parties into five clusters that differ in political culture and in the biographies of their members-councilors. Moreover, it has been possible to identify parties of a similar type in various countries (one group consisting of post-communist parties, and another of parties identifying themselves with Christian-Democracy). On the other hand, the final result of classification is not always coherent. Some groups that are “forced” by the formal clustering method look a bit artificial and are quite heterogeneous—e.g., Hungarian liberals from FIDESZ being in the same group as the Bulgarian agrarian BANU or a party of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria.

It should be added that the picture arising from such a typology of parties is more like the traditional picture of left-right cleavages. Unlike what Clark suggests in his modern theories of New Political Culture or New Fiscal Populism (Clark and Fergusson 1983, Clark and Hoffmann-Martinot 1998) parties which are “leftist” on market issues are also “leftist” on social issues. To conclude, the picture of cleavages is much more coherent than one might expect on the basis of popular beliefs in the chaotic character of the political scene in CEE countries, but it is also far from fully logical and explicable.

NOTES

- ¹ Classification of local executive management systems refers to Mouritzen and Svava (2002) typology.
- ² We return to this issue at the beginning of section on parties' local political culture.
- ³ More precise definitions of individual dimensions are included in relevant section of this paper.
- ⁴ Local Democracy and Innovation project has been funded by the Norwegian Research Council for Applied Social Sciences and coordinated by prof. Harald Baldersheim (see Baldersheim et al. 1996, Baldersheim et al. 2003).
- ⁵ To calculate "size-standardized mean" we take into account size distribution which is averaged for all analyzed countries. For the size cohorts that are empty in our samples (e.g., we have no local governments below 1,000 residents in Bulgaria or in Poland), we use an extrapolation of the trend from the existing size cohorts.
- ⁶ There are 25 such parties in the five analyzed countries. The same list of parties is analyzed in the following section where we discuss the variation in political culture.
- ⁷ The surveys do not provide data on sympathy towards two of the analyzed parties: the SDL in Slovakia and the People's Union in Bulgaria.
- ⁸ Party membership of mayors is known from the survey of Chief Executive Officers (see section 1.3).
- ⁹ We do not have data on mayors' sympathy towards Romanian parties.
- ¹⁰ Survey data for Hungary slightly differ from actual data concerning the whole population (presented in table 1.7). But these differences are small and—generally speaking—confirm the accuracy of our information gathered through surveys.
- ¹¹ The applied method of index calculation perhaps requires a methodological footnote. The index is calculated on the basis of mean values for each indicator taken into account. To get a size-standardized index, the means have been calculated individually for seven size cohorts of local governments (below 1,000 residents; 1–2,000; 2–5,000; 5–10,000; 10–50,000; 50–100,000; over 100,000). Missing values (for example, there are no local governments below 1,000 residents in Bulgaria) have been handled in the way described in footnote 6. To avoid a strong domination of membership and support in elections in the index, the weight of the first four variables is 0.5, while for the last two variables the weight is 1. The index is presented on a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means the lack of any presence of parties while 100 means the domination of parties in local political life.
- ¹² Strictly speaking, the electoral system in larger Hungarian cities is not purely proportional and might be described as "mixed." But in our model we group it together with Bulgaria or Estonia, to distinguish the situation in the local governments from typical majority systems that exist in Slovakia or in small Hungarian and Polish local governments.
- ¹³ Communist roots index (CRI) is calculated as: $\text{com}(\text{partymean})/\text{com}(\text{countrymean})$ and

$$\text{com} = \frac{\text{crcomm} + \text{cromoff} + \text{croidrep}}{3}$$

Crcomm—membership of political parties before 1990.

Cromoff—party officers before 1990.

Croidrep—councilors before 1990.

- ¹⁴ The index of modernism is calculated in the same way as the index of communist roots. A 100% value for the national average (as presented in table 1.17) would mean that all councilors use e-mail, use Internet, and have a university degree.
- ¹⁵ At least, these are the verbal declarations of all party members. Some other analyses—for example, Raun 1997, Kuczynski 2003—suggest that the Center Party was created by the former communist party establishment. But this finding is not confirmed by our data. Is this perhaps not a concern of present local councilors? Or do they just not want to admit their communist past?
- ¹⁶ Such an index has been suggested by Swianiewicz and Clark (1996). It consists of the mean standard deviation for the party divided by the standard deviation for the national sample.
- ¹⁷ We claim this finding is surprising in the Central and East European context, since it goes against the popular stereotype of a uniform left together with fragmented and incoherent right-wing parties. However, we should mention that the phenomenon of increasing diversification of left-wing parties has been observed in Western democracies. Lipset (2001) indicates that following changes in the social structure in modern societies, left parties now seek to appeal more to the growing middle strata than to industrial workers, and the “New Left” is looking for more market solutions. Lipset concludes that the Social Democratic and Labour parties are now socially and ideologically pluralistic (p.252).
- ¹⁸ Our intuition tells that if indices are so close to 1, parties’ homogeneity should be assessed as rather low. But perhaps it is typical for most parties, even those in more stabilized democratic systems such as in Western Europe. Unfortunately, we do not have fully comparative data, but we applied the same method to a few questions related to values similar to those we have discussed here, which were asked to mayors in the Fiscal Austerity and Urban Innovation (FAUI) Project in the 1980s and 1990s. The index of parties’ homogeneity was between 0.57 and 0.93 for five French parties, and between 0.80 and 0.99 for three Norwegian parties. This very imperfect check confirms our suggestion that there are larger variations of opinion within CEE party members than typically in Western Europe.

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The Gender Gap in Local Political Leaderships in Central and Eastern Europe

Zsolt Nyíri, Richard Vengroff

ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a comparative study of gender differences in the attitudes and beliefs of local representatives in five transitional countries of Central and Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia.¹ Looking at the special characteristics of women representatives is important since women are, or are close to being, a critical mass of local officials in all five countries (21–32%). The research is based on surveys of about 1,000 locally elected officials in each of the five countries. Our findings for locally elected officials are consistent with findings for the general population and with trends in the gender gap worldwide. We find gender differences in perceptions of the very nature of the role of the state, and this is consistent from country to country. Women see a greater role for the state in the economy and in the provision of help and support to citizens. Differences at the local level are especially important because it is here that many of the issues having a direct impact on the lives of women are addressed on a daily basis. The existing gap seems to be growing, as we see clear generational (age cohort) differences consistent with growth in the gap over time. This is further reinforced by the data on ideological self-identification, which shows women generally to the left of their male counterparts and growth in this gap from generation to generation. However, support for democracy and democratic values is quite consistent across gender.

The Gender Gap in Local Political Leaderships in Central and Eastern Europe

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1. INTRODUCTION

A recent survey of local legislatures (LRS 2002–2003) was sent out to thousands of local representatives in five countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE): Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. While the survey had many objectives, including gathering information about the activities, values, opinions, and demographics of locally elected officials, these data also provided an opportunity to examine important differences in the attitudes, preferences, and perceptions of male and female representatives. The data have allowed us to place in comparative perspective the gender differences, and particularly the so-called gender gap, among local representatives in these five countries. We can see to what extent these data are consistent with findings on the gender gap at other levels. Moreover, the survey allows us to make interesting comparisons across countries in the CEE region.

Our findings on this issue are unique and potentially quite important. There is a lack of available research identifying in what ways female and male locally elected officials actually differ and how those differences affect their policy choices. The idea that more equitable gender representation is good for democratic development and will result in more diverse policymaking at the local level is based on the assumption that there are gender-related differences in the values, goals, priorities, and perceptions of representatives. In addition, since the research focuses on local councilors instead of national or state representatives, it will add to our understanding of the nature and potential benefits of decentralization. These data also provide the opportunity to examine the nature of the “gender gap” among locally elected elites compared to the gap found within the general population of the five countries included in the study. Finally, the research investigates the local situation in a relatively new wave of democracies in Central and Eastern Europe and adds to our understanding of democratic transitions.

1.1 Decentralization and Gender Representation

In recent decades “decentralization” has become increasingly popular as a means of addressing major difficulties associated with the management of complex functions in public administration, increasing the responsiveness of government, promoting greater participation, and improving the quality of governance. Even traditionally highly centralized unitary states such as France have made significant moves in this direction (Loughlin and Mazey 1995; Page 1991; Downs 1998; also see DeVries 2000 regarding support for decentralization in Europe). Worldwide, both developing and transitional countries have been under intense international pressure from the donor community to decentralize authority as part of the democratization process. Understandably, many post-socialist countries have welcomed decentralization as a way of breaking down the over-centralized socialist state as part of their democratic transitions.

All five countries in our study have already established local self-governments with constitutionally guaranteed rights. According to Tamás M. Horváth (2000), only Poland and Hungary can be described as following a “coherent model of transition” of local governments. For these two countries, the structure of local governments was established early and elections at the local level were held at the time of the first parliamentary elections. In CEE countries, however, it was more common that their institution of local democracy developed gradually. The structures, functions, and financing of local governments were the result of ongoing political disputes in which “temporary political and legal techniques were adopted” (Horváth 2000). Nevertheless, the end product is similar in all five cases in the sense that local government rests on the foundation of democratically elected local bodies. Moreover, all the countries included in this study consider the European Charter of Local Self-Government of the European Union as a model in establishing pluralistic and democratic local governance. Local governments also add a great deal of vitality to the political systems of each country. While the precise structures and functions of local governments often differ from one country to another in important ways, we believe enough similarities still exist to allow for meaningful comparison.

The importance of the impact of local level governance on people’s lives is increasing, and this raises several gender-related questions. To what extent do gender-related issues become part of the local agenda? How well are women represented in elected councils and legislatures at this level? In what ways do men and women differ in their views of democracy and government? The number of women representatives, presumably with their own values, unique views on public policy issues, and different backgrounds, may have a critical impact on a broad range of policy issues in the future. Assuming that there are significant differences between male and female locally elected officials, better gender representation may result in decision-making bodies that are more likely to represent the real values of the public (Thielemann and Stewart 1996).

In addition to the critical areas of policy they address, locally elected bodies may provide attractive opportunities and easier access for women. These legislatures offer seats that are often less competitive, require less costly campaigns and are less likely to require relocation away from familial demands, all conditions which have traditionally inhibited women's involvement in electoral politics (Lovenduski 1986). In addition, they may serve as an important recruiting ground for women candidates for higher-level offices.

For example, a recent study by Susan J. Carroll found evidence of a significant "gender gap" between the ideological orientations and attitudes on policy issues of representatives in the United States. Carroll's work confirmed earlier findings that women representatives are more likely to hold liberal opinions on issues and are less likely to call themselves conservatives—regardless of their party affiliation (Carroll 2002).

At the state level, Carey, Niemi, and Powel found important differences between men and women legislators in the following areas:

- Level of political ambition
- Level of professionalization—the degree to which men were more ambitious, experienced, and able to mobilize greater resources
- Legislative activities
- Policy positions
- Ideology.

Carey, Niemi, and Powel note that "women state legislators are different from their male counterparts in important ways" (Thomas and Wilcox 1998, 87). Not only do they differ, but this difference matters in the sense that it will affect their politics (Thomas 1994). As the number of women elected to public office grows, it is becoming more and more important to explore these gender-based differences. Moreover, earlier studies neglected gender differences at the local or regional levels of politics.

1.2 Small Differences That Matter

Inglehart and Norris (2003) note that there exists "a modest but consistent" gender gap between many aspects of policy-related values and beliefs such as the political activism of male and female citizens of postindustrial, industrial, and agrarian societies. Lovenduski and Norris (2003) conclude in their study of the British Parliament that the entry of more women into the legislature will probably not generate radical revolution but will end "politics as usual." Others, such as Phillips, also confirm that the differences between men's and women's experience of politics originates in rather small differences and do not suggest that men and women are "essentially" different. Instead, "a fairly small difference in experience can become a large difference in self-image and social perception" (Phillips 1998).

These seemingly small differences, therefore, can be very important. Anne Phillips identifies some arguments why better gender representation and eventually gender parity is essential in a democracy (Phillips 1998):

- *Justice*: it is unfair for men to monopolize political representation. Distorted representation is the result of intentional or structural discrimination against women representatives;
- *Women's interest*: from the point of view of political realism, there is no public interest. Instead, there are several different interests within the public. Women's interests are one of the many interests, and they are inadequately addressed in a political system dominated by men;
- *Revitalization of democracy*: increasing the number of women representatives is not only a pictorial or quota-related goal. Feminists think that gender representation matters because what female representatives do is different from their male counterparts. Consequently, increasing the number of women representatives enhances democracy and democratic institutions.

While much research has already been carried out on male to female ratios in elected bodies, it is rare to investigate what actual difference it makes to have better gender equity. In other words, how are male and female representatives different² and what is the policy impact of those differences?

1.3 Gender Representation in Post-socialist Countries

The five countries included in this study, and post-socialist countries in general, now tend to share a similar experience with many developed western democracies. They generally have relatively low levels of women represented in legislative offices when compared to women's share of the total population. This is especially surprising with regard to formerly socialist countries, since these countries tended to have higher levels of descriptive representation in their "socialist" past than they do in their democratic present. Increasing the number of women in governmental bodies was part of the socialist rhetoric of emancipating women from a double oppression: first, because of their class and, second, due to their gender. Paradoxically, the relatively high level of descriptive representation was only possible due to the fact that elections were not free. Thus, the Socialist Party could influence nominations and votes according to its ideological directives. During the last socialist elections in Hungary in 1985 women won 27% of the parliamentary seats (compared to only 8% in the most recent national election) and 21% of the positions in local governments. It is important to note, however, that descriptive representation was not accompanied by substantive representation, and for women as well as "for most people political participation meant passive attendance at

meetings and demonstrations to support the party” (Rueschemeyer 1994). Eva Fodor notes that even the 30% quota set by the Hungarian Politburo for female participation in political positions was a sign of limiting women’s advancement under socialism to a maximum of less than one-third of all the leadership positions (Fodor 2002; see also Moser 2003).

After the collapse of communism, the absolute number of female politicians significantly dropped. In Hungary, for example, women occupied only 7.3% of the parliamentary seats after the first democratic elections in 1990. However, more than double that (16%) were elected at the local level. There has been a slight increase in female representatives since the first elections, and the gap between the local and central ratios remains in favor of the local level (Jaquette and Wolchik 1998; Vengroff, Nyiri and Fugiero 2003).

The countries selected for inclusion in this study represent a great variety of CEE transitional democracies. Four of the five countries are new members of the European Union (Poland, Hungary, Estonia, and Slovakia), but Bulgaria has yet to join. Bulgaria is also representative of the Balkan region with its distinct historical and economic perspectives. But the most important feature of these countries is a unifying one, as they are all transforming their post-communist political systems into modern democratic systems of governance with a substantial amount of decision-making granted to the local level. Freedom House describes the “freedom status” of all five countries as free.³ Four of the countries are ranked similarly in political rights and civil liberties, with only Bulgaria scoring a little less favorably on both indices (see table 2.1 below).

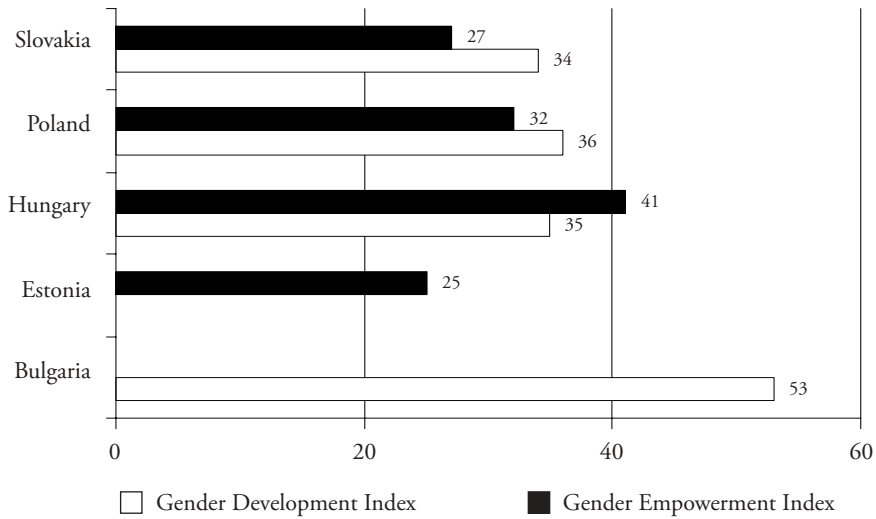
As far as women’s representation and gender equality are concerned, the countries are rather similar. With the exception of Bulgaria, all the countries in this study score relatively high on the Human Development Index and the Gender-related Development Index (GDI)—see figure 2.1. The Gender-related Development scale is a composite index measuring average achievement in the three basic dimensions captured in the

Table 2.1
Freedom House Rankings (1999–2000)

	Political rights	Civil liberties	Freedom status
Bulgaria	2	3	Free
Estonia	1	2	Free
Hungary	1	2	Free
Poland	1	2	Free
Slovakia	1	2	Free

Source: <http://www.freedomhouse.org>.

Figure 2.1
 Comparison of Rankings on Gender-related Development
 and the Gender Empowerment Measure⁴



Source: United Nations Development Program, 2001.

Human Development Index of the United Nation’s Human Development Report (UNDP 2001): a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living for women. Only Bulgaria is among the countries considered to be at the “medium” level of development on this index. The countries in our study tend to be in one cluster as Slovakia ranks 34th, Hungary 35th, Poland 36th, and Bulgaria 53rd out of 146 countries (data on Estonia are missing).

As the countries in this study tend to rank high on gender-related development, they score somewhat similarly on the more political aspects of gender empowerment. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) goes beyond basic dimensions of human development and takes into account the degree to which women participate in politics and the economy. GEM is a composite index measuring gender inequality in three important dimensions of empowerment: women’s economic participation and decision-making roles, political participation and decision-making, and power over economic resources. Looking at the countries in our sample, Estonia is ranked the highest at 25th, Slovakia 27th, Poland 32nd, and Hungary 41st out of 64 countries. Unfortunately, GEM values are missing for Bulgaria.

As noted above, CEE countries have a history of women’s participation in the political arena, and all the countries in our sample granted voting rights to women before 1945.

Moreover, women could be legally elected to political office since that time. Women are fairly well represented at the ministerial level in our sample countries, ranging from 14% to 36% of the workforce. But in the politically more prestigious parliaments women's representation lags behind, ranging from a low of 8% of parliamentary seats held by women in Hungary to 18% in Estonia. Even the best performer in our group of countries has fewer women MPs than the leading countries in women's representation such as Norway (36.4%) and Sweden (42.7%). This is not particularly unusual, however, as many of the more affluent and established Western democracies also have relatively few women in their parliaments (e.g., France with 10.9%, the United States with 14%, and Italy with 11.1%). Table 2.2 below provides some basic indicators and milestones of women's political rights and representation in the five countries.

Finally, lower earnings of women than men—a phenomenon not unknown in more established democracies—can also be observed in our sample of countries. Women's income ranges from 57% to 65% of the earned male income among the general population. Figure 2.2 displays the ratio of estimated earned income for males and females among the general population in four of the five countries of our study during the period 1994–1999. While earning disparities are a stable feature of all democracies, we must note that both male and female representatives make less money in CEE than in Western Europe, which makes the earning gap more painful for women since the base is lower to begin with.

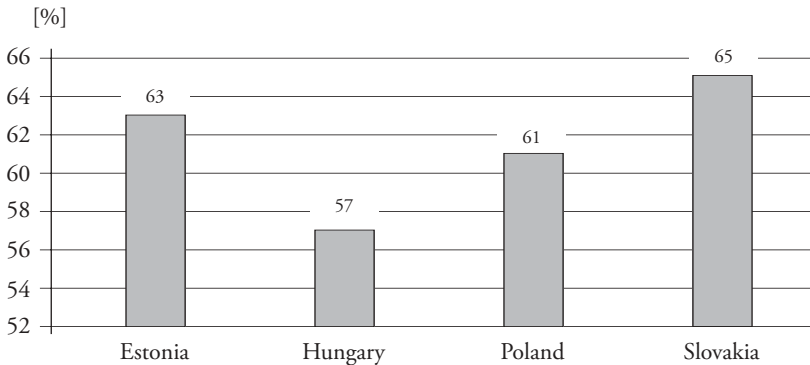
In summary, based on general measures of gender equity, the five countries of our study are situated in a more or less uniform cluster. Based on the general population measures, we also expect them to behave relatively similarly with regard to the gender gap in local political elites, as they have shared a “common history” since World War II as well as a current political agenda to prepare them to conform with EU practices and policies.

Table 2.2
Political Rights and Representation of Women in Five CEE Countries (2001)

	The year women received the right to vote	The year women received the right to stand for election	Percent of women in government at the ministerial level	Parliamentary seats held by women in the lower or single house (as percent of the total)
Bulgaria	1944	1944	19	11
Estonia	1918	1918	14	18
Hungary	1918	1918	36	8
Poland	1918	1918	19	13
Slovakia	1920	1920	19	14

Source: United Nations Development Program, 2001.

Figure 2.2
The Ratio of Estimated Female to Male Earned Income (2001)



Source: United Nations Development Program, 2001.

2. DATA SOURCES

The statistical analysis on gender differences is carried out on data⁵ gathered during 2002 and 2003 as part of a project initiated by the Open Society Institute in Budapest. The survey instrument was distributed among local representatives in five countries to collect information about the activities, values, opinions, and demography of local political elites. The targeted respondents were locally elected representatives such as mayors and municipal councilors. The survey design included items in the following six areas:

1. The perception of local government performance
2. An evaluation of the relationship between local government and citizenry
3. Trust and power relations within the political elite
4. Party and NGO membership
5. Respect for and commitment to basic democratic values
6. Demographic characteristics such as age and education.

The countries in this study (Estonia, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Hungary) provide a good cross-section of Central and Eastern European countries, and all of them have a functioning system of democratically elected local representatives. Although the samples were not stratified by gender, between 21% and 32% of the interviewees in each country are women.

3. THE COMMON GROUND: EDUCATION, AGE, AND OPTIMISM

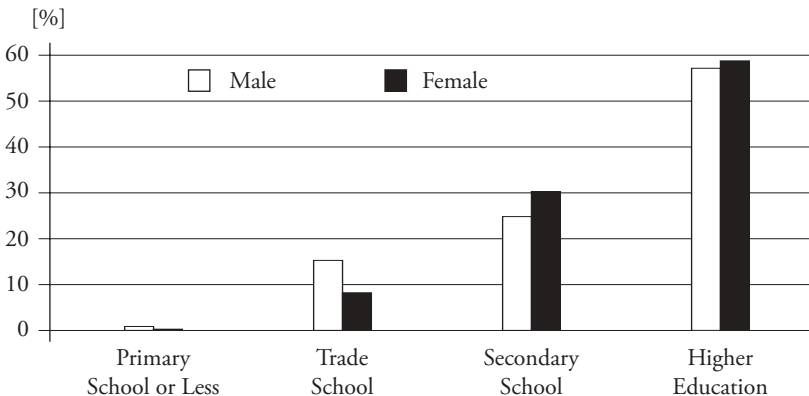
3.1 Age

While the focus of this chapter is on gender differences, men and women elected as local officials also have many things in common. For example, the median age for both male and female local representatives is 49 and 47, respectively. Although this difference is statistically significant, it bears little substantive relevance as both sexes tend to be from the same generation; that is, they were born before the 1960s and grew up under the communist regime.

3.2 Education

The differences are also minimal in terms of education.⁶ Local representatives are generally well educated. More than half of the representatives have had some college or university training, including 57% of male and 59% of female representatives. Those having completed only primary school or fewer than eight years of elementary school comprise less than 2% of each group. Of those whose schooling ended at the secondary level, men are more likely (15.6% versus 9% for women) to have attended trade schools and to have some type of vocational degree, and women are more likely to have attended traditional high schools (30.9% compared to 25.5% of males).

Figure 2.3
Gender and Education among Local Representatives (2002–2003)



Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

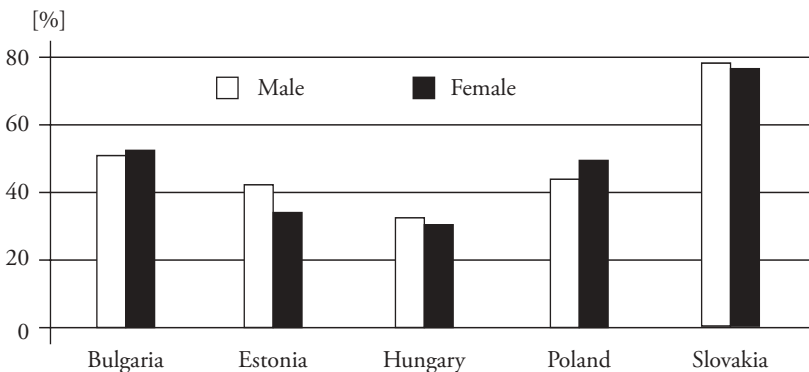
We found no significant gender-related difference in the ability to speak a foreign language(s). Slightly fewer than half of all respondents (48% of men and 46% of women) reported that they are able to take part in a conversation in a foreign language. As we can see from figure 2.4 below, there exist some differences between countries in this regard (Slovakia scoring highest, as expected from its recent history), but the gender-related differences within the countries are negligible.

3.3 Optimism

Are women in general more optimistic than men about the future of their municipality? To determine this we created an optimism index based on the difference between the respondent’s estimation of how things will be going in the local community five years from now and their satisfaction with the municipality at the time of the interview.⁷ When we look at their predictions about life in their respective local communities five years from now (see figure 2.5), regardless of gender interviewees tend to be slightly optimistic, with an average of 4.5 on a one-to-seven scale (one meaning that the future will be much worse and seven meaning the future will be much better). Representatives tend to give slightly weaker responses—but still without a significant gender gap—to the question of how satisfied they are with the current situation in their own municipality. They tend to evaluate their local government at the middle point of a seven-point scale.

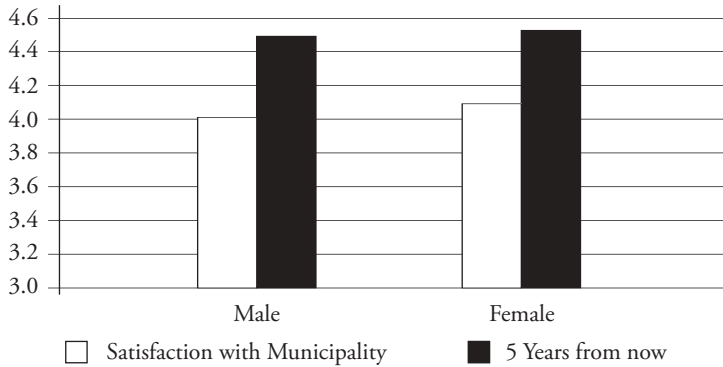
The scale on the optimism index ranges from -6 to +6; the higher the score, the more optimistic the local representatives are (see figure 2.6). In all five countries there is some limited optimism about the future of their municipality. We can safely say that

Figure 2.4
Representatives Speaking a Foreign Language, by Gender [%]



Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

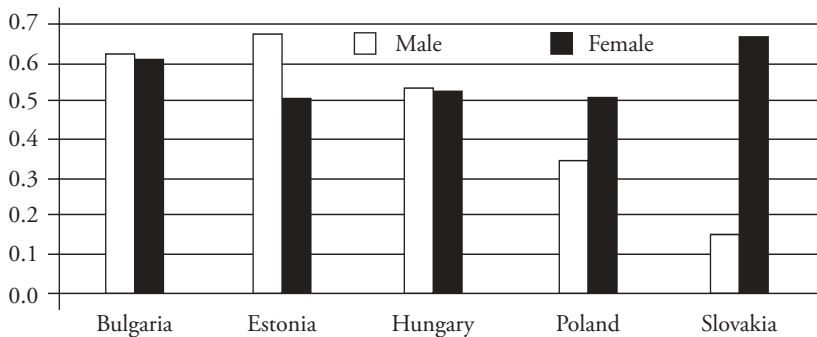
Figure 2.5
General Optimism about the Future of the Municipality



Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

most local leaders do not expect things to worsen and do predict some improvement in the next five years. By far the least optimistic about change in the future are the Slovak representatives, especially women. Gender differences within the countries are quite small, on average well below one full point in all five countries. In other words, both female and male representatives can be described as being slightly and equally optimistic about the future of their municipality; on the other hand, they are closer to the middle, i.e., slightly less satisfied, with the current situation.

Figure 2.6
Country and Gender Differences on the Optimism Index (2002–2003)



Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

4. AREAS OF DIFFERENCE: WORK AND COMPENSATION

4.1 Time Spent Working as a Local Councilor

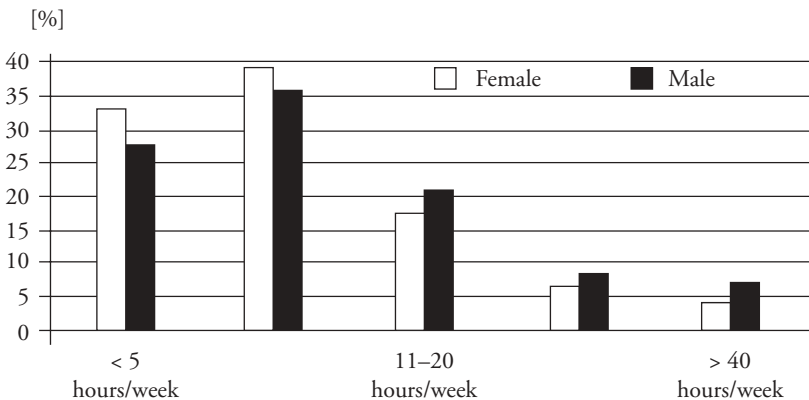
The traditional view that women need to spend more time at home and that this detracts from their active time commitment to politics seems to be true in CEE countries (see figures 2.7 and 2.8 below). Women report devoting fewer hours in an average week to their activities as councilors than their male counterparts do. Furthermore, women representatives tend to work fewer office hours than do their male colleagues. But these figures may be deceptive as women tend to conduct more of their business in less formal contact situations. There is very little cross-country variation in this regard and the modal category is in the 5–10 hours-a-week range for all five countries.

4.2 Levels of Compensation

Finally, we must address the issue of representatives' compensation. As can be seen in figure 2.9 below, there is a statistically significant gender gap here. Female representatives report their personal income is about the same as the average income in their municipality, four on a seven-point scale. Male representatives report slightly higher incomes than the average citizen—4.5 on the same scale.

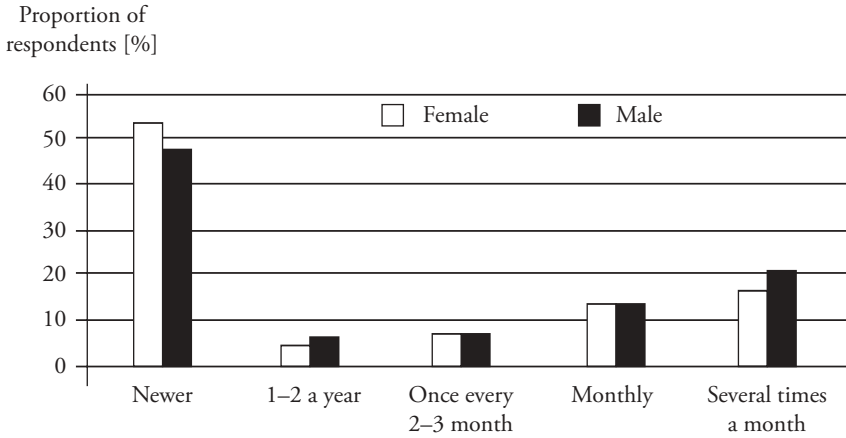
Figure 2.7

Hours Local Representatives Spend on their Activities by Gender⁸ (2002–2003)



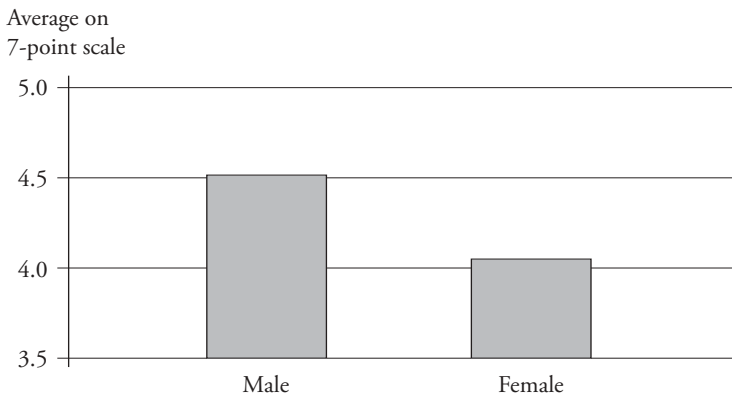
Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

Figure 2.8
Provision of Office Hours for Constituents,⁹ by Gender (2002–2003)



Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

Figure 2.9
Personal Income Relative to the Community, by Gender¹⁰ (2002–2003)



Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

The above finding is not surprising if we take into account that women in general make less money than do men in the region. But this does not mean that female representatives work less, because their employment status tends to be remarkably similar to that of men. That is, around 68–70% of both male and female local representatives are employed full time in one capacity or another. Hungarian male representatives seem to have the highest income when compared to average income (4.73 on a seven-point scale), while the only Estonian representatives who report that their income is below

average (3.63) for their municipalities are the females (see figure 2.10 below). Detailed data on compensation are presented in tables 2.3a and 2.3b below.

5. CIVIC INVOLVEMENT AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM AMONG LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES

While the respondents in this study have already demonstrated their political activism by being elected to political office, we also examine whether the gender gap applies to other forms of political activism and non-traditional participation such as political protests and demonstrations. We also consider in what ways local political elites in Central and Eastern Europe behave differently from the general population in their respective countries.

Table 2.3a
Personal Income Comparison

Gender	Country	Mean	N	Standard deviation
Male	Bulgaria	4.23	716	1.480
	Estonia	4.56	621	1.511
	Hungary	4.73	702	1.223
	Poland	4.53	581	1.669
	Slovakia	4.55	647	1.366
	Total		4.52	3,267
Female	Bulgaria	4.05	194	1.311
	Estonia	3.63	286	1.581
	Hungary	4.27	221	1.397
	Poland	4.45	153	1.666
	Slovakia	4.07	230	1.498
	Total		4.04	1,084
Total	Bulgaria	4.19	910	1.447
	Estonia	4.27	907	1.593
	Hungary	4.62	923	1.281
	Poland	4.51	734	1.667
	Slovakia	4.43	877	1.418
	Total		4.40	4,351

Note: N=4,351

Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

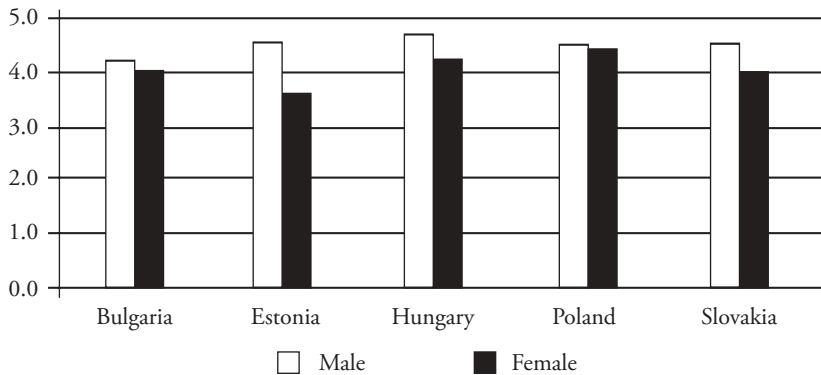
Table 2.3b
Personal Income Comparison (ANOVA)

Income comparison by gender	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Between combined groups	183.059	1	183.059	84.364	0.000
Within groups	9,436.700	4,349	2.170		
Total	9,619.759	4,350			

Note: N=4,351

Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

Figure 2.10
Personal Income Relative to Community by Country (2002–2003)



Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

Gender has traditionally been examined as a factor that affects political participation including electoral turnout, party membership, and political protest among the general population. Inglehart and Norris (2003) argue that there are three major dimensions of political activism:

- Traditional political activism such as party or union memberships and voting
- Civic activism that goes beyond the conventional forms of political participation such as membership in voluntary organizations and associations
- Protest activism such as participation in demonstrations, boycotts, or petitioning.

They found “a modest but consistent” gender gap in political activism with women being less active than men among the general population of postindustrial, industrial, and agrarian countries.

Inglehart and Norris classify the countries of Central and Eastern Europe included in this study as industrial societies with newer democracies. All five of our sample countries are included in the 1990 World Values Study and in most cases in subsequent surveys. These studies provide some baseline data on the general population. These surveys provide us with an opportunity to contrast local elites with the general population, in addition to highlighting gender differences among local representatives.

5.1 Civic Involvement

Almond and Verba (1963), and Putnam (1994) point out that membership in voluntary associations is an important measure of civic culture. Civic-mindedness and social capital are connected to the quality and success of democratic institutions because they facilitate cooperation by increasing trust among the members of a particular group and by enhancing communication. Because of the increased role of the local elite in Central and Eastern Europe in building and maintaining democratic institutions, we have paid special attention to their level of civic activism.

We measure civic activism by membership in civic organizations such as associations, foundations, or trade unions, in which a representative has had a position of trust. (This is because the questionnaire only asked about membership in civic organizations in which the respondent occupied a position of trust such as being a board member or an official.) We then contrast the level of associational activism between male and female local officials.

A quick glance at table 2.4 reveals that at the national level membership in civic organizations seems to be negatively correlated with party membership. That is, countries with higher levels of party membership among local representatives tend to rank lower

Table 2.4
Local Representatives Occupying a Position of Trust in Civic Organizations [%] (2002)

Country	NGO Position of trust			
	Male	Female	Total	Gender gap
Hungary	53.2	50.5	52.6	-2.7
Poland	43.0	43.0	43.0	0.0
Estonia	34.4	32.1	33.6	-2.3
Slovakia	27.8	23.3	26.7	-4.5
Bulgaria	20.7	21.9	20.9	1.2

Note: N=3,993

Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

in civic organization membership. While 86% of the local representatives were party members in Bulgaria, only 21% of them held a position of trust in a civic organization. Meanwhile, only 35% of the Hungarian representatives were party members, but 52% percent were in a position of trust in a civic organization.

The gender gap is quite small, but female representatives are less likely to be in a position of trust in an NGO than are their male counterparts in Estonia, Hungary, and Slovakia. There is no difference in Poland, and in Bulgaria women are more involved by a very slim margin. However, the differences are not statistically significant, even when we control for age cohort. Also, there is no significant relationship between party and civic organizational membership at the individual level; that is, party members are not more or less likely to be members of civic organizations.

We further analyzed civic activism by contrasting the number of civic organizations to which men and women belong (table 2.4). Except for Slovakia, female local representatives belong to fewer civic organizations than do their male counterparts. This difference, similar to leadership differences in associational groups, fails to reach statistical significance.

When we compare the civic activism of local representatives to that of the general population in their respective countries (as reported by Inglehart and Norris) we find, as expected, that local elites greatly exceed their respective country averages in organizational activism. Citizens in industrial societies tend to belong to fewer than one civic organization (on average 0.71 for women and 0.86 for men). Among local representatives in our sample, the mean number of civic organizations in which they hold a position of trust (a more restrictive measure than simple memberships) ranges from 1.37 for Estonian women to 1.69 among Hungarian women. Men who are local office holders tend to belong to more civic organizations, the range being from 1.48 civic organizations per representative in Estonia to 1.82 in Poland.

Although we found no statistically significant gender gap in terms of membership in civic organizations, the numbers are in the expected direction. Among leaders, as is the case with the general population, women seem to be slightly less likely to be active in civic organizations in most of the countries in our study. This has clear implications for democracy, to the extent that these measures are considered proxies for social capital (see tables 2.5 and 2.6).

5.2 Participation in Protest Demonstrations

Finally, the least conventional form of political participation measured in the survey is political protests and demonstrations. Our findings show that female local representatives were less likely than are their male counterparts to have participated in demonstrations during the previous year in all five countries considered. Hungary showed the largest

Table 2.5
 Mean Number of Civic Organizations in which
 Local Representatives Occupy a Position of Trust (2002)

Country	Mean number of civic organizations		
	Male	Female	Gender gap
Bulgaria	1.67	1.47	-0.20
Estonia	1.48	1.37	-0.11
Slovakia	1.53	1.62	0.09
Poland	1.82	1.62	-0.20
Hungary	1.80	1.69	-0.11

Note: N=2,112

Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

Table 2.6
 Membership in Civic Organizations in the General Population
 of Postindustrial and Industrial Societies (2003)

Type of society	Gender	Memberships in civic organizations (mean no.)
Postindustrial	Female	1.46
	Male	1.50
	Difference	-0.04
Industrial	Female	0.71
	Male	0.86
	Difference	-0.15

Source: Inglehart and Norris, 2003.

difference: more than twice as many of the male representatives (16%) report that they participated in a protest or demonstration during the previous year, compared to only 7% of the female representatives.

While the gender gap between representatives remains, local representatives of both genders are less likely to use this form of political activism than is the general population. Given the nature of our sample population (local representatives are already members of the political elite and tend to work inside the system), these results are not surprising. In addition, the local political elite has access to and may prefer other avenues for expressing their views than this non-traditional form of political participation. Even so, political protest is not unknown as a form of participation among them.

Table 2.7
Local Representatives Participating in Protest Demonstrations
during the Previous Year [%] (2002)

Country	Participation (percent of representatives)			
	Male	Female	Total	Gender gap
Hungary*	15.9	7.1	13.8	-8.9
Bulgaria	12.7	9.9	12.1	-2.8
Poland	10.4	9.6	10.2	-0.8
Slovakia	5.8	3.4	5.2	-2.4
Estonia	4.8	3.2	4.3	-1.6

Note: $p < 0.001$, $N = 4,274$

Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

Table 2.8
Percentage of Population in Postindustrial
and Industrial Societies Who Have Done at Least One Protest Act

Type of society	Gender	Protested at least once [%]
Postindustrial	Female	62.3
	Male	65.5
	Difference	-3.3
Industrial	Female	29.7
	Male	34.4
	Difference	-4.7

Source: Inglehart and Norris, 2003.

Our findings for local representatives in Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Estonia, and Slovakia reinforce the “modest but consistent” gender gap in political activism that others have found among the general population. Even in those cases where the differences are not statistically significant, the direction of the relationship is such that female local elites seem to be less engaged in the major forms of political activism. The fact that these women are already elected political representatives does not fully overcome the gender gap. Local representatives in general, and male local representatives in particular, are more likely to be members of a party and hold a position of trust in civic organizations than is the case in the general population. However, local representatives in general are less likely to participate in protests and demonstrations in all of the five countries included in our analysis.

5.3 Party Membership

Party membership is a traditional way for citizens to express their political views and their support in a rather active form. Tamás Horváth cautions us in advance that as parties are new to the political systems of CEE countries, independent candidates have better access to elected bodies on the local level than they do nationally (Horváth 2000, 39–40). We find his remarks generally hold true for the countries in our study. Except for Bulgaria and Estonia, the majority of local representatives in our sample countries are not members of any party. When the gender of the representative is taken into account, four out of the five countries exhibit statistically significant differences between men and women in terms of party memberships. With Estonia as the only exception, female local representatives are less likely to be party members than are male. Hungary provides the most dramatic example of a significant gender gap. Hungarian female representatives are less than half as likely as males (19% compared to 39%) to belong to a party. Clearly these data are consistent with the findings of the World Values Survey about the gender gap in party membership among ordinary citizens. It should be noted that party membership among Bulgarian local elites exceeds that of any of our other countries. This may help define the attitudinal differences between our Bulgarian respondents and those in the other four countries.

The size of the municipality also seems to affect party membership in some countries, so we need to examine the possibility that there are differences in the chances of women being elected to councils based on city size. In Hungary and Slovakia, we find that smaller municipalities are more likely to elect female representatives than are larger municipalities. Almost 73% of the female representatives in Hungary are elected in villages ($p < 0.000$) and in Slovakia a slightly higher number (75%) are elected in villages rather than cities ($p = 0.056$). In both of these countries, representatives in smaller municipalities are also less likely to be members of any party. It is in these two countries that the gender gap in party membership is greatest. Thus, in these two countries the gender gap in party membership may be, at least in part, a function of where women are elected rather than choice. However, we did not find statistically significant gender differences in representation based on size of municipality in Poland, Bulgaria, or Estonia. The gaps in these countries are therefore the result of other factors.

Overall, “independents” (nonpartisans) seem to dominate local elites in four of the five countries considered here. Female local elites are, as expected, by a wide margin more likely to engage in this traditional form of political participation than are women in the general population. While among the general population party membership ranges from a low of 1% in Estonia to a high of 8% in Bulgaria, among local female representatives party membership is, as expected, much higher.

Table 2.9
Party Membership among Local Representatives by Country [%] (2002)

Country	Members of a party			
	Male	Female	Total	Gender gap
Bulgaria	87	83	86	-4
Estonia**	49	58	52	9
Slovakia**	48	35	44	-13
Poland**	38	27	36	-11
Hungary***	39	19	35	-20

Note: * $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (based on chi-square); $N=4,358$

Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

Table 2.10
Party Membership among the General Population by Country [%] (2003)

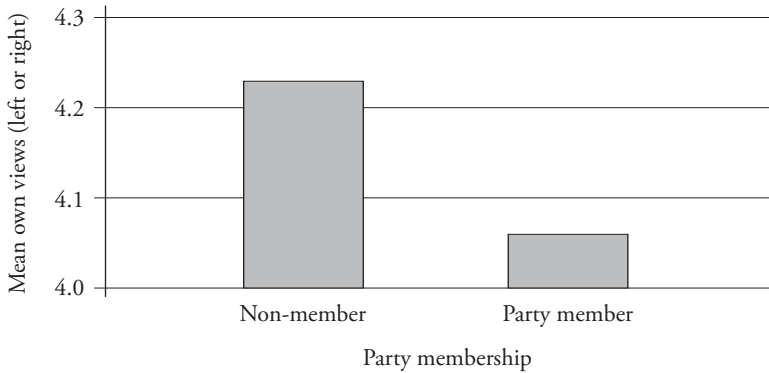
Country	Party members
Bulgaria	8.0
Estonia	1.0
Slovakia	5.0
Poland	2.0
Hungary	2.0

Source: Letki, 2003.

