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Caught in the Middle

Ideology, Issue Ownership and Support for
the Norwegian Centre Parties, 1997-2009

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Contents

1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 NORWEGIAN ELECTORAL POLITICS 1945–2009	3
2.1 THE FIRST LIBERAL PARTIES IN EUROPE	3
2.2 THE CENTRE PARTIES	4
2.3 THE CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS FROM 1997 TO 2009	5
3 THEORY AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH	7
3.1 MODELS OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR	7
3.1.1 SOCIAL CLEAVAGES AND CLASS BASED VOTING	7
3.1.2 PARTY IDENTIFICATION	10
3.1.3 RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY	11
3.2 THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE: A SILENT REVOLUTION?	13
3.2.1 THE CHANGING NORWEGIAN POLITICAL CULTURE	14
3.3 IDEOLOGY	14
3.3.1 VALUES AND ATTITUDES	15
3.3.2 BELIEF SYSTEMS AND IDEOLOGY	16
3.3.3 STABLE IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS	18
3.3.4 HOW IDEOLOGY AFFECTS VOTE CHOICE	18
3.3.5 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS IN THE NORWEGIAN ELECTORATE	19
3.4 ISSUE OWNERSHIP	21
3.4.1 MEDIATISATION	21
3.4.2 ISSUES AND OWNERSHIP	23
3.4.3 ISSUE OWNERSHIP AND ITS EFFECT ON VOTE CHOICE	23
3.4.4 MEASURING ISSUE OWNERSHIP	24
3.5 AN INTEGRATED THEORY OF VOTING	25
3.6 HYPOTHESES	27
4 RESEARCH DESIGN	31
4.1 METHODOLOGY	31
4.1.1 THE STATISTICAL METHOD	31
4.1.2 SAMPLE THEORY	33
4.3 LOGISTIC REGRESSION	33
4.3.1 ASSUMPTIONS OF LOGISTIC REGRESSION	33
4.3.2 INTERPRETATION OF LOGISTIC COEFFICIENTS	34
4.4 VARIABLES	36
4.4.1 THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE	36
4.4.2 IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS	37
4.4.3 ISSUES AND ISSUE OWNERSHIP	42
4.4.4 DEMOGRAPHIC CONTROL VARIABLES	44
4.5 THE ANALYSIS	44
4.5.1 THE MODELS	44
4.5.2 INTERPRETATION	45
5 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS	49
5.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS	49
5.1.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS	49
5.1.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR ISSUE OWNERSHIP	51
5.1.3 SUMMARY OF THE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS	55
5.2 LOGISTIC REGRESSION	56

5.2.1 KRF	56
5.2.2 SP	59
5.2.3 VENSTRE	62
5.2.4 SUMMARY OF THE LOGISTIC REGRESSION	64
5.3 FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS	64
5.3.1 KRF	64
5.3.2 SP	66
5.3.3 VENSTRE	67
5.4 THE CENTRE	68
6 SUMMARY	71
6.1 CONCLUSIONS	71
REFERENCES	73
APPENDIX	79
APPENDIX A: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR DEPENDENT VARIABLES BY PARTY	79
APPENDIX B: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	80
APPENDIX C: FULL LIST OF ISSUES IMPORTANT TO VOTERS BY PARTY	82
APPENDIX D: LOGISTIC REGRESSION WITH LOGIT AND STANDARD ERROR	84
APPENDIX E. BOX PLOTS FOR ELECTORATE'S DISTRIBUTION ALONG IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS	86

Figures

FIGURE 1. ISSUE OWNERSHIP AND SALIENCY	25
FIGURE 2. FUNNEL OF CAUSALITY.....	26
FIGURE 3. VOTE PERCENTAGE FOR THE CENTRE PARTIES 1997-2009	36

TABLES

TABLE 1. PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS FROM THE NORWEGIAN ELECTION SURVEY OF 1997,.....	44
TABLE 2. PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS FROM THE NORWEGIAN ELECTION SURVEY OF 2001.....	39
TABLE 3. PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS FROM THE NORWEGIAN ELECTION SURVEY OF 2005.....	40
TABLE 4. PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS FROM THE NORWEGIAN ELECTION SURVEY OF 2009.....	41
TABLE 5. ISSUES MOST IMPORTANT TO VOTERS, BY PARTY IN %, 1997-2009	43
TABLE 6. THE REGRESSION DESIGN.....	45
TABLE 7. MEAN SCORES OF IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS 1997-2009.	50
TABLE 8. KRF. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR ISSUE OWNERSHIP.....	52
TABLE 9. SP. THE AGRARIAN PARTY. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR ISSUE OWNERSHIP.	54
TABLE 10. VENSTRE. THE LIBERAL PARTY. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR ISSUE OWNERSHIP.....	55
TABLE 11. CHANGE IN R ² FOR VARIABLE GROUPS FOR IDEOLOGY AND ISSUE OWNERSHIP FOR KRF	57
TABLE 12. LOGISTIC REGRESSION KRF.....	59
TABLE 13. CHANGE IN R ² FOR VARIABLE GROUPS FOR IDEOLOGY AND ISSUE OWNERSHIP FOR SP	60
TABLE 14. LOGISTIC REGRESSION SP.	61
TABLE 15. CHANGE IN R ² FOR VARIABLE GROUPS FOR IDEOLOGY AND ISSUE OWNERSHIP FOR VENSTRE	62
TABLE 16. LOGISTIC REGRESSION VENSTRE.....	63
TABLE 17. SUMMARY OF THE HYPOTHESES	69

1 Introduction

The parliamentary election of 2009 marked a historic low point for the Norwegian centre parties. In the parliamentary election of 1997 they collectively received more than 25 per cent of the vote and had great influence in Norwegian politics. In the election of 2009 the centre parties received less