5.4 Political Ideology and Party Membership

We have already established that local representatives are more likely to be party members than the general population of their respective countries. But we were also interested in knowing whether there is a difference in ideological self-placement among party members and non-members. We used our pooled data set of all five countries to test this hypothesis. Our one-way ANOVA test detected significant differences between the ideological orientations of party members and non-members. Independents tend to be more to the center-right than party members who are more to the center on a seven-point scale, with four being the middle point. (see figure 2.11 and table 2.11)

Figure 2.11
 Left-Right Self-placement and Party Membership (2003)



Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

Table 2.11
 Party Membership and Mean Ideology Score

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Non-member	1649	4.23	1.758	0.043
Party member	2486	4.07	1.833	0.037
Total	4135	4.13	1.805	0.028

Note: F=8.39, p<0.05, N=4,135

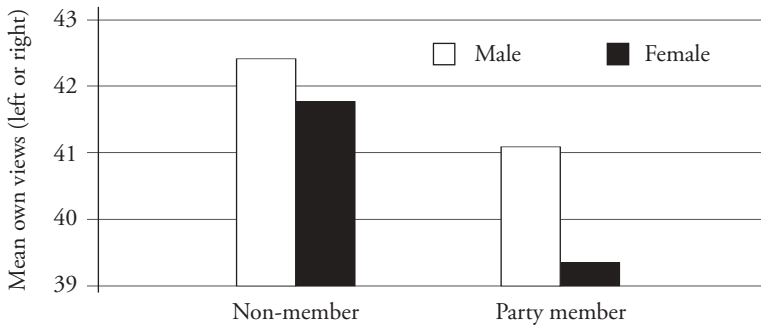
Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

When we control for gender, we see that it still holds true but that the gender gap among party members seems to be wider than among non-members. The average female party-member leans left of the center while male representatives who are also party members lean slightly to the right. The gender gap between female and male representatives is larger among party members than non-members as parties seem to polarize along gender lines (see figure 2.12, tables 2.12 and 2.13).

Based on our previous analysis, we can safely conclude that party members and independent local representatives differ in their ideological orientations in the five countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Independents of both genders lean more towards the right than do party members.

We also found that there is a significant ideological gender gap between party members, with women being more to the left than men. Our pooled data set which includes all five countries confirms that in comparison to men, women lean more to the left. The

Figure 2.12
Left-Right Self-placement and Party Membership by Gender (2003)



Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

Table 2.12
Party Membership and Ideology by Gender

Own views left or right				
Party membership	Gender	Mean	N	Standard deviation
Non-member	Male	4.24	1,253	1.783
	Female	4.18	369	1.676
	Total	4.23	1,622	1.759
Party member	Male	4.11	1,859	1.829
	Female	3.94	600	1.833
	Total	4.07	2,459	1.831
Total	Male	4.16	3,112	1.812
	Female	4.03	969	1.778
	Total	4.13	4,081	1.804

Note: $F=7.638$, $p<0.006$, $N=4,081$

Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

gender gap between male and female representatives is also more pronounced among party members than non-members.

We expanded our analysis of party membership further by checking whether there is a gender gap in political ideology after we control for party membership. The sample sizes were too small to run statistical tests for all the parties within each country. Therefore, we picked the most “popular” party in each country. After identifying these (i.e., those with the most local representatives in our sample) among local representatives

Table 2.13
 Left-Right Self-placement among Party Members

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
Male	1,859	4.11	1.829	0.042
Female	600	3.94	1.833	0.075
Total	2,459	4.07	1.831	0.037

Note: F=4,029, p=0.045, N=2,459

Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

in all five countries, we used a one-way ANOVA analysis to test for the gender gap in that party. In four of the five countries the major parties do not show a statistically significant ideological gender gap, Bulgaria being the exception. In Bulgaria, female local representatives who are also members of the Bulgarian Socialist Party tend to place themselves more to the left than do male representatives of the same party. However, in all the other cases the direction was similar, although by margins too small to reach statistical significance. This is especially interesting because the major parties used for our analysis represent a wide spectrum of ideologies ranging from the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP) to Slovakia’s Christian Democratic Movement (KDH).

Table 2.14
 Country Comparison of Ideological Differences within Major Parties by Gender

Mean scores on left-right self-placement (1=left, 7=right)					
Country	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Party	Bulgarian Socialist Party	Center Party	Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP)	Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)	Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)
Male	2.00	4.18	1.81	2.52	6.28
Female	1.70	4.09	1.42	2.17	6.15
F	3.82*	0.11	2.99	1.29	0.25
* p<0.05	n = 276	n = 84	n = 138	n = 128	n = 69

Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

6. COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRATIC VALUES

At the most fundamental level we must ask whether there are gender differences among locally elected officials in terms of their commitment to core democratic values and tolerance. We selected five items from the survey of local elected officials to test this: (1) democracy is the best form of government for my country, (2) political tolerance of freedom of speech (even extreme views), (3) belief that broad participation produces better policy outcomes, (4) freedom of the press, and (5) minority rights. On four out of the five items, special rights for minorities being the exception,¹¹ respondents generally leaned to the more democratic side of the seven-point scale. For example, the view that democracy is the best form of government received positive average scores ranging from a low of 5.12 (Slovakia) to a high of 6.12 (Hungary), with Bulgaria (5.86), Estonia (5.67), and Poland (5.26) in between.

For our purposes the critical issue here is whether there are significant differences between female and male local officials on these issues. The answer is a qualified no. Only in Estonia are the scores significantly different by gender, with males leaning more toward the democratic end of the scale (5.78) compared to women (5.43). When we look at the pooled data, women and men do not differ significantly on their belief in democracy as the best form of government (the mean scores for women and men being 5.68 and 5.72, respectively). The same holds true for the issue of minority rights, with the gender difference in the means on this item differing by only one one-hundredth of a point on the seven-point scale.

The remaining three items show significant gender differences, with women favoring more positive democratic values on only one of the three items, political participation. Female local representatives (4.76) are more likely than their male counterparts (4.48) to believe that broad participation produces decisions more consistent with the needs of the citizens ($F=17.29$, $p<0.001$). The tendency is the same in all five countries, but it is statistically significant only in Estonia when we disaggregate by country. Thus, although women are more likely to view participation positively, they differ only slightly in this regard from male officials.

On the critical issue of political tolerance, women are less likely to accept the right of extremist groups to present their opinions in an open forum. This relationship holds statistically for the pooled data as well as in four of the five countries (Estonia being the exception). The same holds true for freedom of the press (the right to report both bad and good events from their communities). Women in general are less committed to the right of the press to report problems that might have a negative impact on the community. This relationship is consistent across countries although statistically significant in only two of the five. It should also be noted that in spite of the differences, both men and women, regardless of country, tend to lean to the “freedom of the press” side of the scale.

In sum, although there are differences in commitment to democratic values based on gender, these differences tend to be small. Furthermore, elected officials, regardless of gender or country, seem to be relatively more committed to democratic values as measured by our indices.

7. GENDER DIFFERENCES ON ECONOMIC ISSUES

In their book, *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change around the World*, Inglehart and Norris (2003) argue that both voting behavior and public opinion demonstrate that there is a significant gender gap in countries all around the world. This gender gap is especially notable in the area of left-right self-placement, but in policy terms manifests itself in perspectives on the role of government. Historically, the gender gap was one in which males were more likely to be to the left of women on the key issue of the role of the state in the economy. However, there has been a major change in this gap over time, with women now taking a more “statist” or social democratic view of the role of government and men tending more toward the right-wing, neo-liberal perspective. In fact, of some 70 countries for which Inglehart and Norris present data (2003), 64 show a gender gap where men are to the right of their female compatriots. There is also a voting gap to complement the opinion differences, with women being more likely to support parties of the left than men. Changes in this gap have been attributed to a variety of social, cultural, economic, and institutional changes, including the rise of “postmaterialism.”

Cross-national data indicate that these phenomena are prevalent in the transitional democracies of Central and Eastern Europe as well as the more advanced industrial democracies, and in this section we examine the data for our five selected transitional countries. But the individuals studied here, rather than being drawn from a mass sample, are selected from a survey of political elites—the locally elected officials at the county and municipal levels.

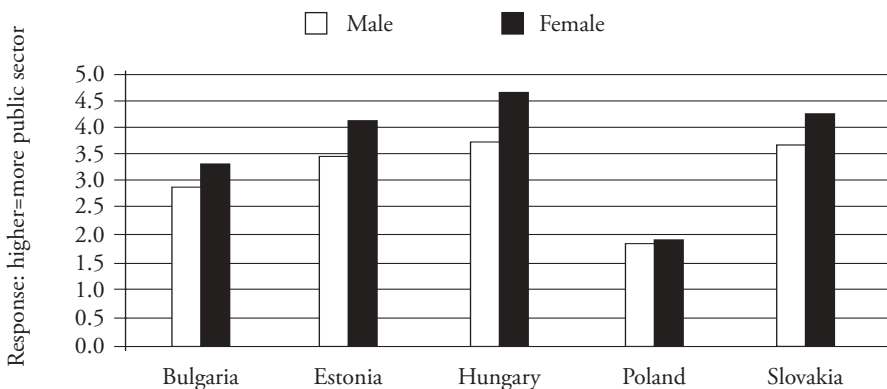
We hope to see whether the attitudinal and ideological gaps noted at the mass level persist among locally elected elites. If gender-related differences in citizen attitudes are to eventually be manifested in policy, we would expect to see basic differences at the elite level as well. It is also important to note the direction of change. While this is not directly possible because we are dealing with cross-sectional data, we can infer change by comparing age cohorts. This is particularly important because we can identify major periods of transition, especially for those who grew up in the post-World-War-II period when the Cold War dominated. Alternatively, those socialized in the later period of the Cold War and during the transition to democracy may have different expectations and attitudes.

7.1 Views on the Role of the State

Women officials, like typical women citizens cross-nationally, are generally friendlier to state (i.e., public) involvement in the economy and the ownership and management of property than are men. In all five countries women officials are significantly more likely to favor increasing public ownership of business while men tend to be more favorable to the private sector. Poland stands out in this because both male and female officials are much more favorable to the private sector than is the case in the other four countries, although the gender gap is still in the expected direction and statistically significant. In three of the other four countries (Hungary being the exception) the mean scores tend to be slightly more favorable to the private sector side (four or lower). In Hungary the mean for women falls slightly on the public sector side of the scale while for men it leans toward the private. In a related fashion, women are more likely to suggest that the government should take greater responsibility for the well-being of the citizenry as opposed to the people taking more responsibility for themselves. It should be noted that this difference is in the expected direction in four of the five countries and statistically significant in Estonia, Hungary, and Slovakia, but not in Poland. In Bulgaria there are essentially no differences between men and women on this issue (see figure 2.13 and table 2.15).

In all five countries the private sector is seen as considerably more efficient than the public. In four of the five, Poland being the exception, men are significantly more likely than are women to see the private sector as the more efficient sector. In a related question on the relative preferred size of the public and private sectors, women in

Figure 2.13
Preference for Private or Government Ownership by Country and Gender¹²



Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

Table 2.15
 Mean Scores of Preference for Private or Government Ownership
 by Country and Gender

	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Male	2.89	3.42	3.69	1.86	3.64
Female	3.30	4.07	4.58	1.93	4.20
F	6.47*	29.3***	41.70***	15.40***	10.30***

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001; N=4,413

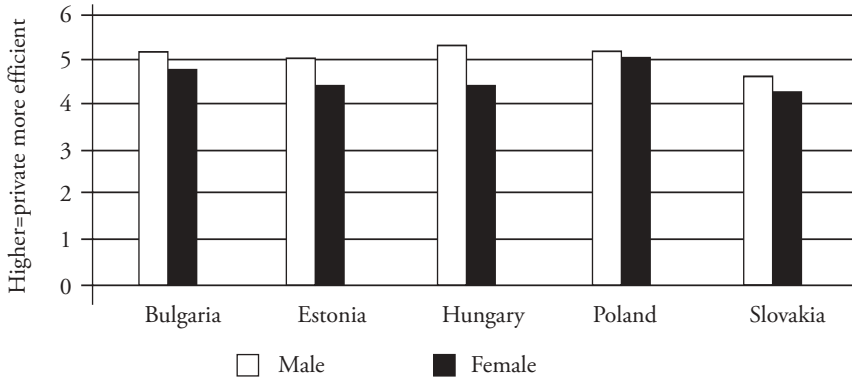
Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

Estonia and Poland are significantly less favorable to the public sector than are men (the tendency is consistent with our other findings in the remaining three countries). Only in Hungary do the scores indicate a preference for the public sector to grow (scores of three on the seven-point scale). In all other countries the tendency is toward a balance between the two. It is interesting to note that in four of the five countries (Bulgaria being the exception) male officials are more likely than their female counterparts to spend more time consulting with and explaining policy to their fellow citizens who represent the business sector.

Ideological self-placement is considered to be an important indicator of the policy positions taken by individuals. Even though we find considerable spread in each country regarding self-placement on the left-right scale, women are to the left of men in all five countries. However, we find statistically significant gender differences only in Estonia and to a lesser extent in Hungary. The central tendency for both groups in Estonia is a bit right-of-center, while Hungary is left-of-center. In the remaining three countries men are slightly more to the right than are women, but both tendencies are very slightly right-of-center. The median and the mode are both the midpoint of the scale in four of the countries and the median is five in Estonia (the mode still being four) (see figure 2.14 and table 2.16).

Following the lead of Inglehart and Norris (2003) we have constructed a “role of government scale” composed of the same items they employed and using the same 100-point scale. In all five countries the gap between males and females is in the expected direction and in four of the five the relationship is statistically significant (Bulgaria is once again the exception). All five of these countries appear in the rankings of the gender gaps for the general public presented by Inglehart and Norris for national population samples. Interestingly, the gender gaps, although in the same direction, are greater for our samples of local elites than is the case for the population as a whole in each of the countries. This is consistent with expectations that the elites will have a clearer view of their ideological positions than will be apparent among the general population.

Figure 2.14
 Personal Beliefs on Relative Efficiency of Private and Public Sectors,¹³
 by Country and Gender



Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

Table 2.16
 Private vs. Public Sector Efficiency by Country and Gender

	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Male	5.21	5.02	5.32	5.20	4.65
Female	4.78	4.45	4.42	5.04	4.30
F	8.60**	23.70***	54.90***	0.90	5.00**

Note: Higher = private sector more efficient; N=4,264

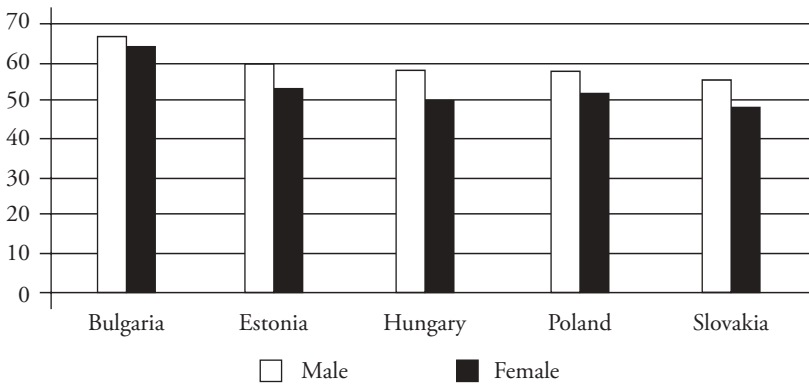
Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

As already noted, these data are cross-sectional in nature so it is difficult to determine trends in attitudinal change or changes in the size and nature of the gender gap. An indirect way of inferring change involves the comparison of age cohorts on these issues. For this purpose we compare those born between 1945 and 1959 with those born after 1960. The basic rationale for this division is that those born in the earlier period would have experienced the bulk of their socialization, job training, and a considerable part of their work experience under communist rule during the period of the Cold War. By contrast, the latter group (those born in 1960 or later) would have entered the work force during the period in which major upheavals and regime transformation were in progress in the late 1980s and for the youngest, after the fall of the Soviet Union, during the democratic transition and economic liberalization period that followed. In all

five countries we find significant differences in key attitudes between these age cohorts (see figure 2.15 and table 2.17).

We have computed a gender gap measure for both our role of government measure and the ideology self-placement measure. We then compare the differences in this gap between the age cohorts identified above to see if we can infer that the gap has grown, decreased, or essentially remained the same. As can be seen in figure 2.16 and table 2.17, in Poland, Slovakia, and Estonia the gap grew quite dramatically, while in Bulgaria and Hungary it remained essentially unchanged (statistically). In Poland this results from a combination of men staying about the same but women moving dramatically to the left (toward government ownership and responsibility as opposed to increasing the role of the private sector). In Estonia, both males and females moved in their views toward an increasing role for the private sector, but males did so at a more rapid rate, thereby

Figure 2.15
Role of Government Score by Country and Gender



Source: Norris and Inglehart, 2003.

Table 2.17
Role of Government Score by Country and Gender

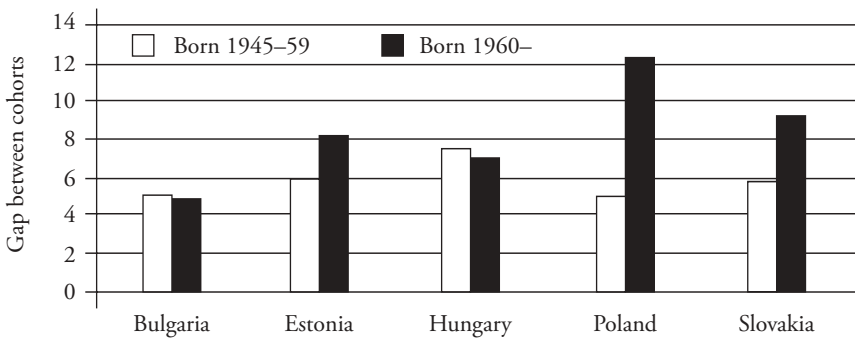
(Norris and Inglehart measure)					
	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Male	66.55	59.95	57.85	57.68	55.30
Female	63.89	52.99	49.80	51.91	48.40
F & p<	2.10 NS	25.50***	25.70***	8.70**	11.00***
n =	932	939	919	727	875

Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

increasing the gender gap in the latest generation. In Slovakia generational change saw males move to the right toward an increasing role for the private sector, while women have moved in the opposite direction, toward a position of greater support for the role-for-government position.

Different processes seem to have been at play where the gap remained stable. In Hungary, both men and women show a generational movement toward preference for an increasing role for the government while the gap between the two remained stable. In Bulgaria both genders moved to the right towards a position supportive of an increasing role for the private sector and at about the same rate. Hence the gap between them stayed virtually unchanged. In sum, in terms of general overall change, in two of the countries, Estonia and Bulgaria, both males and females moved to the right, in Poland and Slovakia males moved to the right and females to the left, and in Hungary both groups moved to the left on this issue (see figure 2.16 and table 2.18).

Figure 2.16
Within Cohort Gender Gap in Role of Government
by Cohort and Country



Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

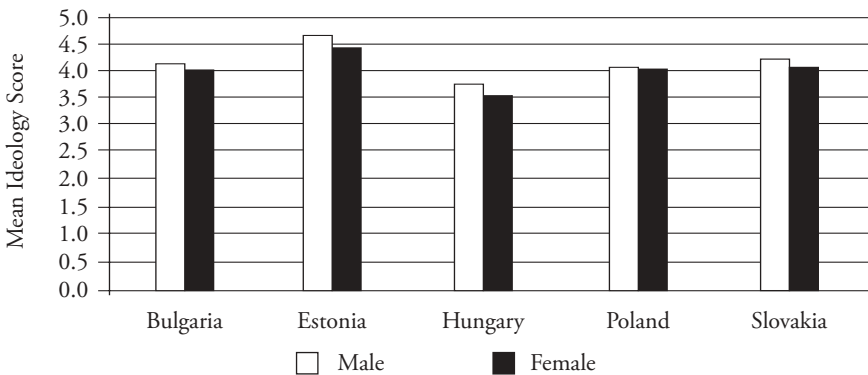
Table 2.18
Within Cohort Gender Gap—Role of Government II
(Norris and Inglehart measure)

Age cohort	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Born 1945–59	5.13	5.94	7.56	5.10	5.80
Born 1960–	4.93	8.20	7.03	12.3	9.24
n =	706	755	676	539	557

Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

To complement this analysis we also looked at the gender gap in ideological self-placement across generations. In this instance the gap grew quite markedly in all five countries between generations. Hungary shows the greatest change, followed by Bulgaria and Estonia. In Poland, Bulgaria and Slovakia we see generational change as movement toward the right in self-placement, but movement among males is more rapid than it is among females. Hungary and Estonia show generational change from a common position in the older cohort toward the right among males and to the left among females in the younger cohort. The within-cohort gender gap is in the direction expected in all five countries, but should be interpreted conservatively because the magnitude of the differences remains quite modest. The critical inference we can draw from these data is that the gender gap in ideological self-placement is “alive and well” among local government officials in Eastern Europe (see figure 2.17, table 2.19, figure 2.18, and table 2.20).

Figure 2.17
Left-Right Self-placement by Country and Gender



Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

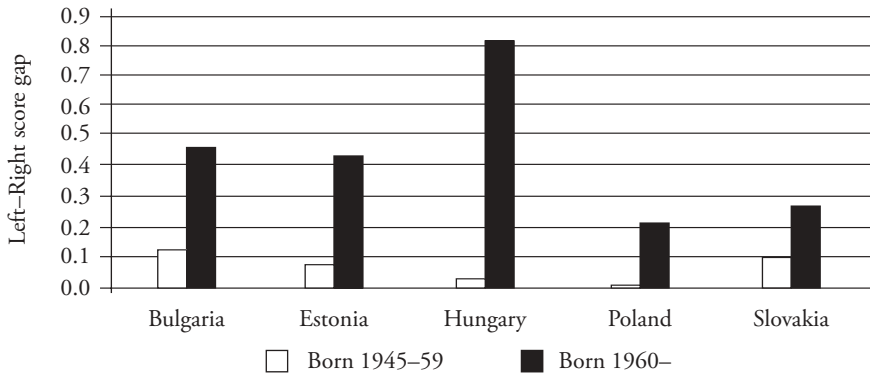
Table 2.19
Within Cohort Gender Gap: Left-Right Self-placement by Country

Age cohort	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Born 1945–59	0.13	0.08	0.03	0.01	0.10
Born 1960–	0.47	0.42	0.81	0.22	0.27
n =	706	755	676	539	557

Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

Figure 2.18

Within Cohort Gender Gap: Self-placement on Left-Right Scale by Country



Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

Table 2.20

Left-Right Self-placement by Country and Gender

Own views left or right					
	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Male	4.14	4.68	3.79	4.04	4.23
Female	4.03	4.46	3.53	4.03	4.10
F	0.40	4.80*	3.2 (.07)	0.00	0.70
n =	930	790	907	696	858

Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

8. IS THE GENDER GAP REAL?

One critical issue for examination is whether gender *per se* has an impact on the gap in policy views regarding the role of government. Recall that our key dependent variable is the role-of-government measure which replicates the Inglehart and Norris measure. In fact, we have included the same two ten-point survey items they use: (a) “Private ownership of business and industry should be increased (value 10)—Government ownership of business and industry should be increased (value 1)” and; (b) The government should take more responsibility to insure that everyone is provided for (value 1)—People should take more responsibilities to provide for themselves (value 10).” One of these two items was recoded so they would have the same directionality in the values. The scale composed in an additive fashion from these two measures was then converted to a 100-point scale to “ease interpretation” and be directly comparable with Inglehart and

Norris. The Inglehart and Norris scale was applied by them to data from national samples of individuals in 70 different countries between 1990 and 2001. The gaps between male and female interviewees show women to the left (towards the “more government involvement” side of the scale) in 65 of these countries. Interestingly, our analysis of local officials closely mirrors the differences found at the mass level for each of the countries, but the point differences are one to three points higher (on the 100-point scale).

A key question is whether the impact of gender is sustained when we control for a variety of other factors. In order to further examine this possibility we have pooled our data sets for the five Central and Eastern European countries included in the survey of local officials. We have already noted that the male-female gender gap is statistically significant for four of the five countries (Bulgaria being the lone exception). In our pooled data set we first look at the “role of government” measure to determine if it remains affected by gender among local government officials in all five countries. Using an ANOVA we in fact find that the relationship is highly significant ($F=65.1$, $p<0.001$).

Our next strategy is to move beyond the bivariate relationship to a multivariate analysis. We employ an OLS regression to see if the impact of gender remains important after we control for a variety of other factors. The independent variables are handled in four groups: (1) social background factors (age, education, and gender), (2) cultural values (trust in institutions, postmaterialism, and left-right ideology), (3) democratic values (democracy as the best system, political tolerance, minority rights, participation, and media independence), and (4) a series of country dummy variables to sort out country-specific effects.

Education is difficult to compare because of the lack of exact equivalencies across nations. However, we are dealing with elected local government officials, about half of whom have had at least some form of post secondary higher education. Hence we use this break point for its comparative validity. The dummy variable we created is for some higher education (1) or no post-secondary education (0). We also grouped individuals by age to get a post-Cold-War and a pre-Cold-War generation (arbitrarily defined as those born before and after 1960) and created a binary variable for age cohort. We also tested the model with actual age as a variable. The “trust in government” variable is a combined measure of responses to a series of questions on the trust in various government institutions (executive, legislature, parties, police, justice system, etc.). The postmaterialism scale is Inglehart’s standard four-point scale used cross-nationally in the World Values and related surveys. We also ran these regressions with dummy variables for each of the countries to further sort out possible country-specific effects.

In table 2.21 we test five models to explain “the role of government” index. In Model One (not shown in the table) we examine the impact of gender alone. It remains quite significant as a factor in our pooled data set. In Model Two we add in social background characteristics. Age, higher education, and gender are all statistically significant in this model. In Model Three we add in the cultural and democratic values dimensions.

As can be seen in this model all three cultural values, trust in institutions, postmaterialism, and left-right self-placement are statistically significant contributors. Among the democratic values items, democracy as the best system, support for minority rights, and media independence are statistically significant but neither political tolerance nor the value placed on popular participation figure in the equation. Gender and higher education remain significant but the age variable drops out in Model Three.

In Model Four we add in the organizational membership variables, party membership, and membership in an NGO in which they hold a position of responsibility. The other variables that are statistically significant in Model Three remain so, but the two additional variables are significant, and the explained variance increased a bit. It is worth noting that when we ran this same regression for each country sample individually, the organizational membership variables are both significant only in Bulgaria. Party membership but not NGO position is significant in Hungary.

In Model Five we include the same sets of variables but add in dummy variables for country to sort out any country-specific effects. Interestingly, we see significant country effects for Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. However, we can explain the same variance by including only Bulgaria. When any other countries are included with Bulgaria, the combination does not increase the explanatory power of our models. Bulgaria appears to be somewhat different than the other four countries in the views of local officials on the role of government. In Model Five we see that all of our background factors, including age, all of the cultural values variables, the same three democratic values, and the four country dummy variables are significant. However, the organizational membership variables drop out of the equation (in terms of significance).

These models confirm the ongoing impact of gender on overall perspectives on the role of government in the economy. When we examine the standardized betas we see that the more educated, the more right-wing ideologically, the more postmaterialist, and the greater the level of trust in government institutions, the greater the support for a strong private sector role or less government involvement in the economy and responsibility for the well-being of the country's citizens. The democratic values items show that greater support for democracy as a system and for a free press are associated with support for more government involvement in the economy, and greater commitment to minority rights is associated with a preference for less government involvement. The impact of gender is consistent with earlier findings. Women are more likely to support a larger government role and collective responsibility for individual welfare than are men, who seem to prefer the private sector and more individual responsibility. Age cohort did not have a significant impact in the pooled data set, but age (as a continuous variable) did. It has a very limited impact (approaching statistical significance) with the young being only slightly more likely to support a stronger role for government.

When we entered in the country dummy variables, all were statistically significant, and they had some impact on the dependent variable (as measured by the standardized

betas). They did not affect the significance or impact of the other variables. Bulgaria stands out in this respect as being somehow different than the other four. While the signs for the betas for the other four countries are negative (more supportive of greater government involvement), the sign for Bulgaria is positive. That is, Bulgarian local officials differ from their colleagues in the other countries in being much stronger in their support for privatization and a greater role for the private sector. What is consistent across all of these models, however, is the impact of gender. Therefore, our overall conclusion is that the gap associated with gender does indeed have its origins there rather than in other characteristics, and is of some importance (see table 2.21).

9. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we examined gender differences, particularly the so-called gender gap among local representatives in five countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), e.g., Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. Differences at this level are especially important because it is in the locales that many of the issues that directly impact on the lives of women are addressed on a daily basis. Our findings, based on a large sample of local councilors in these countries, are consistent with those for the general population and with trends in the gender gap worldwide.

Women are relatively well represented in local government in Central and Eastern Europe. Male and female locally elected officials in these countries share common educational backgrounds, a sense of optimism regarding their respective municipalities, and belief in democracy as the best form of government. Although there are gender-related differences in commitment to core democratic values, these differences are relatively small. Both men and women tend to place themselves on the more democratic side of the scale.

We also examined gender differences in variables related to social capital such as civic organizational memberships and activism. Here too, we find a small but consistent gap, with males holding more organizational memberships and active roles. They are also more willing and likely to participate in nontraditional forms of political participation such as demonstrations. Women officials are more likely to be independents rather than formally enrolled members of political parties. In other words, their political bases and electoral support are built on personal networks as well as associational groups.

We find that perceptions of the very nature of the role of the state come into play. The gender gap is consistent from country to country. Women see a greater role for the state in the economy and in the provision of help and support to citizens. They are also less convinced of the advantages of the private sector than are males occupying similar roles and functions. The existing gap seems to be growing as we see clear generational (age cohort) differences consistent with growth in the gap over time. This is further

reinforced by ideological self-placement which shows women generally to the left of their male counterparts and growth in the gap from generation to generation. In this context we find that even among members of the same political party there is a small but persistent difference between male and female partisans, with women again tending to the left.

Table 2.21
OLS Regression Models with the Role of Government Dependent

	Model 2			Model 3		
	Gender+social background			Gender+social+cultural values		
	B	Beta	Sig.	B	Beta	Sig.
Gender	-6.640	-0.128	***	-5.250	-0.099	***
Social Background						
Higher Education	10.480	0.230	***	8.310	0.181	***
Age	-0.160	-0.073	***	-0.031	-0.014	
CULTURAL VALUES						
Trust in Institutions				0.117	0.036	*
Postmaterialism				4.060	0.107	***
Left-Right Ideology				3.080	0.248	***
DEMOCRATIC VALUES						
Democracy is the Best Govt.				2.510	0.185	***
Minority Rights				0.762	0.074	***
Political Tolerance				0.024	0.002	
Media Independence				-0.516	-0.050	***
Public Participation				0.130	0.011	
ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP						
Party Member						
NGO Member (Officer)						
COUNTRY						
Estonia						
Hungary						
Poland						
Slovakia						
Constant	68.200	***		26.900	***	
R ²	0.070			0.217		
Adjusted R ²	0.069			0.215		

	Model 4			Model 5		
	Gender+social+values +org. membership			G+S+V+org.+country		
	B	Beta	Sig.	B	Beta	Sig.
Gender	-5.051	-0.095	***	-4.719	-0.089	***
Social Background						
Higher Education	8.210	0.178	***	6.818	0.148	***
Age	-0.015	-0.007		-0.042	-0.019	
CULTURAL VALUES						
Trust in Institutions	0.129	0.040	**	0.179	0.056	***
Postmaterialism	4.211	0.111	***	3.690	0.098	***
Left-Right Ideology	3.122	0.252	***	3.059	0.247	***
DEMOCRATIC VALUES						
Democracy is the Best Govt.	2.595	0.191	***	2.627	0.194	***
Minority Rights	0.800	0.078	***	0.885	0.086	***
Political Tolerance	-0.006	-0.001		-0.170	-0.016	
Media Independence	-0.523	-0.051	***	-0.640	-0.062	***
Public Participation	-0.088	0.008		-0.288	-0.025	
ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP						
Party Member	2.287	0.05	***	0.698	0.015	
NGO Member (Officer)	-2.257	-0.048	**	-1.010	-0.021	
COUNTRY						
Estonia				-7.585	-0.118	***
Hungary				-9.228	-0.168	***
Poland				-6.946	-0.120	***
Slovakia				-6.911	-0.129	***
Constant	24.600		***	35.000		***
R ²	0.226			0.243		
Adjusted R ²	0.223			0.239		

Source: Own calculations based on data from the LRS of the ILDGP, 2002–03.

Even when we control for a variety of other factors such as education, postmaterialism, age, trust in government institutions, ideology, democratic values, organizational memberships, and country (in our multiple regression), gender remains a significant but by no means the strongest predictor of political perceptions of the preferred role of government.

Although we have no direct evidence of actual policy differences or the impact of these gender differences on local and municipal councils, several hypotheses do emerge from this analysis. Women are or are close to a critical mass of local officials in all five countries (ranging from 21%–32% of elected councilors). First, since their views on the role of the state show some differences from those of their male counterparts, we expect some local policy differences to emerge, with women taking a more social democratic perspective and men leaning toward a more neo-liberal approach to social welfare issues. Second, since women constitute a critical mass on many local councils, we expect that there will be a rise in consideration of gender-related issues such as maternal health, state-supported day care, and spousal abuse and violence. We hypothesize these will become important subjects of local legislation and policy. Third, the election of many women to local office provides a vital training ground for future leaders at higher levels. Thus, we see the possibility of a longer-term influence of the local gender gap on national representation and policy.

NOTES

- ¹ Funding for our research was graciously provided by the Tocqueville Research Center Foundation, under its program in Comparative Local Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe.
- ² See Rule 1987; Welch and Studlar 1986; Bullock and MacManus 1991; Studlar and McAllister 1991; Studlar and Welch 1991; Chapman 1993; Caul, 1997; Maille 1990; Matland and Studlar 1996; Reynolds and Reilly et al. 1997; and Vengroff, Nyiri, and Fugiero 2003.
- ³ Political Rights and Civil Liberties are measured on a one-to-seven scale, with one representing the highest degree of freedom and seven the lowest. Source <http://www.freedomhouse.org>.
- ⁴ Lower scores mean higher ranks.
- ⁵ These data are currently housed at the Tocqueville Research Center in Budapest.
- ⁶ Even though they are significant at the 0.000 level, using Chi Square test of significance.
- ⁷ The two questions used for comparison are: “Generally speaking, how satisfied are you with the way things are going in the municipality where you are a representative of the local government?” and “In your estimation, how will things be going in your local community five years from now?” (1=much worse, 4=about the same, and 7=much better).
- ⁸ Respondents were asked: “Roughly *how many hours* in an average week do you usually devote to your activities as a councilor?” ($p < 0.000$ using Chi-Square).
- ⁹ “How often do you [plan to] hold *office hours* for residents?” ($p < 0.000$ using Chi-Square).
- ¹⁰ “Comparing your own personal income with others in your municipality, is it higher or lower than the *average income* in your municipality?” ($p > 0.000$ using ANOVA).
- ¹¹ It is possible to interpret this item in different ways because one pole is equal rights for everyone.
- ¹² Higher score means preference for public sector.

- ¹³ “Some people would agree, and some would disagree with the following statements about the political and administrative system. Please indicate the extent to which you personally agree or disagree with them on our seven-point scale. 1 means that you completely disagree with the statement; 7 means you agree completely with the statement; and if your views fall somewhere in between, then choose one of the numbers in between: In general the private sector is more efficient than the public sector.”

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The Influence of Local Media on Local Government Performance, and Why It Matters

Tania Gosselin

ABSTRACT

This chapter considers the impact of local media on local government decision-making (smoothness and efficiency) and on democratic performance (inclusiveness). Four aspects of local media systems are considered: the number of media outlets present in the locality, the diversity of the ownership structure, the extent to which media cover local political affairs, and the size of their audience. Findings show that coverage quality, the number of outlets, and the diversity of the ownership structure are positively associated with democratic performance. Such media features, however, have virtually no impact on how quickly and smoothly local authorities reach decisions.

We also examine the hypothesis that the impact of the media on democratic performance may be enhanced by certain characteristics of the local civil society. In Hungary and Romania, the coverage quality and the number of local media outlets were found to exercise a greater influence on the performance of local governments in localities having more civic organizations and where citizens were more involved in public life. Further investigations of potential mechanisms of media influence on performance reveals that beliefs of chief administrative officers and councilors regarding the influence of local media outlets do not translate into greater or lesser impact of media features on democratic performance.

The analysis shows that local media do have an impact on the democratic, inclusive character of local authorities' decision-making practices and allows us to quantify this impact. While the available measures do not permit definite conclusions about the mechanisms through which these influences operate, initial findings lend some support to the theory that a livelier civil society contributes to the impact of political information disseminated by the media.

The Influence of Local Media on Local Government Performance, and Why It Matters

Tania Gosselin

1. INTRODUCTION

People often observe that the media have an influence on the well-being of democracy, and Dawisha writes: “It can be generally assumed that the greater the independence and pluralism of the media ..., the greater will be the level of civic trust and civic involvement” (1996, 54). This connection is also assumed to operate at the local level, but there has been no attempt to validate this assumption, as the absence of literature demonstrates. It has become almost a truism to say that the plurality and independence of local media are important and have a positive effect on the performance of democratic local government.

If it is true that politically well-informed citizens contribute to the well-being of democracy, then such effects should be assessed. This chapter seeks to establish empirically whether and how local media enhance the quality of local governance. Relying on survey data gathered within the framework of the Indicators of Local Democratic Governance Project (ILDGP), we focus our analysis on the decisional and democratic aspects of local government performance in more than 2,000 municipalities of Hungary, Latvia, Poland, and Romania. We assess the links between certain characteristics of the local media (number of outlets, ownership structure, the extent of coverage of public affairs, and audience size) and the capacity of local governments to make decisions in a timely and effective manner (decisional performance) that includes citizens in the decision-making process (democratic performance).

Following some introductory remarks about the local media landscape in the four countries included in the research, the chapter provides an overview of theories buttressing the assumption that media and local government performance may be linked. This is followed by an outline of the hypotheses to be tested with respect to how media presence, ownership structure, quality content, and penetration have an impact on performance. We then describe the data and method of analysis, followed by our findings. The conclusion presents our interpretation of the results, suggests new hypotheses, and points towards further areas of exploration for increasing our understanding of media effects on local government performance.

2. THE LOCAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE: TAKING STOCK

The 1990s witnessed deep economic, social, and political reforms in Central and Eastern Europe, and this included local government systems. The national media attracted a significant amount of attention during this process and was assumed to have a major impact on public opinion, although scant attention was given to local media and their role in the development and strengthening of local democracy. Scholars and observers of the national outlets identified a variety of issues, including privatization (of the press and of broadcast media); changes or the lack thereof in the values and attitudes of journalists trained and socialized during the socialist era; and, perhaps most frequently, politicization of the media (as accounts of the “media war” that raged in Hungary until 1996 well illustrate).

The main obstacles to media plurality and independence have been mapped out by a number of authors, including those focusing on post-communist media (e.g., Bajomi-Lazar 1999, 2001, 2002; Galik 1996; Giorgi 1995; Goban-Klasz 1994; Gross 1996; Jakubowicz 1996; Kovats and Whiting 1995; O’Neil 1997; Splichal 1995; Sükösd 1997–98). They have examined factors such as monopoly situations, government control, the grip of commercial interests, the legal framework, and, though less often mentioned, weak political party competition. Specific information on local media is much harder to obtain; scandals about local media rarely make headlines. But recent reports about the increasing concentration of ownership and political manipulation of local outlets in certain regions (see Preoteasa 2003 and SAR 2003 for examples from Romania) have raised concerns that a significant number of people may not have access to adequate information about local public affairs. These developments further underscore the gap in our knowledge about the state of local media in Central and Eastern Europe.

2.1 Citizens’ Attention to Local Media

The local media in each country are organized somewhat differently. In Hungary and Poland, for example, local print media are structured to a large extent to reflect territorial divisions.¹ Regional newspapers in Poland are distributed in at least one *voivodship*, the largest territorial subunit of the country. Similarly, Hungarian regional papers are distributed within counties. Other subnational papers in Hungary cover events in towns or villages. In Poland, two levels of local media exist as a reflection of the three-tier territorial organization: “local” papers cover less than a *voivodship* but at least one *powiat* (the second largest territorial entity), and the “sublocal” media encompasses all other local publications, i.e., municipal, town, or parish papers. Foreign ownership predominates in both countries’ regional markets, while domestic owners are present at the local level. A significant proportion of the local press is published by local governments in the two countries.

The ILGDP survey provides information about the presence of local media systems, their coverage of local public affairs, ownership, and audience size. Chief administrative officers of over 2,000 municipalities in Hungary, Latvia, Poland, and Romania were asked, among other questions, how many media outlets cover public affairs “from time to time” in their municipalities (from zero to eight or more). Table 3.1 shows that a large number of localities possess no media outlets.² Of the 29,460,752 inhabitants living in the self-government units included in the survey, almost 8% have no access to information about local public affairs. At the other end of the spectrum, nearly 40% of the population lives in media-rich environments, i.e., with access to six or more outlets. The number of media covering local public affairs varies significantly from one country to the next. Only 2% of localities in Poland and 3% in Latvia have no such outlets. In Hungary and Romania, on the other hand, 45% and 51% of the localities do not count any local media.

The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) respondents were also asked to provide details about the owner(s) of local outlets, the extent to which the local media provide coverage on local public affairs and how many citizens they reach. Differences between localities and countries are observed with respect to these attributes as well. (See appendix I for the distributions by country.)

National surveys are another source of information on the extent to which people attend to local media. According to the Public Opinion Barometer surveys³ carried out in Romania between 1995 and 1997, the proportion of Romanians who read local dailies hovered around 20% for those who read a local newspaper the day before and

Table 3.1
Localities per Number of Media Outlets [%] (2001)

Media outlets	Pooled data set	Latvia	Hungary	Poland	Romania
0	30	3	45	2	51
1	17	18	30	8	12
2	16	34	14	13	13
3	12	21	5	21	7
4	8	11	3	15	6
5	9	8	2	20	7
6	3	3	1	6	1
7	2	1	0	6	1
8 and more	4	2	1	10	2
	N= 2023	N=241	N=646	N=579	N=557

Note: Percentage figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted data.

Source: Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

up to 36% for those who read one in the previous seven days. In Hungary, more than 30% of respondents who participated in a recent survey reported reading a regional daily every day or several times a week. Fewer than 15% said they listen to local radio or watch local television channels equally frequently.⁴

The 1999 Polish General Social Survey showed that almost 54% of the 1,143 respondents read a regional newspaper at least once a week, while 27% stated they never read such newspapers (the data reveal little difference between readership of regional and national papers). A little more than 51% of respondents read national papers at least once a week, while nearly 32% claimed never to read them.⁵

Finally, according to a survey conducted in Latvia in 2000, of nearly 1,000 respondents who were asked which newspaper they read most often and consider as their main source of information, almost 15% identified local and regional publications. When asked about their newspaper consumption, 23% said they regularly read a regional or local paper in Latvian, and 9% a regional or local paper in Russian. Only 6% reported listening to local radio programs.⁶ While these numbers come from observations at a single point in time (except in the case of Romania) and provide more information about print than broadcast outlets, they show that consumption of local media in Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Latvia is far from negligible.

2.2 Links between Media, Citizens, and Local Government Performance

The belief that the media make a difference to the quality of democracy is not new. Alexis de Tocqueville underlined the connection between civil society and media in his famous *Democracy in America*. To secure cooperation, individuals have to be persuaded that they serve their private interests by “voluntarily uniting [their] efforts to those of all the others. That cannot be done habitually and conveniently without the help of a newspaper. Only a newspaper can put the same thought at the same time before a thousand readers. ... So hardly any democratic association can carry on without a newspaper” (1990, 112–113).

The need for communication channels between citizens also arises from the complexity of modern policymaking. Citizens require good information and access to discussion about the merits of policies, particularly since it is impossible for any one individual to pay attention to how a city is run all the time or to possess all the necessary knowledge to evaluate representatives’ every decision (Page 1996, 2). Nowadays, the mass media (notably television) have become the prime source of political information (Ansolabehere, Behr, and Iyengar 1993), enabling citizens to identify and articulate their interests, to voice them at election time, and to participate in public life in general. Factual political information “assists individuals in their civic actions, helps explain

group differences in political access, and serves as a collective good, strengthening the likelihood that the polity functions both responsively and responsibly” (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, xi). Except in very small communities, where interpersonal communication provides nearly all strata of local society with access to information about local affairs, the development of meaningful democracy (rather than just a more or less liberal oligarchy) at the local level clearly requires substantial and diverse media coverage of local politics.

In classical liberal theory, this requirement was fulfilled by the existence of a marketplace of ideas ensuring that citizens are exposed to diverse information and points of view. Even if individual outlets were biased, competition would allow media consumers to weed out true information from the false. From the early to mid-20th century onward, this idea of the press as the cornerstone of representative democracy—the “fourth estate”—gave way to calls for a more defined, substantial role for the media. In the modern media context, competition was found either to be unrealized or to privilege profit-making over other goals such as achieving political and other freedoms. These changes gave rise to the notion of social responsibility of the media, media ethics, and the development of journalists’ professional roles such as that of “watch dog” (see McQuail 2000, 146ff. for a detailed account of these developments). In this role, journalists and the media in general act as a check on authorities’ power, ready to expose wrongdoings (Kocher 1986; Weaver 1996).⁷ Thus, media “publicity provides an effective external control over the competence, responsiveness and accountability of public officials” (Swoboda 1995).

Reasons to suppose that the media have an effect on local government performance are not only based in normative theories and journalists’ discourse about their professional role. They are also rooted in two strands of research about media effects. The first leans toward cognitive psychology and examines how media consumption or exposure affects people’s knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. Studies belonging to this group have been preoccupied with how people (and which people, in terms of socio-demographic characteristics) learn and retain political information distilled by the media. Delli Carpini and Keeter’s seminal book about the determinants of political knowledge in America is a good example. Literature focusing on electoral campaigns has also contributed to this stream, notably the agenda-setting theory and its extension, priming. Agenda-setting holds that the media are able to influence what issues people think about. Priming takes place when the media influence the importance that people assign to different issues or considerations when making a choice (Iyengar 1991). A number of studies specifically concerned with the impact of local media have addressed the relationship between media consumption and community ties (Neuwirth, Salmon, and Neff 1989), and between local media use and participation in local public affairs (McLeod et al. 1999; McLeod, Scheufele, and Moy 1999).

A second stream of research concentrates on media effects at the aggregate rather than the individual level. Recent studies have examined the association between access

to media as well as media freedom on the one hand and good governance⁸ on the other (Norris 2001). Links between the media ownership structure (public or private) and national indicators of education, health, and freedom are another focus of interest (Djankov, McLiesh, Nenova, and Shleifer 2001). Studies in this group address media effects from a wide range of perspectives, including links between various local media characteristics such as competition, ownership, and content (Lacy 1989; Bernstein and Lacy 1992; Lacy, Coulson, and St. Cyr 1999). Media features have also been linked with aspects of the local environment such as diversity of public opinion or ethnic heterogeneity (Lasorsa 1991; Johnson and Wanta 1993; Hindman, Littlefield, Preston, and Neumann 1999).⁹ None of these studies provides an applicable framework of analysis for examining the relationship between media and decisional or democratic performance of local governments. However, they do provide a useful theoretical and empirical background against which to set it.

Another related strand of research, mostly qualitative but not exclusively so, has been concerned with the impact of media on public policy and on policy-makers. Do media have a direct impact on governmental decisions and the opinions of the decision-makers, or does public opinion first mediate this influence?¹⁰ The question is relevant to the concerns of this chapter. Media effects on local government procedures or policies can occur when citizens learn the information they need to hold their representatives accountable, to engage actively in local public life, and so on. The media can also affect local representatives directly and, consequently, their performance as those who make the decisions and establish the rules for how those decisions are arrived at. "Media attention to an issue affects legislators' attention, partly because members [of Congress] follow mass media like other people, and partly because media affect their constituents," notes Kingdon (1995, 58). In their study, Lomax Cook et al. (1983) found that media reports about fraud in public programs had an impact on policymakers' opinions and on policy mostly because of the "active relationship" that developed between journalists and policymakers, rather than as a result of pressure from public opinion.

These last remarks highlight the complex nature of media effects. The aggregate nature of the available survey data does not allow for a full account of the mechanisms underlying local media influence on the performance of local governments in Hungary, Latvia, Poland, and Romania. Nonetheless, the analysis will generate useful insights on how local media work in the region, and what influence they have on (some of) the nuts and bolts of local democracy.

3. HYPOTHESES

Before we present our hypotheses linking media features with local government performance, a few words about the meaning and measures of local government performance

used in this chapter are in order. When information is “sufficiently full, accurate, and well interpreted, then citizens can decide what policies they want in an informed way, consistent with their basic values and interests” (Page 1996, 2). Here, we assume that citizens prefer a local government that runs smoothly, as opposed to one frequently bogged down by delays, lack of quorum, and other similar impediments. Also, a central tenet of democratic theory is that governments do what citizens want them to do. While we do not have sufficient information to evaluate citizens’ preferences with respect to local public matters, we assume it is more likely that the interests of citizens will be reflected in decisions taken by the local assembly when they are more involved in the decision-making process. The construction of the performance indices, described in section 3.2, reflects these assumptions.

In this chapter, we evaluate the impact of local media with respect to two aspects of local government performance: decisional, that is, the capacity of local authorities to make decisions in a timely and effective manner; and democratic, defined as local authorities’ ability to favor the input of citizens and various elements of local civil society in the decision-making process. The indicators used to construct the two measures partly follow the model set in the *State of Local Democracy* (2002), whose contributions describe the main findings of the ILDGP survey data.¹¹ The indices of decisional and democratic performance take into account only elements that were included in the survey. It is useful to keep in mind that, while attempting to design “universal” measures, surveys involve a selection of questions and indicators that leaves other, potentially relevant dimensions of performance unexplored.

3.1 Media Presence

Evidence abounds that the media have an impact on the way politics are run. To give one famous example, the Watergate affair and Nixon’s resignation as a consequence of it are considered to have happened because of media reports (Protess et al. 1991, 3–5). Focusing on the individual level, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996, 149) show that reading newspapers is associated with a higher level of knowledge about local politics in the United States. Reading local newspapers also has a positive and significant impact on citizens’ participation as voters and in contacting public officials (McLeod, Scheufele, and Moy 1999). This last point about the potential mobilizing role of the media leads us to expect a more palpable impact of media on democratic than on decisional performance. This applies not only to media presence, but to other media characteristics as well.¹²

- *Hypothesis 1: Local governments in localities endowed with media outlets will display better performance than others—especially democratic performance.*

3.2 Diversity of Ownership Structure

Much has been written about the impact of media owners and ownership on media content, yielding sometimes compelling yet inconclusive accounts (e.g., Badgikian 1992; see also Page 1996 for a review). Similarly, the effects of competition have been explored in a number of studies. Most find that competition has little or no effect on newspapers' content, but Rarrick and Hartman (1966, in Entman 1989, 93) found competition to be associated with more local-oriented news.

Franklin's (1988) investigation showed that the content of newspapers published and distributed by English local authorities free of charge to each household was colored by the perspective of the party in power in the local assembly.¹³ Assuming that local politicians wish to be re-elected, it is not implausible to imagine that local governments that have control over the media will ensure that the content is not overly critical of their activities, if not blatantly biased in their favor (see Popescu and Tóka 2002 for a description of such an occurrence in Hungary's public television during the 1994 general election campaign). Consequently, media presence in itself may not be sufficient to ensure an impact on performance. What matters could well be who owns the outlet(s), and thus whether local authorities are in a position to insulate themselves and their activities from the media's critical scrutiny.¹⁴

- *Hypothesis 2: Local government performance (notably democratic) is expected to improve when the media ownership structure is diverse; that is, when not only government-controlled but also privately-owned, NGO-run, etc., outlets are available.*

3.3 Quality of Content

Defining the quality of media content in quantitative terms is not an easy task.¹⁵ While the general distinction between information and entertainment is useful, such a measure can only be guided by content analysis. Given the unavailability of content analysis data, and regardless of the mechanism potentially at work between media and performance, it is plausible to suppose that whether local media report about local public affairs, and to what extent, does matter for performance. Equally plausibly, reports about local politics can be regarded as quality media content—generally defined as content of “social or political significance... [that] is implicitly intended to help citizens in their role as democratic decision-makers” (Zaller 1999).

- *Hypothesis 3: Greater quality coverage by local media is more likely to be associated with higher local government performance scores (particularly democratic performance scores).*

3.4 Extent of Media Penetration

In line with the hypotheses presented so far, greater penetration of local media outlets among the population is also expected to bolster the performance of local authorities.

- *Hypothesis 4: The greater the reach of local media among citizens, the better the performance of local governments, especially its democratic aspect.*

“If extensive political information is available somewhere in the system, not everyone has to pay attention to it all the time,” writes Page (1996, 7). Because some people—“opinion leaders”—will pay more attention to local political news, some of this information will reach others in the community via face-to-face interaction with family, friends, and co-workers (Sniderman, Tetlock, and Brady 1991). The theory of the two-step flow of communication (Ansolebehere, Behr, and Iyengar 1993, 132) provides grounds to expect that media presence, rather than penetration, could be playing a more central role in influencing both types of performance (as long as a minimal threshold of penetration is achieved by local outlets). If, however, the media should play a direct mobilizing role, the impact of a greater number of people exposed to local outlets should be felt, particularly on democratic performance.¹⁶

3.5 Other Factors Explaining Performance

The goal of the hypotheses presented so far has been to quantify the impact of media features on the decisional and democratic aspects of local governments’ performance. But obviously the media are not the only element influencing performance. Therefore, to test for the robustness of findings related to the hypotheses above, a number of other factors with the potential to bear on performance are considered.

- *Unemployment:*

In communities harder hit by unemployment, we expect people to be less engaged in participatory activities, and thus to observe a moderately lower democratic performance (moderate because the index of democratic performance also includes elements such as the number of public hearings held. Attendance, rather than the number of hearings, is likely to be affected by unemployment). Economic adversity is also likely to generate obstacles for the local assembly in reaching decisions, due to the compromises and trade-offs involved when resources are limited (we posit here that unemployment reflects the general financial state of the community).

- *NGOs, Political Parties and Citizens’ Initiatives:*

The presence of more parties is expected to decrease decisional performance; when more voices are heard, agreement and decisions are likely to be harder and

slower to reach. The presence of NGOs is anticipated to have a similar effect, albeit to a lesser degree since they are not necessarily directly involved in decision-making. On the other hand, NGO presence should enhance democratic performance. Indeed, where more NGOs can contribute to bringing citizens together and better identifying and articulating their interests, it is more likely that citizens will want to make their voices heard. Also, local authorities will have more opportunities to engage in consultation and seek the contribution of citizens before taking major decisions. The role of political parties in this respect is not clear cut: considering that more parties implies the presence of more groups with diverse interests in local society, we would expect this to reflect positively on democratic performance. However, more political parties could also monopolize the decision-making process to the detriment of other local actors. Expectations with respect to the impact of citizens' initiatives (petitions, requests for meetings with local authorities, demonstrations, and challenges of local government decisions in court) are similar to those related to the presence of civic organizations. The active engagement of citizens in local public life should reflect positively on democratic performance. However, it could also slow down decision-making by adding to the chorus of voices involved in the process.

- *Level of Education of Local Government Staff Members:*
The survey queried chief administrative officers about the number of local government staff members having completed higher education. More staff with higher education is expected to impact positively on performance.
- *Community Homogeneity:*
When people are similar in many respects such as socio-demographic characteristics, income, beliefs, etc., representation is less problematic. There should be less dissent among local representatives and citizens as how to allocate the available resources. Greater homogeneity is therefore expected to be connected with greater decisional efficiency. The survey data provide information about a number of local cleavages: income, religious beliefs, political views, areas within the locality, urban/rural differences, ethnic origin, and long-time residents vs. newcomers. The questions were formulated to obtain information about tensions caused by the divides rather than about the "objective" divides themselves. While this formulation may render the measure less precise in certain cases (e.g., ethnic cleavages), in others it may prove useful in highlighting more salient cleavages.

We would expect more and stronger cleavages to be linked with poorer decisional performance. Conversely, it is plausible that more diversity would bring more frequent opportunities to draw citizens into the decision-making process. However, the positive impact of cleavages on democratic performance might not be felt should these divides have been translated into NGOs or political parties.

Obviously, a larger number of factors would be required to explain performance more fully.¹⁷ However, the goal of this analysis is not to explain all the observed variance in performance, but to provide an evaluation of the part played by the media in it.

3.6 Interactions between Media Features and Other Factors

Due to the complex nature of media effects, the hypotheses below include the potential for interaction effects—that is, the possibility that the characteristics of media act together with other variables to yield an effect that can neither be attributed entirely to media nor to the other variables alone.

- *Perception of Local Officials about Media Influence:*
As mentioned in the previous section, media can have an impact on performance for a variety of reasons: via citizens' knowledge of public affairs, by alerting public opinion about wrongdoing, or directly on the policymakers themselves. The survey data allow only for limited testing of the possible channels of media effects. One possibility consists in using chief administrative officers' (CAOs) evaluation of local media influence on decisions taken by the local assembly. Should CAOs' stance about media influence be indicative of policymakers' perception and attention to local outlets, we expect a stronger positive relationship between performance and media in municipalities where CAOs believe that media significantly influence local decisions.
- *Hypothesis 5a: Localities where chief administrative officers consider local media to be a more potent influence on local authorities' decisions will witness a larger impact of media characteristics on performance.*

The Local Representative Survey (LRS), also part of the Indicators of Local Government Project, provides another opportunity to test the idea that media influence is potentially channeled through the perception of members of local authorities. Councilors' views of the media might be crucial in shaping media influence, even more so than the perception of CAOs. If the media matter for performance, they will matter more, other things being equal, in places where local representatives hold the view that the media are "powerful" at agenda-setting and help them to better take the pulse of the citizenry. Kanervo and Kanervo (1989, 310) found that policymakers tend to assign significant influence of media over their consumers, thus "sometimes even using [newspaper] articles as a direct measure of public opinion." Therefore, hypothesis 5b is similar to what has been posited about CAOs' perception of media influence.

- *Hypothesis 5b: The impact of media is accentuated where councilors perceive the media to be powerful in setting the citizens' agenda and providing them with information about citizens' views and opinions.*

Because the Local Representatives Survey (LRS) conducted in 2002 in Hungary and Poland was administered after the local elections, data from the first LRS conducted in Hungary in 2001 is used to test hypothesis 5b.

- *Civil Society and Citizens' Participation:*
Delli Carpini and Keeter found that partisan individuals are more likely to learn facts with a partisan color, and that contact by political parties and citizens' knowledge about politics go up together. As they put it, parties and NGOs provide "fertile ground for improving the information environment" (1996, 282). Consequently, investigating for potential interactions between media and the presence of local organizations could tell us more about how local media influence operates, and in which context. Hypotheses involving the interactions between media and political/civil society specifically concern democratic performance, notably due to the already mentioned "push" phenomenon (see note 9). The first hypothesis predicts that the impact of media will be greater in places where there are more NGOs to diffuse information and mobilize citizens more effectively. Similarly, we expect that municipalities that are the theater of citizens' active engagement in public life will also see a greater influence of local media.
- *Hypothesis 6. The media features will have a greater impact on democratic performance in localities where more civic organizations are present.*
- *Hypothesis 7. The media features will have a greater impact on democratic performance in localities where local citizens have engaged in demonstrating, petitioning, contacting local officials, or challenging local government decisions.*

To summarize, we expect the number of media, the quality of their coverage of local public affairs and their audience reach to "push up" performance, especially democratic performance. The same should be true with greater diversity in the media ownership structure. A denser civic network, generally gauged by the presence of NGOs and political parties as well as by citizens' initiatives, is likely to have different effects, depending on the type of performance considered. If our general hypotheses are supported, more associations, parties, and initiatives should go hand in hand with greater democratic performance, but lower decisional performance. The effects of unemployment are expected to be negative. The diversity of interests represented in localities, measured by the degree of tensions rooted in income, religious, geographic, and other differences among inhabitants, should lead to lower decisional performance. Lastly, it is posited that the link between media and performance might be stronger where chief administrative officers and councilors estimate that the media exert greater influence on local authorities and in making public affairs topics salient to the community. Similarly, opportunities for

discussion and dissemination of political information (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995, 5) offered by local clubs, civic associations, and various NGOs could amplify the impact of the media on democratic performance.

4. DATA AND METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The analysis below relies on survey data collected within the framework of the Indicators of Local Democratic Governance Project (ILDGP) in the spring of 2001. Unless indicated otherwise, the data come from the Local Government Survey (LGS), one component of the ILDGP. Localities in the four countries covered in the first wave of the LGS are included in the present study. The first step consists in verifying whether there is a difference between localities endowed with media and those that have none with respect to decisional and democratic performance. A first set of regression equations, controlling for population size and the country in which the localities are situated, estimates the impact of basic media presence (none versus at least one outlet), and also of the quantity available in town (none to eight or more) on both types of performance. Then two linear regression equations estimate the combined impact of the four local media characteristics we are interested in on decisional and democratic performance.

A third set of equations assesses the relative impact of these media features together with that of other factors likely to affect local government performance: the presence of political parties and civic organizations, citizens' active participation in public life (measured by a dummy variable indicating whether at least one initiative was undertaken in the locality), unemployment, local government capacity (measured by the number of local government staff members with higher education), as well as community heterogeneity. Finally, another set of equations explores interaction effects, i.e., the potentially greater effect of media features in local environments characterized by denser civic and political networks and more active citizens. The paragraphs below briefly describe the operationalization of the variables used to test the hypotheses presented in the previous section. A detailed description of the variables can be found in appendix II.

The privileged unit of observation is the locality. Except where interaction effects are concerned, the analyses are based on the pooled data set—that is, all the localities from the four countries together. Dummy variables control for the country in which municipalities are located. They capture country-level variations not accounted for by the factors considered in the models. Hungary is used as the reference category. Population size is also controlled for by using the natural logarithm (indicated by “log”) of the population size of each locality. In all regression analyses, the data is weighted to adjust for the overrepresentation of bigger localities in the sample, thus assigning equal weight to all municipalities. Frequency distributions (shown in table 3.1 and in all but one table in appendix I) are not weighted.

Space constraints and the limited information available about the particularities of local media systems in each country (aside from the characteristics assessed by the ILDGP survey data) restrict the range of country-related hypotheses that that we can draw and test. However, remarks about different country patterns are made in the Findings section.

4.1 Media Variables

The variable measuring the number of local media covering local public affairs “from time to time” ranges from zero to eight. When CAOs were asked to qualify the extent to which outlets cover public affairs, how many citizens they reach, etc., they were requested to provide information about the first five outlets. Consequently, the number of media was adjusted to account for a maximum of five outlets in the analyses involving other media characteristics.

The response categories of the question pertaining to media ownership were the following: the local government or a company owned by the local government; another government (regional or national) or a company owned by this government; a local public institution; a political party; an NGO(s); a business enterprise(s); a private citizen(s) or “other owner.” Chief administrative officers had the option of indicating that they did not know who sponsored an outlet. The variable is coded from 1 to 5, given that diversity cannot exceed the number of outlets for which ownership information is available.

As already mentioned, quality is not a concept that easily translates into quantitative terms. Concepts such as fairness, lack of bias, good faith, and credibility are obviously relevant (McQuail 1992, 211–2).

Since neither content analysis-based measures nor information pertaining to the number of journalists employed, editorial budget, or circulation numbers are available for all outlets, quality is measured by the presence/absence of four elements from local media outlets’ regular coverage: (1) reports about decisions of the local assembly; (2) reports about proposals debated in the assembly; (3) reports about arguments and counterarguments discussed at the local assembly; and (4) interviews with local government leaders or councilors. Absence of coverage is coded “0,” and “1” reflects the presence of these quality elements in outlets’ coverage. The scores for the four elements were added and divided by the total number of outlets in each municipality.

Audience size is computed using chief administrative officers’ estimates of the number of citizens reached by each media outlet, on a scale ranging from 0 (“less than one person out of 10”) to 10 (“almost everyone”). The estimates were added and then divided by the number of outlets (up to five) to obtain an average penetration score.

(Appendix I presents the distribution of media systems' features for the pooled data set as well as for localities grouped by countries.)

4.2 Performance Indices

The decisional index was constructed using CAOs' answers to survey questions on the number of occurrences of lack of quorum, the frequency of postponed decisions, budget promptness (acceptance of the budget before the legal deadline), as well as the number of extraordinary sessions held in 2000. The results were added to obtain a score for each municipality. A higher score denotes a better decisional performance.¹⁸

The democratic index measures whether local authorities discussed budgetary plans with local civic associations, whether they held a public forum about the budget and published a draft of the document before it was passed. It also includes an indicator of the number of local associations that participated in the decision-making process during the year via membership in a municipal committee or as experts consulted by the local authorities. The last indicator included is the number of public hearings held in 2000.¹⁹ Again the measures were summed up. Like the decisional performance index, the democratic index is positive: the higher the score, the better the performance.

Both indices are constructed so that each municipality is compared with other localities in the same country. This step was taken to compensate for the inevitable fact that the indices "perform" differently in each country. For example, a Polish regulation states that the failure to respect the legal deadline to pass the yearly municipal budget should result in the intervention and passing of the budget by a supervisory board. This rule provides a strong incentive to complete the budget on time; accordingly, virtually all municipalities in Poland met the budget deadline in 2000. In Latvia, where such an incentive is absent, approximately 30% of municipalities did not meet the legal deadline that same year. Does this mean that Polish cities are doing better than Latvian ones? The indices do not allow such general conclusions. All we can say is that according to the selected indicator—budget promptness in this case—Polish localities perform better than their Latvian counterparts. It may well be that according to another indicator not included in the survey, the reverse situation would be true. To control as much as possible for such inevitable disparities, the indicators were centered around their mean, using the mean of each country's samples before they were added up. Consequently, a Polish city that failed to pass the budget on time was assigned a very low score compared to other, "timely" cities in the country. Latvian towns that did not manage to meet the deadline also received a lower score than the Latvian localities that met it, but not as low because the average of that indicator in Latvia is lower than in Poland.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Media Presence

Our first hypothesis was a simple one: that cities endowed with media achieve greater performance than those without local outlets, when the data is controlled for size of locality and the country in which they are situated. Coefficients in table 3.2 show that the number of local media is not significantly associated with the measure of decisional efficiency of local authorities. It turns out that local media presence is significantly associated with greater democratic performance. However, this impact is significantly felt only as the number of outlets increases.

The fact that the coefficient is positive and significant supports our first hypothesis in the case of democratic performance. The significance pattern holds everywhere,²⁰ except in Romania where media presence is also weakest (more than half of Romanian localities have no local outlets).

5.2 Diversity of Ownership, Quality of Content, and Penetration of Media

Next, we want to know if aspects of the local media other than the number of outlets are associated with greater decisional and democratic performance. Thus we focus on localities where at least one media outlet is available. According to hypothesis 2, the presence of different types of local media sponsors should enhance performance, notably democratic performance.²¹ Hypotheses 3 and 4 predict that greater coverage quality and penetration of outlets would also positively influence performance, again more on the democratic than the decisional side. Along with these characteristics of media, the

Table 3.2
Impact of Media Presence on Decisional and Democratic Performance

	Local media presence (none versus at least 1 outlet)	Number of media (0 to 8 or more outlets)
Decisional performance	0.014 (adj. R ² : -0.001)	0.028 (adj. R ² : 0.00)
Democratic performance	0.041 (adj. R ² : 0.027)	0.102** (adj. R ² : 0.031)

Note: * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; N=2,022; population size and country controlled for.

Source: Own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

number of outlets was retained in the equation (recoded to account for a maximum of five, the highest number of outlets for which information is available regarding ownership, quality, and audience size).

The results partly confirm our expectations. Coverage quality and a diverse ownership structure of local media are positively associated with democratic performance. Decisional performance fails to be significantly affected by any of the four features of media. These results demonstrate that democratic performance responds to the shape of the local media scene. The four characteristics of local media systems taken together, along with population size and country dummies, explain slightly over 5% of the total variance observed in democratic performance. Among the four media features, coverage quality plays the largest role in influencing democratic performance: whether the media cover local government affairs or not is what matters most. More media outlets with diverse ownership also spells good news for democratic performance. (see table 3.3)

Conducting the same analysis for each country separately is informative. The positive link between coverage quality and decisional performance already described emerges in all four countries.²² The case of ownership diversity and number of media is particular to each country: obviously, the two are related to some degree (a partial correlation controlling for population size in the pooled data set yields a coefficient of 0.39). In fact, diversity of ownership structure plays a major role in Poland, while in Hungary and Latvia it is the number of media in town that makes a difference,²³ with diversity not being significant. Table A3.2 in appendix I clearly displays the fact that Polish municipalities enjoy a much higher rate of diversity than their counterparts in other countries. It could well be that a certain diversity threshold has to be reached before it can play a major role and relegate to backstage the impact of the number of available media outlets. In other words, a certain degree of competition, not reached except in Poland, could be required before the effects of a diverse ownership structure on performance can be registered. This hypothesis cannot be tested until more municipalities displaying greater media competition, from a larger range of countries, can be included in a sample.

Interestingly, Romania is the only country where neither diversity nor the number of media are associated with democratic performance. As mentioned above, it is the country where local media outlets are least present, where they are consumed on average by fewer people, and show less propensity to cover local public affairs.²⁴ This could explain why media features make little difference for performance.

Table 3.3 also shows that when only media factors are considered (with controls for country), bigger localities generally experience greater democratic performance. This is not surprising, given that the sheer presence of more citizens provides more opportunities for their inclusion in the decision-making process, as well as (plausibly) greater grassroots pressure for such opportunities to be made available by local authorities. On the other hand, in the case of decisional performance, greater size of locality is associated (but not significantly) with less efficiency.

Table 3.3
The Impact of Media Features on Decisional and Democratic Performance

	Decisional performance	Democratic performance
Population size (log)	-0.041	0.094*
Number of media	0.024	0.058
Diversity	0.008	0.111**
Quality	-0.034	0.155**
Penetration	0.066	-0.048
Poland	0.028	-0.158**
Romania	0.044	0.003
Latvia	0.009	-0.095*
	Adj. R ² : 0.00	Adj. R ² : 0.053

Note: * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; N=1,119

Source: Own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

5.3 Other Factors Explaining Local Government Performance

Testing the strength of the variables already observed requires the consideration of other factors potentially accounting for local government performance. Table 3.4 includes the presence of local civic organizations and political parties in the locality; unemployment, as a measure of how the community is doing economically; the percentage of local government staff members with higher education, which controls for the institutional capacity of local authorities; and, lastly, community heterogeneity or cleavages palpable enough to cause a certain degree of tension among local inhabitants (1 indicating “low” and 7 “high” tension).

As expected, the presence of a larger number of civic organizations in the municipality is linked to the more democratic character of decision-making. Whether citizens had engaged in public life²⁵ was significantly related to both types of performance. The relationship goes in the anticipated direction and is stronger where democratic practices are concerned: localities that witnessed citizens taking initiatives such as signing a petition, demonstrating, or demanding to meet their local representatives boast a higher democratic performance. However, those localities also experienced fewer delays and postponements, and thus a higher decisional performance. The relative rarity of citizens’ initiatives (more than half of localities witnessed no initiative at all and the number of localities where more than one single initiative took place is very small) calls for a cautious interpretation of these findings.

Table 3.4
The Impact of Media Features, Civic Organizations, Political Parties,
Citizens' Initiatives, Unemployment, Education of Local Government Staff,
and Population Cleavages on Performance

	Decisional performance	Democratic performance
Population size (log)	-0.091	-0.031
Number of media	-0.007	0.028
Diversity	0.010	0.105**
Quality	-0.026	0.161**
Penetration	0.080*	-0.043
Number of NGOs	0.034	0.122**
Number of political parties	0.031	0.004
Citizens' initiatives (dummy)	0.071*	0.092**
Unemployment	0.043	0.063
Staff education	-0.026	0.100**
Community heterogeneity	0.146**	0.021
Poland	0.076	-0.070**
Romania	0.075	0.021
Latvia	0.048	-0.114
	Adj. R ² : 0.026	Adj. R ² : 0.078

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; $N = 1,061$

Source: Own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

As anticipated, more staff members with higher education working for local authorities yielded a significantly better democratic performance. But this did not bear significantly upon decisional performance. The latter finding may be explained by the fact that staff members have little, if any, opportunity to affect such things as quorum, budget promptness, or the number of extraordinary sessions held in a locality. Elected representatives are in large part responsible for decisional performance as measured in this study. Staff members, on the other hand, are more likely to impact on the inclusive character of decision-making through direct and regular contacts with community members and local civic groups.

Contrary to expectations, a more politicized environment did not correspond to less efficiency in the decision-making process.²⁶ The high number of independent councilors, notably in Hungary and in Poland, the frequent occurrence of candidates with multiple party labels, as well as the likelihood of consensus rule in local governments, especially small ones, could help explain why party politics does not appear to matter for performance in a direct way.

Another result not in line with expectations is that communities divided along a higher number of cleavages witness a significantly smoother decision-making process. It may be that tensions and the heightened awareness of potential disputes that is likely to accompany them impose constraints that ultimately prove beneficial to decisional performance. Where the balance between interests is more delicate, it may be that local authorities cannot afford to be bogged down by procedural delays and obstacles, or that differently-minded participants will act as checks upon each other. We not only initially posited that cleavages, as a measure of the diversity of preferences among citizens, would diminish efficiency but also that they would create an opportunity to boost democratic performance. However, the number and depth of social, economic, and other local fault lines as gauged by survey data do not have a visible impact on local governments' participatory practices.²⁷ It could be that, as speculated earlier, the divergent interests rooted in local cleavages are channeled through civil society.

The unemployment coefficients fail to achieve significance in both equations. Furthermore, their positive sign is not coherent with the initial hypothesis that the two types of performance should be hampered by a higher unemployment rate. It could be that unemployment figures given by CAOs do not constitute an adequate proxy for the general financial state of the community. In addition, we cannot be entirely sure that economic adversity has the usually assumed negative impact on participation²⁸ at the local level. For example, walking to the councilor's office in a small town typically takes less time than visiting a parliamentary representative, whose office is likely to be located in the county's largest city. A preliminary investigation of aggregate voting behavior at the local level in Hungary shows that poorer localities experience higher turnout than wealthier cities (Gosselin 2003a). A potential reason for this finding could be the not negligible welfare benefits handed out by local governments in a number of CEE countries.

The adjusted R-squared values of the full model remain relatively modest, indicating that factors other than those tested here are responsible for most of the variation in performance observed between localities (2.6% of the observed variation is accounted for in the case of decisional performance, almost 8% in the case of democratic performance). More interesting for our present purposes is that the two features of media systems highlighted in table 3.3—coverage quality and diversity of the ownership structure—retain a significant and positive relationship with democratic performance even when we control for alternative explanations. Moreover, the strength of the relationships between these media characteristics and democratic performance remains largely unaffected by the inclusion of additional factors in the equation.

Lastly, the coefficient of penetration of local outlets is significant for decisional performance once other factors are taken into consideration. In the absence of other elements that could point to a pattern, the interpretation of this result is not straightforward. In any case, the impact of the variable is limited since penetration

coefficients were not significant in the first, media-features-only, equation (table 3.3). It could be that a measure of penetration based on CAOs' estimates does not adequately reflect real audience size. Of the four media characteristics asked about in the LGS, audience is probably the most difficult for CAOs to assess with accuracy (more difficult than the number of outlets or the nature of their coverage).²⁹

Separate country analyses confirm the importance of coverage quality's impact on democratic performance, statistically significant in all settings.³⁰ Diversity of ownership structure again plays a major role only in Poland. This time, the coefficient for the number of media achieves significance in Latvia (where $p < 0.1$) but not in Hungary. This weakens the case for speculation about the prime role of the number of available media outlets until ownership structure in the local media market becomes sufficiently competitive, without dismissing it entirely until the hypothesis can be tested in a larger number of settings.

5.4 Investigating Mechanisms of Media Influence on Democratic Performance

As highlighted in the theoretical discussion in section 2, media effects are complex and difficult to circumscribe. Two hypotheses presented in section 3 proposed to explore the possibility that linkages between local media and democratic performance run through the perceptions of media held by local officials and elected representatives, and/or through the characteristics of local civil society. The analyses of interaction effects performed below assess whether the impact of media on democratic performance of local authorities differs depending on characteristics of the local civil society, or depending on local officials' perceptions. Once the impact of media features is controlled for, a positive interaction term would suggest that the influence of the selected local media attribute on democratic performance is greater in localities where (for example) we find more civic associations. The analyses of interaction effects focus on democratic performance, because only this aspect of local government performance turned out to be significantly linked to local media features in a manner fitting theoretical considerations.

5.4.1 Interactions between Media and Local Civil Society

All four media systems' characteristics are combined separately with indicators of the presence and dynamism of local civil society to detect potential interaction effects: first with the number of civic associations, then with citizens' initiatives (measured by a dummy variable). Earlier we hypothesized that the presence of local civic organizations provides favorable ground for the diffusion of political information. In addition, if information

goes hand in hand with mobilization, we also expect a stronger link between media and performance where the local citizenry has proved more active. The analyses for the two types of interactions (one with NGO presence, the other with citizens' initiatives) are conducted separately to avoid multiple collinearity problems; indeed, should many variables behave in a very similar way, it would become impossible to distinguish their respective impact.

The method used here follows the one suggested by Jaccard and Turrisi (2003) to capture interaction effects in multivariate regressions. First, the two predicting variables assumed to interact with one another are centered around their mean (a constant equivalent to the variable average is subtracted from each locality's score). The product of the two mean-centered variables constitutes a distinct, third variable. The democratic performance index is then regressed onto the two mean-centered variables, as well as the product term. A significant coefficient for the product term variable indicates that the "moderating" factor (the number of civic associations or local citizens' initiatives) influences the impact of media features on democratic performance.

The first set of analyses of interaction effects takes the number of local civic organizations as a moderating factor. Namely, the impact of media characteristics on democratic performance is expected to vary according to the number of NGOs present in town. A pooled data set analysis (including all municipalities in the four countries) shows a positive and significant interaction effect between the number of associations³¹ and coverage quality, as well as between NGO presence and the number of local media (up to five outlets).

Separate country analyses reveal that the interaction between NGO presence³² and coverage quality plays a statistically significant role in Romania. The second interaction effect, involving NGO presence and the number of media outlets, is significant in Romania as well as in Hungary. NGO presence did not combine with either diversity of media systems' ownership structure nor audience size to produce a differential impact on democratic performance.

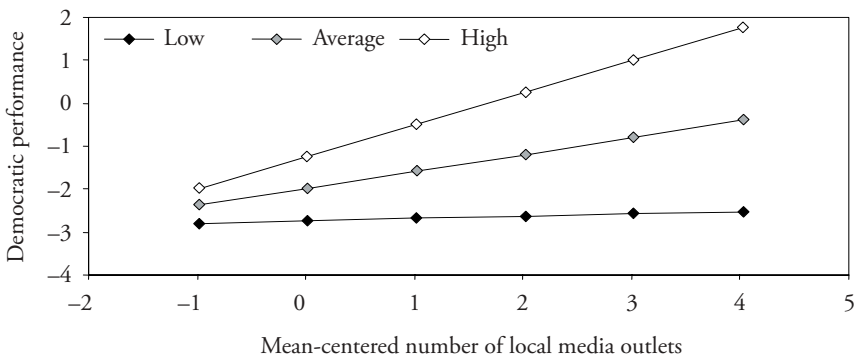
Citizens' initiatives are the second aspect of local environment allowed to interact with the four media characteristics. Due to the skewed nature of the distribution of citizens' initiatives (more than 50% of localities did not witness any type of action in 2000), the variable was transformed into a dummy (coded "1" for cities where at least one type of action was used, and "0" where none took place). Avowedly crude, this measure of citizens' involvement in local public affairs nonetheless interplays with the coverage quality of local media to yield better democratic performance where inhabitants engaged at least once in petitioning, requesting meetings with local officials, demonstrating, or challenging a local government decision. The coefficient of the interaction term is significant for the pooled data set. At the country level, Hungary's and Romania's coefficients are significant at the 0.1 level. Citizens' initiatives also significantly and

positively moderate the relationship between the number of media outlets and democratic performance in Hungary, but not in the pooled data set or in any other country.

Figure 3.1 below illustrates graphically how NGO presence affects the impact of the number of local media outlets on democratic performance in Hungary. The figure shows that the effect of the number of available outlets on democratic performance depends on the presence of civic associations, yielding a better performance score where both elements are present in higher numbers. When the number of NGOs in town is “low” (one standard deviation below average), the slope of democratic performance on the number of media outlets differs from when NGO presence stands at average (i.e., approximately five organizations) or one standard deviation above average (approximately ten organizations). If there were no interaction effect, the three lines in the graph would be parallel. This is clearly not the case in figure 3.1.

It appears that aspects of the local environment, namely NGO presence and citizens’ activities in the public sphere, generally matter more for media effects in Hungary and Romania. Media presence is less frequent in Hungarian and particularly in Romanian localities, and local outlets available in the latter provide comparatively limited coverage of local politics (see appendix I, table A3.3). It could be that outlets present in environments where media are not such a common feature, as well as those with markedly more political content (but not necessarily involving party labels), resonate more within civil society even if the latter is not overly developed (at least not by the yardstick of number of associations, which is lower in Romania than in the three other countries). Altogether, the analysis of interaction effects provides us with as many insights as it raises new, intriguing questions.

Figure 3.1
Regression Lines Predicting Democratic Performance from the Number of Local Media Outlets in Hungary



5.4.2 Interactions between Media and Local Officials' Attitudes about Media

In the LGS, chief administrative officers were asked to estimate on a scale of 1 to 7 the influence of local media on decisions taken by the council. When added to the four media features in a regression equation, the coefficient of this "media influence" variable turns out to be significant when democratic performance is the dependent variable (data not shown; the impact is similar to that of coverage quality in strength and the R-squared is boosted to 0.069 when the variable is added to the equation presented in table 3.3). However, product terms of media features and CAOs' perceived influence of local media are not significantly related to the performance index. This suggests that perceptions about the media's influence do not amplify the effect of media in localities where CAOs estimate that this influence is greater. The finding that CAOs' perceptions of media influence are directly linked with performance seems to indicate that these perceptions might not have much to do with the reality of the local media systems, at least not in the way that this reality (defined by our four media features) is captured by the survey data.³³ As mentioned before, CAOs' opinion on the matter of media influence provides an approximate and arguably not the best measure of local officials' perceptions about media.

Another tool is available to test the idea that perceptions of people within local authorities make a difference. The 2001 Local Representative Survey (LRS), the second component of the ILDGP project, was conducted in a number of localities in Hungary. A total of 255 localities count respondents from both the LGS and LRS, making it possible to merge information pertaining to the same year and same administrations. The LRS was conducted by mail; between one and eighteen councilors completed questionnaires in the overlapping municipalities (with an average of six respondents per locality). In the bulk of localities (60%), between three and eight respondents returned the survey questionnaire. Councilors' evaluation of the influence of media on agenda setting (the capacity of local media content to influence what citizens think about), on the extent to which local media influence local authorities' decisions, as well as their own opinions about local government issues, are averaged to obtain one score for each type of perception per locality.³⁴ The results vary between 1, standing for "little influence," to 7, indicating "great influence." (On the agenda-setting scale, 1 stood for "no influence.") This investigation did not unearth a systematic pattern of interactions between media system features and councilors' beliefs.³⁵ However, we must keep in mind that the exploration for potential interactions between three of the four media characteristics, on the one hand, and beliefs of councilors, on the other, involved only 120 to 130 localities out of the initial 255 (due to the more limited information available about the ownership, coverage, and audience aspects of media systems), and that all were located in one country, Hungary.³⁶ In spite of these caveats, the LRS 2001 and LGS 2001 data sets do not lend credence to the thesis that media impact on local government performance is channeled through the beliefs of councilors and administrators about the influence of local media.

6. CONCLUSION

This chapter explored the linkages between local media and the performance of local governments in Hungary, Latvia, Poland, and Romania. Two aspects of performance were considered: decisional performance, i.e., how efficiently local government officials and representatives arrive at decisions, and democratic performance, i.e., how open to citizens' input the rules and practices of decision-making are.

The ILDGP surveys generated original data pertaining to local government operations, local media, political parties, and civil society in a large number of localities in Central and Eastern European countries. The survey data shed light on various aspects of local media scenes: the number of outlets available on the local market; whether local governments or commercial interests are behind local media; how much local outlets report about local public affairs, notably local government issues; and the extent to which citizens attend to local media.

Statistical analysis was used to put to the test the hypothesis that these four attributes of local media enhance the performance of local authorities where they are present, especially democratic performance. The analysis mainly concerns a pooled data set including more than 2,000 municipalities from the four countries considered in this chapter, but also addresses country differences. Hypotheses and findings are summarized in the two sections below.

- *The direct impact of media characteristics on performance:*

Hypotheses 1 to 4 respectively submit that localities endowed with more media outlets, where the ownership structure of those outlets is more diverse (as opposed to only local-government controlled, for example), where the quality of coverage is higher, and where more citizens consume local media, are expected to display better performance, notably better democratic performance. The first stage of the analysis shows that better coverage quality (measured by the extent to which local outlets cover local public affairs), greater availability of media outlets and greater diversity in the ownership structure are linked with higher democratic performance scores, but register no impact on decisional performance. The average reach of local outlets was associated with neither of the two performance measures. A closer look at country patterns revealed that coverage quality has a positive and significant impact in all settings. On the other hand, the positive impact of diversity of ownership structure on the democratic aspect of local authorities' performance emerges only in Poland. In Hungary and Latvia, it is rather the number of media outlets that accounts for higher democratic performance, while neither the size of local media scenes nor ownership diversity matter for democratic performance in Romania. These mixed findings could be explained by a potential threshold effect. The number of media appears to have an effect on performance only above a certain threshold;

in turn, once a local media system's ownership structure is diverse enough, it may "take over" the positive impact of the number of local outlets. The ownership structure of local media is not equally diverse in the four countries considered in this research. Polish localities often count many outlets, owned or controlled by different actors. There are also much fewer local media in Hungary and Romania. In further research, localities from a larger number of countries need to be examined to test a threshold hypothesis and fully disentangle effects due to country settings and those attributed to media features.

A second multivariate analysis showed that the impact of media features previously identified, notably the positive effect of coverage quality on democratic performance, is quite robust. The strength of the coefficients remains largely unaltered once we have controlled for local political and civic activities (number of political parties and of NGOs, and citizens' activities connected to public affairs), the communities' characteristics such as size, unemployment, and community heterogeneity, as well as the level of education of local government staff. In a few words, these findings support Hypothesis 3 in all the country settings examined in this chapter. Hypothesis 1 is confirmed only in Latvia and Hungary (to a lesser extent in the latter country), while Hypothesis 2 holds up in Poland. The data does yield support for Hypothesis 4.

- *Channeling media influence—interactions between media features and the local environment:*

The linkages between media and government performance run through a number of potential channels. Media can influence performance because citizens with access to more abundant and better information about local public affairs are more likely to hold their representatives accountable. Those citizens are also more likely to better articulate their interests and concerns, and to voice them when issues relevant to their daily lives, from welfare and primary school education to garbage collection, are at stake. Media can also carry weight through the perceptions of local administrators and councilors; where the latter consider media as potent agenda-setters and shapers of local public opinion, local authorities might be more wary of inefficient practices, lack of transparency, delays, etc., which could be publicized in the local media. The second stage of the analysis set out to explore three potential channels of media effects on democratic performance (decisional performance was not considered in this part of the analysis since media features did not exhibit a statistically significant link with this aspect of performance).

Hypotheses 5a and 5b posited that the impact of the four media features would be stronger where chief administrative officers (CAOs) and local councilors believe that local media successfully influence local authorities' decisions, and that they are potent

agenda-setters and shapers of local public opinion. Councilors and CAOs' opinions in these respects did not significantly modify the impact of media characteristics; however, CAOs' perceptions proved to be directly and positively linked with democratic performance. Thus Hypotheses 5a and 5b do not receive support. The fact that CAOs' opinions register a direct and positive impact on democratic performance could indicate, rather, that the perception measure is not exactly what we intend it to be: it may have less to do with the actual characteristics of local media than with those of the local officials themselves.

Next, the study investigated how the presence and dynamism of civil society affect the impact of media on democratic performance. Hypotheses 6 and 7 stated respectively that the number of NGOs in town and citizens' public issues-oriented activities (requesting meetings with local authorities' representatives, taking part in petitions or demonstrations, or challenging a local government decision in front of courts) should enhance the impact of media features on democratic performance. Findings partly support Hypotheses 6 and 7 in Hungary and Romania. In both cases, a stronger NGO presence was associated with a greater impact of media attributes (of coverage quality in Romania; of the number of outlets in Hungary and Romania) on democratic performance. The enhancing effect of citizens' active involvement is similar but weaker (citizens' initiatives corresponded with a stronger impact of coverage quality in Romania and Hungary; it was also linked to larger effects of the number of outlets, but only in Hungary).

Overall, the media features examined in this study account for over 5% of variation observed in democratic performance between localities. This is not negligible, given that media effects are by nature difficult to circumscribe and thus to quantify. The difficulties of the endeavour are increased by the paucity of available information about local media in general, which received scant attention in transition studies compared to their national counterparts. These findings tell us that media do matter for how local governments run municipal public affairs. This is not a trivial conclusion, since assumptions about the positive influence of plurality and independence of the media on local democracy have so far had more currency than quantitative assessments of the influence of local media on local authorities' practices. Still, the results of this research cannot tell the whole story of how local media matter for local government performance.

Focusing on the locality as the unit of observation, for which the available survey data is well suited, has increased explanatory leverage with regard to the impact of media features. However, the differences between media systems, as well as between local government systems at the country level, compounded by the lack of information about local media, pose a thought-provoking challenge. More information and further research is required to better understand local media, formulate more precise hypotheses about their effects, and interpret findings with greater accuracy. This chapter sought to identify direct (and indirect, through interactions) linear effects of media systems' characteristics on local government performance. Other, non-linear models have yet to

be tested. As hypothesized in the case of diversity of ownership structure, an influence might be detectable only after a certain threshold is reached. Media may also affect performance following a more complex pattern of combinations between media features and characteristics of local environments than has been examined in these pages. Our study only begins the investigation of this so far neglected topic.

NOTES

- ¹ See Bajomi-Lazar (2001) and Chorawski (2001). I am unaware of similar accounts about Romanian and Latvian local media.
- ² Throughout this chapter the term “local media” is used for the sake of convenience but all survey questions refer to media outlets which provide information about local public affairs.
- ³ Survey data available from the Open Society Foundation–Romania at <http://www.osf.ro/ro/bop/cercetare.html>.
- ⁴ Central European University Post-Election Survey 2002 (1,200 respondents), funded by the CEU Foundation.
- ⁵ Available at <http://www.iss.uw.edu.pl/osrodki/obs/pgss/en/index.html>. The machine readable data file 1992–1999 of the Polish General Social Surveys is produced and distributed by the Institute for Social Studies, University of Warsaw (2002). Investigators are Bogdan Cichomski (principal investigator), Tomasz Jerzyński, and Marcin Zielinski.
- ⁶ The survey was conducted in the framework of the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences’ project “Towards a Civic Society;” the data is available at <http://www.bszi.lv>.
- ⁷ This idea of journalism’s function in society also emerges in studies of the public’s expectations of what the media should do (see Protess et al. [1991, 14] for an American survey).
- ⁸ In a nutshell, less corruption, greater administrative efficiency, higher political stability, and a more effective rule of law.
- ⁹ The large majority of empirical studies of local media pertain to the American context, where detailed information about local media markets and a number of content analyses are available.
- ¹⁰ See Cook Lomax et al. (1983) for an empirical approach, and Protess et al. (1991) for a qualitative take on the issue.
- ¹¹ The two other types of performance outlined in the book, responsiveness and implementation, were left out for reasons of space constraints, data availability, as well as the need to focus on the most comparable aspects of local governance procedures across countries.
- ¹² It is quite possible that local authorities achieve higher democratic performance scores as a result of their own behavior (a “pull” phenomenon), and as a consequence of local inhabitants’ and civic groups’ demands (“push”) to be included in the policy-making process. A “push” effect is less likely in the case of indicators measuring decisional performance. For example, instances of lack of quorum (used as an indicator of decisional performance) are related to councilors’ and mayors’ behavior rather than citizens’ influence. This is why, in addition to the purported mobilization role of the media, democratic performance should be more responsive than its decisional counterpart to the presence of media, as well as to other media features.

- ¹³ For different reasons on why local media coverage is generally favorable to local authorities, see Paletz, Reichert, and McIntyre (1971).
- ¹⁴ As Popescu and Tóka's (2002) investigation revealed, the expected positive impact for incumbents does not automatically materialize. They found that when the government overtly used public television as a tool for political propaganda during the 1994 electoral campaign, it actually had the reverse impact on people's voting choice—greater exposure to public television was associated with voting for the challenger, thus showing that mobilization can take place when media outlets are used in an outrageously self-serving manner by the government in power.
- ¹⁵ Most attempts to assess quality in a quantifiable manner have made use of content analysis. For example, the proportion of local content in a news report or a newspaper has been used as a measure of quality by students of local media. Others have used indicators such as the number of own news-gathering staff (McQuail 1992, 268), the size of editorial budget, or the workload of journalists, defined as the number of articles or news pieces produced per day (Riffe and Shaw 1990; Lacy and Fico 1990). In the case of newspapers with relatively large circulation, a rule of thumb has been to rely on a ratio of editorial staff/circulation (Turner 1995).
- ¹⁶ However, this measure of penetration does not reveal whether the same or different people are reached by a locality's outlets. Here the average audience of all outlets present in one locality has been selected as the measure of penetration.
- ¹⁷ Notably, more detailed measures of financial capacities and autonomy. These elements can only be controlled for adequately in the framework of country comparisons rather than in a study privileging the locality as its prime unit of observation.
- ¹⁸ The indices are not meant as scales or as "objective" measures of performance; what constitutes performance here is solely defined by the available data. The indicators used to build the indices do not necessarily correlate with one another.
- ¹⁹ The question about discussion of budget plans with journalists was not retained because it is not independent of the presence of media in the locality. A measure of the number of local referenda was also not included because the question was not asked in Latvia.
- ²⁰ In Hungary and Poland, significance levels are below 0.01. In Poland, the relationship is weaker, significant at the 0.1 level.
- ²¹ The coefficient of a variable measuring whether or not the media scene was entirely controlled by the local government was not significant when included in the equation instead of the ownership diversity variable.
- ²² The significance level of the coverage quality's coefficients in Latvia and Romania are 0.07 and 0.06 respectively.
- ²³ In Hungary, the significance level of the number of media outlets variable is 0.01; in Latvia, 0.05.
- ²⁴ However, we need to keep in mind the results of the Public Opinion Barometer surveys cited in section 1.1, according to which readership of Romanian local papers is far from negligible (at least between 1995 and 1997, when the surveys were carried out; the author could not find more recent data pertaining to local media audience).
- ²⁵ Localities were separated into two categories: those that witnessed no such initiatives (a little more than half of the sample) and those where at least one activity took place.
- ²⁶ The coefficient for the number of factions included in the ruling coalition of the local assembly was not significant when included with or used instead of the number of parties.

- ²⁷ Equations including each type of cleavage separately did not yield significant coefficients.
- ²⁸ One of the reasons frequently given to explain lower civic involvement is lack of resources (Brady, Verba, and Schlozmann 1995).
- ²⁹ Unlike the question about ownership, the one about audience size did not include the “Don’t know” option as an answer.
- ³⁰ In Hungary, Poland, and Romania, $p < 0.01$. In Latvia, $p = 0.07$.
- ³¹ The number of organizations ranges from none (35% of localities) to 98 or more. In analyses involving interaction terms, the variable was recoded so that localities with ten local associations or more are part of one category. Approximately 85% of localities count between zero and nine NGOs.
- ³² In Hungary, Poland, and Romania, the variable accounting for the number of local organizations has been recoded so that approximately 15% of localities with the largest NGO presence are grouped into one category (in Romania, the scale runs from zero to ten; in Hungary, from zero to fifteen; in Poland, from zero to twenty). In Latvia, no recoding was used as the distribution of NGO presence covered a narrower range, with 35 as the maximum number of associations reported.
- ³³ CAOs’ perception of media influence and the number of media are only moderately correlated. This could indicate that the perception of media influence of CAOs actually taps into something other than the media reality of the locality. It could be that CAOs have a poor idea of media influence; alternatively, the measure could be more indicative of the “open-mindedness” of respondents; yet again, it could also measure the eagerness of respondents to paint their locality in a “democratic” light.
- ³⁴ No weight is applied to the analyses pertaining to the merged LGS and LRS data sets.
- ³⁵ Only two significant interaction effects emerge. The first is between the mean penetration of outlets and councilors’ belief that local media are successful at influencing what citizens discuss and are concerned with when it comes to matters of local public life. It indicates that when such a belief is stronger, the slope of mean penetration on performance decreases. The second interaction occurs when councilors perceive that the influence of local outlets on local government decisions is larger. Then, the impact of the number of media on performance is enhanced. This second finding is more in line with expectations than the first one.
- ³⁶ Repeating the operation with other beliefs of councilors related to media, namely their trust in reports about local government issues, to what extent they believe that local media should serve as watchdogs for the community, or whether councilors think that citizens attempt to influence local government by alerting the media, did not yield significant results.

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APPENDIX I

Overview of Local Media Characteristics and Local Government Performance Indices

The appendix provides a brief overview of the local media landscape in the four countries included in the study. The main characteristics of local media systems explored are their size (number of local media), the quality of their content, sponsorship (diversity of ownership), and their estimated reach (penetration) among local citizens. Since those four elements are interconnected to a certain degree, a table highlighting correlations between size, quality, sponsorship, and penetration is also included below. We have described the feature involving the number of available local outlets in the first section of the chapter (see table 3.1). The tables below display the distribution of the three other media features in the LGS sample.

The last section of the appendix describes how the local government performance indices “perform,” not only in the pooled data set but in each country. For more details on how the variables are constructed, see Appendix II.

- **Ownership Structure**

Local Government Survey (LGS) data show that in over 40% of localities, local governments own at least one local media outlet. Private citizens and business enterprises are also present in over 30% of local media scenes. Other types of owner are less present in the local media; none of those included among the answer options (NGOs, local institutions, other governments, or political parties) can be found in more than 11% of all localities included in the sample. Political parties own outlets in hardly a handful of localities, mostly located in Poland (5.8%).* By law, political parties are not allowed to control broadcast media in Latvia (CIT 2001).

In Hungary and Latvia, local governments are strong sponsors of the media, with at least one outlet in 78% and 63% of localities where there are local media. By contrast, only 10% of localities count local government-owned media in Romania. Poland stands somewhere in between, with local government media present in 27% of localities. The proportion of private media, owned either by enterprises or private citizens, hovers between 40% (Hungary) and 65% (Poland). Polish localities display the most diverse range of owners, notably with

* This does not mean that political parties do not publish local papers. For example, competition is particularly fierce in some districts of Budapest where major parties provide readers/voters with small newspapers after the model of the local government paper.

a significant presence of public institutions (18%) and “other owners” (15%) as sponsors of media outlets.

- **Coverage Quality**

The distribution for the Coverage Quality Index is displayed in table A3.3 for both the pooled data set and by country. The index is composed of four indicators: reports about local assembly’s decisions; reports about proposals debated in the assembly; reports about arguments and counter-arguments discussed at local assemblies; and interviews with local government leaders or councilors.

- **Audience Size**

Audience size, or the penetration score of media outlets for each city is calculated using the mean of CAOs’ estimates of the audience reached by each outlet, ranging on a scale from zero (“less than one person out of ten”) to ten (“almost everyone”). For the sake of clarity, table A3.4 shows localities divided into five categories ranging from “very low” to “very high” penetration scores.

- **Correlations between Media Systems’ Features**

The coefficients given below are indicators of the strength of the relationship between pairs of variables, while controlled for population size. The analysis is weighted to adjust for the over-sampling of bigger localities. Note that the number of cases pertaining to each correlation is given in the boxes below the standardized beta coefficients (table A3.5).

- **Performance Indices**

The measures of decisional and democratic performance constructed for the purpose of this chapter are not significantly correlated. Thus, one does not materialize at the expenses of the other (a common assumption in studies of local governance). However, democratic performance is moderately correlated to locality size (logged population size) ($r=0.165$). For the pooled data set and for each country, the distributions of both types of performance have been divided into five categories. Although the categories are roughly of equal size within countries, there are observable differences between countries’ distributions, thus allowing a comparison of how the indices “perform” in the different settings considered in this study (tables A3.6 and A3.7).

Table A3.1.
Localities per Number of Media Outlets and Types of Owner—Pooled Data Set*

Outlets	Local government (% localities)	Other government (% localities)	Local institution (% localities)	Political party (% localities)	NGO(s) (% localities)	Business (% localities)	Private citizen(s) (% localities)	Other (% localities)	Don't know (% localities)
0	58	90	91	98	96	69	69	93	75
1	36	6	6	2	3	16	15	5	9
2	5	2	2	0	1	8	8	2	7
3	0	1	2	—	0	4	5	1	5
4	0	0	1	—	0	2	3	0	2
5	0	0	0	—	—	1	1	0	2

* Due to space constraints, individual country ownership data are not displayed here.

Note: Percentage figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted data. N=1,425

Source: Own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

Table A3.2
Diversity of Ownership Structure by Country

Number of types of media ownership available	Hungary (% of localities)	Latvia (% of localities)	Poland (% of localities)	Romania (% of localities)
1	70	48	45	85
2	28	50	40	15
3	3	2	12	1
4	0	0	3	0
Total	N=351	N=214	N=499	N=206

Note: Percentage figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted data.

Source: Own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

Table A3.3
Coverage Quality Measures of Local Media Outlets' Coverage

Coverage Quality (5 th quintile=highest quality)	Pooled data (% localities)	Hungary (% localities)	Latvia (% localities)	Poland (% localities)	Romania (% localities)
1 st quintile	20	13	11	9	29
2 nd quintile	20	20	22	23	7
3 rd quintile	16	11	17	24	4
4 th quintile	23	31	31	23	2
5 th quintile	21	26	19	21	5
	N=1,398	N=349	N=229	N=561	N=259

Note: Percentage figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted data.

Source: Own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

Table A3.4
Localities per Average Size of Media Audience

Average audience (out of ten citizens)	Pooled Data (% localities)	Hungary (% localities)	Latvia (% localities)	Poland (% localities)	Romania (% localities)
Very low (0 to 2.99)	20	6	11	33	20
Low (3 to 4.99)	28	16	18	38	31
Average (5 to 6.99)	27	27	40	21	31
High (7 to 8.99)	15	27	21	6	14
Very high (9 to 10)	10	25	11	2	6
	N=1,399	N=348	N=233	N=563	N=255

Note: Percentages figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted data.

Source: Own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

Table A3.5
Partial Correlations between Elements of Local Media Systems

	Size (up to five outlets)	Coverage quality	Ownership diversity
Coverage quality	-0.059** (1,282)		
Ownership diversity	0.318** (1,148)	-0.067* (1,130)	
Penetration	0.005 (1,286)	0.077** (1,267)	-0.029 (1,129)

Note: * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; standardized coefficients; the number of cases is indicated in parenthesis. Population size (logged) and countries controlled for. Weighted data.

Source: Own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

Table A3.6
Localities per Decisional Performance

Decisional performance (highest quintile=best performance)	Pooled data (% localities)	Hungary (% localities)	Latvia (% localities)	Poland (% localities)	Romania (% localities)
1 st quintile	20	26	26	16	15
2 nd quintile	20	16	17	23	21
3 rd quintile	21	19	14	12	33
4 th quintile	20	12	13	38	13
5 th quintile	20	27	30	11	18
	N= 2023	N=646	N=241	N=579	N=557

Note: Percentage figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted data.

Source: Own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

Table A3.7
Localities per Democratic Performance

Decisional performance (highest quintile=best performance)	Pooled data (% localities)	Hungary (% localities)	Latvia (% localities)	Poland (% localities)	Romania (% localities)
1 st quintile	20	27	22	19	13
2 nd quintile	20	17	20	18	24
3 rd quintile	20	21	16	19	23
4 th quintile	20	15	21	20	25
5 th quintile	20	21	20	25	15
	N= 2023	N=646	N=241	N=579	N=557

Note: Percentage figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted data.

Source: Own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

APPENDIX II

Description of Variables and Performance Indices

The variables used in this chapter are listed and described below. Names of variables referring to the Local Government and Local Representative Surveys' codebooks are in parentheses and italicized.

Performance Indices

- *Decisional Performance Index*. The index is composed of four indicators: budget promptness (computed using the month and year of adoption of the 2000 budget), lack of quorum [*decis03*], frequency of postponed decisions [*decis04*], and number of extraordinary sessions [*decis02*]. Extraordinary sessions are recoded into eight categories: the numbers of extraordinary sessions from 0 to 6 make up the first seven categories, and “7 or more sessions” form the last one. The ordering is reversed so that a higher score reflects a lower number of sessions, and thus greater efficiency in decision-making. Budget promptness is coded in a similar fashion—lack of promptness receives a score of 1 while localities that managed to respect the legal deadline for passing the budget are coded 2.

To capture a maximum of within-country variance in performance, the index is calculated differently depending on the country where the municipality is located. As explained in the chapter, the laws regulating the functioning of local governments differ and a direct comparison of Latvian cities with Polish ones with respect to budget promptness would tell us more about the legal framework than about performance itself. Therefore, the mean and standard deviation of the four components of the index were calculated on the basis of country samples. Missing values were replaced with country-sample means. Z-scores (the variable value minus the sample mean, divided by the standard deviation) are then computed for each of the four variables. The Z-scores of the four components are summed up in a Decisional Performance Index.

- *Democratic Performance Index*. The index is composed of five indicators: the number of public hearings and forums held [*info03*], whether there was a public forum about the draft budget [*decis06b*], whether the draft budget was published [*decis06c*], whether the local authorities discussed the draft budget with local civic organizations [*decis06a*], and how many such organizations, if any, were included in the preparations of local governments' decisions [*civil01a*].

The number of public hearings and forums was recoded into eight categories (zero, one, two, three and four, five to seven, eight to ten, eleven or more). The initial response options did not include “no forums were held.” Following the contributors to the first

volume using the LGS data set (e.g., Kálmán and Soós 2002; Pop 2002, in *The State of Local Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*), missing values were treated as an indication of a lack of hearings held in 2000.

Variables for the public forum about the budget and draft budget publication were recoded so that better performance translates into a higher score (1="no," 2="yes"). The two last indicators (discussions of draft budget with civic associations and number of associations included in decision preparations) imply the presence of civic associations in the municipality. To evaluate the democratic performance of localities with respect to their inclusion in decision preparations meaningfully, localities that count civic associations but do not include them in those preparations were assigned a score of 0. Localities without associations were given a score of 1. Localities where such organizations are present and included in the decision-making process received a score of 2. The variable indicating whether local authorities discussed the draft budget with civic organizations was coded in a similar fashion. Missing values (in cases of localities where civic organizations were reported) of the two indicators were replaced by the mean of only those cities in the sample endowed with associations.

As for decisional performance, the means as well as the standard deviations used to calculate the Z-scores of the five indicators are calculated on the basis of country samples. Similarly, Z-score are added to yield a positive democratic performance index, i.e., a higher value indicates better performance.

Media System Variables

- *Number of Media* [*media1*]. Coded from 0 to "8 or more" for the first analysis (described in table 3.2), recoded from 0 to 5 in subsequent analyses.
- *Coverage Quality Index* [*media7a to media7e, media8a to media8e, media9a to media9e, media10a to media10e*]. Initial variables were recoded 0="no" and 1="yes" to indicate whether the outlet includes the four indicators of quality coverage (reports about the local assembly's decisions; reports about proposals debated in the assembly; reports about arguments and counterarguments discussed at local assemblies; and lastly, interviews with local government leaders or councilors) in its regular coverage. Mean scores for each of the four indicators were computed for all outlets. The new variables were standardized (i.e., "z-scored," a process that centers the variable's distribution around 0) and then added up to obtain a measure of quality in each locality. Cases that had missing values for two or more of the four indicators (and localities with no media outlets) were not included in the index (625 cases were excluded).
- *Diversity of Ownership Structure* [*media13a, media13b, media13c, media13d, media13e*]. The numbers of different types of ownership present in a locality were added up. Cases for which no information (either missing or "don't know") about ownership was available, as well as localities without media outlets, were

not included. However, to maximize the number of cases that could be included in the analysis, localities for which no ownership information was available but where only one outlet was reported received a score of 1 (752 cases were excluded.)

- ___ *Audience* [*media11a*, *media11b*, *media11c*, *media11d*, *media11e*]. The original variables are coded in such a way that the coding scheme does not fully distinguish between the absence of outlet or a score of 0 (i.e., no audience). To illustrate this point: in a number of localities with one or two outlets, the penetration score assigned to (non-existent) third, fourth, and fifth outlets was “0” instead of an indication of missing outlets. To correct for this as much as possible, I recoded as missing all outlets that were not reported when asked for the total number of local media (*media1a*, up to five). For example, were three outlets reported, the fourth and fifth columns were treated as missing instead of “0” so as not to underestimate the audience of local media. The audience scores of all outlets in town were meaned. Localities without outlets or for which no audience information was available were left out and treated as missing (624 cases were excluded).

Local Civil Society Variables

- *Number of NGOs* [*civil07*]. The number of civic organizations in the locality.
- ___ *Number of Political Parties* [*parties*]. The number of political parties active in the locality.
- ___ *Citizens’ Initiatives* [*actio01a*] (demonstrations), [*actio02a*] (petitions), [*actio03a*] (requests for meetings), [*actio04a*] (challenges to local government decisions in court). The localities that witnessed no initiatives were coded 0; those where at least one of the four activities took place were coded 1.

Other Variables

- ___ *Unemployment* [*unemp*]. The percentage of unemployed people in the locality.
- ___ *Community Heterogeneity* [*socio04a*] (differences in income), [*socio04b*] (differences in religious beliefs), [*socio04f*] (different parts of the municipality), [*socio04c*] (differences in political views), [*socio04e*] (differences of ethnicity), [*socio04g*] (differences between newcomers and long-established inhabitants). Chief administrative officers’ evaluation of the degree of tension caused by these various divides in the locality—rated from 1 for “low tension” to 7 for “high tension.” Community heterogeneity is measured by taking the mean of the tension score of all cleavages.
- ___ *Staff Level of Education* [*staffedu*]. The percentage of local government staff with higher education.

Local Officials' and Representatives' Perception of Media Influence

- *___ Chief Administrative Officers' Perception of Local Media Influence on Local Authorities' Decisions [decis08e].*
- *___ CAOs' Perception * Number of Media Outlets.* The product of the two variables (both variables were centered on their mean by subtracting the mean from the two variables' scores before they were multiplied).
- *___ CAOs' Perception * Quality Coverage.* The product of the two variables (both variables were centered on their mean by subtracting the mean from the two variables' scores before they were multiplied).
- *___ CAOs' Perception * Ownership Diversity.* The product of the two variables (both variables were centered on their mean by subtracting the mean from the two variables' scores before they were multiplied).
- *___ CAOs' Perception * Penetration.* The product of the two variables (both variables were centered on their mean by subtracting the mean from the two variables' scores before they were multiplied).

From the 2001 Hungary Local Representative Survey (LRS)

The observational unit of the LRS is the councilor, not the locality. Between one and 18 councilors returned the questionnaire in a number of Hungarian localities. The media-related responses of councilors from the same town were averaged to yield one measure for each type of perception per locality. The data were then merged with the LGS data and localities common to both data files were retained (255 localities).

- Councilors' Perception of Local Media Capacity to Influence:
 - Local Authorities' Decisions [q21d]. Coded between 1 (little influence) to 7 (great influence).
 - Agenda-setting [q34] (capacity to influence what citizens think about concerning local government issues). Coded 1 (no influence) to 7 (great influence).
 - Own Opinion about Local Government Issues [q40j]. Coded 1 (little influence) to 7 (great influence).
- *___ Councilors' Perception of Media Influence on Local Government Decisions * Number of Media Outlets (up to five).* The product of the two variables (both variables were centered on their mean by subtracting the mean from the two variables' scores before they were multiplied).
- *___ Councilors' Perception of Media Influence on Agenda-Setting * Number of Media Outlets (up to five).* The product of the two variables (both variables were centered on their mean by subtracting the mean from the two variables' scores before they were multiplied).

The three variables measuring councilors' perceptions were mean-centered, then multiplied first with the number of media outlets and second with the coverage quality index score, for a total of twelve product terms.

Municipality Size and Citizens' Effectiveness: Hungary, Poland, and Romania

Daniel Pop

ABSTRACT

The relationship between the size of municipalities and the ability of citizens to influence local matters is the focus of this chapter. Our study looks at Hungary, Poland, and Romania using data from the Indicators of Local Democratic Governance Project (ILDGP), a joint project of the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI) and the Tocqueville Research Center (T-RC). The data reflect attitudes expressed by local public officials. In each of the three countries, the study shows less effective citizen involvement in very small municipalities and greater effectiveness in larger centers. This finding indicates that the high level of municipal fragmentation that is specific to the three countries tends to have a negative impact on the overall quality of local democracy. The evidence that system capacity is negatively related to the size of municipalities further supports this finding. It appears that smaller municipalities are unable to fulfill their potential to provide incentives for local participation, without which we cannot consider these countries to have effective local democracies.

Municipality Size and Citizens' Effectiveness: Hungary, Poland, and Romania

Daniel Pop

1. INTRODUCTION

As the title suggests, this chapter deals with the relationship between municipality size and citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters in the case of three countries (Hungary, Poland, and Romania). We consider the effective engagement of citizens to be a dimension of the quality of local democracy, and when examining this issue we will need to look at the level and types of citizen participation as well as the system's capacity to provide incentives for such participation. Depending on the relationship between the size of municipalities and citizens' effectiveness, we could gain a better understanding of the implications of municipal structure for the quality of local democracy.

The starting point is Dahl's claim that "participation in very large units becomes minimal and in very small units it becomes trivial" (1971, 960). This suggests that, on the one hand, the participation of citizens is inhibited within very large municipalities, while on the other hand it is even less effective in very small ones. If this claim is valid in the three countries under study, it would imply that citizens' effectiveness varies according to the population size of municipalities—low in very small municipalities and improved in larger ones. Since very large municipalities in the three countries are extremely low in number and are mainly capital cities, we will not attempt to evaluate the level of participation in very large units.

Our analysis is comparative, being conducted in three countries, and the hypothesis to be tested is of special relevance to the three countries for at least two reasons. First, it relates to the ongoing debate on the relationship between citizens' ability to influence local matters and the quality of local democracy. Second, the average size of municipalities in all three countries under study is small compared to other democratic countries such as Great Britain and Ireland, where the average population of municipalities is 120,000 and 103,000, respectively (Larsen 2002, 317). By comparison, in Hungary the average size of municipalities is 3,229 inhabitants, in Poland 15,561, and in Romania 8,044 (Soós and Tóka 2002, 413). According to Larsen's comparative data, Poland would

qualify as having medium-size municipalities on average, while those in Hungary and Romania would be small.

To determine if the relationship between municipality size and citizens' effectiveness holds for the three countries under study, we will evaluate the relationship between the direct effects that municipality size has on citizen effectiveness in influencing local decision-making, and also investigate the system capacity of municipalities to create incentives for citizens to participate.

Path analysis will be used to evaluate the relationships among the variables. The main reason for this choice is that there are significant levels of multi-collinearity among our variables. This technique is useful because in addition to addressing the possible relationship between the size of municipalities and citizens' effectiveness in influencing local policy matters, it is also sensitive to the indirect effects of municipality size.

The paper is organized in seven sections. Following this brief introduction to the topic of our study, we present a short review of the literature dealing with the relationship between municipality size and the quality of local democracy. Next, the main data sources used in the analysis are presented. The fourth section describes the variables, and the fifth deals with the analysis of individual country cases. The last two sections present a comparative analysis as well as the findings and conclusions.

2. RESEARCH ON THE SIZE OF POLITICAL UNITS

In the early literature on the size of political units summarized by Almond and Verba (1963, 231–236), the authors found no consistent relationship between the size of municipalities and “subjective political competence.”¹ In reanalyzing their data, Finifter (1970) also found no zero-order relationship between the size of municipalities and political competence; however, the author concluded that there was a relationship once the level of education was taken into consideration.

Other authors measured citizens' influence on local politics through direct political participation. Using a “communal activity” index, Verba and Nie (1972) found a strong negative relationship between the size of municipalities and citizens' influence. Their investigations supported the proposition that the larger the community the more complicated and impersonal it becomes, leading to a reduced level of participation. In contrast, citizens in small communities can see the results of their participation more quickly, and this serves as an incentive for more involvement. Dahl (1971) estimated that the ideal size of political units was between 50,000 and 100,000 inhabitants.

The start of modern research on the relationship between the size and the viability of democratic polities was marked by Dahl and Tufte's study entitled *Size and Democracy*, published in 1973. In this book, the authors drew attention to the fact that democratic theory had not evolved with historical reality and had thus become outdated. Their

solution was to update democratic theory by including the “neglected problem of political units and their inter-relationship” (1973, 139). They came to the conclusion that it was impossible to determine one optimal size for political units. As a result, they suggested a mixture of small and large units, claiming that citizens could participate more easily in the former, but the latter improved the effectiveness of citizen participation. Nevertheless, the authors recognized that the problem of ineffectiveness in small units and that of alienation in large ones might persist.

Besides the problem of diminishing avenues for political participation, Le Roy found evidence that civil society organizations themselves could be perceived as agents of the state (1995, 314). In the author’s view, this could lead to alienation or a “crisis of confidence and trust that characterizes much of the West.” By contrast, in his research focusing on the importance of proximity and capacity to influence local politics, Larsen considers that even if citizens’ participation is higher in small municipalities, this does not imply greater interest or knowledge or more positive views on local democracy (2002, 330). These findings indicate that the absolute extent of citizen participation in itself is not sufficient to account for the nature of local democracy. Lastly, the complex nature of the relationship between municipality size and the performance of local democracy is evident in the work of Keating (1995, 117), who directs our attention to the influence of specific local factors.

3. DATA SOURCES

The main data used in this study were generated by the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI) and the Tocqueville Research Center (T–RC) within the Indicators of Local Democratic Governance Project (ILDGP). The first phase of the project took place in 2001, when the Tocqueville Research Center conducted a four-country survey, known as the Local Government Survey (LGS). The survey consisted of face-to-face interviews with chief administrative officials from Hungary, Latvia, Poland, and Romania.

Within the framework of the same project, the LGI published a volume entitled *State of Local Democracy in Central Europe*, comprising the reports on local democracy for the four countries mentioned above (Soós and Tóka 2002). This volume provided the main source of data for our country case studies.

4. VARIABLES

The main variables for the three countries under analysis are introduced and described below. They include: the size of municipality, citizens’ participation, citizens’ effectiveness in influencing local matters, and system responsiveness.

4.1 Municipality Size

The literature distinguishes between population number and surface area as the two main measures for municipality size (Swianiewicz 2002, 3). Although both of these are valid conceptualizations, population number is used here as the measure for municipality size.

Following Soós and Tóka, municipalities are initially grouped into eight categories based on their population number (2002, 414). The categories include municipalities with inhabitants from 0 to 999, 1,000 to 1,999, 2,000 to 4,999, 5,000 to 9,999, 10,000 to 49,999, 50,000 to 99,999, 100,000 to 999,999, and finally, municipalities with a population over 1,000,000. To provide a clear overview and to allow comparability among our country cases, the eight categories are later merged into three: small municipalities (0–4,999 inhabitants), medium-size (5,000–49,999 inhabitants) and large (over 50,000 inhabitants).

Table 4.1 illustrates the situation in the three countries in our study. In Hungary 54.81% of all municipalities have fewer than 1,000 inhabitants, in Romania only 1.7%, and in Poland none. In the case of municipalities with a population of between 1,000 and 4,999 inhabitants, 69.88% of Romanian, 23.0% of Polish, and 36.59% of

Table 4.1
Municipalities by Population Size and Number of Inhabitants

	Hungary 1997		Poland 1996		Romania 1999	
	Number of municipalities	Total population category	Number of municipalities	Total population category	Number of municipalities	Total population category
Below 999	1,714 (54.81%)	790,737 (7.8%)	—	—	52 (1.7%)	658,180 (20.58%)
1,000–1,999	651 (20.82%)	934,429 (9.2%)	7 (0.3%)	12,234 (0.0%)	388 (13.1%)	
2,000–4,999	493 (15.77%)	1,476,377 (14.6%)	563 (22.7%)	2,235,165 (5.8%)	1,674 (56.78%)	5,581,663 (24.76%)
5,000–9,999	133 (4.25%)	931,912 (9.2%)	1,078 (43.4%)	7,656,636 (19.8%)	607 (20.59%)	3,981,735 (17.66%)
10,000–49,999	116 (3.71)	2,271,414 (22.4%)	734 (29.5%)	13,722,206 (35.5%)	180 (6.11%)	3,530,746 (15.66%)
50,000–99,999	11 (0.35%)	709,971 (7.0%)	56 (2.3%)	3,750,448 (9.6%)	23 (0.78%)	1,778,327 (7.89%)
100,000–999,999	8 (0.26%)	1,159,135 (11.4%)	45 (1.8%)	11,262,652 (29.1%)	23 (0.78%)	4,987,762 (22.12%)
1,000,000 and over	1 (0.03%)	1,861,383 (18.4%)	—	—	1 (0.03%)	2,027,512 (8.99%)

Source: Data from Soós and Tóka 2002, 413–414.

Hungarian municipalities fall into this category. This shows that, while over 90% of Hungarian and 71.58% of Romanian municipalities have below 5,000 inhabitants, in Poland only 23% of the municipalities belong to this group. On the other hand, 72.9% of Polish municipalities have between 5,000 and 49,999 inhabitants, while for Romania the share is 26.7% and for Hungary it is only 7.96%. In all three countries the share of municipalities with a population above 50,000 inhabitants is very small (0.64% for Hungary, 4.1% for Poland, and 1.59% for Romania).

Although the number of very large municipalities (over 50,000) is small in all three countries, their population still amounts to a significant share of the total population. In Hungary, they account for almost 37% of the overall population of the country. In Poland and Romania, 36.6% and 39% of the population respectively lives in large municipalities.

4.2 Citizen Participation

A direct measure of citizen participation is used in several analyses specific to the study of the relationship between municipality size and participation. Authors seeking to capture the elusive concept of citizen participation employ many different measures including simple indicators such as voter turnout, and complex scales comprising a variety of different direct and indirect forms of political participation.

The LGS collected data on five different forms of political participation (see table 4.2), including:

- attendance at public demonstrations concerning local matters
- collection of citizens' signatures for petitions on various issues related to local politics
- direct meetings between local officials and citizens or groups of citizens on local political matters
- challenges to local government decisions in a court of law or at a higher administrative authority
- proposal writing or written requests by civil society organizations on any public interest question.

The above table presents citizen participation rates for the different types of political participation in the three countries under study as reported by chief administrative officers (CAOs). From their responses we learn that the preferred forms of activity by citizens vary among the countries. In Hungary, civil society proposal writing and formulating written requests are the most preferred forms of citizen participation. The same is true for Poland, but the share of municipalities in which such action was undertaken is 15% higher than in Hungary. In Romania, civil society proposal writing holds second place at 14.5%, lower than in Hungary and Poland.

Table 4.2
 Municipalities' Share in Type of Citizen Participation in Local Politics [%]

	Country		
	Hungary	Poland	Romania
Public demonstrations	3.0	10.6	7.3
Petitions	12.6	26.5	12.5
Requests for meetings	24.2	48.3	20.3
Challenges to local government decisions	4.4	9.2	5.3
Civil society proposals	37.0	52.4	14.5

Source: LGS, 2001.

The second most common form of participation in Hungary and Poland—requests for meetings between local officials and citizens—presents even more accentuated differences. In Hungary 24% of municipalities requested such meetings, compared to Poland with over 48%. In Romania this is the most preferred type of participation, yet it only occurred in about 20% of municipalities.

The data show that attending public demonstrations and challenging local decisions in a court of a higher administrative authority are the least preferred forms of political participation in all three countries.

The five forms of participation captured by the LGS data are the most common ones, but they exclude other potentially important types such as direct contact with local officials. This fact somehow weakens our own findings. Also, as the data come from CAOs and not directly from the citizens of the given municipalities, we can not adequately evaluate the levels of citizen participation. Citizens' effectiveness, however, is a different matter and these data are worth considering for that purpose.

4.3 Citizens' Effectiveness in Influencing Local Decision-making

Citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters is evaluated according to how much they are able to influence local decision-making. It is a composite measure, including the influence on local decision-making through local entrepreneurs, firms, and business associations; civic associations, foundations, trade unions, and churches; the local branches of political parties; the print and electronic media; and direct citizen influence. The alpha reliability test for the scale of citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters is 0.7622 for Hungary, 0.7369 for Poland, and 0.7695 for Romania, with item-total correlations for all three countries presented in appendix I.

Although the measurement relies on the evaluations of chief administrative officers from the selected municipalities, the data refer to the direct experiences of the

respondents (as in the case of citizens' participation). Therefore, they are substantively more reliable than in the case of CAOs reporting on citizens' participation levels. Given the data constraints, however, we also include institutional variables that influence the structure of incentives to undertake political participation, i.e., the system's capacity to respond.

4.4 System Capacity to Respond

The capacity of the system to respond to citizens' requests and to provide incentives for participation is measured by "expenditure rigidity." The legal status of municipalities determines the responsibilities they are assigned to perform and therefore sets their level of autonomy in decisions on local matters. Expenditure rigidity is the percentage of own revenues in the total budget of the municipalities as reported by the local officials. Own revenues are those incomes of municipalities over which they have the authority to define both the pool and the amount of the payable taxes, fees or duties. Thus, all the revenues that are collected at the national level and redistributed to municipalities are excluded from this category. A reason for deciding to define own revenues in this way is that the shared tax systems in these countries are largely biased by the earmarked character of the transfers of the municipality revenue shares.

Similarly, national transfers are largely normative and earmarked. Although they influence the income situation of municipalities, they do not contribute to an increase in their fiscal independence. Instead, in adopting a strongly redistributive system in each country, the intent was to guarantee the minimum provision of basic public services in all municipalities.

Although legally there is no hierarchy among municipalities based on their size, and in theory all municipalities perform similar functions, there is still a certain differentiation based on the peculiarities of different municipalities and their level of fiscal independence. For instance, in Hungary and Romania there are municipalities with county rights, which perform the functions of the County Council within their jurisdiction. The difference between the two countries lies in the fact that, while in Hungary local governments have the opportunity to decide which noncompulsory responsibilities to assume, the Romanian local governments do not have this choice.

Another important distinction among municipalities is their urban or rural character. In the Romanian system, rural municipalities have only limited sources of own revenues compared to urban municipalities. This is due to the fact that a large share of the population in rural municipalities is active in various occupations related to agriculture. Under the current shared taxation system, a certain percentage of all income taxes collected in their jurisdictions is redistributed to local governments. This amounted to 35% in 2000 and 36.5% in 2001. But since agricultural income is not

taxable, the amounts collected by rural municipalities as a share of local income are rather small. Various central government and county council equalization transfers are meant to compensate for this lack of funds. Nevertheless, these often come in the form of earmarked transfers, which determine both the scope of funds and the amount spent on specific budget lines.

An important consequence of this is to reduce the policy space available for municipalities and the ability of citizens to influence decisions; thus, we can theorize that the higher the expenditure rigidity of municipalities, the less effective citizens are in influencing local matters. On the other hand, from the findings of the research it seems that the relationship between municipality size and revenue rigidity is substantial or very strong for each country.

5. COUNTRY CASES

This section identifies the relationship between the population size of municipalities and the level of citizens' effectiveness in influencing policymaking for each of the three countries. In each case, the scores on citizens' effectiveness, participation and the level of expenditure rigidity for each municipality size will be discussed.

5.1 Hungary

In the case of Hungary the correlation coefficient between municipality size (log) and citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters is 0.355 and it is significant at the 0.01 level (see figure 4.1). This indicates a moderately strong direct relationship between municipality size and citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters. The correlation and significance results are reported below.

As expected from the findings of the earlier literature, the low score of R square indicates that municipality size is not the best predictor of citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters. Although municipality size is not a strong predictor (it explains only 12% of the total variation in citizens' effectiveness), the low significance level implies that R square can not be attributed to sampling error. In this sense, the findings agree with the general findings of the earlier literature.

Table 4.3 shows that citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters varies with the size of municipality in Hungary. According to the findings, only 15.1% of those interviewed consider that citizens have a slightly, fairly, or very big influence on local decision-making. By contrast, 67.1% of respondents believe that citizens' effectiveness in influencing local decision-making is very, fairly, or slightly small. This seems to suggest that citizens' ability to influence local decision-making is generally very limited in

all Hungarian municipalities. Still, we can track slight differences in the level of citizen effectiveness among municipalities of different sizes. From among 67.1% of respondents who consider citizen effectiveness as being limited, a vast majority (77.6%) belongs to municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. This response was selected by only 52.5% of those from municipalities with a population of 5,000 to 49,999, and 44.4% of those from municipalities above 50,000 inhabitants. This suggests that citizen effectiveness is generally low in Hungary, especially in small municipalities.

Figure 4.1
Hungary: Model Summary, ANOVA, and Coefficients

Model summary ^b				
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Standard error of the estimate
1	0.355 ^a	0.126	0.123	1.1056

- a. Predictors: (constant), log pop size.
b. Dependent variable: citizens' effectiveness to influence local matters.

ANOVA ^b						
Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Significance
1	Regression	59.082	1	59.082	48.334	0.000 ^a
	Residual	409.498	335	1.222		
	Total	468.580	336			

- a. Predictors: (constant), log pop size.
b. Dependent variable: citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters.

Coefficients ^a						
		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Significance
Model		B	Standard error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.590	0.312		1.890	0.060
	Log pop size	0.261	0.038	0.355	6.952	0.000

- a. Dependent variable: citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters.

These data confirm our statistical expectations: the smaller the municipality, the less effective citizens are in influencing local decision-making. However, this occurs in an environment in which citizens are found to have very little influence in municipalities of any size at all.

Table 4.3
 Citizen Effectiveness in Influencing Local Decision-making in Hungary
 (by Size of Municipality)

Citizens' effectiveness		Municipality size			Total
		0-4,999	5,000-49,999	over 50,000	
Small influence	Count	156.0	62.0	8.0	226.0
	% within citizens' effectiveness	69.0	27.4	3.5	100.0
	% within municipality size	77.6	52.5	44.4	67.1
	% of total	46.3	18.4	2.4	67.1
Neither small nor big influence	Count	22.0	32.0	6.0	60.0
	% within citizens' effectiveness	36.7	53.3	10.0	100.0
	% within municipality size	10.9	27.1	33.3	17.8
	% of total	6.5	9.5	1.8	17.8
Big influence	Count	23.0	24.0	4.0	51.0
	% within citizens' effectiveness	45.1	47.1	7.8	100.0
	% within municipality size	11.4	20.3	22.2	15.1
	% of total	6.8	7.1	1.2	15.1
Total	Count	201.0	118.0	18.0	337.0
	% within citizens' effectiveness	59.6	35.0	5.3	100.0
	% within municipality size	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	% of total	59.6	35.0	5.3	100.0

Note: N=337.

Source: LGS 2001.

Table 4.4
 Share of Municipalities in which Citizen Participation Occurred
 at Least Once (Hungary) [%]

	Municipality size		
	0-4,999	5,000-49,999	over 50,000
Public demonstrations	2.3	7.3	40.9
Petitions	10.5	35.0	72.7
Requests for meetings	22.2	51.8	72.7
Challenges to decisions	3.9	13.1	27.3
Civil society proposals	33.7	82.5	90.9

Note: N=646.

Source: LGS 2001.

The data in table 4.4 show that although all types of participation take place in municipalities below 5,000 inhabitants, citizens are the least active here. In other words, depending on the type of participation considered, in municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, participation was undertaken only in 2.3% to 33.7% of the cases. The most frequent type of citizen participation was civil society proposal writing, followed by requests for meetings between local officials and citizens.

In municipalities with between 5,000 and 49,000 inhabitants, the share in which participation was undertaken is higher for all forms than in municipalities with below 5,000 inhabitants. Civil society proposal writing was the most frequent form of participation, and was employed at least once in over 82% of the cases.

The largest share of municipalities in which all forms of participation were undertaken at least once is those with over 50,000 inhabitants. Civil society proposal writing and written requests occurred at least once in over 90% of the cases. The second most common form of participation was requests for meetings between local officials and citizens, and the third was the writing of petitions, undertaken in over 62% of municipalities.

The data seem to suggest that, although some type of citizen participation was undertaken in only 49% of all Hungarian municipalities, the larger the municipality the more intense the participation. Still, we need to keep in mind that there are only a limited number of really large municipalities. Furthermore, we cannot disregard the level of effectiveness of participation.

In Hungary, citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters is constrained by the fact that the goal and scope of government transfers determine most decisions on local matters. The degree of legal autonomy of municipalities in Hungary is defined in the Local Government Act and in sectoral laws. In accordance with the law, all municipalities have to carry out certain mandatory functions and they may provide further services on an optional basis. Interestingly enough, municipalities tend to carry out as many optional functions as they can, since this involves more central transfers. As shown by Soós and Kálmán (Soós et al. 2002, 25), central transfers still constitute the largest source of local government revenues, although their share has been reduced from 64% to 51%–53%.

A rather large imbalance can be observed in the capacity of municipalities to raise local revenues, since this capacity depends on the level of economic development in each municipality. To equalize the existing imbalance, the central government calculates central transfers for operations, taking into consideration the business tax collected by the municipalities. Although local governments in Hungary have autonomy in deciding on their operational spending, this autonomy is constrained to a certain degree by the increasing share of earmarked grants for specific purposes (Fekete et al. 2002, 41).

According to the responses in the LGS, in 63.3% of Hungarian municipalities, over 50% of overall revenues originate from different types of government transfer. In 24.3%

Table 4.5
Revenue Rigidity by Municipality Size in Hungary

Own revenue of municipalities		Municipality size			Total
		0–4,999	5,000–49,999	Over 50,000	
Below 30%	Count	176.0	23.0	1.0	200.0
	% within own revenue of municipalities	88.0	11.5	0.5	100.0
	% within municipality size	37.4	17.7	4.8	32.2
	% of total	28.3	3.7	0.2	32.2
Between 30% and 50%	Count	130.0	37.0	6.0	173.0
	% within own revenue of municipalities	75.1	21.4	3.5	100.0
	% within municipality size	27.6	28.5	28.6	27.8
	% of Total	20.9	5.9	1.0	27.8
Over 50%	Count	165.0	70.0	14.0	249.0
	% within own revenue of municipality	66.3	28.1	5.6	100.0
	% within municipality size	35.0	53.8	66.7	40.0
	% of total	26.5	11.3	2.3	40.0
Total	Count	471.0	130.0	21.0	622.0
	% within own revenue of municipality	75.7	20.9	3.4	100.0
	% within municipality size	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	% of total	75.7	20.9	3.4	100.0

Note: N=622.

Source: LGS 2001.

of cases the transfers constitute from 30% to 50% of total revenues, and only in 12.4% do they account for less than 30% of overall revenues (see table 4.5).

In terms of municipality size, we note that the smaller a municipality, the more it tends to depend on government transfers. This is indicated by the fact that 93.4% of the municipalities that have over 50% of their budget revenues coming in the form of government transfers belong to the group of municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, accounting for 65.2% of all Hungarian municipalities with a population below 5,000 inhabitants.

In the case of municipalities with between 5,000 and 49,999 inhabitants, 46.6% have over 50% of their revenues originating from the government, which represents 6.1% of all municipalities with such high rigidity. The budget of 31.3% of medium-size municipalities comprises from 30% to 50% of government transfers, and 22.2% have less than 30% of their revenues coming from government transfers.

Among large municipalities (over 50,000 inhabitants), only one-third depend on government transfers to an extent larger than 50% of their total revenues. The majority

of these municipalities (51.5%) rely on government transfers to a smaller degree, central transfers constituting between 30% and 50% of their total revenues. Only 15.2% of large municipalities have less than 30% of their revenues collected from government transfers.

As expected, the data show that the smaller a municipality in population size the more rigid its revenues tend to be. However, this happens in the context of a system in which transfers are significant in municipalities of all sizes.

5.2 Poland

The correlation coefficient between municipality size and citizens' effectiveness is weaker in Poland (0.26 and significant at the 0.01 level) than in Hungary. Although this level of relationship indicates only a moderately direct relationship between municipality size and citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters, it is positive and cannot be attributed to sampling error.

Figure 4.2
Poland: Model Summary, ANOVA, and Coefficients

Model summary ^b				
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Standard error of the estimate
1	0.260 ^a	0.067	0.066	1.0926

- a. Predictors: (constant), log population size.
b. Dependent variable: citizens' effectiveness to influence local matters.

ANOVA ^b						
Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Significance
1	Regression	47.147	1	47.147	39.494	0.000 ^a
	Residual	651.803	546	1.194		
	Total	698.950	547			

- a. Predictors: (constant), log population size.
b. Dependent variable: citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters.

Coefficients ^a						
		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Significance
Model		B	Standard error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.533	0.423		1.260	0.208
	Log pop size	0.277	0.044	0.260	6.284	0.000

- a. Dependent variable: citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters.

As with the case of Hungary, the score of R square is low, which indicates that municipality size is not the best predictor of citizens’ effectiveness in influencing local matters for Poland either. Still, municipality size explains 8% of the total variation.

Table 4.6 shows that 50.9% of all respondents consider citizens’ effectiveness in influencing local decision-making to be very, fairly, or slightly low. Of these, 21.5% are from municipalities with a population below 5,000, 72.4% from municipalities with a population between 5,000 and 49,999, and 6.1% from municipalities with over 50,000 inhabitants. Only 20.5% of the respondents say that citizens have a big influence on local decision-making.

The distribution according to size of municipality is 16.6% when there are fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, 71.0% with 5,000 to 49,999, and 12.4% with a population over 50,000. About one-fourth (28.6%) of the respondents claim that citizen effectiveness is neither low nor high. Of these, 13.4% are from municipalities with below 5,000 inhabitants, 68.2% from municipalities with a population between 5,000 and 49,999, and 18.5% from municipalities with over 50,000 inhabitants.

Table 4.6
Citizen Effectiveness in Influencing Local Decision-making in Poland
(by Size of Municipality)

Citizens’ effectiveness		Municipality size			Total
		0–4,999	5,000–49,999	Over 50,000	
Small influence	Count	60.0	202.0	17.0	279.0
	% within citizens’ effectiveness	21.5	72.4	6.1	100.0
	% within municipality size	65.9	51.9	25.0	50.9
	% of total	10.9	36.9	3.1	50.9
Neither small nor big influence	Count	21.0	107.0	29.0	157.0
	% within citizens’ effectiveness	13.4	68.2	18.5	100.0
	% within municipality size	23.1	27.5	42.6	28.6
	% of total	3.8	19.5	5.3	28.6
Big influence	Count	10.0	80.0	22.0	112.0
	% within citizens’ effectiveness	8.9	71.4	19.6	100.0
	% within municipality size	11.0	20.6	32.4	20.4
	% of total	1.8	14.6	4.0	20.4
Total	Count	91.0	389.0	68.0	548.0
	% within citizens’ effectiveness	16.6	71.0	12.4	100.0
	% within municipality size	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	% of total	16.6	71.0	12.4	100.0

Note: N=548.

Source: LGS 2001.

These data seem to indicate that, although citizen effectiveness in influencing local decision-making is generally low, in 32.4% of the municipalities with over 50,000 inhabitants the influence is found to be large. Yet differences appear not only among municipalities of different sizes, but also among municipalities with similar size. This suggests that in addition to size there are some other variables with a systematic effect on citizens' level of influence on decision-making in municipalities.

In addition to having the highest average municipality size, Poland also has the largest share of municipalities in which citizen participation was reported to have occurred at least once during the year 2000. According to table 4.7, the most preferred forms of citizen participation were civil society proposals and meetings between local officials and citizens. This general trend remains valid for municipalities of all sizes. The data show that the larger a municipality, the more opportunities it provides for civil society proposals and written requests. For instance, the share of municipalities with a population below 5,000 inhabitants, where civil society proposals were introduced at least once in the year 2000, amounts to 49.0%. Compared to this, in municipalities with a population between 5,000 and 49,999 inhabitants, civil society proposals were introduced at least once in 55.0% of the cases, while in large municipalities this share reached 62.7%. In the case of the second most preferred form of participation, i.e., requests for meetings between local officials and citizens, the trend is similar.

Although public demonstrations were reported in fewer than 10% of small and 15% of medium-size municipalities, there was at least one public demonstration in almost 41.2% of large municipalities. A large increase can also be observed in the case of petition writing and challenging local government decisions at court or a higher authority.

The independence of local authorities in executing public tasks assigned to them is guaranteed by the Constitution. Municipalities need to execute public tasks of local importance. In accordance with the Local Government Act, the tasks consist of those aimed at satisfying the collective needs of the community as well as commissioned tasks. Both categories include mandatory and optional public tasks.

Table 4.7
Share of Municipalities in Which Citizen Participation Occurred
at Least Once (Poland) [%]

	Municipality size		
	0-4,999	5,000-49,999	Over 50,000
Public demonstrations	9.1	14.7	41.1
Petitions	24.5	29.0	43.1
Requests for meetings	50.0	50.1	69.0
Challenges to decisions	34.5	40.4	60.4
Civil society proposals	49.0	55.0	62.7

Note: N=570.

Source: LGS 2001.

Municipalities have autonomy in deciding over the method of implementation, provided that their decision is in compliance with the law. To implement commissioned projects, municipalities are provided with earmarked grants from the state. According to Aldona Okraszewska and Jacek Kwiatkowski (Soós et al. 2002, 197), in 2000 the share of earmarked grants for Polish municipalities was 13.7% of the total income. This share is considerably lower than that of the own income of municipalities (52.5%). As a result, we can say that the share of own income in the case of Polish municipalities is relatively high compared to Hungarian ones. However, this varies with the size of municipalities.

According to the responses in the LGS (table 4.8), the budget of 60.31% of municipalities came from a given form of government grants. Municipalities with a population below 5,000 inhabitants represent 23.6% of the total municipalities with over 50% of revenues coming from government transfers. The budgets of 11.6% of small municipalities derived from 30% to 50% of revenues from central transfers, and only 13.5% of municipalities claimed to have budget dependence below 30%.

Table 4.8
Revenue Rigidity by Municipality Size in Poland

Own revenue of municipalities		Municipality size			Total
		0 –4,999	5,000–49,999	Over 50,000	
Below 30%	Count	32.0	73.0	7.0	112.0
	% within own revenue of municipalities	28.6	65.2	6.3	100.0
	% within municipality size	32.7	18.3	10.4	19.9
	% of total	5.7	12.9	1.2	19.9
Between 30% and 50%	Count	42.0	133.0	29.0	204.0
	% within own revenue of municipalities	20.6	65.2	14.2	100.0
	% within municipality size	42.9	33.3	43.3	36.2
	% of Total	7.4	23.6	5.1	36.2
Over 50%	Count	24.0	193.0	31.0	248.0
	% within own revenue of municipality	9.7	77.8	12.5	100.0
	% within municipality size	24.5	48.4	46.3	44.0
	% of total	4.3	34.2	5.5	44.0
Total	Count	98.0	399.0	67.0	564.0
	% within own revenue of municipality	17.4	70.7	11.9	100.0
	% within municipality size	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	% of total	17.4	70.7	11.9	100.0

Note: N=564.

Source: LGS 2001.

In the case of municipalities with a population of between 5,000 and 49,999 inhabitants, 55.8% reported their dependence on government transfers to be over 50%, which represents 72.9% of all municipalities with such high dependence. A dependence rate between 30% and 50% was reported by 23.2% of municipalities with a population between 5,000 and 49,999 inhabitants, which accounts for 82.3% of all sizes of municipalities with this dependence rate.

Large municipalities (above 50,000 inhabitants) also show considerable dependence, as 53.5% of these municipalities reported that more than 50% of their budgets came from government transfers. Of the large municipalities 25.6% have between 30% and 50% of their budget originating from government transfers, and 20.9% have less than 30% from transfers.

Based on the above, we can conclude that in the case of Poland municipality size does have an effect on the level of citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters. But the direct relationship is very weak and is attributable to a large extent to the specific features of local policy resulting from the economies of scale that local administrative units confront. Concerning revenue rigidity, the data show no strong relationship between municipality size and rigidity level.

5.3 Romania

The Romanian data show a correlation between municipality size and citizens' effectiveness of .285 and this is also significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates a moderately strong, direct relationship between municipality size and citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters. The correlation and significance results are reported below.

In the case of Romania, too, the low score of R square indicates that municipality size is not a strong predictor, and just as in the case of Poland, it explains only about 8% of the total variation in citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters.

In Romania (see table 4.9) 67.1% of all respondents consider that citizens have only very little, small or slightly small influence on local decision-making. Of these respondents, 41.6% are from municipalities with a population below 5,000 inhabitants, 23.6% from municipalities with a population between 5,000 and 49,999, and 2.0% from municipalities with a population over 50,000.

Only 14.2% of all respondents consider that citizens have a big influence over local decision-making, of which only 4.4% come from municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, 7.3% from municipalities with a population of 5,000 to 49,999, and 2.4% from municipalities with over 50,000 inhabitants. As regards the "neither small nor large influence" response, which constitutes 14.2% of the total, 4.4% fall in the category of municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, 7.3% in the 5,000 to 49,999 category, and 2.9% in the over 49,999 category.

Figure 4.3
Romania: Model Summary, ANOVA, and Coefficients

Model summary ^b				
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Standard error of the estimate
1	0.285 ^a	0.081	0.079	1.2763

- a. Predictors: (constant), log population size.
- b. Dependent variable: citizens' effectiveness to influence local matters.

ANOVA ^b						
Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Significance
1	Regression	64.669	1	64.669	39.699	0.000 ^a
	Residual	729.784	448	1.629		
	Total	794.453	449			

- a. Predictors: (constant), log population size.
- b. Dependent variable: citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters.

Coefficients ^a						
		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Significance
Model		B	Standard error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-0.267	0.469		-0.569	0.569
	Log pop size	0.227	0.054	0.285	6.301	0.000

- a. Dependent variable: citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters.

These results show that citizens' effectiveness in influencing local decision-making is limited in municipalities of all sizes. Nevertheless, there is a clear differentiation among municipalities of different sizes. According to the answers of the chief administrative officers, in the case of 76.0% of municipalities with a population below 5,000 inhabitants, citizens have only a small influence over local decision-making. In 60.9% of the municipalities with a population of 5,000 to 49,999, citizens' effectiveness is considered to be small. Where the population is over 50,000, the share of citizens with a small influence over local matters is only 30.0%.

Participation in municipalities with a population below 5,000 is rather small. The most frequent form of participation, i.e., requests for meetings between local officials and citizens, was reported to have occurred in fewer than 18% of municipalities. Among the other forms of participation only petition writing and civil society proposals reached over 10%. Public demonstrations were reported in 6.8% of the municipalities and challenges to government decisions in only 3.4%.

In municipalities with a population between 5,000 and 49,999, the share of those in which some form of citizen participation occurred increases compared to the score

Table 4.9
 Citizen Effectiveness in Influencing Local Decision-making in Romania
 (by Size of Municipality)

Citizens' effectiveness		Municipality size			Total
		0-4,999	5,000-49,999	Over 50,000	
Small influence	Count	187.0	106.0	9.0	302.0
	% within citizens' effectiveness	61.9	35.1	3.0	100.0
	% within municipality size	76.0	60.9	30.0	67.1
	% of total	41.6	23.6	2.0	67.1
Neither small nor big influence	Count	39.0	35.0	10.0	84.0
	% within citizens' effectiveness	46.4	41.7	11.9	100.0
	% within municipality size	15.9	7.8	33.3	18.7
	% of total	8.7	19.5	2.2	18.7
Big influence	Count	20.0	33.0	11.0	64.0
	% within citizens' effectiveness	31.3	51.6	17.2	100.0
	% within municipality size	8.1	19.0	36.7	14.2
	% of total	4.4	7.3	2.4	14.2
Total	Count	246.0	174.0	30.0	450.0
	% within citizens' effectiveness	54.7	38.7	6.7	100.0
	% within municipality size	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	% of total	54.7	38.7	6.7	100.0

Note: N=450.

Source: LGS 2001.

for small municipalities. In this category the most frequent form of participation was, again, requests for meetings between local officials and citizens, occurring in 30% of municipalities. Petition writing and civil society proposal writing were reported to have happened at least once in the year 2000 in 14.0% and 26.0% of municipalities, respectively. Measures taken to challenge local government decisions in court or at a higher authority more than doubled in terms of the number of municipalities in which they occurred, thus reaching a share of 9.0%.

The largest share of municipalities in which citizens' participation occurred at least once is that of units with a population over 50,000 inhabitants. The increase in the share of municipalities in which civil society proposal writing was used is substantial compared to smaller-size municipalities. The same is the case for formal requests for meetings between local officials and citizens, which occurred in more than twice as many large municipalities as in middle-size ones. All other forms of political participation were reported to have occurred at least once in around 25% of large municipalities.

Table 4.10
 Share of Municipalities in Which Citizen Participation Occurred
 at Least Once (Romania) [%]

	Municipality size		
	0-4,999	5,000-49,999	Over 50,000
Public demonstrations	6.8	8.5	23.5
Petitions	11.5	14.0	26.5
Requests for meetings	17.6	30.0	30.6
Challenges to decisions	3.4	9.0	32.4
Civil society proposals	11.5	26.0	76.5

Note: N=557.

Source: LGS 2001.

The decentralization of local governments in Romania is established by the Local Public Administration Act. However, financial decentralization and autonomy still remain limited. Municipalities are assigned certain mandatory tasks in all fields of public action by the central government and ministries. The autonomy to implement these is to some extent constrained by quantitative and/or qualitative regulations. The mandatory tasks imply that certain compulsory expenditures are imposed on municipalities. Some of these expenditures need to be covered from equalization grants and earmarked revenues provided by the state, which constrain municipalities’ fiscal autonomy. What is considered to be a similarly important problem lies in the fact that additional funding is not always ensured when new compulsory expenditures are imposed on municipalities.

From the responses of local officials we learn that in Romania 46.6% of all municipalities obtain over 50% of their revenues from government transfers, with 13.2% receiving from 30% to 50%, and 40.2% receiving less than 30% from transfers.

If we contrast this data to the three categories of municipality size, we find that municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants make up 82.5% of all municipalities with more than 50% of their revenues coming from government transfers, a share which accounts for 53.8% of all small municipalities (table 4.11). The share of medium-size municipalities with over 50% dependence rate on government transfers is 29.1%, and that of large municipalities with over 50,000 inhabitants is even less, amounting to 20.8%. Of these, 66.7% have government transfers amounting to less than 30%, while for middle-size municipalities the share is 51.3% and for small municipalities it is 35.6%.

The above table shows that in the case of Romania there is a relationship between the population size of municipalities and the level of citizens’ effectiveness in influencing local matters. Peculiar to the Romanian case is the relationship between municipality size and revenue rigidity, as there is a mismatch between the most dense municipality size cluster and the lowest level of transfer dependence.

Table 4.11
Revenue Rigidity by Municipality Size in Romania

Own revenue of municipalities		Municipality size			Total
		0 –4,999	5,000–49,999	over 50,000	
Below 30%	Count	94.0	26.0	1.0	121.0
	% within own revenue of municipalities	77.7	21.5	0.8	100.0
	% within municipality size	29.4	13.2	2.9	22.0
	% of total	17.1	4.7	0.2	22.0
Between 30% and 50%	Count	76.0	30.0	6.0	112.0
	% within own revenue of municipalities	37.9	26.8	5.4	100.0
	% within municipality size	23.8	15.2	17.6	20.3
	% of Total	13.8	5.4	1.1	20.3
Over 50%	Count	150.0	141.0	27.0	318.0
	% within own revenue of municipality	47.2	44.3	8.5	100.0
	% within municipality size	46.9	71.6	79.4	57.7
	% of total	27.2	25.6	4.9	57.5
Total	Count	320.0	197.0	34.0	551.0
	% within own revenue of municipality	58.1	35.8	6.2	100.0
	% within municipality size	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	% of total	58.1	35.8	6.2	100.0

Note: N=551.

Source: LGS 2001.

6. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Having discussed how the variables perform in each of the three countries separately, we turn now to a comparative analysis of the findings. This is relevant to highlighting the differences and similarities among the cases.

6.1 Citizen Effectiveness

According to the responses of the CAOs, the share of citizens with only a small influence on local decision-making is three times larger than the share having a big influence in all three countries under study (table 4.12). In Hungary, 67.1% have a small influence, similar to Romania, and 50.9% in Poland. The category of respondents with neither a small nor a big influence represents 28.6% in Poland, 18.7% in Romania, and 17.8% in

Table 4.12
**Citizen Effectiveness in Influencing Local Decision-making
in All Three Countries [%]**

	Hungary N=337	Poland N=548	Romania N=450
Small influence	67.1	50.9	67.1
Neither small nor big	17.8	28.6	18.7
Big influence	15.1	20.9	14.2

Source: LGS 2001.

Hungary. Those having a big influence on local decision-making in Hungary represent 15.1%, in Poland 20.9%, and in Romania 14.2%.

In terms of municipality size, citizen effectiveness in Hungary is low in over 77.6% of the municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. This rate is 65.9% in Poland and 76.0% in Romania. High citizen effectiveness in influencing local decision-making was registered in only 11.4% of Hungarian municipalities, 11.0% of Polish, and 8.1% of Romanian. The level of citizens’ effectiveness is almost the same in all three countries.

For municipalities with a population of 5,000 to 49,999, the share with citizens having a small influence is 52.5% in Hungary, 51.9% in Poland, and 60.9% in Romania. The results for the “big influence” category are again almost identical in all three countries (20.3% in Hungary, 20.6% in Poland, and 19.0% in Romania).

In large municipalities, the share of low citizen effectiveness in influencing local matters is 44.4% in Hungary, 25.0% in Poland, and 30.0% in Romania. Nevertheless, the differences among those with high citizen effectiveness are substantial. Compared to 19.6% of large Hungarian municipalities in which respondents considered that citizens had a big influence, the rate in Poland was 32.4% and in Romania 36.7%.

In Romania the main differences in terms of citizen effectiveness are between municipalities with a population below 5,000 and above 50,000. The largest variance was registered among municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. In contrast, in Poland we have a similarly large variance both among municipalities of below 5,000 inhabitants and those with between 5,000 to 49,999 inhabitants.

From the above we can conclude that the levels of citizen effectiveness in the three countries under study show great similarities. While in Hungary and Romania the scores are almost identical, Poland, as expected, has a slightly higher level of citizen effectiveness. This is in line with Dahl’s claim that the smaller a municipality the more trivial or ineffective participation becomes. As we noted in section 4.1, Hungary and Romania have very small municipalities on average, while Poland’s average municipality size is almost double.

6.2 Expenditure Rigidity

The transfer systems in the three countries under study are somewhat different, but earmarked transfers represent an important share of all transfers in each country. In terms of expenditure rigidity, we have seen that government transfers are an important source of revenue for municipalities in all three countries. In table 4.13, the level of expenditure rigidity for all three countries is compared.

According to the data, there is a strong similarity between the Hungarian and Polish cases. For instance, in around 40% of all municipalities in both countries government transfers constituted over 50% of the total revenues of municipalities. In contrast, in Romania the share of municipalities with similarly high levels of government transfers was 57.7%. In the case of only about 20% of Romanian municipalities, the share of government transfers was between 30% and 50%, or below 30%. Compared to this, there was a 30% to 50% share of transfers in 27.8% of Hungarian municipalities and 36.2% of Polish municipalities, while in 32.2% of Hungarian municipalities and 19.9% of Polish municipalities the share of government transfers was below 30%.

In the case of Hungarian and Polish municipalities, over 50% of transfer dependence is lower than in the case of Romanian municipalities. Also, the significant gap in the level of economic development between the first two countries and Romania, combined with the bureaucratic tradition in these countries, further emphasizes this difference. In Romania, for instance, there are even regulations specifying the number of persons a municipality can employ. Another important issue is the differences in expenditure rigidity, which need to be taken into consideration when dealing with the accounting standards in each country. Furthermore, the number of extremely small municipalities is large in Hungary and Romania (see table 4.1), and these communities are not self-sustainable in fiscal terms when it comes to supporting fixed costs such as local schools, public institutions and road maintenance.

When comparing the expenditure rigidity of municipalities of different sizes in the three countries, we find that in the small municipalities with fewer than 5,000

Table 4.13

Ratio of Share of Government Transfers to the Total Number of Municipalities

	Hungary	Poland	Romania
Below 30%	32.2	19.9	22.0
Between 30 and 50%	27.8	36.2	20.3
Over 50%	40.0	44.0	57.7
Total	100.0	100.0%	100.0

Source: LGS 2001.

inhabitants there is an important variance among countries (see table 1.14). In Poland only 24.5% of small municipalities have over 50% of their revenues originating from government transfers, while in Hungary this share is 35% and in Romania 46.9%. The lowest level of rigidity is found in Hungary, where in 37.4% of municipalities the transfers are below 30%. In Poland, of all municipalities with under 5,000 inhabitants, the largest share has budgets in which 30% to 50% of revenues comes from transfers. These results are reflected again in the overall municipality population size structure in Hungary and Poland. Thus, for both countries the lowest level of revenue rigidity corresponds to the category with the largest number of municipalities. This is not true for the case of Romania.

Table 4.15 presents the share of government transfers within the total budget revenues of municipalities with a population of 5,000–49,999. The pattern is similar to that of small municipalities with the exception of Hungary. Romania has the largest rate of municipalities with over 50% dependence on transfers (71.6%), while in Hungary the rate is 53.8% and in Poland 48.4%. For all three countries the share of municipalities with over 50% of their total revenues coming from government transfers is around 20% more compared to small municipalities.

In the case of large municipalities (more than 50,000 inhabitants), however, the previous trend changes. In Poland, the share of large municipalities with over 50% of

Table 4.14
Share of Government Transfers to Small Municipalities

	Municipalities with 0–4,999 inhabitants		
	Hungary	Poland	Romania
Below 30%	37.4	32.7	29.4
Between 30% and 50%	27.6	42.9	23.8
Over 50%	35.0	24.5	46.9

Source: LGS 2001.

Table 4.15
Share of Government Transfers to Medium-size Municipalities

	Municipalities with 5,000–49,999 inhabitants		
	Hungary	Poland	Romania
Below 30%	17.7	18.3	13.2
Between 30% and 50%	28.5	33.3	15.2
Over 50%	53.8	48.4	71.6

Source: LGS 2001.

Table 4.16
Share of Government Transfers to Large Municipalities

	Municipalities with over 50,000 inhabitants		
	Hungary	Poland	Romania
Below 30%	4.8	10.4	2.9
Between 30 and 50%	28.6	43.3	17.6
Over 50%	66.7	46.3	79.4

Source: LGS 2001.

their revenues coming from government transfers remains as high as 46.3%. In Hungary and Romania, there is an increase in the share compared to middle-size municipalities (see table 4.16).

We may conclude from the above that expenditure rigidity varies according to the size of municipalities in all three countries. Generally speaking, all municipalities regardless of population size are characterized by high expenditure rigidity. But a difference in the pattern is apparent in Romania, on the one hand, compared to Hungary and Poland on the other.

Since expenditure rigidity has been used to measure the system capacity of municipalities, the findings suggest that municipalities in general have a low level of system capacity to respond to their communities' expectations and needs. Nevertheless, differences in rigidity rates among countries and municipalities do exist, as a reflection of local characteristics such as the level of development and the structure of economic activity.

6.3 Citizen Participation

Having seen how political participation varies according to the size of municipality in the individual countries, we now look at the variance in different types of participation as related to municipality size for all three countries.

In the category of municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, participation is by far the highest in Poland (table 4.17). In terms of requests for meetings between local officials and citizens, 50% of small municipalities in Poland, 22.2% of in Hungary, and 17.6% Romania registered this form of participation. The results are similar for civil society proposals. In Poland, the rate of municipalities with at least one written proposal introduced by a civil society organization is more than four times larger than the rate in Romania. This is partly explained by the small number of civil society organizations in Romanian municipalities of this size.

Table 4.17
Citizen Participation in Local Politics by Type (Small Municipalities)

Type of political participation	Municipalities with 0–4,999 inhabitants		
	Hungary	Poland	Romania
Public demonstrations	2.3	9.0	6.8
Petitions	10.5	24.5	11.5
Requests for meetings	22.2	50.0	17.6
Challenges to local government decisions	3.9	34.5	3.4
Civil society proposals	33.7	49.0	11.5

Source: LGS 2001.

The third most common type of participation in municipalities with a population below 5,000 is petition writing. Again, this activity was undertaken twice as many times in Polish municipalities as in Hungarian and Romanian ones. The two least preferred types of participation, public demonstrations and challenging local government decisions, also show the highest rate in Polish municipalities.

According to the findings presented in table 4.18, participation rates in medium-size municipalities (population of 5,000–49,999) become more balanced between Hungary and Poland. Requesting meetings with local officials and making civil society proposals remain the two most frequent types of political participation. Officials from over 82% of Hungarian municipalities reported at least one case in which a civil society proposal was submitted. Given that some form of participation was registered in only about 51% of all Hungarian municipalities, the medium-size municipalities seem to have a considerably active civil society.

Romania shows the lowest rates of participation, except in the cases of challenging local government decisions in court or at a higher authority and holding public demonstrations.

In large municipalities (with over 50,000 inhabitants), the rate of political participation increases. Hungary has the highest levels of all forms of participation except challenging local government decisions, where Romania surpasses it. Civil society proposals and requests for meetings remain the two preferred forms of citizen participation. The frequency of occurrence of civil society proposals is as high as 90% in Hungary, 76.5% in Romania, and 62.7% in Poland (see table 4.19).

The frequency of the other types of citizen participation also increased significantly in large municipalities compared to small and medium-size ones. Participation rates in large municipalities in Romania show a considerable growth, in most cases reaching the levels of those in Hungary and Poland.

In conclusion, there are significant differences among the three countries in terms of frequency of citizen participation based on the size of municipalities. However, the

Table 4.18
Citizen Participation in Local Politics by Type (Medium-size Municipalities)

Type of political participation	Municipalities with 5,000–49,999 inhabitants		
	Hungary	Poland	Romania
Public demonstrations	7.3	14.7	8.5
Petitions	35.0	29.0	14.0
Requests for meetings	51.8	50.1	30.0
Challenges to local government decisions	13.1	40.4	9.0
Civil society proposals	82.5	55.0	26.0

Source: LGS 2001.

Table 4.19
Citizen Participation in Local Politics by Type (Large Municipalities)

Type of political participation	Municipalities with over 50,000 inhabitants		
	Hungary	Poland	Romania
Public demonstrations	40.9	41.1	23.5
Petitions	72.7	43.1	26.5
Requests for meetings	72.7	69.0	30.6
Challenges to local government decisions	27.3	60.4	32.4
Civil society proposals	90.9	62.7	76.5

Source: LGS 2001.

rank ordering of the different types of participation remains constant across different sized municipalities and countries. The results seem to suggest that, although political participation is rather limited, the larger the municipality the higher the citizen participation rates. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the main data source comes from chief administrative officials, and we should be cautious about drawing conclusions regarding citizens' participation on this basis.

7. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The general findings from our calculations based on LGS data indicate that although the citizen effectiveness rate as a whole is rather low in all three countries, there is a systematic relationship between municipality size and citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters. The correlation tests for the three countries indicate that there is a weak

but positive relation at a .01 significance level between municipality size and citizens' effectiveness. Seen in this light, the municipality structure of the three countries in terms of population does seem to have an impact on the quality of local democracy in general.

The strongest relationship was found in Hungary, with a correlation coefficient of 0.262, and the weakest in Poland, with a coefficient of 0.172. Romania stands in between the two with a correlation coefficient of 0.182.

Although the correlation between municipality size and citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters is weak and the explanatory power of the model is very limited, the low significance level implies that r^2 can not be attributed to sampling error. The model explains only 12% in Hungary, 8% in Poland, and 8% in Romania of the total variation in citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters. These findings subscribe to the general findings of the earlier literature, i.e., that there is a weak but statistically significant and positive correlation between citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters and municipality size, once citizens decide to participate. This occurs in a context in which the overall capacity of citizens to influence local matters is very low in municipalities of all sizes and in all three countries.

More surprising is the very low participation level in local political matters as reported by chief administrative officials. In absolute terms, occurrences of all five types of participation included in the LGS are extremely limited. Interestingly enough, the two countries with the largest differences in terms of municipality size structure, Hungary and Poland, present the greatest similarities in terms of political participation rates. The biggest variation was in expenditure rigidity, where—although a strong national trend was found—no clear cross-country trend could be identified.

The state of local democracy in the three countries seems to be rather weak in terms of system capacity to respond. A common finding for all three countries is that municipalities are highly dependent on central government transfers, and therefore there is not much incentive for citizens to participate. This also reduces the level of citizen effectiveness. The general trend found for the three country cases is that the smaller the municipality, the higher its expenditure rigidity. Larger municipalities are more likely to have higher rates both of citizen participation and citizens' effectiveness in influencing local matters. As the hypothesis suggested, participation becomes minimal only in very large units, and the three countries under study do not have many very large units.

In conclusion, it seems that the influence of citizens over local matters is very limited, because of the extremely low system capacity to respond to local needs and concerns. If this is the case, the improvement of the quality of local democracy will require enhancing the system's capacity to respond to the requests of citizens. This in turn might produce an environment in which citizens' participation could be more effective and consistent.

The success of such an effort also depends on the structure of the municipal system in these countries. By reducing the share of extremely small municipalities, in which the citizens' effectiveness is the lowest, we would also improve the opportunity to have a more vibrant and dynamic community life. Nevertheless, the implementation of any reform to reduce the number of administrative units could prove difficult to achieve.

NOTE

- ¹ "Subjective political competence" was the main measure used to evaluate residents' perceptions about their ability to influence local politics.

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APPENDIX I

Reliability of the Citizen Effectiveness Scale

1. Hungary

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS—SCALE (ALPHA)				
		Mean	Standard deviation	Cases
1.	DECIS08A	3.0593	1.6662	337.0
2.	DECIS08C	2.8012	1.5846	337.0
3.	DECIS08D	2.4154	1.8771	337.0
4.	DECIS08E	2.0208	1.4360	337.0
5.	DECIS08F	3.3086	1.6528	337.0

Statistics for Scale	Mean	Variance	Standard deviation	N of variables
	13.6053	34.8646	5.9046	5

Item-total statistics				
	Scale mean if item deleted	Scale variance if item deleted	Corrected item total correlation	Alpha if item deleted
DECIS08A	10.5460	23.4451	0.5357	0,7175
DECIS08C	10.8042	22.9080	0.6227	0,6876
DECIS08D	11.1899	22.8805	0.4712	0,7459
DECIS08E	11.5846	24.3031	0.6003	0,7001
DECIS08F	10.2967	24.6617	0.4551	0.7455

Reliability coefficients		
N of cases	N of items	Alpha
337	5	0.7622

2. Poland

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS—SCALE (ALPHA)				
		Mean	Standard deviation	Cases
1.	DECIS08A	3.2099	1.5888	548.0
2.	DECIS08C	3.2974	1.5264	548.0
3.	DECIS08D	2.6241	1.8620	548.0
4.	DECIS08E	2.4781	1.5492	548.0
5.	DECIS08F	4.2755	1.5460	548.0

Statistics for scale	Mean	Variance	Standard deviation	N of variables
	15.8850	31.9447	5.6520	5

Item-total statistics				
	Scale mean if item deleted	Scale variance if item deleted	Corrected item total correlation	Alpha if item deleted
DECIS08A	12.6752	20.5707	0.6140	0.6471
DECIS08C	12.5876	20.8717	0.6269	0.6446
DECIS08D	13.2609	21.1146	0.4303	0.7243
DECIS08E	13.4069	21.2838	0.5779	0.6623
DECIS08F	11.6095	25.1050	0.2872	0.7639

Reliability coefficients		
N of cases	N of items	Alpha
548	5	0.7369

3. Romania

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS—SCALE (ALPHA)				
		Mean	Standard deviation	Cases
1.	DECIS08A	2.3933	1.7349	450.0
2.	DECIS08C	2.3733	1.8016	450.0
3.	DECIS08D	2.5333	1.9787	450.0
4.	DECIS08E	2.1800	1.6755	450.0
5.	DECIS08F	3.8489	2.0065	450.0

Statistics for scale	Mean	Variance	Standard deviation	N of variables
	13.3289	44.2346	6.6509	5

Item-total statistics				
	Scale mean if item deleted	Scale variance if item deleted	Corrected item total correlation	Alpha if item deleted
DECIS08A	10.9356	30.5014	0.5596	0.7216
DECIS08A	10.9356	30.5014	0.5596	0.7216
DECIS08D	10.7956	29.2677	0.5162	0.7371
DECIS08E	11.1489	31.8642	0.5056	0.7393
DECIS08F	9.4800	29.4038	0.4965	0.7448

Reliability coefficients		
N of cases	N of items	Alpha
450	5	0.7695

APPENDIX II

Variable Description with Codes

Code	Description
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION	
VOTE	Voter turnout in last municipal elections, prior to 2001
CONTACT	Direct contact with politicians and municipal officers
BROPA	Broad organizational participation
Local collective action	
ACTIO01a	Number of public demonstrations
ACTIO02a	Collection of citizens' signatures
ACTIO02b	Number of actions against the actions of local government
ACTIO03a	Local civil society organization requests for meetings with local government on local policy issues
ACTIO04a	Challenges to local government decisions by civil society organizations in a court of law or higher administrative authority
ACTIO05a	Actions organized by political parties
ACTIO05b	Actions organized by civil society organizations
ACTIO05c	Actions organized by individual citizens
Local civil society	
CIVIL01a	Civil society organizations' participation in decision-making
CIVIL01b	Civil society organizations' initiatives
CIVIL03	Local budget supported by civil society organizations
CIVIL04	Local government and civil society organizations' contacts
CIVIL05	Civil society organization leaders that are municipal council office-holders
CIVIL06	Municipal council office-holders that are civil society organization leaders
CIVIL07	Number of civil society organizations in the municipality
CIVIL08	Number of civil society organizations active in other municipalities
CIVIL09	Number of ethnic/racial minority civil society organizations active in the municipality
SYSTEM RESPONSIVENESS	
DECIS06a	Opportunity for citizen participation in local decision-making
DECIS06b	Public hearings
DECIS06c	Draft budget public
DECIS06d	Proposed budget discussed with journalists
DECIS07e	Negotiations with people affected by a policy decision
DECIS08a	Influence by local entrepreneurs, firms, and business associations
DECIS08c	Influence by civil associations

DECIS08d	Influence by political parties
DECIS08e	Influence by media
DECIS08f	Influence by residents
INFO03	Public hearings and forums
INFO04	Local referendum
INFO05	Who initiated the referendum
INFO06	Municipal web site
INFO07	Municipality offering electronic information
POLCY01n	Communication to citizens and media about activities of the municipal government
POLCY01p	Citizens' requests about national policies
POLICY AUTONOMY & ARTICULATION	
POLCY01a	Council work schedule
POLCY01b	Economic development plan
POLCY01c	Local government investment plan
POLCY01d	Public sanitation and environmental protection
POLCY01e	Public education program
POLCY01f	Sports program
POLCY01g	Cultural program
POLCY01h	Plan for financial supervision of local government
POLCY01i	Reporting policies of chief administrative officials
POLCY01j	Public safety and crime prevention
POLCY01k	Health protection
POLCY01l	Housing program
POLCY01m	Mass transportation
POLCY01o	Urban image
POLCY01q	Public procurement regulation
FISCAL AUTONOMY	
BUDGE05a	Share of own revenue from total budget (BUDGE02–BUDGE05)
EXPENDITURE RIGIDITY	
BUDGE04	Municipal debt to total expenditure
BUDGE03	Total expenditure
CONTROL VARIABLES	
SIZE	Size of municipality—number of legal residents with voting rights in local elections
AVESIZE	Average size of municipality—number of legal residents with voting rights in local elections
BUDGE11	Project execution difficulty
SOCIO01	Number of settlements forming a municipality

SOCIO03	Unemployment
SOCIO04a	Social tensions due to income inequality
SOCIO04b	Social tensions due to religious differences
SOCIO04c	Social tensions due to political views
SOCIO04e	Social tensions due to race/ethnicity
SOCIO04f	Social tensions among parts of the municipality

Approaches to Local Representation in Poland, Estonia, and Bulgaria

Cristina Nicolescu, Amelia Gorcea

ABSTRACT

The following analysis explores the relationship between local representatives and citizens in Poland, Estonia, and Bulgaria examined from the point of view of the local representatives. We consider two main approaches: a citizen-oriented one emphasizing enhanced collaboration and consultation, and a rather classical, system-oriented approach entailing less input from citizens in government and more emphasis on relations in the inner administrative system. The two different approaches result from the degree of openness that each region has acquired in its representation system since the fall of communism, and from the speed at which changes in roles and loyalties at the local level occurred. Our theoretical framework incorporates several approaches based on social capital, value orientations and context, and socialization influences. We first review the conceptual issues involved and then use these concepts to assess the nature of the relationship between local representatives and citizens. The data for our analysis of the variables used to measure the concepts comes from the ILDGP project's Local Representative Survey which focused on the activities, values, opinions, and demography of local councilors. The main findings of the research reveal a propensity of the local representatives towards a participatory approach in their relationship with citizens—an approach based on collaboration, consultation, and openness to citizens' input in their activity as public representatives. We conclude from the analysis that social capital is not sufficient to explain the approach taken by local representatives to their relationship with citizens, and that the input of variables like socialization, context, and value orientation contribute significantly to an understanding of this issue.

Approaches to Local Representation in Poland, Estonia, and Bulgaria

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1. INTRODUCTION

The post-communist changes in Central and Eastern Europe have generated vigorous debates about why the various countries in the region have evolved differently. The first temptation was to test western models and explanations, while adapting them to specific local conditions. At the same time, the idea of social capital, as elaborated in Putnam's *Making Democracy Work*, was capturing interest as a promising concept. More recently, evaluations of the usefulness of this concept have ranged from overemphasizing it to considering it inadequate for the situation in Central and Eastern Europe (Mihaylova 2003). Despite some unfulfilled expectations, the idea of social capital has proved to be useful in analyzing the emergence and evolution of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. A higher degree of social capital is considered to be conducive to good governance, which in turn enhances certain components of social capital such as generalized trust (Uslaner 2003).¹ We have thus considered it important to assess the level of social capital of local representatives and the positive influence that it may have on their relationship with citizens.

This report looks at the style adopted by elected representatives at the local level in their relationship with citizens. Our framework distinguishes between two main styles or approaches: a citizen-oriented one with enhanced collaboration and consultation at the local level, and a rather classical system-oriented approach that involves less input from citizens and more dynamic relations at the inner administrative level. The development of a particular style is influenced by the degree of openness in the representation system acquired after the fall of the communism and the speed with which changes in the representatives' roles and loyalties at the local level occurred. Neither of the two approaches, of course, is to be found in a pure form. In some situations a very citizen-oriented local representative may be compelled by circumstances to act in a system-oriented manner, while system-oriented local representatives might sometimes give the floor to citizens.

We expect that a collaborative and consultative approach towards citizens will be found among local representatives with higher levels of social capital who have been exposed to political socialization before holding the present public office, are stimulated by the local context and are predisposed toward postmaterialist values. The hypothesis will be tested using data provided by the LRS survey² of the ILDGP project, which focuses on the activities, values, opinions, and demographic characteristics of local councilors. The data comes from a randomly selected pool of municipalities whose local representatives have been asked to take part in the survey, from which the final sample is self-selected and includes those local representatives who completed and mailed back the questionnaires on a voluntary basis.

We begin with a brief exploration of approaches to local representation and the accountability of elected local representatives, and then investigate the specific administrative systems of the analyzed countries. After describing the distribution of local representatives according to their demographic characteristics, we explore the theoretical concepts underpinning our framework and their application within the analyzed units. Finally, we test successive models using a logistic regression method in order to investigate the combination of characteristics that citizen- and system-oriented local representatives rely on in their relationship with citizens.

2. LOCAL REPRESENTATION: CONTEXT AND APPROACHES

Theorists stress the importance of leadership style in the processes and performance of administrative systems, and we believe it is also a relevant factor in explaining the dynamics of the relationship between local representatives and citizens. Thus, we address this issue of leadership style from the perspective of our interest in the different approaches to local representation. We find *accountability*—defined as the extent to which people feel their behavior is going to be observed and evaluated by others, and that meaningful rewards and punishments are contingent upon these evaluations (Chemers 1993, 117)—to be an important component of local representatives' conduct as local leaders. Besides the factors strongly related to leader accountability such as laws and regulations, specific evaluation systems, and mechanisms of social control, the individual orientations of local representatives in their relations with citizens are also relevant to their conduct as local leaders. Wherever provisions for citizen participation are assigned by law within the local decision-making process, local representatives have specific tools to develop a collaborative approach. Moreover, they are aware that electors have both the right and the mechanisms to regularly evaluate their performance. Based on the extent to which local representatives have met the electors' initial expectations, there is always a chance that they will lose electoral support. Whether the electors actually do reevaluate their local leaders needs to be investigated further, as the focus of this paper is on the conduct of local representatives and its determinants, not on the citizens' social and electoral behavior.

What are the incentives for elected local leaders to take a citizen-oriented approach to governance? Rather than looking at individual qualities and classical explanations based on demographic characteristics, this report explores the impact of factors such as social capital (assessed through levels of trust, networks, and participation), value orientation, context influences, and socialization. We have used these factors in examining the actual practices of the local administrations in order to find the combination of factors that better predicts the likelihood of local representatives upholding either a citizen- or a system-oriented approach while acting as elected local leaders in Bulgaria, Poland, and Estonia.

Our study is focused on the local representatives and the approach they choose to take in their relationship with citizens at the local level, but this should not be interpreted as disregarding the perspective of the citizens. The rationale for taking this approach is based on previous findings (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 390) that from the wide range of people having the potential to get involved in social and political life, those who are already mobilized (active in civil society) will be more likely to take advantage of opportunities to participate. In the light of such findings, the efforts of local representatives to stimulate and encourage citizen participation could prove to be very important to the success of local democracy in Southeastern Europe. Besides acting as an incentive for extended civic engagement, an approach of local representatives that encourages citizen participation will enhance or even supplement the legally provided mechanisms of consultation between local representatives and citizens. Another principle underlying our choice of focus is that local representatives are researched as common citizens. Their activities, values, opinions, and demographic characteristics are linked with the approach they take towards their relationship with citizens in the same way that research on the activities, values, opinions, and demography of regular citizens links such findings to their approach towards the political system.

Societal changes that have occurred in the context of the latest economic developments have in turn brought changes at the individual level and have shaped citizens' relationship with the political system. As Inglehart has noted, "In the long run, industrialized societies of both East and West must cope with long-term changes that are making their publics less amenable to doing as they are told and more adept at telling their governments what to do" (1999, 251). This approach, along with the extended possibilities of civic participation that emerged after the fall of the communism, justifies the inclusion in our explanatory model of a value orientation dimension, in addition to the trust and participation components of social capital. The value dimension in this paper consists of analyzing orientations to individual freedom, including the right to have a word in the decision-making process as opposed to an overemphasis on the role of the state in decision-making. Values in this case are not interpreted to mean personal qualities (such as trust, reliability, or openness).

The discussion in western countries of postmaterialist and postmodern values is applicable to the present research to a certain extent. A limitation, of course, is the difference in the emergence and extent of such social changes in the analyzed region compared to the advanced industrialized democracies. Also, research into the effects and influences of this value orientation has not yet been carried out in the countries analyzed here. Nevertheless, we have chosen to consider this dimension because of the existing postmaterialist orientations among the surveyed local representatives that could have an influence on their approach. It is of interest that some local representatives believe maintaining order in the country to be more important than giving people more say in government decision-making, or that some see solving local problems as more important than achieving national goals. Such orientations could impact significantly on the approach local representatives choose to take in their relationship with citizens, as the analyzed data will show.

Other dimensions included in our model are the socialization of local representatives and contextual influences. The literature on socialization ranges in subject matter from the transfer of ideological orientations from parents to children (Westholm, Niemi 1992), to the impact of socio-economic status during childhood on an individual's value orientations as an adult (Inglehart 1990; Conway 1991). In investigating the approach local representatives take towards their relationship with citizens, we use "political socialization" to refer to experiences such as the family tradition of holding public office and also to having a personal history of being reelected to public office in the years following the fall of communism (where the available data sets cover the relevant years).

The relationship between local representatives and citizens is also shaped by contextual influences reflected in the extent of community participation and how much pressure it exerts on local government. Recent studies consider the contextual factor to be very important for expanding social capital in communities. Sandu (2003) has suggested that in Central and Eastern Europe, context should be understood as referring not only to the region or country, but also to the type of community. The present research takes into consideration contextual influences as they were perceived by the local representatives included in the surveys, as an indicator of how much they felt that the social context compelled them to take an open and collaborative approach towards their constituency.

2.1 Local Administrative Systems

Following the fall of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, several challenges had to be faced simultaneously by the countries in the region. In addition to the creation of a minimal legal framework for the new regime, decisions had to be made on how best to address the population's immediate social, political, and civil needs

(Przeworski 1995, 36). Several common features have marked the pathway undertaken by each country throughout the region. Institutional incapacity and economic difficulties are just two of the common challenges faced by the transitional countries. Each country has also had to address specific problems related to the particular nature of the previous regime.

In keeping with the methodological approach of analyzing dissimilar systems in an attempt to find similar elements, we have selected the countries of Estonia, Poland, and Bulgaria for our study. The three countries have different local government systems that will be analyzed further in this section, but their evolution following the regime change has several similarities that are also taken into account. Besides offering a comparative analysis of the local government systems and of the legal framework for local government in each country, this section will also provide some insights into the evolution of political rights and civil liberties, based on the Freedom House ratings and on the latest Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Program.

The local government systems in the three countries are distinguished by the number of levels they possess: one level in Estonia, two in Bulgaria, and three in Poland. The Estonian³ political system was established in the 1992 Constitution, which stated that local issues should be managed and resolved by local authorities without involvement from the central government. Public administration is authorized to act only on a legal basis, but it is argued that Estonia's public law and administration neglect organizational democracy and participation. There are increasing regional imbalances and gaps between the living standards of the rural and urban areas, providing evidence that the Estonian central authorities are not fully able to fulfill their tasks. Local authorities often lack opportunities to effectively represent the interests of their constituents, even though the single-level system of local government was introduced to bring the authorities as close to the people as possible and to guarantee the democratic involvement of citizens within society (Haav 2000, 11).

The local government system has one level with two types of units: towns (*linn*) and rural municipalities (*vald*). There also exists a higher unit—the county (*maakond*)—which is part of the central government. The executive bodies of local government in Estonia, all elected for three-year terms, are the council, elected by the citizens, and the mayor, elected by the council, or the head of a rural municipality also elected by the council. As established by the Constitution, local authorities manage and independently resolve all local issues. Lately, efforts have been made to reduce and consolidate the overall number of local authorities. Since most Estonian municipalities have between 1,000 and 3,000 residents, amalgamating them into a number of larger local governments would improve each authority's administrative and financial capacities.

Local representatives themselves have opposed such reform proposals due to certain immediate negative consequences at the local level (Made 2001). Considering that in most areas the municipal and state agencies are the biggest employers, one of the

arguments is that unemployment will grow when the local bureaucracy no longer provides jobs in the local government system. Besides this, the relationship with the population would suffer because of the increased distance between the local center and the periphery. Rural inhabitants would be penalized by having to use poor transportation systems to travel longer distances to the new administrative center. Even if larger administrative units could organize the redistribution of resources from richer to poorer units, the richer municipalities have regarded this as an argument against the reforms. The proposed governmental reform plan was to eliminate up to two-thirds of the administrative units, but the results of the 2001 presidential elections have caused a postponement of the announced reforms because the rural politicians' candidate won the elections.

The local government system in Bulgaria⁴ has two levels: municipalities (*obshtini*) and regions (*oblasts*). The municipalities comprise mayoralties or settlements, and their decision-making authority is highly restricted. The executive branch is the mayor, elected by the settlements for a four-year term. Regional governors appointed by the Council of Ministers govern the regions, while local government units have very little decision-making authority. Along with the fact that the governors are appointed, this lack of power at the local level is likely to influence the kind of relationship that local representatives can develop with the citizens in their constituency. Most of the changes in local administration took effect under the 1991 Constitution, which established a decentralized power structure and ensures the possibility of local referendums to be held on the basis of universal, equal, and direct suffrage by secret ballot (Article 10), and also under the Law on Local Self-Government and Public Administration. The latest changes occurred with the Law on Administration of 1998 and the Law on Civil Service of 1999. Even if there are regulations concerning the time frames in which state administration (local or central) should respond to citizens' requests, in practice there still are problems with meeting the legal provisions. Besides the positive changes that the two laws have brought, there are some provisions that impinge on bureaucratic procedures. One of these concerns the duties of civil servants, which are defined in terms of norms and regulations that are to be respected, including the need to respect the hierarchy (Georgiev 1999).

The local government system in Poland⁵ is the most elaborate of the three countries. The one-level system established by the Municipal Act in 1990 was changed in 1999 to a three-level local government system. The levels are: municipalities (*gminy*), which have a directly-elected municipal council that in turn elects both the municipal board and the mayor; a county level (*powiat*), which has a similar structure with a directly elected council for a four-year term that elects both the county board and the head of the county; and the highest local government level, the voivodship, which includes representatives of the central government and is represented by the regional councils elected by the citizens and the regional board elected by the council.

Although the administrative reform in Poland increased the distance between the authorities and the general population, there has been no opposition or fear that negative impacts would follow the reform. Article 170 of the Constitution states the following: “Members of a self-governing community may decide, by means of a referendum, matters concerning their community, including the dismissal of an organ of local self-government established by direct election.” This clause clearly describes the power citizens have in dealing with local governments, by specifying that they may decide by referendum to dismiss the locally elected self-government. Local government reform in Poland is seen as one of the few unquestionable successes of the Polish transition. According to the amended Constitution (1992), local self-rule is the basic organizational form of public life in the community (Howard 1999, 683).

Some common features of the local government systems in the three countries include the variable number of council members according to the size of locality, and the existence of the councils as representative bodies of local government units, although the term for which they are elected is shorter in Estonia (three years) compared to Poland and Bulgaria (four years). For a comparative overview of the three administrative systems see appendix 1.

The three countries have evolved in similar ways, as is pointed out by the Freedom House⁶ ratings of political rights and civil liberties, shown in table 5.1 below. The Freedom House country ratings range from 1 to 7. Countries rated from 1 to 2.5 are considered free, from 2.5 to 5.5 partly free, and from 5.5 to 7 not free. The evolution

Table 5.1
Freedom House Country Ratings (1991 to 2002)

Year ⁷	Estonia	Poland	Bulgaria
1991–92	2.3 F*	2.2 F	2.3 F
1992–93	3.3 PF**	2.2 F	2.3 F
1993–94	3.2 F	2.2 F	2.2 F
1994–95	3.2 F	2.2 F	2.2 F
1995–96	2.2 F	1.2 F	2.2 F
1996–97	1.2 F	1.2 F	2.3 F
1997–98	1.2 F	1.2 F	2.3 F
1998–99	1.2 F	1.2 F	2.3 F
1999–00	1.2 F	1.2 F	2.3 F
2000–01	1.2 F	1.2 F	2.3 F
2001–02	1.2 F	1.2 F	1.3 F

Note: * F: free; ** PF: partly free.

Source: <http://www.freedomhouse.org>.

toward political freedom of each of the three countries has been quite constant for the last ten years. We should underline the rapid progress in Estonia, where only five years were required to attain the level of Poland as far as Freedom House ratings are concerned, while Bulgaria has stagnated for ten years before coming close to being rated at 1.3 on the seven-item scale.

The Human Development Index used by the United Nations Development Program also supports the hierarchy established among the three countries according to their post-regime evolution. Poland is in 35th place, Estonia 41st, and Bulgaria 57th. We chose to use this index because it is widely used to classify countries for multinational analysis, being a measure that encompasses more than just the level of economic income. The Human Development Index⁸ combines levels of literacy, education, health, and income, and is used as a “standard model of societal modernization” (Norris 2002).

Both our analysis of local government systems in the three countries and the ratings provided by the Freedom House and Human Development Index lead us to conclude that Poland is the country with the most clearly positive evolution, followed by Estonia and Bulgaria. These differences also show up in our analysis of the type of relationship that local government representatives develop with the citizens in their constituencies in the three countries, discussed below.

2.2 Characteristics of the Local Representatives

In this section we provide a short description and comparative analysis of the main characteristics of the local representatives in the analyzed countries, based mainly on their demographic profile. The analysis was conducted using data generated by the ILDGP project’s Local Representative Survey (LRS), which inquired into the activities, values, opinions, and demographic characteristics of local councilors in Poland, Bulgaria, and Estonia. Table 5.2 shows the results of the survey of the local representatives from the point of view of gender, education, and age distribution.

The above table mainly shows similar characteristics among the local representatives included in the survey, with slight differences in the Estonian case. There is a significant percentage of male local representatives in the three countries, with a slightly higher percentage of female representatives in Estonia (31.8%). From the educational point of view we should emphasize the more balanced distribution of local representatives in Poland in all three categories, as compared to the balance in only two categories for Estonia (secondary and higher education), while the Bulgarian case stands out with 17% not having completed their secondary education as opposed to 78.8% having attended higher education, of which 60% are over 45 years old. The provisions of the Civil Service Act of 1999, stipulating that higher education is mandatory for appointment to a managerial function, explains this high percentage of more highly educated local representatives in Bulgaria.

Table 5.2
Demographic Characteristics of Local Representatives
in Poland, Bulgaria, and Estonia (2002)

Variable		Poland [%]	Bulgaria [%]	Estonia [%]
Gender	Male	78.8	78.5	68.2
	Female	21.2	21.5	31.8
Education	Completed 8/9 years	15.0	17.1	1.5
	Secondary	28.2	4.1	43.1
	Higher	56.8	78.8	55.4
Age	Under 30 years	7.1	0.2	3.2
	Between 31–45 years	38.3	39.6	48.8
	Over 45 years	54.6	60.2	48.0

Source: Local Representative Survey of ILGDP, 2002.

Poland has a greater percentage of younger local representatives, with 7.1% under 30 years old, while Estonia and Bulgaria have only 3.2% and 0.2% in this category. The most balanced age distribution for the other two categories, between 31 and 45 years and over 45 years, is the Estonian case with almost equal percentages, while Bulgaria and Poland have a higher percentage of local representatives in the last age category.

Another important dimension for capturing a complete description of the local representatives in the three countries is their political orientation, which is indicated by two items: their membership in a political party and their self-positioning on the left-right scale of political beliefs (see table 5.3 below). The country in which the highest percentage of local representatives are members of political parties is Bulgaria (86.1%), as compared to only 35.8% in Poland, while Estonia shows a balance between 52% members and 48% non-members of political parties. The Estonian local representatives display another difference in being more right-oriented than their Bulgarian and Polish colleagues. We have to acknowledge again the very balanced distribution of local representatives in Poland, with 31.2% oriented towards the left and center-left positions, 34.1% to the center and 34.6% to the right and center-right.

The position of the surveyed local representatives within their local administrations is presented in table 5.4. There are four main categories for this classification: mayor, member of a local committee, chair of a local committee, manager of a municipal firm, and “other,” which includes positions such as vice-mayor, member of the county government, or member of parliament.

The total figures show that some representatives in all three countries hold positions in more than one category. Most overlapping is due to committee chairs also being members of the committee, and managers of the municipal firms and vice-mayors

Table 5.3
 Political Views and Memberships of Local Representatives
 in Poland, Bulgaria, and Estonia (2002)

Variable	Country		Poland [%]	Bulgaria [%]	Estonia [%]
	Categories				
Party membership	member		35.8	86.1	52.0
	non-member		64.2	13.9	48.0
Self-positioning on the scale of left-right political views	Right ↑ Left	7	10.1	19.2	6.7
		6	10.3	12.8	20.1
		5	14.2	10.4	25.5
		4	34.1	19.6	30.8
		3	11.5	11.1	11.7
		2	10.7	9.9	3.2
		1	9.0	17.1	2.0

Source: Local Representative Survey of ILGDP, 2002.

also being members of the local committee. Because of the small percentage of mayors included in the survey (fewer than 10% for each of the three countries), this category will be further analyzed together with the local councilors and committee members. This approach fits the authors' primary intention to analyze the combination of features that enhance a citizen-oriented relationship style in local representatives as individuals, and not to approach the investigation from the point of view of incentives for such attitudes being offered by the position within the system.

Table 5.4
 Position of Surveyed Local Representatives
 in the Local Administrative System (2002)

Country	Estonia [%]	Bulgaria [%]	Poland [%]
Member of committee	55.2	65.4	56.4
Chair of committee	38.7	26.7	34.0
Manager of municipality firm	5.0	2.2	0.7
Mayor	8.6	9.9	5.0
Other	8.3	8.4	20.7
Total	115.8	112.6	116.8

Source: Local Representatives Survey of ILGDP, 2002.

3. EXPLANATORY APPROACHES

The theoretical framework of the following analysis is based on three main approaches: social capital, value orientations, and context and socialization influences. In each approach we will focus first on the conceptual issues, and then assess their usefulness in terms of the results of the data analysis which encompasses the variables used as measures of the concepts.

3.1 Social Capital

The concept of “social capital” became a fashionable explanation for economic efficiency and good governance when Robert Putnam elaborated it in *Making Democracy Work* (1993) and in *Bowling Alone* (2000). Putnam defines social capital as “connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.” He argues that social capital has significant political consequences. Norris (2003, 3) describes a two-step model of how civil society directly promotes social capital and how, in turn, social capital (the social networks and cultural norms that arise from civic society) is believed to facilitate political participation and good governance. Both Coleman (1988) and Putnam agree that like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence.

The key element of social capital is trust, which lays the basis for cooperation among people who are different (Uslaner 2002). Trust is viewed on two levels: generalized or interpersonal trust, meaning trusting other people, and institutional trust, meaning trusting institutions in a comprehensive manner. Trust in institutions builds on both institutional and human performance as far as the role and tasks of the institutions are concerned. Research shows that trust is an important ingredient in situations of cooperation. Communities characterized by an increased level of trust are more easily mobilized, as they are often motivated towards goals that refer to the common good (Badescu, 2001). Putnam also acknowledges the importance of trust, calling it the “cornerstone of a cooperative spirit” (1993). Following from these notions of trust among people and trust of people in institutions, local representatives possessing a higher level of interpersonal trust would be more prone to consult and collaborate with citizens as far as public matters are concerned. Consequently, a high level of trust among local representatives would foster cooperation between them and their constituents. We argue that local representatives who have a higher level of social capital possess the prerequisite for a consultative and collaborative relationship with citizens.

Mark Warren (1999b) holds that a political system is more democratic the more equally its institutions enhance individual self-rule and the more equally it underwrites

individual chances to influence collective judgments and decisions. He notes that democracy implies some processes of communication, first at the level of individuals and second as a collectivity. Social capital has tremendous relational power, and is believed to facilitate political participation and encourage good governance. Consequently, it may be seen as a resource for fostering collaboration among citizens and government representatives at both local and central levels. In Giddens' (1996) opinion governments depend on a complex, confidence-based relationship between political leaders and the people. Thus, citizen participation in policymaking and decision-making processes represents a necessary feature of stable democracies while social capital is a resource for political activism (Badescu 2001, 81). Measuring the level of institutional trust of local representatives will help to complete the picture of the prerequisites they possess for consultation and collaboration with citizens.

Another important component of social capital is the social networks that can be measured by affiliation with associational groups and social movements. Besides trust, information, and other factors associated with social capital, social networks may favor participation, depending on the type of action they involve (Badescu 2001). Consequently, generalized trust is a resource for actions that endorse collective goals, and creates a positive context that enhances direct communication between citizens and local representatives. Moreover, a horizontal relationship between citizens and local representatives will be promoted in a context characterized by civic engagement, seen by Putnam as one of the components of social capital: the more horizontal these relations, the higher the level of social interaction, communication, and trust (1995). Such relations represent the basis for further partnerships and citizen involvement in designing policies. The presence of social capital encourages openness on the part of both parties and recognition of the advantages of cooperation.

The development of the networking dimension of social capital has also nourished the emergence of what has been labeled as *the dark side* of social capital. This refers to the informal networks that support activities with a negative social impact, such as illegal labor migration, trafficking networks, or mafia-type structures. The surveys our data is taken from do not touch upon this side of the networking dimension of social capital, consisting only of measures of local representatives' engagement in various types of organizations. Following the accountability measures presented in appendix IV it can be easily acknowledged that local representatives in the three analyzed countries expect to be asked to justify their position on local public issues more often by their family and work colleagues. Even if such evidence could be interpreted as a negative type of social capital networking on account of the known, highly praised family and work loyalty in the mafia-type structures, there is no rationale and no justifiable data as to further dwell upon such an interpretation.

The data-based assessment of the social capital dimension follows three strands: the level of generalized trust among the surveyed local representatives, their level of institu-

tional trust, and their engagement in social life through channels of citizen participation other than their position in the local government (assessed through engagement in civic and political organizations). Several items in the survey measuring the level of trust among local representatives are presented in table 5.5 below.

In Estonia most of the local representatives believe that most people can be trusted (64.3%), while the percentage in Poland is somewhat lower at 44.7%, and in Bulgaria lower yet at 30.9%. The situation appears similar in the case of the second measure, with the Bulgarian figures showing the strongest response (64.5%) from those believing that most people would try to take advantage of them, compared to 5.1% for Estonia. The first item, assessing the perceived level of generalized trust among people in the locality, shows a very high concentration around the central measure, while the extremes (low or high level of trust) are weakly represented, especially in the Estonian case. Among the three countries Estonia has the highest level of generalized trust, followed by Poland and then Bulgaria.

The second assessment of social capital among local representatives, which measures their level of institutional trust as declared in the survey, reveals very interesting patterns (see appendix II). The most trusted of the democratic institutions is the presidency, with the highest percentages for each of the countries: 49.2% in Estonia, 38.7% in Poland, and 40.2% in Bulgaria. The central government is greatly distrusted in both Poland and Bulgaria, while in Estonia the media joins the political parties as far as local representatives' distrust is concerned. The least trusted institutions are the political parties (distrusted by 30.1% in Estonia and 53.4% in Poland), followed by parliament (40.8% in Poland and 37.3% in Bulgaria). It is surprising that political parties are so distrusted by local representatives in the three countries, considering that in Bulgaria

Table 5.5
Level of Generalized Trust among Local Representatives
in Estonia, Poland, and Bulgaria (2002)

Questions	Estonia [%]		Poland [%]		Bulgaria [%]	
	Low level of trust	High level of trust	Low level of trust	High level of trust	Low level of trust	High level of trust
How much do people trust each other in your city?	6.0*	3.9	16.2	3.6	26.3	3.7
Can most people be trusted or do you need to be very careful?	32.0	64.3	52.8	44.7	67.8	30.9
Would most people take advantage of you or would they try to be fair?	5.1	28.5	57.3	40.6	64.5	34.5

Note: * Discrepancies from a 100% total are accounted for by non-answers and the medium value.

Source: Local Representative Survey of ILGDP, 2002.

a significant 86.1% of the local representatives are party members and the parties they belong to have nominated 82.5% of them in the elections. The figures for Estonia are lower but still surprising, considering that 51.1% of the local representatives are party members and the parties nominated 41.6% of them in the elections. The situation is different in Poland, where just 34.9% of local representatives are party members and only 35.7% were nominated by their party for the elections. The other 64.3% were nominated by other organizational structures.

The third dimension used to assess the level of social capital among local representatives is their engagement in participatory acts, analyzed from the perspective of engagement in two types of organizations: civic and political. The first type of involvement—holding a position of trust in a civic organization—applies to 40.8% of local representatives in Poland, 24.9% in Estonia, and only 19.0% in Bulgaria. Another aspect is the number of organizations in which they are involved. This ranges from none at all to eight (in the case of one representative in Bulgaria). In Poland and Estonia the highest number of memberships was six, but most local representatives are engaged in only one organization, similar to the situation in all the analyzed countries. There was also a very high number of non-respondents—up to 60% in Estonia and 76% in Bulgaria. The situation in Poland is very different, with the highest percentage of local representatives involved in civic organizations (89.7% are members in one or two organizations). Membership in political organizations (parties) reveals a highly politicized situation in Bulgaria where 86.% of the local representatives surveyed belong to a political party, as opposed to only 34.9% in Poland and 51.1% in Estonia. Of all the forms of political engagement, collecting signatures is the most common practice identified by representatives in the three countries, with 31.3% in Estonia, 47.1% in Bulgaria, and 51.1% in Poland. On the other hand, there is little engagement in protest politics by local representatives in any of the countries; the highest level is in Bulgaria, with up to 12% participating in such activities.

3.2 Value Orientations

For a long time the explanatory power of economic factors as predictors of civic engagement has been considered essential, especially as far as voting is concerned. But the predictive value of economic indicators in the postmodern era is no longer what it used to be (McAllister 1999, 201). In western industrialized democracies in particular, the impact of political culture and historical context on citizen participation in government has caused reconsideration of the factors involved. The consequences of unprecedented economic development have entailed not only societal evolution, but also a reshaping of how individual citizens see their relationship to the political system: “In the long run, industrialized societies of both East and West must cope with long-term changes

that are making their publics less amenable to doing as they are told and more adept at telling their governments what to do” (Inglehart 1999, 251). The same idea is reinforced in recent studies showing that “the politics of choice appears to be replacing the politics of loyalties” (Norris 2002, 1).

The extent to which this applies to Central and Eastern European countries has not yet been assessed. Despite the enormous changes of the last fifteen years, there is still a long way to go until this region reaches the unprecedented level of economic development that was seen in the West, and from which postmodern theories concerning civic engagement and democracy have emerged. Still, Central and Eastern European countries have caught up rapidly in terms of some of the underlying factors that eventually led to what Inglehart calls *the silent revolution* (Inglehart 1977). The increasing level of education, mass access to political information, and the diminishing effectiveness of gender barriers (at least formally, if not entirely in practice) in Central and Eastern Europe are some of the factors that can be expected to play a similar role in the evolution of political behavior. Due to the prolonged lack of individual rights under the former communist regimes, the emphasis now placed on such rights encourages adherence to postmodern or postmaterialist values, even if the motivation has been different than in the West.

Such changes are encompassed in a broader mechanism of social change known as the social mobilization process, analyzed by Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck (1984), Inglehart (1990), and also Dalton (1998). Social mobilization occurred as a consequence of sweeping societal changes in the modern industrialized societies of the West, and partially in Central and Eastern Europe after the regime changes. A marked feature of this process in western societies has been the emergence of a highly political and sophisticated citizenry that defines politics in terms of their own interests (Dalton 1998, 28) and has acquired the necessary levels of education, information, political skills, and resources to be self-sufficient in politics and to engage in direct actions challenging their governments. In the West, a more open, participatory, and individual-centered form of democracy evolved in response to the social changes occurring along with unprecedented economic development and material sufficiency. In Central and Eastern Europe, however, citizens were either presented with a more open, participatory, and individual-centered democracy following the fall of communism in the region, or they had to challenge their governments to provide such opportunities for active citizenship in an open, participatory democracy.

One distinctive aspect of the social changes discussed above is a shift in western value preferences from physical security and economic well-being to non-material needs such as self-expression and individual fulfillment. This “silent revolution” is reflective of the postmodern political attitude, which “*allows a much wider range for individual autonomy in the pursuit of individual subjective well being*” (Inglehart 1997, 238).

More specifically, this new orientation expresses a shift toward postmaterialism, which strongly de-emphasizes the previously lauded qualities of economic efficiency, bureaucratic authority, and scientific rationality upon which modern societies were built, and instead values individual autonomy, increased self-expression, and the acceptance of diversity. Postmaterialist values have major behavioral and attitudinal consequences for the way individuals relate to the political system and participate in social life. Citizens with postmaterialist values are more likely to be actively engaged in social life and more open to using unconventional and challenging modes of civic participation, including protest actions.

The value orientations of local representatives in the analyzed countries were assessed through two means. The first involved having the representatives prioritize the following goals to be achieved in the country in the coming years:

- Maintaining order in the country
- Giving people more say in important government decisions
- Fighting rising prices
- Protecting freedom of speech.

Of these four items, maintaining order in the country proved to be the most highly valued goal in each country: 54.5% considered it the highest priority in Bulgaria, 57.3% in Estonia, and 62.2 % in Poland. The second priority, giving people more say in important government decisions, is also similar for the three countries. Fighting rising prices and protecting freedom of speech share the last place in the order of priorities, as shown in table 5.6.

The second item used to assess the value orientations of local representatives in the analyzed countries is their agreement or disagreement with certain statements that express contrasting orientations (traditional or postmodern) towards a variety of topics (see table 5.7).

For each of the two contrasting items in table 5.7, the one on the left puts a more traditional emphasis on increased state/government responsibility for providing goods and for equality of income or rights, while the one on the right reflects a more individual-oriented approach which is closer to the postmodern and postmaterialist value orientations, without being exclusive or exhaustive.

The local representatives in the three countries adhere to similar value orientations from the point of view of praising competition, private ownership, and the advantages of widespread public participation. The Estonian local representatives showed slight differences from the others in their favoring of income equality, additional rights for minorities, and the primacy of solving local problems over achieving national goals. A potential explanation for this may be the fact that Estonia, unlike Bulgaria and Poland, was part of the former Soviet Union and experienced both the status of minority and the primacy of the federation's goals over local problems. Another difference worth

Table 5.6
 Ranking of Strategic Goals by Local Representatives
 in Bulgaria, Poland, and Estonia [%] (2002)

	Bulgaria			
	1 most important	2	3	4 least important
Maintain order	54.5	27.2	13.4	2.2
Give people more say	31.2	29.2	24.4	11.9
Fight inflation	4.6	19.4	28.2	43.8
Protect freedom of speech	9.1	20.5	29.7	36.6
	Poland			
Maintain order	62.2	19.5	11.5	4.6
Give people more say	23.2	27.0	32.3	15.3
Fight inflation	14.1	29.8	22.4	30.7
Protect freedom of speech	8.6	21.7	26.6	40.1
	Estonia			
Maintain order	57.3	23.7	11.5	2.6
Give people more say	21.3	27.0	37.3	9.0
Fight inflation	8.6	28.2	23.7	34.1
Protect freedom of speech	7.8	16.1	22.0	48.3

Source: Local Representative Survey 2002.

Table 5.7
 Value Orientations of Local Representatives in Bulgaria, Poland, and Estonia [%] (2002)

Bulgaria	Poland	Estonia	Traditional vs. postmodern value orientations	Bulgaria	Poland	Estonia
Percent agreeing with the first value preference				Percent agreeing with the second value preference		
20.2	17.6	31.7	income equality vs. income disparity	53.5	70.1	46.9
21.6	25.6	28.1	public ownership vs. private ownership	62.0	42.0	44.8
34.0	44.6	45.5	government vs. individual responsibility to provide goods	45.3	27.0	35.7
9.7	10.2	14.2	negative vs. positive outcomes of competition	81.9	75.7	73.9
48.2	37.6	19.1	achieving national goals vs. solving local problems	19.5	28.5	45.5
18.0	31.8	17.5	negative impact vs. positive outcomes of widespread public participation	62.9	46.6	62.4
64.9	63.8	45.7	equal rights vs. additional rights for minorities	28.4	22.7	35.4
67.5	42.0	47.0	limitation of freedom of speech vs. political extremists' right to hold public meetings	18.5	36.1	34.4

Note: Discrepancies from a 100% total are accounted for by non-answers and the medium value.

Source: The Local Representative Survey of ILDGP, 2002.

noting is the individual-centered orientations of Bulgarian local representatives as far as the responsibility for providing goods is concerned, with 45.5% of local representatives believing that such responsibility belongs to the individual rather than to the government, as compared with the 27% of Polish and 35.7% of Estonian local representatives.

3.3 Context Influences and Socialization

Political socialization is defined as “the processes by which individuals learn the political norms, values and behavior patterns of the nations, groups or subgroups to which they belong. These characteristics can be thought of as each group’s political culture. Political socialization means the enduring attitudes and ways of behaving that characterize a group over an extended period of time” (Lipset 1995). Some scholars (Patton 2001) place the agents of socialization in two categories: first the home, which plays a major role in shaping one’s world outlook from birth, with peer group pressure and contact with friends also having an effect on one’s behavior and attitude, and second, the institutions other than family (school, social clubs, places of work, mass media) that have an impact on individuals’ behavior, values, knowledge, and actions. Social clubs and places of work are often selected as a result of certain stimuli from one’s educational experience. Yet, these factors are insufficient to explain by themselves the differences in national levels of political activism. It is also important to take account of the broader context set by societal modernization, institutional design, and mobilizing agencies (Norris 2003).

Discussion of the factors influencing the approach local representatives take towards their relationship with citizens must necessarily include contextual influences. Of the external contextual factors that are relevant for our purposes we selected certain socialization influences, at the same time acknowledging that socialization means much more than what this paper investigates. Despite such limitations, we believe important insights for the purposes of this research can be gained by considering the influences exerted by several variables fitting the broader patterns of context and socialization. Socialization influences can be seen in local representatives in such things as the family tradition of assuming public office, or in the personal experience of holding public office before the present mandate. Contextual influences are measured by assessing the pressure for accountability that comes from several groups within the society, and the perceived influence on the decision-making process of several social actors, both individuals and groups.

The family tradition of assuming public office is strongest in Poland and Bulgaria, with a shifting position between engagement in political parties (45.8% in Bulgaria and 23.3 % in Poland) and engagement in nongovernmental organizations (29.8% in Bulgaria and 42.7% in Poland). Estonia is very weakly represented from this point of

view, with only 9.2% of the representatives' parents engaged in political parties and 6.6% involved in nongovernmental organizations.

Prior experience in holding public office during recent years is very well represented, with the majority of the local representatives included in the survey being reelected for at least one term in each of the three countries. As many as 10% in Poland and 16% in Estonia have been reelected more than three times, as is shown in table 5.8.

The context influences are measured by an item dealing with the influence of several persons and groups on the decision-making of the local government. The components can be divided into two distinct categories: influences from other institutions or representatives (including civil servants, the chief administrative officer, the mayor, central government, and local branches of political parties), and direct or indirect influences from citizens (including church, interested citizens, media, civic organizations, unions, and local businesses). The figures are presented in appendix III.

It is quite noticeable in all three countries that the highest influence is exerted by the first category of factors, including other institutions and the direct hierarchical superiors of the local representatives, while the second group has a visibly lower influence on the decision-making process as perceived by the local representatives. The most influential category in all the countries is the mayor with almost 70% perceiving a high influence, while the influence of civic organizations and interested citizens is somewhere around 50%, higher in Bulgaria and Poland than in Estonia. Church representatives along with unions and local business representatives share the lowest influence on local decision-making in all the analyzed countries.

The persons or groups to whom local representatives expect to be held accountable show a pattern of strong family networks. Most frequently, local representatives expect that they will be held accountable by family, work colleagues, and the political party. On the other hand, they have very little expectation of being held accountable by media, nongovernmental organizations, or the business community. The figures are similar for the three countries. In Estonia the figures are somewhat lower with regard to the

Table 5.8
Experience of Local Representatives in Holding Public Office

Reelected	Bulgaria [%]	Poland [%]	Estonia [%]
One time	53.9	39.5	34.6
Two times	23.6	28.3	24.3
Three times	15.5	18.1	21.0
More than 3 times	2.0	10.7	16.0
Missing	5.0	3.3	3.8

Source: Local Representative Survey of ILDGP, 2002.

frequency of accountability requirements, but not with regard to the groups to whom local representatives feel accountable (for more detailed figures see appendix IV).

4. TESTING THE HYPOTHESIS

The initial hypothesis asserts that the approach local representatives take towards their relationship with citizens is determined not only by the social capital of local representatives, but also by other variables which we expected would include their value orientations, socialization, and contextual influences. The dependent variable that we aimed to explain is the approach local representatives take towards their relationship with citizens, as defined by two categories: the *classical system-oriented approach*, with decision-making based on hierarchical and classical bureaucratic procedures of the administrative systems; and the *participatory, citizen-oriented approach*, based on consultation, collaboration, and partnerships and aimed at opening the decision-making process to input from citizens.

We used successive logistic regression models to compare the probability that local representatives with certain characteristics would uphold the citizen-oriented approach with the probability that they would uphold a system-oriented approach. The dependent variable was computed by recoding a set of items from the questionnaire (see tables 5.9 and 5.10) measuring the actions of the local representatives and their approach to their relationship with the citizens, using a high ranking for those options appropriate for a collaborative and consultative approach (i.e., organizing consultative forums before decision-making) and a low ranking for the more classical approach to decision-making (without input from citizens). The final distribution has been obtained by assigning a “citizen-oriented” description to local representatives when more than half of their choices ranked at the high end of the scale, and a “system-oriented” description to those who chose more than half at the low end.

Table 5.10 presents the final frequency distribution of the dependent variable (the approach taken by the local representatives towards their relationship with citizens) after recoding.

The categories of the dependent variable are balanced only in Poland, while in Estonia and Bulgaria there is a clear trend towards the participatory approach, with a surprising 90.3% favoring this approach in Estonia.

The hypothesis was tested using an initial explanatory model that includes demographic characteristics and measures of civic engagement and generalized and institutional trust. All of these are part of the broader explanatory variable—the local representatives’ level of social capital. The alternative models include the other proposed variables (socialization, context influences, accountability, and value orientations), with the evolution of the indicators being compared successively, one by one. First we analyze

Table 5.9
Items Considered for the Final Distribution of the Dependent Variable

Items included in the final value of the dependent variable:	
Have you held a citizen forum as a local councilor in the course of the past year?	
Roughly how many hours in an average week do you usually devote to your activities as a councilor?	
When making decisions, to what degree do you feel it is important to give special consideration to the following groups of people?*	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizens who voted for you All inhabitants of the municipality The party or group to which you belong Central government authorities 	
How influential does the opinion of the following people seem on the formation of your own opinion on local government issues?*	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil servants in the local administration Representatives of your party or the organization that nominated you at the elections Local business persons Representatives of civic organizations Local religious leaders Journalists Local residents you meet 	
A local representative can learn about the views of citizens in different ways. How important do the following sources of information seem for you as mayor or councilor in your municipality?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal contacts with individual citizens Letters from citizens Representatives of civic organizations Your own party branch The municipal administration 	

Note: * The answers were indicated on a scale from 1 (very little importance) to 7 (very great importance).

Table 5.10
Frequency Distribution of the Dependent Variable [%]

	Poland	Estonia	Bulgaria
System-oriented approach	41.4	9.7	33.6
Citizen-oriented approach	58.6	90.3	66.4

Source: Local Representative Survey 2002.

the changes for each of the three countries, and then we conclude with a comparative analysis for the three countries.

The indicators for Estonia are presented in table 5.11. The first model shows a positive influence of both generalized and institutional trust and civic engagement. Age and gender do not have significant values, but education positively influences the chances that a local representative with the described features will prefer a participatory approach towards his or her relationship with citizens. The successive inclusion in the following models of new variables has slightly decreased the indicators in the first model, which mainly remained statistically significant. The influence of education and civic engagement measures has been affected by the inclusion of the additional explanatory variables, and shows no statistical significance in the final model. The explanatory power of the model has been slightly strengthened by the context, accountability and value orientations measures, as indicators show (see table 5.11).

The initial model for Bulgaria shows a particular significance of age and education, starting from the first model and remaining statistically significant throughout. Other measures with a positive influence are civic engagement and institutional trust, which prove to be more stable in influence than generalized trust. The newly included variables have significant positive influences in the model, slightly strengthening its explanatory power (see table 5.12).

The situation in Poland is slightly different with fewer statistically significant coefficients. The influence of age, gender, and education is not significant, and age indicators are very close to 1. Institutional trust and civic engagement have positive influences, being significant for the first two models and reaching closer to 1 in the models including context, accountability, and value orientations measures, which all have positive influences and significant values.

A comparative analysis of the explanatory models for the three countries shows some particularities that may explain the frequency distribution of the dependent variable as presented in table 5.10. The case of Estonia, with 90.3% of local representatives included in the survey leaning towards a participatory approach, may be explained by the significant values of both generalized and institutional trust. These values retained their significance in the models that included additional explanatory variables, which was not the case for the civic engagement measures. Previous studies have also underscored that it is social trust rather than associational activism that strongly correlates with levels of human and democratic development (Norris 2002).

The unexpected 90% propensity of Estonian local representatives towards a participatory approach in their relationship with citizens can be explained by the patterns of the administrative system and the embedded local government relationships which have been established over time and show resistance towards attempts at reform. The analyzed variables do not fully explain the high percentage of people-oriented local representatives, but if we add the impact of the administrative system we find that such

Table 5.11
Logistic Regression Coefficients for Estonia

	Age	Gender	Education	Generalized trust	Institutional trust	Participation	Socialization	Context influences	Accountability	Value orientations	Nagelkerke R ²
	0.99	0.74	1.20*	1.17**	1.04**	1.16**	—	—	—	—	0.09
	0.99	0.77	1.19*	1.16**	1.04**	1.15**	1.06*	—	—	—	0.09
	0.99	0.78	1.15*	1.11*	1.03**	1.10*	1.05	1.02**	—	—	0.11
	0.99	0.83	1.14	1.12*	1.03**	1.05	1.03	1.02**	1.10**	—	0.15
	0.99	0.86	1.13	1.11*	1.03**	1.06	1.03	1.02**	1.10**	1.08*	0.16

Note: * p<0.1; ** p<0.5.

Source: Local Representative Survey, 2002.

Table 5.12
Logistic Regression Coefficients for Bulgaria and Poland

	Age	Gender	Education	Generalized trust	Institutional trust	Participation	Socialization	Context influences	Accountability	Value orientations	Nagelkerke R ²
BULGARIA	0.97**	0.91	1.50**	1.06	1.02**	1.12*	—	—	—	—	0.07
	0.97**	0.91	1.46**	1.05	1.02**	1.11*	1.12**	—	—	—	0.08
	0.97**	0.94	1.44**	1.01	1.01	1.08	1.15**	1.03**	—	—	0.13
	0.97**	0.95	1.41**	1.01	1.00	1.00	1.13**	1.02**	1.06**	—	0.15
	0.97**	0.93	1.40**	1.01	1.00	1.00	1.12**	1.02**	1.06**	1.06*	0.16
POLAND	0.99	0.92	1.12	1.02	1.01*	1.14**	—	—	—	—	0.02
	0.99	0.92	1.12	1.02	1.01*	1.13**	1.03	—	—	—	0.02
	0.99	0.89	1.12	1.01	1.00	1.10*	1.02	1.03**	—	—	0.08
	1.00	1.01	1.05	1.00	1.00	1.01	1.00	1.03**	1.06**	—	0.11
	1.00	1.01	1.05	1.00	1.00	1.01	1.00	1.03**	1.06**	1.00	0.11

Note: * p<0.1; ** p<0.5.

Source: Local Representative Survey, 2002.

an overwhelming figure is accounted for not only by the people within the administration, but also by the system itself, due to the small size of administrative units that have favored a close relationship between local government and citizens for a long time. The opposition of local governments to reform initiatives aimed at decreasing the number of administrative units and consequently increasing the distance between the people and the local government also accounts for this high percentage of people-oriented local representatives.

The case of Bulgaria is different from the other two because of the significant and constant negative influence of age and the positive influence of education measures, which in the other cases are not significant and very close to neutral values. The distribution of local representatives in Bulgaria by age has shown that 60% of them are over 45 years old. Bulgaria has the smallest number of young local representatives, with only 0.2%. The constant and powerful influence of education is also explained by the frequency distribution of the variable. The pattern of Bulgarian local representatives' education is very different from the other two countries, having almost no middle category values and an overwhelming 78.8% with higher education, of which over 60% are in the last age category, thus strengthening the constant impact of the two variables in the model. This is due to the mandatory higher education requirement for appointment to a managerial position, stipulated in the Bulgarian Civil Service Act. The significant and higher coefficients for socialization should also be mentioned, as this strengthens previous conclusions from section 3.3 showing the impact of the family tradition of associational membership.

In the case of Poland, the highest percentages for the calculated coefficients models show no statistical significance; thus, the models seem to have rather limited explanatory power. The influence of civic engagement seems to be more significant and constant when compared to this item in the other two cases, but the overall explanation provided by the models does not seem to be very appropriate for this case, which had the most balanced frequency distribution of the dependent variable. A potential explanation may be found in the balanced frequency distribution of local representatives in Poland on most of the variables considered. From the age distribution point of view, Poland has the highest representation of local representatives under 30 years of age among the three countries. Education is also very well balanced, with a slightly higher percentage of local representatives having higher education, while the left-right self-positioning shows an almost perfectly equal situation, around 30% in each of computed categories.

The only variable with an impact on the regression analysis results is the only one on which Polish local representatives do not show a balanced frequency distribution: the civic engagement variable. This is the point where Poland is significantly different from the other two countries. Over 80% of local representatives in Poland are engaged in civic organizations and 64.9% of them have been nominated in the elections by an organization and not by a political party. Compared to the 60% missing answers

in Bulgaria and 76.5% missing answers in Estonia on this item and to the balanced frequency distributions on other variables, this situation explains why civic engagement is the only significant variable for Poland. Besides the distribution for the local representatives themselves, Poland has a high percentage of parental engagement in civic organizations, which is the case for neither Estonia nor Bulgaria.

5. CONCLUSION

The present report aimed to investigate the factors influencing the approach that local representatives take towards their relationship with citizens, focusing the explanation not only on social capital but also trying to identify other variables with considerable influence in each of the three countries—Estonia, Poland, and Bulgaria. Besides considering the classical approach of social capital (assessed through level of trust, networks, and participation) the research aimed at beginning a discussion about how variables such as value orientations, socialization, and context influences might affect the relationship between local representatives and citizens.

The main findings of the research show that there is a propensity from the local representatives in the analyzed countries towards a participatory approach in relating to citizens, based on collaboration and consultation with the latter and openness towards input from the citizens in their activity as public representatives. The three cases show various differences in the determinants that have an impact on the relationship between the representatives and their constituents, even if the dependent variable shows the prevalence of the same approach from the local representatives' side, varying in percentage. The Estonian case shows an unexpected 90.3% of local representatives approaching the citizens in their constituency horizontally; at the other end, the Polish representatives showed a highly balanced distribution. The explanatory models have focused on investigating the supplementary explanations provided by such variables as socialization, context influences (including accountability issues), and value orientations, which have been added one by one to the logistic regression-based models, considering at the same time the specificities of the administrative systems from the three countries that helped explain the significance of the variables included in the explanatory models.

The overall conclusion drawn from the analysis is that social capital by itself is not sufficient to explain the approach local representatives have towards their relationship with citizens, and the input of variables like socialization, context influences, and value orientations significantly contribute to such explanatory attempts. Leadership style is also relevant for the dynamics of the processes and performance of administrative systems, influencing the relationship between local representatives and citizens. The combination of factors that stimulate local representatives to act as citizen-oriented decision-makers is far from being identified with certainty and exhaustively by this study. However, the

study has succeeded in confirming the initial hypothesis for the cases of Estonia and Bulgaria, while the case of Poland needs further investigation to find an appropriate set of explanatory variables. Another important conclusion of our analysis is that when considering the explanatory power of social capital, the various components (namely trust, networks, and participation) should be distinguished. In addition, differences should be examined among the various dimensions of each component. The tested models have shown that institutional trust and generalized trust have different explanatory impacts, supporting the scholars who assert the need to separately approach the two concepts as they are of different origins.

Consideration of the systemic features of local administrations in the three countries has proved to be a valuable aspect of the research. The present study is far from shedding full light on the combination of factors that influence the approach local representatives choose to take towards their relationship with the citizens in the three analyzed countries. This complex issue has to be further investigated, alternative models tested, and appropriate sets of explanatory variables sought, in order to constantly enrich the underlying theoretical principles of the relationships under study. An approach that would definitely add much to the understanding of the broader relationship between local representatives and citizens would be one that looked at the citizens' own approach towards the relationship. This would complete the investigation that we undertook in the present report.

NOTES

- ¹ Extract from the discussions at the conference *Social Capital in the Balkans: The Missing Link?* organized by the Blue Bird Social Inclusion Group and the Center for Policy Studies, January 21st—February 1st 2003 at Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
- ² For more information on the samples and data collection methods please refer to Tocqueville Research Center's web site: <http://www.t-rc.org>.
- ³ The information is taken from the Local Government International Bureau web site: <http://www.lgib.gov.uk/enlargement/estonia.htm>.
- ⁴ The information is taken from the Local Government International Bureau web site: <http://www.lgib.gov.uk/enlargement/bulgaria.htm>.
- ⁵ The information is taken from the Local Government International Bureau web site: <http://www.lgib.gov.uk/enlargement/poland.htm>.
- ⁶ The Freedom House country ratings are based on evaluation of political rights and civil liberties in each country, attempting to judge by a single standard. The indicators do not rate governments *per se*, but the rights and freedoms enjoyed by individuals. The surveys are not based solely on the political conditions of a given country, but on the effects such conditions have on freedom. The ratings are based on a broad range of international sources of information, including domestic and foreign news reports, NGO publications, think tank and academic analysis, and individual professional contacts.

For more information on the criteria and methodology used to determine country ratings, please refer to <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2000/methodology.htm>.

⁷ The Freedom House ratings are shown starting only from 1991 because this is the first year when Estonia has been considered as an independent country in the surveys.

⁸ For more information on the methodology of calculating the index, please refer to <http://www.undp.org/hdr>.

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APPENDIX I

Local Government Systems in Estonia, Bulgaria, and Poland

Country	Levels of local government	Units of local government	Representative bodies	Features	Observations
Estonia	1	Towns (<i>linn</i>)	Council	Elected directly by citizens 3-year term Minimum 7 members—increasing with the size of locality	
		Rural Municipalities (<i>vald</i>)	Mayor Head of Rural Municipality	Elected by the council 3-year term Elected by the council 3-year term	
		Counties (<i>maakond</i>)			Part of central government
Bulgaria	2	Municipalities (<i>obshini</i>)	Mayor	Elected by mayoralties and/or settlements (components of municipality) 4-year term	Highly restricted decision-making authority
		Regions (<i>oblasti</i>)	Regional Governor	Appointed by the council of ministries 4-year term	
Poland	3	Municipality (<i>gmina</i>)	Municipal Council	Elected directly by citizens 4-year term	
			Municipal Board	Elected by the council	
			Mayor	Elected by the council	
		County (<i>powiat</i>)	County Council	Elected directly by citizens 4-year term	
			County Board	Elected by the county council	
			Head of the County	Elected by the county council	
Voivodship		Regional Councils	Elected directly by citizens 4-year term		Includes some representatives of central government
		Regional Board	Elected by the council		

APPENDIX II

Institutional Trust in Estonia, Poland, and Bulgaria [%]

	Estonia				Poland				Bulgaria			
	Low	Mid	High	DK/DA*	Low	Mid	High	DK/DA	Low	Mid	High	DK/DA
	level of trust in...				level of trust in...				level of trust in...			
County government	6.6	68.4	17.7	7.3	27.1	66.1	5.4	1.3	NA	NA	NA	NA
Courts of law	12.9	56.1	24.5	6.5	35.6	53.9	9.5	1.1	44.9	47.7	5.5	1.9
Central government	12.5	72.6	11.7	3.2	44.7	48.6	5.3	1.4	41.2	49.1	7.8	1.9
Media	21.0	69.5	6.8	2.7	24.1	62.6	11.9	1.4	24.2	65.5	8.1	2.3
Parliament	17.4	72.6	6.5	3.5	40.8	52.8	4.7	1.6	37.3	54.2	6.5	2.0
Political parties	30.1	60.2	2.5	7.1	53.4	43.5	2.0	1.2	27.6	61.9	8.3	2.2
Police	13.2	69.3	14.9	2.6	16.9	65.1	16.6	1.4	24.0	58.2	16.1	1.8
President	5.1	42.3	49.2	3.4	19.8	39.9	38.7	1.6	22.2	36.2	40.2	1.5
Regional government	7.2	71.1	14.4	7.2	NA	NA	NA	NA	38.7	52.7	6.5	2.1

Note: * DK/DA=don't know/didn't answer

APPENDIX III

Context Influences in Bulgaria, Poland, and Estonia [%]

	Bulgaria			Poland			Estonia		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
	influence of ... on decisions of local government			influence of ... on decisions of local government			influence of ... on decisions of local government		
...civil servants...	45.9	28.8	21.2	40.8	28.9	27.5	32.5	30.3	28.1
...chief administrative officer...	47.8	21.2	27.9	35.0	24.1	36.0	31.3	25.2	35.0
...central government...	29.4	22.4	43.9	34.9	21.9	39.0	23.5	19.8	34.8
...mayor...	14.9	10.4	73.1	7.8	7.1	77.7	8.2	13.0	75.2
...local branches of political parties...	26.6	25.3	43.9	40.4	22.8	32.5	37.7	17.6	23.2
...local business...	39.2	22.2	34.5	43.2	29.0	23.3	30.8	26.4	32.1
...church...	70.9	12.2	9.3	38.9	19.6	38.6	57.4	8.5	7.5
...interested citizens...	51.2	21.8	23.6	42.7	25.3	29.0	44.4	27.4	20.7
...media...	44.7	23.3	25.6	37.0	22.4	36.9	45.3	16.5	20.3
...civic organizations...	58.6	18.5	19.1	54.9	29.5	14.6	43.4	22.3	14.3
...unions...	74.1	12.6	5.9	70.0	14.6	9.2	58.4	4.7	3.3

APPENDIX IV

Accountability Measures in Bulgaria, Poland, and Estonia [%]

How frequently are you (or do you expect to be) requested by the following people to explain your position on a local public issue?

1 =every week

2 =once/twice a month

3 =a few times a year

4 =not at all

	Bulgaria				Poland				Estonia			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Business community	6.8	21.4	37.4	27.6	4.1	22.1	42.0	22.7	3.9	19.8	36.5	35.8
Work colleagues	36.6	31.0	18.6	8.4	37.5	33.6	17.9	6.1	27.7	35.8	23.8	8.3
Constituency	24.7	31.8	33.3	7.1	32.5	40.1	21.2	2.8	15.8	40.7	33.0	7.6
Family	47.7	24.7	17.4	6.3	46.1	27.4	18.7	4.5	33.9	37.6	20.2	6.0
Media	9.8	19.0	32.7	31.9	9.0	17.1	30.4	34.5	2.4	14.4	32.5	46.3
Neighbors	18.0	29.1	34.4	13.6	20.9	41.5	27.9	5.3	7.2	28.0	40.0	22.2
NGOs	13.3	31.3	31.1	14.9	23.1	32.3	22.4	14.1	5.2	26.4	32.7	29.2
Party	38.6	35.0	15.8	5.5	16.3	23.5	17.0	27.8	16.5	37.2	17.2	20.8

Political Parties in Local Governance: Do Delegates Represent Local or National Interests?

Filip Franek

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the role of political parties in local governments in Bulgaria, Estonia, and Hungary, and asks whether political party members tend to behave more like “delegates” within their local governments, and independent candidates more as “trustees.” In Estonia and Hungary these characterizations appear to have merit, while in Bulgaria the data indicate a tendency that would support such a claim. The main research question addresses the connection between this concept of delegates and trustees and the councilors’ own declared views on whether they represent local or national interests. The data from the “Indicators Project” show that local politicians who declare a preference for solving local problems rather than pursuing national goals vote according to their own opinions more often. We consider these individuals to be trustees. At the same time, there was not a significant relationship between political party membership and local/national goals representation. The chapter also makes some observations about the differences among the three countries, including a higher number of independent councilors in Hungary, a greater influence of the central government on local issues in Bulgaria, and a higher level of public participation in Hungary.

Political Parties in Local Governance: Do Delegates Represent Local or National Interests?

Filip Franek

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with local politicians, local political parties, and their function within local governments in three countries: Bulgaria, Estonia, and Hungary. The research is intended to contribute to the study of political parties in local government, particularly the role they play in determining whether local representatives pursue local or national interests. We will examine whether it is helpful to use the concept of delegate versus trustee in this particular context. Delegates are generally defined as politicians who follow the opinions of the groups they represent. They try to find out what their voters want and then act accordingly. Trustees, on the other hand, act and vote on the basis of their own view of what is best for their municipality or county as well as the nation (Burns, Peltason, and Cronin 1989).

Hungary, Bulgaria, and Estonia were chosen for the study as particular representatives of three geographical units within Central and Eastern Europe: Hungary as one of the Visegrad countries, Bulgaria representing the South-East of Europe, and Estonia as one of the Baltic states. Although there are some basic differences in the local governance of these countries, their general development is rather similar. The main differences include a higher number of independent councilors in Hungary, a greater influence of the central government on local issues in Bulgaria, and a higher level of public participation in Hungary. Comparing these countries can be particularly valuable because of the differences in their political cultures, the role of central government in local issues, and the role of political parties in local government. These differences are elaborated more specifically in section 3.

What the three countries have in common, of course, is their pre-1989 experience of Soviet-type local governments characterized by a system of local councils that were actually executive units of the central administration. Professional party organizations directed every level of public administration; the party committees directed the local

councils, decisions were made centrally, and finances were distributed in the same way. Everything was organized hierarchically. After 1989, the post-communist states decided to follow the path of decentralization, which required a centrally imposed legal and political framework for the process of rendering local government independent from the state hierarchy. In countries like Hungary and Poland, there was pressure from below to promote the emerging local government, while other countries (e.g., Bulgaria) saw a national policy to implement a local self-government system without actual demand from the regions (Elander and Gustafsson 1991).

A political party is defined here as a group organized to support certain policies on matters of public interest. The aim of a political party is to elect officials who will try to carry out the party's policies. Public interest issues informing the parties' policies may range from peace, war, and taxes, to how people should earn a living or pragmatic questions such as whether or not to build a new bridge in the village.

In this chapter we will first examine if it is possible to identify political party members as delegates and independent candidates as trustees. The data will indicate that this works only for Estonia and Hungary. As the concepts of trustee and delegate are measured on the basis of whether the councilors prefer to vote according to their own views or on the basis of the opinion of their "group of special consideration," the links between these variables will be examined as well. The second research question attempts to determine the distinct markers of the local politicians who can be characterized as delegates and trustees. We propose that in the case of trustees, a personal history of civic engagement and embeddedness in the municipality will be found. Delegates, on the other hand, are expected to be less involved in civic projects and less embedded in the municipality. The third question addresses the relation between the concept of delegate and trustee and the councilors' declared representation of local versus national interests. Here we seek to identify the characteristics of the councilors who declare a preference for local rather than national interests. Can differences among them be explained on the basis of the distinction between delegate and trustee?

At the most general level, we adopt Chandler's (1998) differentiation between elite and pluralistic theories for the purposes of our study. We will ask whether delegates can be described as typical councilors from the perspective of elite theories, which claim that the community is ruled by a group of influential party leaders, local businessmen, or civil servants. In the light of elite theory, the expectation is that councilors will normally vote in accordance with the position of the political party or other group that gave them the opportunity to become council members. In an analogous way we consider whether trustees, in their efforts to find out what is best for the community, might reflect the norms and assumptions of pluralistic theories. A categorical differentiation would clearly be rather simplistic, which is why such a link has only an indicative value. Moreover, the results of the research in all three countries indicate that the majority

of the councilors belong to neither of the two groups, as they decide how to vote on the basis of the particular situation. The concept is nevertheless given rather extensive attention due to the expected correlation between the representation of national versus local interests and the concept of delegates and trustees. It is expected that in at least one country delegates will declare a preference for the national interest while trustees will express preference for local interests.

As stated earlier, within the operational terms of the “Indicators Project” delegates are councilors who vote according to the opinions of their group of special consideration rather than according to their own views. Trustees, on the other hand, vote according to their own views.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Normative Standpoints

Some authors (Newton, Dunleavy, and Stoker) suggest that political parties have a tendency to separate the actual local issues from their local election campaign, which leads to a lack of accountability at the local level. Political parties present their national programs and local candidates are supported by national politicians, but local policies are often left out of the spotlight. The success of a political party at the local level is then determined by the position of the party at the national level. Such situations promote the phenomenon of local politicians as delegates, as they find themselves in a position where the only thing that matters for their political success is their loyalty to the party secretariat. Later we will suggest, together with Kuroda and Wiatr (1974), that independent candidates are more concerned about local issues. However, as Stoker (1991) would add, that does not necessarily make them more efficient or more beneficial for the community. Independent candidates’ concern for local issues can be understood as their primary motive in entering politics. Such candidates are not attracted by the possibility of furthering their political careers but by the opportunity to solve the issues they are concerned about.

Be that as it may, the purposes of this chapter are essentially descriptive, not normative; that is, we do not intend to propose normative criticism of the role of political parties in local governance. The theoretical debates about this issue, however, necessarily include some important normative standpoints, such as the debate between protagonists of localism and their critics. For this reason the following section will present some of these normative highlights.

2.2 Local Decision-makers

Wiatr (1974, 261) highlights four contextual spheres which influence local government decision making:

- The structural characteristics of the political system (to what extent the local government is autonomous)
- Socio-economic conditions
- Characteristics of the local leadership (the decision-makers themselves)
- The extent and type of public participation in decision-making.

The third sphere—the characteristics of local leaders, especially in the context of their party membership or non-membership—is the one most relevant to the analysis in this chapter. The first issue to be addressed is the motivation of local agents for their involvement in local politics. Our initial assumption is that some candidates get involved in local politics because of their concern with local issues, while others see local politics as a good start for their future political career. Their concern is to get political experience and recognition that will help them get involved in national politics. An intuitive example of the reasonableness of this expectation is the fact that successful ex-mayors of big cities are usually unbeatable candidates in majority vote elections (e.g., Czech Senate elections). It would be tempting to assume that the first group is mostly represented by independent candidates and the second one by political party members, but this is not necessarily the case. Also, it is important to stress that this distinction does not imply that either independent or political party agents will be better or more efficient actors in local politics.

The second question concerns how local leaders actually make their decisions. Chandler (1998, 251) proposes two ways of answering this question. The first is in line with elite theory and asserts that local government bodies are controlled by small groups of political party chairs who are closely connected with local business circles and/or important civil servants. The second is based on pluralistic theories and claims that the elite persons who seem to make the final authoritative decisions are forced—if they want to maintain their power—to acknowledge the requests of the larger groups that express the majority opinion in their respective communities. At the end of the day, the voters will judge them in elections on the basis of their perceived contribution to the welfare of the county.

Chandler's interpretation of elite and pluralistic theories at the level of local government is based on his observation that the construction of local politics in Europe is—even in the smallest communities—influenced by political parties. In discussing some European countries, he concludes that their local councils are not ruled by independent local councilors but by certain political majorities. On the other hand, Kuroda (1974) presents a more “localist” approach and proposes a participatory model where the idea of local government springs from the explicit desire of the people to manage their local

affairs. Kuroda claims that “citizens and residents of a community are interested in building self-governing bodies in the hope of improving the quality of their lives” (1974, 117). In illustrating this kind of interest, Kuroda mentions such diverse goals as the attraction of new industries or the conservation of the natural beauty of the community.

Both Kuroda’s participatory model and Chandler’s pluralistic theory stress the importance of public participation in local decision-making. They assume that people can actually make a difference and have a solid way of influencing local politics; they also suppose that citizens are interested in doing so. This research, however, is not intent on exploring the relations between civic participation and decision-making in detail. Instead it will look at the possible influence that previous, civic involvement of the councilors can have on their decision-making.

2.3 Criticism of Political Parties in Local Government

Stoker’s book, *The Politics of Local Government* (1991), based on an analysis of local government in the UK, opposes Kuroda’s localist ideas. Stoker sees local government as a focus for the broader conflicts between political parties, as well as an arena for political competition between business groups, trade unions, community action groups, ethnic minorities, etc. He describes the politicization of locally elected local governments through their opposition to the administration, as a consequence of growing party control over local authorities. “It is now almost universal practice for councilors of the same political party on an authority to organize themselves into a political group which meets to pre-determine the line to be taken on matters coming before the council,” contends Stoker (1991, 39). He goes on to stress the importance of values like group discipline, cohesion, and solidarity, which in his view are central to political party members. This can be supported by the observation that 92% of the Conservative and 99% of the Labour groups, when in power, vote together. Moreover, the argument goes, the organization of local authorities is based on party lines and, crucially, such politicization also entails the management and the strengthening of the parties and party organizations within the local government. This view, based on the situation in the UK, might be supported by the experience in several Central European countries where, in spite of a great number of independent councilors, most counties are controlled by coalitions composed of the same parties that cooperate at the national level.

This tendency is particularly interesting against the background of what Malikova (1995) describes as the “unclear political orientation of campaigns at the town and village or county level.” She claims that attempts to explain local politics in Central and Eastern Europe by a left-right differentiation lead only to confusion. “In the municipal elections the orientation prevailed more toward the solution of the real problems of towns and villages. Candidates tried hard to convince voters of their professional competency,”

concludes Malikova (1995, 17). The question of why local alliances, which are primarily concerned with solving local issues, follow the same pattern of party cooperation as the party secretariats on the national level thus remains open.

As pointed out earlier, Chandler discusses the same phenomenon (local councils being controlled by party majorities), but he presents it in a rather localist light while describing pluralist theories: citizens can pressure their representatives by threatening not to elect them again. Chandler and Malikova both presuppose that local elections are decided on the basis of local political performance, local campaigns, and local issues. Stoker, on the other hand, claims that local elections are determined by national issues. Newton's research (in Stoker, 1991, 52) on local elections in Birmingham between 1945 and 1965 shows that local factors have a relatively insignificant impact on local election results. Stoker concludes by saying that a determined localist could argue that national party allegiances are structured in part by the performance of the parties at the local level; however, he implies that such consideration can be neglected.

The broadly accepted journalistic approach seems to follow Stoker's rather than Chandler's conception. Recent local elections in Spain were interpreted as a victory of Prime Minister Aznar because his party managed to keep power in most counties. The implication is that the people in Andalusia, for example, were actually voting for Aznar and not for the local representatives that they thought were most fit to deal with Andalusia's affairs. Similar stories are often heard throughout Europe and seem to support Stoker's conclusions.

Magnusson and Sancton (1983) list some further arguments against the involvement of political parties at the local level, which have a long history and include the following:

- Most local issues are "administrative" rather than "political" in character;
- There is no point in having local issues entangled with acrimonious political party debates that have no inherent connection to them;
- The presence of parties would result in favoritism in the awarding of contracts and the provision of services.

2.4 Supporting Arguments for Political Parties in Local Government

Apart from the above criticisms of the dark side of political parties in local government, Stoker (1991, 49) argues (quoting the "Widdicombe Report") that party politics in local government are both inevitable and desirable because they offer the organizational basis through which citizens can achieve self-government and the services they want without direct participation. Political parties, according to him, also enable straightforward accountability. Magnusson and Sancton (1983) add the further argument that political

parties bring a certain continuity to local politics, stimulate interest in it, and provide a good training ground for party activists.

Goldsmith and Rose (2000) claim that, especially in larger constituencies, there is not much difference between local and national politicians. The authors argue that both are in search of power and prestige. This claim can be taken as an extension of the point made by Magnusson and Sancton, that political parties bring continuity to local politics as well as people who are interested in furthering their political careers.

Another proponent of having classical political parties involved at the local level is Martin Saiz (1999). He claims that local political parties should be understood as “Janus-faced,” or double-faced, in that they are components of national organizations, on the one hand, and specific actors in community politics, on the other. This claim would also be supported by Coulson (1995), who focuses on the establishment of local democracy in Eastern Europe. According to Coulson, the development of local agents is a minimum condition for the emergence of local autonomy, and the natural groups of such agents are local governments or the regional branches of political parties. Chapman and Malikova (1995) strengthen this view by saying that at least on the local level voters are more interested in personalities than in parties. Writing about Slovakia in the mid-nineties, they argue that “unstable groups have formed around personalities rather than on the basis of platforms or socio-economic cleavages” (1995, 65).

This theoretical section has addressed the role of political parties in local governance and attempted to examine its critics as well as its defenders. Critics of political parties in local government argue that political parties shift the attention far from local issues and cause local elections to be decided on the basis of the national policies of their respective parties; that they “politicize” local administrative issues; and that their involvement may result in favoritism when it comes to contracts and provision of services. The defenders argue that political parties provide the necessary organizational framework of self-government; they allow for straightforward accountability as well as continuity in local politics; and they also create opportunities for the development of local politicians. The main link between the criticism of political parties in local government and Chandler’s elite theories would be the danger of favoritism, while the clearest link between the defense of political parties and Chandler’s theory of pluralism is the accountability argument.

As this research will focus on identifying delegates and trustees among the councilors, we propose that it is possible to link these concepts (delegate and trustee) to the theories (elite theories and pluralistic theories). Delegates can be seen as councilors presented in the elite theories. They give more consideration to their party or other group of special consideration, they have to be constantly accountable to the party or other group of special consideration, and they tend to vote in accordance with the positions of those parties or groups. Trustees are more in line with pluralistic theories. They see themselves as the people’s representatives, who have a mandate to follow their

own opinion on what is the best for the constituency. That is why they tend to be more independent from the party.

2.5 What Goes on Inside Local Governments?

Political parties are, however, not the sole agents of local governance. In attempting to understand the real functioning of local governments, Stoker stresses the importance of examining the internal politics of local authorities. He tries to inquire “what goes on inside towns, boroughs, and county halls...” (1991, 89). As a way of getting at this question he presents the following six models of how local governments might operate:

1. *The “joint elite” of senior officers and councilors.* What happens according to this model is that the party chairs make the group accept decisions made by themselves and leading civil servants. However, Stoker claims that in Britain, lately, the opposite is more common: the political group instructs the civil officers what to do. This model was probably in some sense applicable in Central and Eastern Europe in the early ‘90s, when the newly elected representatives relied on the experience of the pre-1989 officials.
2. *The ruling party group and party caucuses.* This model is particularly important when the party is set on implementing its manifesto. The inner structure of decision-making within a political group can vary from the domination of an inner circle of senior members perhaps influenced by various interest groups, to giving the right to vote to all local party members, even to those who are not councilors. The main point is that the decision of the party is binding for all the councilors nominated by the respective party.
3. *Councilors as ward representatives.* This category seems to represent an ideal type of the councilor-as-trustee. The councilors enhance local loyalties; they may have a history of activism in the community or at least in some single-issue cases; they have good contact with the voters and know how to handle local issues; moreover, they reintroduce an area dimension into policymaking. Stoker claims that, given some favorable circumstances, the ward councilors can be effective in pursuing their goals. However, he admits that the ward representatives are usually not involved in the policymaking process and thus cannot influence the major decisions affecting their wards. It can be argued that potential efforts of majority party councilors to represent the interests of their wards end up unfulfilled because of the pressure to follow the party line. At the same time, the demands of minority party councilors can easily be neglected.
4. *Interdepartmental conflicts.* This model studies the intraorganizational politics of local authorities and is interested, for example, in the issue of professionalization of local government services.

5. *Intradepartmental relations.* The real influence in local government in this model is not based on a formal authority or hierarchy but rather on ideas, innovation, and solutions. That is why even junior officials can be actual motors of policy-making.
6. *Interparty deals.* Not many counties are ruled by only one party. The same kind of deal-making that takes place at the national level of politics can be found here.

As this research is concerned with the influence of political parties on local government and not on the role of civil servants or other agents, it will examine two scenarios based on this typology. The first one proposes that all political party members and those who were nominated by a political party can be identified as delegates. From this perspective only independent candidates can be identified as trustees. This assumption is based on Stoker's second model (the ruling party group and party caucuses). In this model it is the political party that formulates the policy, and when it makes its decision the party requires everyone to vote in accordance with it.

The second scenario considers the situation of a ward representative who is at the same time a member of a political party and a political group within the municipal council. In this case it is possible to be a political party member and to perceive oneself as a trustee who is aware of the interests of the constituents in the ward and makes independent decisions in their interest. This ward representative, it can be claimed, would be more embedded in the municipality and would have a history of civic engagement.

2.6 Tensions between Local and National Governments

Malikova (1995) claims that, on the most general level, a fundamental difference between local and central politics is the nature of the power that is available to local and national politicians. She argues that to attain political authority local elites are not required to have the same political capabilities as professional politicians who work in central government. "The specific professional ability of local politicians must include in-depth knowledge of local problems and the ability to work out local policies that will attract citizens to cooperative decision making about public affairs" (1995, 7–8). The power of local elites is characterized by the uniqueness of local problems. Local authorities are confronted with the citizens' immediate problems and they have the advantage of having personal influence on the formation of local public opinion. Local representatives thus have a natural tendency towards independence in dealing with local issues. However, critics of localism point to the illusory nature of the claim that local power is independent from the center. They assert that local political power is always subordinate to the central government. That is why they consider the calls for local autonomy and independence to be based on political illusion.

Elander and Gustafsson (1991) as well as Vajdova (1995) argue that tensions between central and local government were present in Central and Eastern Europe in the early 1990s because of the legacy of the Soviet model of local government. As was said earlier, the Soviet model was based on party control of local councils which were not self-governing bodies but executive units of state administration. The tension between central and local government was in some cases related to the pressure from below to promote the emerging local self-government system on the one side and the national policy of implementing national democracy and a market-oriented economy on the other. In other countries, however, self-government was implemented as part of the national policy without any popular demand for such an arrangement.

The period of transition was characterized by political decisions aimed at the establishment “of a renewed governance function of municipalities” (Malikova, 1995). The law established autonomous local units as legal bodies with independent budgets, property and sources of income. However, as Elander and Gustafsson (1991) point out, in some countries there is still a struggle between the center and the local government due to the latter’s financial dependence on the center, caused by the fact that the multidimensionality of local budgets (in which the center is not the only determinant) is not yet fully operating. Sopoci (1995) offers a specific example of this general struggle between central and local government during the transition period in Slovakia. He describes the formation of the Association of Towns and Villages of Slovakia (ZMOS) and a later clash between them and the center. “In fact, the representatives of the state and the deputies of Slovak towns and communities turned out to be bearers of polar-opposite interests and proponents of diametrically differing conceptions of how to build public administration in Slovakia—one of them highly center-oriented, and the other committed to decentralization and the devolution of power” (1995, 27). With this example in mind, it can be expected that local politicians, both delegates and trustees, will prefer to represent local rather than national interests.

These tensions seem to have become a thing of the past, and the “national world of local government” (Rhodes 1991, 9) is now operating in most Central and Eastern European countries. According to this concept local government represents an institutionalization of local interests and constitutes an arena for negotiations with the central state, while from the perspective of the central state it plays an integrative role in the sense of involving citizens.

3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN BULGARIA, ESTONIA, AND HUNGARY

This research is not concerned with the general state of local governance in Central and Eastern Europe, but focuses on the role of political parties in local government. Moreover, it addresses a very specific issue related to their role—do they tend to turn their members

into party trustees? As our analysis is based on data from the three selected countries, it can be expected that the results will differ among the countries. The aim of this section is to point out some important structural differences in the roles of the political parties in those countries that might explain the different results. Some studies (Baldersheim 1996, Bennett 1997) claim that political parties in local governance in Central and Eastern Europe are crystallized and clearly differentiated, since they relatively consistently and effectively represent the interests of distinct groups of citizens. We can assume that due to the territorial as well as historical specificities of Bulgaria, Estonia, and Hungary, their political parties and also political cultures will function according to different patterns. For this reason the research will not focus on differences between individual parties but will instead attempt to find general tendencies within the countries.

Bennett (1997) presents an interesting historical argument according to which some differences among the post-communist countries can be explained on the basis of their pre-1989 situation. He claims that countries with more liberal Communist Party regimes (such as Hungary) had already developed an increased level of local autonomy in the 1980s, unlike countries with a more conservative Communist Party rule (such as Bulgaria or the Czech Republic). This would mean that Hungary has a longer tradition of decentralization and local governance. At the same time, the new political parties were introduced only after 1989, so it is hard to argue that Hungary has a longer history of free public engagement.

Some authors (Kandeva 2001, Ieda 2000) characterize the Bulgarian local government as highly politicized. The central government plays a rather important role in local politics in that country because of the role of national parties and of governors who are appointed by the Council of Ministers. The local election system combines proportional and majority systems—proportional for councilors and majority for mayors. As mentioned earlier, the national parties are dominant in local governments and they tend to form the same coalitions that operate at the national level. According to Ieda (2000), in the 1999 elections and in the previous one the coalitions were the United Democratic Forces and the Democratic Left.

Ieda (2000) also claims that in Hungary, unlike in Bulgaria, the national political parties have little influence in the local politics of the villages because most of the councilors are independent of political parties. He states that up to 82.9% of local council members in Hungarian villages were independent in the early 1990s. This can be supported by the findings of Soós and Kálmán (2002), which show that the role of political parties in Hungary depends on the size of the municipality. Soós and Kálmán argue that local party branches are more active in cities, while their organization in smaller communities is weak. “Parties in smaller municipalities tend to be brand names and frameworks for electoral campaigns rather than forums for political debate and interest aggregation” (Soós and Kálmán 2002). The autonomy of the local political party branches depends more on the organizational history of each party than on their political program and orientation. According to Horváth (2000), in Hungary there is a tradition of public

participation in the decision-making process. Direct methods include local referendum, public initiative, and public hearing. Citizens may also participate in local decision-making through membership in committees of the representative bodies.

Local political party branches play an important role in choosing the candidates in Estonia, and the candidates must comply with the political program of the party. Minorities also play an important role, especially in the cities. Horváth (2000) claims that although the Local Self-government Foundation Act states that forms of direct democracy can include meetings and referendums, these arrangements have not been extensively used. Moreover, on the few occasions when they were used in issues related to territorial division, only a very small number of citizens took part in them.

In the three countries, the political culture and the legislation concerning local governance are generally quite similar. But there are three areas of differences related to the role of political parties in local governance. First, the number of independent candidates seems to be high in Hungary and low in Bulgaria, with Estonia falling in the middle in this respect. Second, it appears that the central government has a greater influence in Bulgaria than in the remaining two countries. Third, the level of public participation in Hungary is probably higher than in both Estonia and Bulgaria.

4. METHODOLOGY

The analysis section will focus on the relationship between the concept of delegates and trustees on the one hand and the declared preference for national versus local interests on the other. We also examine whether party members can be identified as delegates and independent councilors as trustees. The descriptive statistics already show that there are major differences in key variables among the countries under study. These include party membership of the councilors (274, MEMBPART), frequency of explaining their position to their fellow party members (162, ACCPARTY), relevance ascribed to various groups of special consideration (169, RPRPARTY), embeddedness in the municipality (293, TIMEMUNI), and ascribed preference of local versus national interests (98, LOCALISM). These basic differences among the three countries will be interpreted on the basis of the relevant literature mentioned in the theoretical section. Following these descriptions, the analysis will focus on answering three main research questions:

1. Is it possible to identify councilors who are political party members and/or who were nominated by a political party as delegates and independent candidates as trustees?
2. What are the distinct markers of those local politicians who are characterized as trustees or delegates?

3. Are the councilors who declare their preference for national rather than local interests political party members? Is it possible to explain a preference for national over local interests on the basis of the concept of delegates and trustees?

Question 1

The “Indicators Project” identifies delegates as councilors who vote in accordance with the position of their groups of special consideration. Trustees, on the other hand, vote according to their own opinion (175, TRUSTEE). This research question examines whether it is possible to identify councilors who are political party members (274, MEMBPART), and/or who were nominated by a political party (206,207, NOMPARTI) as delegates. Apart from correlations between these variables, multivariate analysis will be involved and the following variables will be given special attention:

- Special consideration: citizens (166, RPRVOTER)
- Special consideration: municipal area (168, RPRAREA)
- Special consideration: party (169, RPRPARTY)
- Special consideration: certain occupational groups (170, RPROCCGR)
- Special consideration: all inhabitants (168, RPRALL)
- Special consideration: ethnic groups (171, RPRETH)
- Special consideration: central government (172, RPRGOV)
- Frequency of explanation: party members (162, ACCPARTY)
- Frequency of explanation: own constituency (165, ACCCONST)
- Vote with majority (281, MAJMIN)

Question 2

This research question undertakes to explain “what causes a trustee to be a trustee” and “what causes a delegate to be a delegate.” This part of the research proposes that trustees will have a verifiable history of civic engagement (measured on the basis of declared organization or participation in demonstrations and petitions) and of embeddedness in the municipality. The delegates, on the other hand, are expected to be less involved in civic projects and less embedded in the municipality. At this stage we will also examine whether NGO membership or nomination by an NGO to public office have an influence on how the councilor votes.

Question 3

This primarily examines the relation between political party membership (274, MEMBPART) and position on the scale measuring the ascribed priority of national versus local goals (98, LOCALISM). The latter variable will also be tested with the concept of delegate/trustee (175, TRUSTEE). The analyses will also examine interfering variables and the relevance of the following variables:

- Central government as a group of special consideration (172, RPRGOV)
- The level of trust in the central government (138, PTRGOV)

4.1 Working Hypotheses

Question 1

H1: Political party members (274, MEMBPART) will vote as delegates (175, TRUSTEE) while independent candidates will behave as trustees.

This hypothesis proposes that political party members and those who were nominated by a political party can be identified as delegates. From this perspective, only independent candidates can be identified as trustees. This assumption is based on Stoker's second model (the ruling party group and party caucuses). It is the political party that formulates the policy, and when it makes its decision the party requires everyone to vote in accordance with it.

Question 2

H2: Trustees (175, TRUSTEE) and independent candidates (274, MEMBPART) have a proven history of civic engagement, measured on the basis of the following variables:

- They are more likely to have a membership in an NGO (244, NGOMEMB)
- They will more often participate in demonstrations (283, ACTDEMO)
- They will more often sign petitions (284, ACTPETI)
- They will more often organize these (285, ACTORGA)

This hypothesis is based on Stoker's model of ward representatives, characterized as councilors who are aware of the interests of their wards and make independent decisions in their interests.

Question 3

H3: Trustees (175, TRUSTEE) and independent candidates (274, MEMBPART) will ascribe priority to solving local problems (98, LOCALISM).

This hypothesis is based on the earlier discussion of Malikova's text in section 2.3 on tensions between local and national governments.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1 Political Parties and Descriptive Statistics

The data show an important difference in the frequency of councilors holding a political party membership among the three countries in our study. There is also a major difference in the number of councilors who were nominated by a political party in the last elections, which leads us to consider that the role of political parties in local governance

may be fundamentally different in Bulgaria, Estonia, and Hungary. The country results are as follows:

- In Bulgaria 86.1% (802) of the respondents were party members, while only 13.9% (129) did not have a party membership. At the same time, 94.8% (907) of the respondents were nominated by a political party in the last local elections (either by a party in which the councilor had a membership or another one).
- In Estonia 52% (502) of the respondents were party members and 48% (464) non-members. Those nominated by a political party (either a party in which the councilor had a membership or another one) comprised 68.2% (670).
- In Hungary only 34.7% (320) of the respondents were party members and 65.3% (601) non-members. Those nominated by a political party (either a party in which the councilor had a membership or another one) comprised 45.5% (447).

These descriptive findings support Ieda's (2000) claim that unlike in Bulgaria, national political parties have little influence on local politics in Hungarian villages since most of the councilors are independent of political parties.

Table 6.1 presents the means of two relevant answers to the question: "How frequently are you requested by the following people to explain your position on a local public issue?" A higher number indicates higher frequency. Only in Bulgaria are party members more often required to explain their position to the party members than to the constituency. The difference in this value particularly is rather high, particularly between Bulgaria and Hungary.

Table 6.1
Frequency of Requests to Explain Position (Means)

	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary
Party members	3.12	2.54	2.36
Own constituency	2.76	2.67	2.98

Table 6.2
Groups of Special Consideration (Means)

	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary
All inhabitants	6.07	5.86	6.10
Voters	5.73	5.17	6.15
Party	4.75	4.41	4.26

Table 6.2 shows the means of declared special consideration given by councilors to different groups of people. It is interesting to note that the political party has in general a much lower value than all inhabitants of the municipality as well as voters. The value is lowest in Hungary and highest in Bulgaria. It is also worth noticing that voters are seen as a more important group of special consideration than all inhabitants only in Hungary.

For the purpose of identifying delegates and trustees, the respondents were asked the following question: “Sometimes there may be a conflict between what you yourself believe is a correct decision for your municipality and the opinion among groups of people for whom you have special consideration. In such instances, do you usually follow your own opinion or the opinion of the groups of people?” The question measured their declared independence, as they had to say if they usually follow their own opinion, the opinion of the groups of people, or if it differs depending on the situation. The results are as follows:

- In Bulgaria 23.3% of respondents answered that they vote according to their own opinion, 13.3% follow the opinion of the groups of people, and for 63.4% it depends on the situation.
- In Estonia 17.6% said they vote according to their own opinion, 9.1% usually follow the opinion of the groups of people, and 73.3% claim that it depends on the situation.
- In Hungary 18.2% declared that vote according to their own opinion, 10.4% follow the opinion of the groups of people, and 71.4% said that it depends on the situation.

These data indicate that a higher number of councilors claims to follow their own opinion in Bulgaria than in the two other countries, but also a higher number claims to follow the opinion of the groups of people. Respondents in Hungary and Estonia tend to decide on the basis of a particular situation more often. The data also show remarkably similar percentages between Hungary and Estonia.

When it comes to the issue of embeddedness in the municipality, the lower mean value shows a longer period of time that the respondents lived in the locality. The means are 1.31 for Bulgaria, 1.17 for Estonia, and 1.44 for Hungary. This would lead to the conclusion that councilors in Hungary live for a shorter time in their municipality than in the other two countries, but the data generally indicate very high levels of embeddedness. This means that most of the councilors live either their entire lives or for a very long period of time in the municipalities they represent.

Another important variable (LOCALISM) measures the declared position on a seven-point scale between the following statements: “Achieving national goals must always take priority over solving local problems” versus “Solving local problems must always take priority over achieving national goals.” The cumulative percentages indicat-

ing preference of national goals to local problems show a significant difference among the respective countries. In Bulgaria 48.2% of respondents declare national goals to be the priority, compared to 19.1% in Estonia and 13.3% in Hungary. These data strongly resonate with the theoretical claim by Kandeveva (2001) and Ieda (2000) that there is a higher influence of the central government in Bulgaria than in the remaining two countries. It seems that in Bulgaria there is not only stronger influence of the central government on the local one but the local representatives also acknowledge the priority of the national goals.

5.2 Can Political Party Members Be Identified as Delegates?

This section will present the answer to the first working hypothesis separately for each country. After this overview we will learn if it is possible to identify political party members as delegates and independent candidates as trustees on the basis of the available data. Cramer's V is usually used as the correlation coefficient between an ordinal and a nominal variable, while Pearson's coefficient is used between two ordinal variables. *Asresid* (adjusted residual) is indicated in cases where it is higher than 1.5 and there is not a high enough correlation or the correlation is not significant. Unless otherwise indicated, the significance of the correlation is 99%.

Bulgaria

Political party members in Bulgaria give special consideration to their party as they are more often asked by their party to give explanations, but it cannot be said that they vote according to the opinion of the party or other groups of people rather than according to their own view. It is not possible to identify political party members as delegates. At the same time, it is not possible to identify independent candidates as trustees. This situation can be partly explained by the fact that almost all councilors in Bulgaria were nominated to their function by a political party. More detailed analysis shows that:

- Members of political parties in Bulgaria are more often asked to explain their position to fellow party members (Cramer's $V=0.451$). In the case of those who were nominated by the party as members, Cramer's $V=0.396$. In the case of those who were nominated by another party, Cramer's $V=0.326$.
- Members of political parties in Bulgaria list their political party as a more important group of special consideration (Cramer's $V=0.285$). In the case of those who were nominated by a party as members Cramer's $V=0.282$. In the case of those who were nominated by another party Cramer's $V=0.205$.
- Members of political parties in Bulgaria more often do not follow the opinions of groups of special consideration. There is not a significant correlation, but the *asresid*=1.5. (In the case of those who were nominated by a party as members other party, *asresid*=2.4.)

Table 6.3
Bulgaria (Pearson Correlation)

	Special consideration: voters of respondent	Special consideration: all inhabitants	Special consideration: party
Special consideration: voters	1.000	0.072(*)	0.349(**)
Special consideration: municipal area	0.285(**)	-0.088(**)	0.211(**)
Special consideration: all inhabitants	0.072(*)	1.000	-0.021
Special consideration: party	0.349(**)	-0.021	1.000
Special consideration: certain occupational groups	0.208(**)	-0.078(*)	0.335(**)
Special consideration: ethnic groups	0.131(**)	0.001	0.333(**)
Special consideration: central government	0.133(**)	0.055	0.350(**)
Vote with majority	0.040	0.101(**)	0.149(**)
Frequency of explanation: party members	0.060	0.035	0.246(**)
Frequency of explanation: own constituency	-0.001	0.076(*)	-0.004

Note: * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 6.3 shows a medium correlation between giving special consideration to party and to voters, central government, occupational groups, ethnic groups, and frequency of explanation to party members. A smaller correlation was found between special consideration to party and voting with the majority. Interestingly enough, there is no significant correlation between special consideration given to the party and special consideration given to all inhabitants. When it comes to special consideration to all inhabitants, there is only small correlation with voting with the majority and a very small correlation with frequency of explanation to own constituency. There is also very small negative correlation with special consideration to municipal area.

When studying the relation between delegates/trustees and groups of special consideration, we find a significant correlation in the case of political party (Cramer's $V=0.125$, significance 93%), occupational group (Cramer's $V=0.127$, significance 93%), and central government (Cramer's $V=0.136$, significance 98%).

From this we can conclude that politicians who give more special consideration to party, central government, and occupational groups vote as delegates. They are also

more often expected to explain their position to party members. In comparison with the data from other countries it will be shown that this group of councilors in Bulgaria is not as linked with their municipal area.

Estonia

The results show that political party members in Estonia are more often asked to explain their position to party members and they give more special consideration to the party. Also, they vote according to the opinion of the party rather than following their own opinion. They can be identified as delegates. It is also possible to identify the independent candidates as trustees.

More detailed analysis shows that:

- Members of political parties in Estonia vote less often according to their own opinion (delegates) $Asresid=-1.9$
- Members of political parties in Estonia are more often asked to explain their position to fellow party members (Cramer's $V=0.364$). In the case of those who were nominated by a party as members, Cramer's $V=0.340$, while if they were nominated by another party, Cramer's $V=0.170$.

Table 6.4
Estonia (Pearson Correlation)

	Special consideration: voters of respondent	Special consideration: all inhabitants	Special consideration: party
Special consideration: voters	1.000	0.012	0.340(**)
Special consideration: municipal area	0.346(**)	-0.046	0.216(**)
Special consideration: all inhabitants	0.012	1.000	0.002
Special consideration: party	0.340(**)	0.002	1.000
Special consideration: certain occupational groups	0.239(**)	-0.109(**)	0.400(**)
Special consideration: ethnic groups	0.231(**)	-0.031	0.341(**)
Special consideration: central government	0.221(**)	0.001	0.425(**)
Frequency of explanation: party members	0.136(**)	0.072(*)	0.256(**)
Frequency of explanation: own constituency	0.071(*)	0.119(**)	-0.038
Vote with majority	0.058	-0.042	0.095(*)

Note: * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

- Members of political parties in Estonia list their political party as a more important group of special consideration (Cramer's $V=0.236$).

Table 6.4 demonstrates a rather strong correlation between special consideration to party and special consideration to central government and occupational groups. It also shows a medium correlation between special consideration to party and consideration to ethnic groups, voters, and municipal area as well as frequency of explaining their position to party members. In the case of special consideration to all inhabitants there is a small correlation with the frequency of explaining their position to their own constituency and a small negative correlation with special consideration to occupational groups.

Table 6.4 indicates that politicians who give more special consideration to their party also give more consideration to the central government and to occupational groups. They also give more consideration to the ethnic groups, voters, and municipal areas. Also, they are more often expected to explain their position to party members. Councilors who give more special consideration to all inhabitants are more often expected to explain their position to their constituency and they give less special consideration to occupational groups. The comparison with the other countries shows that there is a stronger link between councilors who give special consideration to their party and to central government as well as occupational groups. However, there is no significant correlation of these variables with the delegate/trustee dichotomy.

Hungary

The results show that political party members in Hungary are more often expected to explain their position to the party (particularly if they were nominated by the party as members), and they give special consideration to the party as well as to their voters, but they give less consideration to all the inhabitants of the municipality. Political party members also tend to vote more often according to the opinion of the party or another group of people rather than according to their own opinion. They can be identified as delegates. We can also say that the independent candidates tend to give more special consideration to all inhabitants and vote more often according to their own opinion. They can be identified as trustees.

More detailed analysis shows that:

- Members of political parties in Hungary are more often asked to explain their position to fellow party members (Cramer's $V=0.632$). In the case of those who were nominated by their political party as members, Cramer's $V=0.705$, while if they were nominated by another party, Cramer's $V=0.243$.
- Members of political parties in Hungary list their political party as a more important group of special consideration (Cramer's $V=0.46$). In the case of those who were nominated by a party as members, Cramer's $V=0.501$, while if they were nominated by another party, Cramer's $V=0.191$.

- Members of political parties in Hungary list all inhabitants of the municipality as a less important group of special consideration (Cramer's $V=0.231$). In the case of those who were nominated by a party as members, Cramer's $V=0.255$.
- Members of political parties in Hungary more often follow the opinion of their groups of special consideration (Cramer's $V=0.108$; significance of 95%).
- Political party members give more consideration to the voters. Asresid of party members giving very little consideration to the voters is -2.2 , while it is 2.2 for the non-members. This result is rather surprising, but it can be argued that the political party members have a closer connection with their voters because they view them as supporters of the party.
- Councilors who were nominated by an NGO as its members tend to vote according to the opinion of their group of special consideration. The respective asresid= 2.6 . This can be explained by the fact that as representatives of an NGO they are expected to be its delegates. It is also possible that some political groups have the status of an NGO but at the same time play the role of a political party.

Table 6.5 shows that, unlike in the previous two cases, special consideration to voters does not have the strongest correlation with special consideration to party, but it does correlate with special consideration to municipal area. However, there is not a correlation with "special consideration to all inhabitants." The variable "special consideration to party" strongly correlates with the frequency of explanation to party members. There is also a medium correlation between special consideration to party and special consideration to occupational groups, municipal area, and voters. A smaller correlation was found between special consideration to party and special consideration to central government, minority self-government, and regional government. There is a negative correlation between special consideration to party and special consideration to all inhabitants. The variable "special consideration to all inhabitants" has little correlation with "special consideration to ethnic groups," central government, regional government, and minority self-government. However, there are similar levels of correlation between those variables and special consideration to party. There is also a small negative correlation between special consideration to all inhabitants and frequency of explanation to party members.

Table 6.5 shows that politicians who give more special consideration to the party also give more consideration to occupational groups, to municipal areas, and to their voters. They also give more consideration to the central government and minority self-government. On the other hand, they give less consideration to all inhabitants. The comparison with the other countries shows that the councilors who give more special consideration to the party in Hungary are more concerned about the municipal area and the occupational groups. Those who give more consideration to all inhabitants are less often asked to explain their position to party members.

Table 6.5
Hungary (Pearson Correlation)

	Special consideration: voters of respondent	Special consideration: all inhabitants	Special consideration: party
Special consideration: voters of respondent	1.000	0.020	0.284(**)
Special consideration: municipal area	0.483(**)	-0.042	0.381(**)
Special consideration: all inhabitants	0.020	1.000	-0.136(**)
Special consideration: party	0.284(**)	-0.136(**)	1.000
Special consideration: certain occupational groups	0.200(**)	-0.001	0.384(**)
Special consideration: ethnic groups	0.191(**)	0.153(**)	0.272(**)
Special consideration: central government	0.141(**)	0.151(**)	0.224(**)
Special consideration: regional or county government	0.096(**)	0.209(**)	0.157(**)
Special consideration: Minority self-government (HU only)	0.091(*)	0.169(**)	0.205(**)
Frequency of explanation: party members	0.147(**)	-0.189(**)	0.636(**)
Frequency of explanation: own constituency	0.120(**)	0.040	0.098(*)
Vote with majority	0.018	0.038	-0.079(*)

Note: * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

5.3 Who Are the Delegates and Who Are the Trustees?

Bulgaria

Hypothesis H2 (that trustees and independent candidates have a proven history of civic engagement) cannot be accepted in the case of Bulgaria. There was only a small correlation supporting the claim that delegates less often participate in demonstrations (Cramer's V=0.108, significance: 95%).

Estonia

In the case of Estonia, it can be said that independent candidates have a proven history of civic engagement. However, there is a significant correlation in only two out of four

indicators. The other two indicators show a certain tendency (asresid) which supports the hypothesis. At the same time, it cannot be said that trustees have a proven history of civic engagement. Nor can it be said that either independent candidates or trustees are more embedded in the municipality.

More detailed analysis shows that:

- Independent candidates in Estonia will more likely have a membership in an NGO (see table 6.6). The correlation is rather small (Cramer's $V=0.163$).
- Independent candidates in Estonia sign petitions more often. The correlation is rather small (Cramer's $V=0.140$).
- Independent candidates in Estonia more often participate in demonstrations. $Asresid=1.3$; there is no significant correlation.
- Independent candidates in Estonia more often organize these. $Asresid=1.5$; there is no significant correlation.

Hungary

The Hungarian results are very surprising as they indicate that political party members as well as those who give more special consideration to party are more involved in civic activities. At the same time, party members are less embedded in the municipality than independent candidates. No correlation was found between trustees and the indicators of civic engagement or embeddedness in the municipality.

How is it possible that political party members are more publicly engaged while independent councilors are more embedded in their municipalities? Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that most of the political party members as well as those who give more special consideration to parties live in larger cities where they have more opportunities for civic engagement. This may also explain why independent candidates are more embedded in their municipalities. The correlation between size of municipality and party membership is very high (Cramer's $V=0.690$).

More detailed analysis shows that:

Table 6.6
Party and NGO Membership in Estonia

Party membership		Position in civic organization		
		No	Yes	Total
Party member	Count	282.0	99.0	381.0
	Adjusted residual	4.4	-4.4	
Non-member	Count	203.0	143.0	346.0
	Adjusted residual	-4.4	4.4	
Total	Count	485.0	242.0	727.0

- Independent candidates in Hungary are not more likely to have a membership in an NGO. In fact, table 6.7 shows that the contrary is true. The members of political parties are more often members of NGOs in Hungary (Cramer's $V=0.147$).
- Independent candidates in Hungary do not more often participate in demonstrations. Table 6.8 shows that the correlation is the reverse: political party members more often participate in demonstrations (Cramer's $V=0.357$).
- Councilors who give less special consideration to the party in Hungary do not participate more often in demonstrations. On the contrary, the councilors who give more special consideration to the party more often participate in demonstrations (Cramer's $V=0.240$).
- Independent candidates in Hungary do not sign petitions more often. Petitions are more often signed by party members (Cramer's $V=0.334$).
- Councilors who give less special consideration to the party in Hungary do not sign petitions more often. Councilors who give more special consideration to the party will more often sign petitions (Cramer's $V=0.269$).

Table 6.7
Party and NGO Membership in Hungary

Party membership		Position in civic organization		
		Non-member	Member	Total
Party member	Count	109.0	180.0	289.0
	Adjusted residual	-4.2	4.2	
Non-member	Count	274.0	243.0	517.0
	Adjusted residual	4.2	-4.2	
Total	Count	383.0	423.0	806.0

Table 6.8
Party Membership and Participation in Demonstrations in Hungary

Party membership		Participation in demonstration in previous year		
		Not marked	Marked	Total
Party member	Count	224.0	96.0	320.0
	Adjusted residual	-10.8	10.8	
Non-member	Count	774.0	27.0	601.0
	Adjusted residual	10.8	-10.8	
Total	Count	798.0	123.0	921.0

- Independent candidates in Hungary do not organize petitions more often. Party members will more often organize these (Cramer's $V=0.282$).
- Councilors who give less special consideration to the party in Hungary do not organize petitions more often. Councilors who give more special consideration to the party will more often organize these (Cramer's $V=0.195$).
- Independent candidates in Hungary are more embedded in the municipality. This is demonstrated well in table 6.9 (Cramer's $V=0.162$).
- Councilors who were nominated by an NGO as its members tend to vote according to the opinion of their group of special consideration. The respective $asresid=2.6$. This can be explained by the fact that as representatives of an NGO they are expected to be its delegates. It is also possible that some political groups have the status of an NGO but at the same time play the role of a political party.

5.4 Local versus National Interests

In this section we examine the relation between councilors' preference for local versus national interests, on the one side, and the trustee/delegate dichotomy as well as their status as political party member or independent candidate, on the other side. At the same time, attention is paid to the variables "central government as a group of special consideration" and "level of trust in the central government" as supporting indicators of the local versus national orientation.

Bulgaria

We can say that councilors who declare a preference for solving local problems rather than advancing national goals in Bulgaria are trustees. They give less special considera-

Table 6.9
Party Membership and Embeddedness in the Municipality in Hungary

Party membership		Embeddedness in mMunicipality				
		All life	Long time	Short time	Never	Total
Party member	Count	164.0	133.0	8.0	8.0	313.0
	Adjusted residual	-3.9	3.6	-0.7	3.0	
Non-member	Count	388.0	181.0	20.0	2.0	591.0
	Adjusted residual	9.9	-3.6	0.7	-3.0	
Total	Count	552.0	314.0	28.0	10.0	904.0

tion to the party and they do not aspire to a future political career. On the other hand, there is no correlation between political party membership and any of the indicators of local/national interests. However, when party membership is used as a controlling variable, there is a significant correlation between delegate/trustee and national/local goals only in the case of party members (Cramer's $V=0.161$).

More detailed analysis shows that:

- Bulgarian data only show a correlation between variables "trust to central government" and "central government as a group of special consideration" (Pearson correlation= 0.272). "Ascribed priority to achieving national goals" versus "solving local problems" did not correlate with these.
- The councilors who ascribe priority to solving local problems over national goals in Bulgaria tend to vote more often according to their own view (trustees). (Cramer's $V=0.146$).
- The councilors who give special consideration to central government in Bulgaria (delegates) will less often vote according to their own view (Cramer's $V=0.136$).
- The councilors who give special consideration to central government in Bulgaria will more often give special consideration to the party (Somers' $D=0.281$).
- The councilors who give special consideration to central government in Bulgaria tend to aspire to a political career on the national level. The respective asresids = 1.6 versus -2.0 .

Estonia

Councilors who declare a preference for solving local problems rather than national goals in Estonia can be considered trustees, as they give less special consideration to the party and they do not aspire to a future political career on the national level. On the other hand, there is no correlation between political party membership and any of the indicators of local/national interests.

- The Estonian data only show a correlation between the variables "trust in central government" and "central government as a group of special consideration" (Pearson correlation= 0.182). Ascribing priority to achieving national goals versus solving local problems did not correlate with these.
- The councilors who ascribe priority to solving local problems over advancing national goals in Estonia tend to vote more often according to their own view (trustees). Asresid= 2.4
- The councilors who give special consideration to central government in Estonia will more often give special consideration to the party (Somers' $D=0.331$).
- The councilors who give special consideration to central government in Estonia will less often vote according to their own view (delegates). Asresid= 3.1 .

- The councilors who give special consideration to central government in Estonia tend to aspire to a political career on the national level (the respective $asresids=2.8$).

Hungary

Councilors who declare their preference for solving local problems rather than national goals in Hungary can be considered trustees, as they give less special consideration to the party, do not aspire to a future political career on the national level, and do not have a professional political background. On the other hand, there is no correlation between political party membership and any of the indicators of local/national interests. However, when party membership is used as a controlling variable, there is a significant correlation between delegate/trustee and national/local goals only in the case of independent candidates (Cramer's $V=0.157$, significance 95%).

Hungarian data show a correlation between the variables "trust in central government" and "central government as a group of special consideration" and "ascribe priority to local/national goals." Table 6.10 demonstrates the data, using Pearson Correlations.

- The councilors who ascribe priority to solving local problems over advancing national goals in Hungary tend to vote more often according to their own view (trustees). Cramer's $V=0.133$.
- The councilors who give special consideration to central government in Hungary will less often vote according to their own view (delegates). The respective $asresid=2.8$.
- The councilors who give special consideration to central government in Hungary will more often give special consideration to the party (Somers' $D=0.235$).
- The councilors who ascribe priority to solving local problems over advancing national goals in Hungary do not tend to aspire to a political career on the national level (the respective $asresids=2.0$).
- The councilors who ascribe priority to solving local problems over advancing national goals in Hungary do not tend to have professional political training (the respective $asresids=-2.1$).

Table 6.10

Representation of Local vs. National Interests in Hungary

	National or local goals	Trust central government	Special consideration for party
National or local goals	1.000	-0.77 (sig. 95%)	-0.122
Trust central government	-0.770 (sig. 95%)	1.000	0.202
Special consideration for party	-0.122	0.202	1.000

6. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter we have attempted to examine the role of political parties in three Central and Eastern European countries and to propose a possible theoretical generalization of the results. The primary objective was to identify delegates and trustees among local politicians. The first step of the first research question focused on testing whether it is possible to identify political party members as trustees and independent candidates as delegates. The second research question tried to answer the question: "What are the distinct indicators of local politicians who can be characterized as delegates or trustees?" The third research question searched for links between the concept of delegates and trustees and their declared representation of national versus local interests.

In our earlier theoretical discussion the task was to find a definition suitable for identifying delegates and trustees. Delegates, we said, can be seen as councilors who give more consideration to their political party than to their constituents, who tend to vote in accordance with the position of the party, and have to be constantly accountable to it. Trustees see themselves as representatives of the people and tend to be more independent of the political party, voting on the basis of their own opinion of what is the best for the community.

Section 3 of this chapter highlighted relevant differences in the local governments of the three countries. Namely, a higher number of independent councilors in Hungary, a greater influence of the central government on local issues in Bulgaria, and a higher level of public participation in Hungary. These claims were based on pertinent literature and are, in fact, supported by the data of the "Indicator Project." The description of the data shows that almost 95% of the Bulgarian councilors were nominated to their position by a political party, 68% in Estonia, and only 46% in Hungary. The description also shows that only the councilors in Bulgaria are more often required to explain their position to their party than to their constituency.

The most relevant contribution of the research is that it reveals a correlation between the concept of delegates and trustees, on the one hand, and councilors' declaration that they represent national or local interests, on the other. The correlation was present in the case of all three countries. We found that councilors who declared a preference for solving local problems rather than pursuing national goals voted more often according to their own opinion (trustees), gave less special consideration to the party, had no aspiration for a future political career on the national level, and in the case of Hungary, did not have professional political training. At the same time, there was no correlation between preference for national versus local goals and political party membership. This result suggests that the dividing line between councilors who are more oriented to local or national goals is more related to the concept of delegates or trustees rather than to party membership. The data for Bulgaria and Hungary show that party membership has an influence on the relation between the other variables; this link should be studied in more detail in the future.

The research also found a correlation between political party membership and the concept of delegates in Hungary and Estonia. The Bulgarian data did not sustain this link, probably because almost all councilors in Bulgaria were nominated to their function by a political party. At the same time, there was link in Bulgaria between being a delegate and giving special consideration to the party, occupational group, and central government. This is a tendency that supports the working hypothesis.

In our effort to identify what characterizes delegates and trustees in terms of civic engagement, embeddedness in the municipality, professional political training, and plans for the future, no significant links appeared. However, the data do indicate that independent candidates in Estonia are more involved in civic activities. In Hungary, surprisingly, the political party members are more engaged in civic activities. This can be explained by the fact that most Hungarian political party members live in larger constituencies, which offer them more opportunities for civic engagement.

The theoretical contribution of the research can be discerned at three levels. First, it has confirmed the empirical observations about each country-case that were reviewed in the relevant literature. Second, a link between the concept of delegates and trustees and the focus on councilors' representation of national or local issues was demonstrated. Finally, the research has contributed to verifying the validity of these definitions in the particular comparison of the three Central and Eastern European countries in our study.

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Institutional Balance in Local Government: Council, Mayor, and City Manager in Local Policymaking¹

Georg Sootla, Kristina Grau

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides an analysis of variations in the horizontal institutional configuration of local governance in Hungary, Estonia and Latvia. Specifically, we analyze the variation in the distribution of authority between institutions and in the decision-making behaviour of the local councils.

According to our results, Latvia clearly follows the committee model of local governance, which puts policymaking authority in the hands of the council and its commissions, and which is conducive to the establishment of close contacts with civil society. In Estonia, the institutional configuration of local authorities is rather close to the cabinet model of local governance, in which policymaking authority is distributed between the majority coalition and a strong political executive. This configuration leaves little room for initiatives from individual politicians in policy formation or in contact with citizens. Hungary belongs to the mayoral model of local governance, in which the council's significant authority is balanced by the rather separate administrative authority of a local manager (the notary). The division of policymaking authority between them depends largely on whether the directly elected mayor commands a majority in the council. In the case of majority support, the distribution of policymaking authority becomes similar to the committee system.

The main source of variation was the extent to which politics is institutionalized in the three countries. The cabinet model in Estonia was characterized by extremely intensive partisan affiliations and the formation of factions and coalitions. In Hungary, the institutionalization of politics has been almost nonexistent in smaller and medium-sized communities. The specifics of the electoral system were also a determining factor in this. The committee system, characterized by a very weak executive core, favors regular review of costs and the efficiency of administration and service delivery, whereas the relatively independent administration in Hungary is rather resistant to the review of administrative costs.

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1. CONCEPTUAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

More than ten years have passed since the major reform of local government in Hungary, Estonia, and Latvia. These reforms were focused on the democratization of local governance after fifty years' experience of a "totally administered" society. The magic word "decentralization" sums up all the reform rhetoric and practice of that time (Horváth 2000, Kimbell 1999). Research on local government in CEE countries in the 1990s similarly focussed on intergovernmental relations: on the analysis of devices that would guarantee autonomy from interventions by central authorities, and of self-government at the local level.

Moreover, this focus on theorizing about local government fits with the European academic tradition of recent decades. Models of local government in this tradition primarily describe different ways of balancing central and local relations, starting with Leemans' seminal book (1970). This is mainly because a broad interpretation of the concept of local government has been accepted in the European (institutional) tradition. Since then various models have been suggested by different scholars. Along with the fused, split, and dual systems proposed by Leemans, there has been a variety of other interpretations emphasizing different dimensions of intergovernmental relations. Kjellberg (1993) and his followers focused on the analysis of autonomous versus integrative trends in central local relations (Amna, Montin 2000). Wright (1995) developed a typology in which the agency model was the specifically identified outcome of British local government reforms under the Thatcher government. Recently, John (2001) reasserted the legacy of Page and Goldsmith's North-South typology (Page, Goldsmith 1987) which combines three basic variables—functions, discretion, and access—in analyzing intergovernmental dynamics.

Hence, the analysis of local government reforms and its outcomes has a rather favorable theoretical context. Nevertheless, there does not appear to have been much progress in analyzing local government institutional developments from the standpoint of the

central-local balance that Leemans and Smith (1993), in particular, have considered the cornerstone of local governance and democracy. To some extent the theoretical weakness in the analysis of intergovernmental relations was caused by the specific interpretation of the principle of subsidiarity, either from a libertarian perspective (Vanberg 1997) or from a rhetorical perspective that serves certain political interests (Sanglot, Blichner 1996).

But the main reason was rather trivial. The majority of the analysis completed by western scholars merely reviewed the emerging democratic institutions of governance and did not aim for a more profound analysis. Presumably, this was mainly because of language barriers. For a long period the majority of domestic analysts did not have sufficient academic capacity and remained rather descriptive, or they saw their main task as commenting on legal texts. More successful was the analysis of the concrete dimensions of local government, e.g., local finances (especially Högye 2002).

The Indicators of Local Democracy Project—on which our data analysis will rely—was one of the first attempts at a quantitative comparative analysis of local governance carried out at the Toqueville Research Center (Soós et al. 2002). However, here too we could not see a calculated strategy of testing certain theoretical models or hypotheses: the need for first-hand factual data about the state of local democracy was still very urgent.

Another, narrower approach to “models” of local government originates in the US Model City Charter (Frederickson 2001, Svara 2001). Representatives of this tradition also analyze balance as a core mechanism in the institutionalization of democracy. But they focus on the *horizontal balance* of core local government institutions: council, mayor, and city manager. This analysis discusses the *practical* strengths and weaknesses of various configurations of interaction among those actors and institutions in diverse local government landscapes in the US (Hansell 2000). But some other authors have developed a rather sophisticated theoretical analysis of these diverse situations (Svara 1990, Mouritzen, Svara 2002) as well as profound international comparisons (Mouritzen, Svara 2002). European and especially CEE analysts have largely dropped this dimension of theoretical modelling from their focus. In Europe, the analysis of local government regimes has attracted more attention (John 2002). We are deeply convinced that this is one of main reasons why key problems of local development—citizens’ involvement, democratic control, and corruption—have not received enough serious theoretical and practical attention in CEE countries. Why not?

The majority of new democracies in CEE chose the autonomous model of local government. By 1993 Kjellberg and his colleagues (Kjellberg 1993, Kjelleberg et al. 1994, Sootla 1995, Kjellberg et al. 1996) had already warned that a configuration of split hierarchies that had developed in many CEE countries (Estonia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and temporarily in Latvia) would create considerable problems not only in balancing central-local relations but also in the internal dynamics of governance.

An implicit controversy between democratic values and the capacity of local authorities appropriate to this model soon started to hinder the development of channels of responsiveness for meeting citizens' needs and the establishment of enough effective mechanisms of democratic control at the local level (see also Bennett 1996).

Autonomous models of local government are founded on wide local democracy and democratic representation (Kjellberg 1993). Autonomy provides much freedom to act with discretion at the local level, but there is no effective mechanism of external control over autonomous actors, i.e., local government institutions. If external mechanisms of control (administrative intervention) emerge, the logic of autonomous local government will be considerably distorted. Without internal devices of democratic control—party competition, transparency, feedback, and input from the citizenry—the local authority may develop into an oligarchy that can be brought under control only through strict centralization. For this reason, horizontal checks and balances between LG institutions and actors are the cornerstone of smooth democratic governance in the framework of autonomous models. Hence, we find ourselves taking a more narrow approach to the theory of local government models, since this will serve the immediate needs of local governments in CEE countries.

The main aim and purpose of this study is to analyze the institutional checks and balances in diverse legal and cultural institutional environments. We assume that institutional actors have different roles in diverse models and, therefore, that the policymaking process and style varies in Latvia, Hungary, and Estonia.

In the conclusion of his analysis of the Model Charter, Frederickson (2001) observes that “the formal legal description of a given city as either council-manager or mayor-council is less accurate than the particular structural variation that the citizens of a given community have chosen to adopt in order to make their government reflect their preferences and values.” He also cites Adrian (1998), who has suggested that “the distinction between cities on the basis of their legal platforms is less and less meaningful.” Let us take these remarks as a tentative general hypothesis and research strategy, since such purely theoretical models cannot easily be verified through empirical analysis. Also, in the course of institutionalization—understood in the context of normative institutionalism (Powell, DiMaggio 1991)—of democratic mechanisms and values such as representation and participation, *legal definitions would lose their constitutive impact*. The actual shape of democratic institutions reflects the dynamic attitudes, capacities, and actions of local actors.

Hence, we define our research strategy. After describing the empirical research and methods used, we provide a brief analysis of possible formal models developed in Hungary, Estonia, and Latvia. Then we analyze how the main local government institutions are balanced within various dimensions. In the final section we make suggestions for further analysis.

2. THE LEGAL CONTEXT FOR INSTITUTIONAL BALANCE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IN HUNGARY, ESTONIA, AND LATVIA

We would like to concretize somewhat the typology offered by American authors and to distinguish between the council, mayor, and manager forms, in which different models of organization of the executive serve as the basis for comparison. This is important because the council-manager (mayoral) configuration can entail three rather different ways of organizing the key actors in the policymaking process: committee, cabinet, and mayor.

2.1 The Committee Model

A textbook version of the committee system is apparent in the UK (Smith 1993, Stoker 1991). In this system emphasis is on *collegial policymaking* at council committees and on the avoidance of the concentration of meaningful power in any single actor. In addition, committees exert considerable power in supervising the implementation of council decisions by independent agencies. Councilors in this kind of local government have a very intensive and extensive workload (Rao 1999). It is intensive because the decision-making process is entirely deliberative and must be recorded in writing, and extensive because many routine tasks and also policy advice (preparation of drafts for decision) that are often delegated to the executive, are done in this case by council and its committees. Also, to steer LG agencies and organizations, boards are established where councilors participate as actors. The main idea in this model is to ensure as much representation or input as possible from the community via its representatives and as much control as possible over the policymaking process by those representatives. This model does not promote strong leadership as is expected in the US. Rather, the mayor's role is at best *primus inter alia*, but more frequently that of representative and mediator. The mayor's office itself has only a small separate administration, as administrative tasks are delegated to the independent agencies. The mayor's office serves mainly to manage certain supporting functions, e.g., personnel management or purely bureaucratic-technical functions such as handling documentation. The city manager is a weak figure because his role is merely to steer the work of agencies.

We expect that the committee model reduces the role of partisan representation, because working in committees and side-by-side with professional staff advisers would gradually socialize councilors to take a more professional approach to their work. In this framework, an adversarial situation that is normal when party competition forms the basis of the policymaking process could not emerge.

Latvia has clearly modelled its organization on this kind of political-administrative split (Vanags, Vilka 2001, Vilka et al. 2002). This is obvious even at the level of termi-

nology, where the word “mayor” is not used in legislation, but “chairperson” instead. In the Latvian Local Government Act, the representative body is called the “territorial local government council,” which indicates identification of government and council.

According to the Local Government Act the most powerful actor in the Latvian local community is the council, which has extensive competence up to and including the nomination of judges (Section 21). Legislative initiatives can be brought forward by councilors, committees, or the chairperson and by the initiator of an extraordinary meeting. In other words, the head of the administration does not have the right to make proposals for decision at council (Section 33). The failure to reach quorum is such a serious event in Latvian local life that Cabinet must be informed if this occurs. There is no separate executive office in Latvia at the municipal level. The mayor’s office is also a unit of council, because in communities with fewer than 5,000 habitants the chairperson also occupies the post of chief executive officer.

Council committees have the right to “monitor the work of the local government institutions and undertakings,” which is usually the role of the executive (see also Rao 1991). In Latvia, the heads of public organizations who become councilors cannot be members of committees that monitor the work of their own organization (Section 58). This indicates that such committees have significant power of scrutiny and direct supervision, besides their role as dominant policymaker. Latvian councils can also form boards of directors, commissions, or working groups for “the performance of specific functions or for administration of the administrative territory” (Section 61). This is a much different mandate than the mandate of supervisory boards that are largely used in democratic local communities.

According to Latvian law the executive director is appointed to steer the work of LG independent agencies and organizations. The scope of the director’s powers is defined in the provisions of the law (Section 69). Executive directors can only propose the candidate of the head of organizations of the local administration, who is appointed by council. (For instance, in Estonia this is exclusively within the authority of the head of the local executive, not council.) The executive director has a small administrative office, but this structural unit is not prescribed by law. As only 8% of local government units have a population above 5,000 (Vilks 2002), these two institutions in Latvia are mostly merged into one.

Specific to the Latvian configuration of LG are the unusually extensive rights of intervention by central government and even ministers who can, for instance, call extraordinary sessions and initiate legislation at the local council. This is radically different from UK practice (Smith 1993). In the Latvian case the need for direct intervention would be caused by the need for a fast solution to (possible) conflicts between central government and local communities, particularly where the Russian-speaking population forms the majority.

2.2 The Mayoral Model

The model of the mayor as chief executive has many variations in real life, depending on whether the mayor is assisted by a career official (city manager) and whether the mayor is appointed by council or directly elected. When the mayor is appointed by council and does not have the support of a majority of council, the model approaches the committee model. The similarity is especially strong if the local government does not have a city manager or the role of the latter is very weak. The mayor's role in this case would be reduced to chairing council meetings and supervising independent executive agencies and organizations (see also Hansell 1999, 2000).

At the other end of the continuum, the mayor is directly elected and has the full support of council as the leader of the majority party. The mayor is assisted by the city manager who is completely dependent on the mayor's mercy, because council does not have independent policymaking powers to balance the mayor-manager tandem. That is, the mayor as the formal chief administrator has complete control over the council in developing local policy. The only variables that could hinder the authority of this mayor are a weak party and coalition discipline at council. This model is already close to the mayor-council model that is usually applied in fused (not autonomous or dual) systems of local governance. But in our case Hungary has some traits of the fused system.

In our opinion, Hungary belongs to this classical council-manager, mayoral system. Council has the power and capacity to be involved in policymaking at the preparatory stages and can play a substantive role in the supervision and steering of local finances and property. A directly elected mayor is first of all the head of council, and then the head of the mayor's office. Both the mayor's office and its manager (notary) emanate—according to law—from the will of council. All other powers of LG institutional actors are delegated by council. Obviously, the direct election of mayors after the 1994 revisions to the LG Act was intended to balance somewhat those powers and to avoid the over-politicization of administration. A similar model was used in Estonia and was abolished for the same reasons (Sootla 1995.)

However, the above description of the status of council reflects the formal, legal definition. In reality, the mayor's office is a rather important and separate part of the administrative machinery because it is managed by an independent notary. This makes the mayor and notary important autonomous actors in preparing policy decisions. Council cannot directly steer the departments of the mayor's office, but can ask the mayor to intervene if council members suspect that the office or its departments are not responsive enough to council's policy positions. The manager would actually play a very important if not central role *vis-à-vis* the mayor, especially in the case of *cohabitation*.² Firstly, council only approves the results of an open competition that is the basis for selection of the manager. This makes it rather difficult to fire the manager. The manager is formally the employer of civil servants who are employed at council. Last but

not least, the city manager is responsible for the implementation of state tasks assigned to the local authorities. Thus, city managers are also representatives of the state at the local level. This shows the presence of elements of a fused local government system in Hungary. All this would make the city manager rather powerful in balancing council's policy agenda and especially in supervising the administration and independent agencies that are formally the responsibilities of council.

A recent study of local budgeting demonstrated how the cohabitation period creates a council where committees play an exclusively dominant role in relation to the mayor and the mayor's office. On the other hand, in the absence of cohabitation the notary plays a much more important role in the preparation of the budget (Högye et al. 2002).

2.3 The Cabinet Model

The cabinet model delegates extensive policymaking authority to the politically appointed and controlled mayor, who is usually the leader of a major political party and coalition. The mayor appoints a collegial executive body that is similar to ministerial (as in France or Belgium) or government cabinets, depending on where the members of cabinet come from. Council has mainly a legislative role and acts as principle representative of the community as the owner of public property. All transactions involving the community's assets, removable property, and financial obligations must be decided only by the council. Besides policymaking, cabinet has full discretion in making decisions concerning administrative affairs. The main policy proposals come from cabinet. In the framework of the cabinet model, the institutions of local governance—council and government—can be effective and responsive to community needs only if their activities rely on a balanced spectrum of parties. The parties exert political control over the executive and at the same time ensure the passage of the mayor's proposals in council. But the active role of the mayor and cabinet in preparing policy does not necessarily mean that council's committees are marginal in the policy process. Besides assisting council in its legislative role, council committees play a significant role in supervising the administration, especially concerning their costs and efficiency.

Thus, Estonia has developed a classical cabinet model with a balance between the representative and executive sides. Presumably, the various modifications of the cabinet system are caused by the different interrelations between government and administration. One strategy is to delegate as many functions as possible to independent or private actors (management perspective). In this case, the cabinet is more policy oriented and less prone to taking on managerial functions. The other strategy, adopted in Nordic countries, is to involve local civil society actors in managing the rather integrated and complex local government (governance perspective) through collegial bodies. Estonia has chosen the first scenario. For instance, in 2002 only 5.64% of all local government revenues came from economic activities.

In Estonia mayors as well as members of the cabinet must not come from council. They can be community leaders, businessmen, and even key civil servants who are not elected as members of council but are proposed by the coalition and appointed by the council. This is not permitted in Latvia and in Hungary. On the one hand, a powerful mayor should not have a direct mandate from citizens but only the support of majority coalition members. This can increase the undemocratic impact of interest groups and corporatist networks. On the other hand, the appointment of the mayor and especially members of cabinet not from the council enables the strengthening of the professional dimension of the executive and avoids its overpoliticization.

The council has a relatively limited competence, although—as in all countries—only the council has a direct mandate of governance from citizens. The scope of its actual competence in Estonia is similar to the obligatory competence of the council in Hungary. That is, the Estonian council's actual competence is restricted to a minimum, i.e., as legislator and representative of owners' (community property) rights. The cabinet manages and shapes local policy, which the council then debates and approves or does not approve. Thus, council acts in the policy process primarily as a supplementary political check (or control) and legitimizer of decisions elaborated by the government. Even in the appointment of cabinet, the council could approve or disapprove the mayor's choice. All other appointments are at the discretion of the mayor.

Our analysis of budgeting practices revealed quite extensive cooperation and a clear division of roles between government and council. The main actor in the budgeting process was of course the government. But government, which is interested in the smooth adoption of its budget, involved key actors from council in the budget preparation process, including the establishment of expenditure "ceilings" and the harmonization of details. Cooperation between governing institutions and civil society is also visible in other areas. Chairs of other committees and especially members of commissions (the latter must not be members of council) are often leaders of civil society or of a public organization in the same area that is strictly prohibited in Latvia.

However, council members have the power to exert political control over the mayor and cabinet. Hence, partisan politics is crucial for balancing those two institutions in this form of governance. In 1997–98 the commission for public administration reform suggested introducing the position of city manager. But in the cabinet system this is not necessary because of the strong balance between the roles of mayor and council. Party factions could be separate and powerful actors in multiparty governments, which would make the council more independent *vis-à-vis* the mayor.

We turn now from the description of the models, legal provisions, and actual practices of local governance in the three countries, to the data that informs our study.

3. DATA AND RESEARCH METHODS

The data was created within the framework of the “Indicators of Local Democracy” project that was developed and coordinated by the Toqueville Research Center in Budapest. Surveys were carried out in Hungary and Latvia in the spring of 2001 and in Estonia in the fall of 2002 and early winter 2003. There were two different surveys. One was the Local Government Survey (LGS) which polled top officials from local administrations in an effort to identify, through more or less neutral respondents, the main parameters of the functioning of local government and local democracy. The other was the Local Representatives Survey (LRS) in which the work of council and values of local council members were expressed. As the project was carefully managed and coordinated from the Toqueville Research Center, the research was almost identical in all seven countries that participated. Here we describe the research process and methods that were employed in Estonia.

The sampling for the local councilors’ survey was established according to population size. If a municipality was sampled, all the local councilors of that municipality were included in the study. The sample included 120 municipalities out of 241 ($n=1,878$), and the survey was conducted by mail. The response rate in Estonia was 56.5%. In Hungary the sample included 3,192 respondents, with a response rate of 29%. This survey was not done in Latvia.

For the chief administrative officers’ survey, at least two top officials were selected from each of the 241 municipalities (that is, the number of LG units) in the sampling frame. In Hungary and Latvia the survey was conducted by interview and in Estonia by mail. The LGS questionnaires were sent to the respondents by post and returned in the same way to the research group. In Hungary the sample was 704 persons and 646 were polled. In Latvia the sample was 280 and 241 were polled. In Estonia the survey included 355 persons. The response rate overall was 76.4%. Table 7.1 shows the sent and returned questionnaires as they were distributed across the regions.

The standard format of the LRS and LGS questionnaires was used with minor adaptations for the specifics of the Estonian LG system. Some changes were made because of the extremely small size of Estonia and Estonian municipalities, but these minor amendments do not harm the comparability of the data. The Estonian version of the questionnaire has been translated back into English and checked for correctness at the T-RC. The LRS questionnaire contains 68 items and the LGS one 95.

The survey data are analyzed against a number of background variables, the most common of which is the size of municipality.

Table 7.1
Distribution of Sent and Received Survey Samples by Region in Estonia

Regions	Included counties	Survey samples			
		LRS sent	LRS returned	LGS sent	LGS returned
Western Estonia	Hiiu, Saare, Lääne, Pärnu	307	128	66	51
North-east Estonia	Lääne-viru, Ida-Viru	378	190	41	54
Northern Estonia	Harju, Rapla, Järva, Tallinn	528	278	102	65
Central Estonia	Jõgeva, Viljandi, Tartu	282	234	106	66
Southern Estonia	Valga, Võru, Põlva	244	153	40	36
Total		1,739	983	355	272

Source: Estonian LRS 2002, LGS 2002.

3.1 Data Analysis and Discussion

In this section we will first identify the institutional actors’ impact on local government decisions. This indicator demonstrates the actual role of various institutions in the policymaking process as well as the general horizontal balance of power at the local level. Second, we analyze variables that influence the balance between council and mayor, identifying also the variables that are most likely to cause imbalance. Third, we examine the major actors in the decision-making process and hence the decision-making styles under different regimes of governance. Finally we turn to council-administration relations and the supervisory role of council.

3.1.1 The Distribution of Power between Institutional Actors

In different models the distribution of actual power and influence might be considerable. In both surveys we asked respondents:

“Generally speaking, how much is *the influence of the following persons and bodies* on the decisions of your local government? Please evaluate their influence using a seven-point scale, where 1 means a relatively a smaller influence and 7 a very big influence.”

The results are presented in table 7.2.

We can see in table 7.2 that the general horizontal balance of power at the local level is different among the three countries. In Latvia all local institutional actors have quite a strong impact on decisions, but council and committees are most powerful. The mayor as head of cabinet and the chair of council are clearly the most influential actors in Estonia. It is interesting that Estonian top officials and councilors agree on who the most powerful actors are, while this is not the case in Hungary.³ Hungarian top officials

Table 7.2
The Impact of Different Institutional Actors on LG Decisions According
to Top Officials and Councilors (Means*)

	Latvia	Hungary		Estonia	
	Top officials	Top officials	Councilors	Top officials	Councilors
Mayor/ chairperson	5.43	5.37	5.82	5.67	5.41
Head of council	—	—	—	5.37	5.10
Council	6.74	5.31	—	—	—
Councilors	5.33	5.30	4.42	3.24	3.65
Committees	6.09	5.51	4.86	4.93	4.72
Mayors' office (administration)	5.18	5.90	3.67	4.01	3.87
Most interested citizens	4.91	3.65	3.28	3.39	3.51
National government	3.80	4.03	4.72	2.86	4.23
Business	3.69	3.57	3.42	3.41	3.98

Note: * mean on 7 point scale: 1—no influence at all, 7—very big influence.

Source: Latvian LGS 2001, Hungarian LRS, LSG 2001, Estonian LRS 2002, LGS 2003.

consider the administration in the mayor's office (city manager) to be the most influential actor, but councilors do not think it has very strong impact on the decisions of LG. Instead, they think the mayor is the leader in influencing LG policymaking.

The other general indicator shows the difference in impact between the most powerful and least powerful actors. In countries with a smaller difference (Latvia with a mean of 1.56) there would be more institutional balance in comparison with Estonia where this difference is as much as 2.43. In Estonia, the imbalance between the various actors is obvious: local decision makers regard business as more influential than themselves!

One more general indicator is the difference in the overall average strength of the actors (i.e., their power resources). In Latvia the overall mean of the power resources of all institutionalized actors was 5.75, whereas in Estonia the mean power resource of councilors was 4.55 and of top officials 4.74, which was even less than the result for the "most interested citizens" in Latvia. Here we could hypothesize about the reasons for the difference in the overall estimation of power resources. On the one hand, it might be the result of purely psychological differences in the acceptance of power distance in different cultures. Power distance is a widely used concept of Hofstede (1994), which describes differences in the acceptance of the feasibility and legitimacy of unequal distribution of power among people. It is expected that differences in the acceptance of power distance also influences the assessment of the actual scope of power resources that superiors or institutions command. In cultures that tolerate a large power distance,

the power resource of superiors/institutions seems much larger for subordinates than the scope of power that superiors or institutions actually command. Legitimate powers acquire supplementary weight here. (The impact of acceptance of large/small power distance on the assessment of power resources of institutions by people must be carefully studied.) The other reason could be the difference in actual power resources that authorities in various countries can command. Power resources can be interpreted in that case as the amount of monetary resources (budget) one can command and the number of services the local government directly provides.

In Latvia and Estonia the weightings for the main actors in terms of power were as expected. In the Latvian committee system the council and its committees play a decisive role, whereas in Estonia power is held by a strong mayor as head of the cabinet and/or such authority is concentrated in the hands of single actors (the mayor and head of council), which the committee system intentionally tries to avoid.

Top officials' and councilors' different opinions may be the result of their considerably distinct fields of action. A directly elected mayor is first of all head of council and, according to the results of the study, frequently has complete control over the council. Local council is primarily a forum for *political discussion* that would be considered by councilors as the most important dimension of policymaking. (As table 7.3 shows, councilors tend to think that they have much less power than the mayor does.) The main responsibility of the notary and his/ her subordinates, besides elaborating policy proposals, is the *implementation* of state tasks assigned to the state and local authorities. For the officials, these dimensions of policymaking are presumably the highest source of authority at the local level.

What is more surprising is that the direct election of mayors in Hungary has not resulted in a considerable higher overall power potential for that position compared to the council chair in other countries. The power resources should be higher when the

Table 7.3
Impact of Committees on LG Decisions by Size of Community (Means*)

	Latvia	Hungary	Estonia
> 1000	4.65	3.17	4.62
1,000–1,999	5.51	4.71	4.72
2,000–4,999	5.83	5.92	5.11
5,000–9,999	6.24	5.96	5.37
10,000 <	6.34	5.73	4.72
Total	6.07	5.51	4.92

Note: * means on 7 point scale: 1—no influence at all, 7—very big influence.

Sources: Latvian LGS 2001, Hungarian LRS, LGS 2001, Estonian LRS 2002, LGS 2003.

mayor commands a majority in council and considerably lower when such support is absent (Horváth 2000).

The size of community is not as strong an independent variable for differences in the balance of power and power resources as is usually expected. An exception is the commissions, whose power is considerably strengthened with increase in size, especially in Latvia and Hungary.

Some less important observations can also be made. The increase in the influence of the position of mayor with the increase in size of municipality was surprisingly moderate in Latvia and Hungary. In Estonia, too, where the mayor is the chief executive, the mayor's influence hardly increased at all. In Latvia and Estonia the role of councilors decreased as the size of community increased, whereas in Hungary we observe the reverse trend.

Specific aspects of the institutional power balance are also indicated in the considerable role attributed to "most interested citizens" in Latvia, which is comparable to the power resources of the mayor's office. This is not surprising in the committee system with its principle of representation and management boards in which citizens can be involved, since this would tighten the contact between authorities and citizens. In Estonia, citizens can be members of council commissions (unlike in Latvia) and participate at council meetings, but their impact is considerably lower.

The other difference between the countries concerns the extent of autonomy. In Hungary and Latvia the influence of central government on LG decisions was much higher than in Estonia. Earlier, we discussed the controversy concerning the Latvian autonomous system where central authorities and even individuals (ministers) can easily intervene in the affairs of local authorities. In Hungary the source of this kind of influence is different. The local government notary (manager) is, among other roles, a representative of the central government at the local level charged with implementing tasks of the central government in the community. This makes Hungarian local government similar to the continental model, although the (moderate) authority of directly elected mayors is evidence of a difference from the continental tradition (Smith 1993).

3.1.2 Cooperation between Council and Mayor

Although the mayors in these three countries play somewhat different roles, the issue of cooperation between mayor and council indicates further differences in local governance systems. We did not find overall differences among the countries in this respect (table 7.4).

What can we conclude from this? Can we say that there is no adversarial policymaking in local government in these countries? Here the variable of municipal size started to play a rather important role. In Latvia the level of cooperation was not influenced

Table 7.4
Cooperation between Council and Mayor in Latvia, Hungary, and Estonia [%]

	Latvia	Hungary	Estonia
Majority supports the mayor	51.8	48.7	50.0
Depends on the issue	47.7	50.2	49.6
Mayor is rarely supported	0.5	1.1	0.4

Sources: Latvian LGS 2001, Hungarian LGS 2001 and the Estonian LGS 2003.

by size, but in Hungary and Estonia the overall level of cooperation increased with the increase in size. This trend was almost even in municipalities of all sizes. In Estonia the problem of cooperation seems to be most urgent in the smallest communities.

The other variable—the politicization of the mayor—is even more interesting and had the strongest impact. Also, this correlation is very significant in enabling us to approach the core finding of our study.

In Hungary and especially in Latvia (table 7.5), support for the mayor decreases if the mayor is a member of any party. In Estonia we see the reverse trend—mayors who are party members tend to have better relations with the council compared to non-partisan mayors. The variations among countries in this respect become even more pronounced when party membership is analyzed (table 7.6).

The extent of partisan affiliation is radically different in Estonia, even in the case of the smallest communities. In Latvia the comparable level of partisan affiliation is found in communities with 5,000 or more inhabitants (6% of all municipalities) and in Hungary in those with 10,000 or more (4.4%). This means that council-mayor relations in the majority of Hungarian and Latvian communities rely on rather different

Table 7.5
Effect of Party Membership of Mayor on Level of Cooperation
between Council and Mayor [%]

	Latvia		Hungary		Estonia	
	Party member	Non-member	Party member	Non-member	Party member	Non-member
Majority supports the mayor	34.9	71.2	44.2	52.1	51.8	41.7
Depends on the issue	64.3	28.8	55.4	46.8	47.7	58.3
Mayor is rarely supported	0.8	0.0	0.4	50.6	0.5	0.0

Source: Latvian LSG 2001, Hungarian LSG 2001, Estonian LSG 2003.

Table 7.6
Frequency of Political Party Membership of Mayors [%]

	Latvia		Hungary		Estonia	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
> 1,000	7.7	92.3	8.2	91.8	60.7	39.3
1,000–1,999	5.8	74.2	11.7	88.3	82.9	17.1
2,000–4,999	36.7	63.3	11.5	88.5	78.6	21.4
5,000–9,999	66,7	33,3	31,7	68,3	97,1	2,9
10,000 <	64.4	35.6	64.5	35.5	88.2	11.8
Total	53.1	46.9	44.4	55.6	81.3	18.7

Sources: Latvian LGS 2001, Hungarian LGS 2001 and Estonian LGS 2003.

principles than in Estonia. We should reemphasize here that the mayor in Estonia is the head of the executive and comes not from council but from the community. In Latvia and Hungary the mayor must be elected as the member of council and should therefore have some clear political affiliation. Hence we would expect to have two different types of decision-making process in the local councils: deliberative-councilor-centered and factional-coalition-centered.

3.1.3 The Role and Forms of Politicization in Policymaking

Latvia and Estonia represent two divergent configurations within actual policymaking institutions. In Latvia policymaking and implementation occur in committee. The city manager, as noted earlier, does not have the right to make proposals for decision at council in Latvia. In Estonia policymaking and implementation are the responsibility of the mayor as head of cabinet. Commissions and factions within council mostly play the role of political supervision and promotion of coalition interests.

Coalitions and factions are less developed in Hungary and most developed in Estonia (table 7.7).

In Estonia only about a quarter of the councils in smaller communities do not have factions, whereas this is the highest level of factionalization of councils in Hungary and Latvia. In Hungary factions are found only in the largest communities. The extent of factionalization of councils is far higher in Latvia than in Hungary. Nevertheless, the possibility of forming an organized opposition or coalition is minimal in almost all local councils in Hungary and in more than 50% of councils in Latvia (figure 7.1).

Are the extent of institutionalization of factions and the presence of an opposition reliable enough as indicators to predict the intensiveness of partisan politics in the

Table 7.7
Number of Factions per Council [%]

	0	1	2	3 and more
LATVIA				
> 1,000	57.1	14.3	21.4	7.1
1,000–1,999	64.5	9.7	19.4	6.5
2,000–4,999	54.8	9.7	22.6	12.9
5,000–9,999	55.6	11.1	16.7	16.7
10,000 <	27.7	0.0	38.5	33.8
HUNGARY				
> 1,000	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1,000–1,999	98.3	0.0	1.7	0.0
2,000–4,999	93.8	2.1	4.2	0.0
5,000–9,999	96.6	1.7	1,7	0.0
10,000 <	24.7	1.1	14.2	60.1
ESTONIA				
> 1,000	28.0	8.0	40.0	24.0
1,000–1,999	27.0	10.0	46.0	17.0
2,000–4,999	17.5	6.2	44.3	32.0
5,000–9,999	8.6	8.6	37.1	45.7
10,000 <	0.0	0.0	21.1	79.0

Sources: Latvian LGS 2001, Hungarian LGS 2001, Estonian LGS 2003.

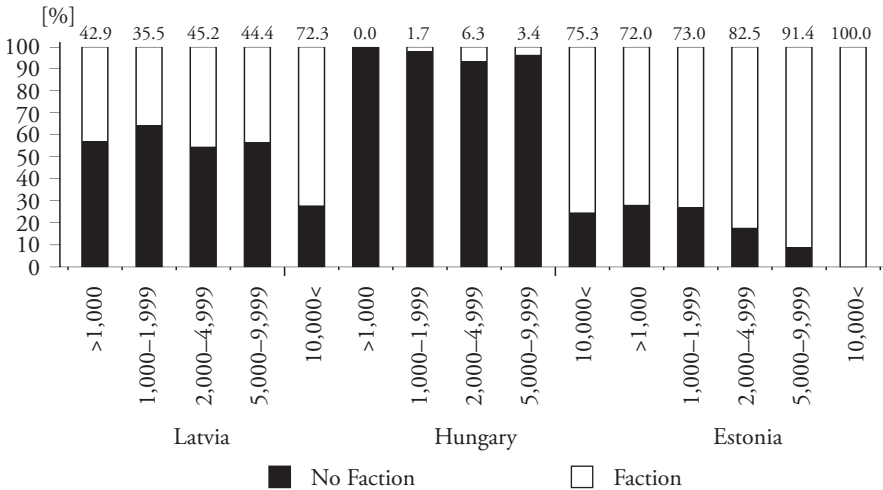
council? Parties might exist, but because of the strong role of council in general and the committees in particular, there are few incentives for councilors to be organized as factions.

In our survey, a formal agreement to establish coalitions was reported in only a few local councils in Hungary, except in the largest municipalities (at 27%) which includes only 4.3% of all LG units. In Latvia coalition agreements are a bit more popular, but still do not exceed 6% or 7% in the smaller and 20% in the largest communities. In Estonia coalition politics is much more developed and significant even in the smallest communities.

If parties do not find it feasible to organize into formal coalitions, another indicator of the number of informal coalitions and voting practices could be how strong the organized/partisan decision-making at councils is.

As demonstrated in figure 7.2, in Latvian municipalities (except in those with a population above 10,000) the proportion of reported formal and informal coalitions

Figure 7.1
 Proportion of Local Councils with and without Factions [%]



Sources: Latvian LGS 2001, Hungarian LGS 2001, Estonian LGS 2003.

Table 7.8
 Public Agreement about the Establishment of a Majority Coalition [%]

	Latvia		Hungary		Estonia	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
> 1,000	7.7	92.3	0.0	100.0	14.8	85.2
1,000–1,999	6.5	93.5	1.7	98.3	20.8	79.2
2,000–4,999	10.0	90.0	0.0	100.0	24.7	75.3
5,000–9,999	11.1	88.9	3.4	96.6	69.7	30.3
10,000 <	18.9	81.1	27.8	72.2	68.8	31.3
Total	15.0	81.0	16.8	83.2	30.5	69.5

Source: Latvian LSG 2001, Hungarian LSG 2001, Estonian LSG 2003.

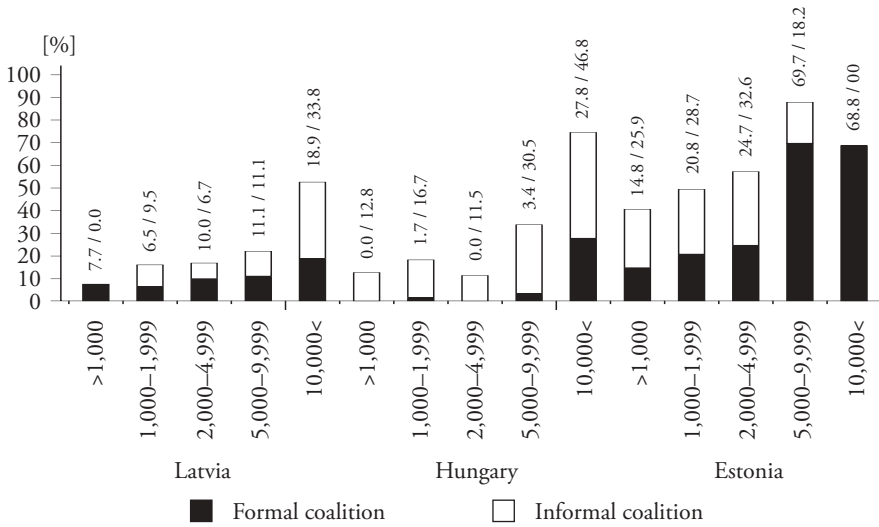
does not exceed 30%. In Hungary the role of informal coalitions is also insignificant, but their importance gradually increases when the population of the community reaches 5,000 or higher.

This partly confirms our tentative hypothesis that the excessive role of commissions can diminish the role of political party values and increase the role of professional values and committee identity.

The next indicator of decision-making style is voting behaviour. The only comparable data we can use for this is the frequency of unanimous decisions.

Figure 7.2

Proportion of Local Councils with Formal or Informal Coalition Agreements [%]



Sources: Latvian LGS 2001, Hungarian LGS 2001, Estonian LGS 2003.

Table 7.9

Frequency of Unanimous Decisions (Mean on 10-Point Scale)

	Latvia	Hungary	Estonia
> 1,000	7.86	8.10	5.41
1,000–1,999	7.90	7.77	6.24
2,000–4,999	7.64	7.30	5.61
5,000–9,999	7.62	6.51	4.75
10,000 <	7.84	4.33	4.00
Total	7.81	5.61	5.92

Sources: Latvian LGS 2001, Hungarian LGS 2001, Estonian LGS 2003.

This data is almost completely in accord with our previous observations. In Hungary, where coalitions have the weakest role, we find the largest proportion of unanimous decisions. This decreases with the increase in size of community and is at comparatively the same level as in Estonia’s largest communities. Latvia’s results show an evenly high level of unanimous decisions. Presumably, coalition politics does not make much sense in committee-centered councils. But that does not mean there are not intense debates in Latvian councils. On the contrary, this was reported as the strongest variable in influencing decisions.

Table 7.10
Voting Behavior in Estonian Councils by Size of Local Community (Mean*)

Voting behaviour	Size of local community by population					
	> 1,000	1,000-1,999	2,000-4,999	5,000-9,999	10,000 <	Total
Frequency of majority coalition voting together	4.79	4.42	5.87	6.61	4.68	5.23
Frequency of majority coalition prevailing against all others	3.34	3.32	4.23	5.03	2.00	3.76
Frequency of unanimous decisions	5.41	6.24	5.61	4.75	4.00	5.92

Note: * mean on a 10-point scale.

Source: Latvian LGS 2001, Hungarian LGS 2001, Estonian LGS 2003.

Unfortunately, data from Hungary and Latvia were not reliable enough to enable us to identify voting behaviour from the standpoint of conflicts and debates. This is because the questions were related only to communities where coalitions actually existed, and in Hungary and Latvia the proportion of such communities was rather low. Therefore, we have evidence only from Estonia where coalition and opposition politics is the essential device in decision-making.

It is true that there are fewer politically sensitive issues at the local level than at the national level. The Estonian data provide some idea of what proportion of issues would be sensitive to party politics. In about half of the cases, the coalition has not retained unity. Even more frequently, councilors who are not members of a coalition supported the coalition when voting at council. That is, the dichotomy between deliberative and coalitional politics and the corresponding difference between committee-based and coalition-based decisions are not so strict in the local policymaking process.

3.1.4 The Role of Council in Steering Administration

The last aspect of our analysis is the balance between council and administration. What devices are typically used to steer the bureaucracy? We would expect that in the committee type of local government direct scrutiny and intervention would be preferred, whereas in the cabinet type political methods of control would be used as a more reliable device.

In our survey the indicator for such controls was the intensity of council's review of costs and of the efficiency of administration. The question asked was the following:

“Over and above hearing the usual and mandatory reports, did the council review any of the following at any time in the last year?”

Three targets of scrutiny were differentiated: administrative costs, costs of local government services, and institutional costs. The results are shown in table 7.11 below.

We find considerable evidence of intensive activity in Latvian councils in checking administrative and service costs. This is not at all surprising because in Latvia the power balance between representatives and the executive is strongly inclined towards council. We do not see a meaningful difference with respect to checking LG institutional costs, which is the most intensively used channel of supervision in Estonia and especially in Hungary. In Estonia the realization of council’s interest in analyzing administrative costs is considerably more intensive than in Hungary, mainly because the politically appointed mayor plays a key role in executive and the administration does not have the ability to resist. This activity is significantly more intensive in Estonia, and council is more active in the smallest communities where relations between council and mayor are less favorable than in larger councils.

Hungary demonstrated significantly less intensity in reviewing administrative costs. Presumably this is because it is the mayor’s office which has to be reviewed, and the mayor hardly supports frequent attempts of council to call the mayor to account. At the same time, council was as active in Hungary as in Estonia in reviewing services and institutional administrative costs, because this is a task of the mayor’s office and therefore there is little resistance to such attempts to control.

Responses to this question demonstrated one very paradoxical result that may indicate possible sources of corruption. In general, institutions’ power resources, especially the power of a commission—which is the main initiator of reviews—was positively correlated with the frequency of review of costs. But in Latvia it is vice versa—the overall intensity of reviews *decreased* in the largest communities (the numbers in brackets indicate the intensity of reviews in Latvia, with the largest councils excluded). More detailed analysis revealed that in the largest communities where there was no review of costs, and especially of administrative costs, the power resource of the key actors was

Table 7.11

Intensity of Review of Costs of Administration by Councils during Last Year [%]

Indicator	Latvia	Hungary	Estonia
Review of administrative costs	87.1 (94.8 ⁴)	47.7	64.6
Review of institutional costs	70.6 (79.8)	66.9	71.1
Review of services costs	84.7 (88.5)	54.1	52.8

Source: Latvian LGS 2001, Hungarian LGS 2001, Estonian LGS 2003.

higher than that of the key actors in communities which did carry out the review. Hence, in some communities where there is extensive concentration of power in the hands of council and its institutions, the power resource could also be used to hinder the control of administration. We observed a similar statistical trend in Estonia, but in the smallest communities in which the decision-making style was significantly more deliberative than in larger communities where factions and coalition-based decision-making prevails.

4. CONCLUSION

It is a rather risky enterprise to seek quantitative evidence for the existence of different theoretical models of local government in different countries. Even if the main variable accounting for differences among the countries is the legal frameworks, we find that on concrete issues there is also considerable variation among local governments within one country, which indicates that rather different patterns of actual behaviour and attitudes do exist in the same legal framework.

We observed clear differences between Estonia and Latvia in institutional configurations, the distribution of authority and patterns of behaviour, which have obviously developed in rather different legal contexts in those two countries. In Estonia the strong role of the executive and in Latvia the strong role of council is emphasized. That is, consistent committee and cabinet systems produce internally more homogeneous local governance in comparison with the council-mayor system. In Hungary, such differences are caused not only by political variables but also by differences in the legal context at elections in both smaller and large communities. However, such different perceptions of the roles of institutional actors in local governance by officials and councilors in Hungary indicated the dispersion of policymaking authority between the main institutions. Whether this flexibility of institutional and role configurations can contribute to the effectiveness of local democracy is a research question for further analysis.

NOTES

- ¹ This chapter is the revised version of a paper presented at the 8th IRSPM Symposium, Budapest, March 30–April 2, 2004. The article was written in the framework of the project.
- ² This concept—derived from French government practice—means that a directly elected mayor cannot command a majority at the council which is elected separately and according to other rules.
- ² Local Representative Study was not done in Latvia and so we can not compare Latvian top officials' and councilors' opinions.
- ³ Indicator of frequency in largest communities.

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What is local democracy?

Is it a social or political issue raised by concerned citizens at a local government council meeting?

Is it the number of male versus the number of female representatives in a municipality?

Is it a protest or petition, politics or policymaking?

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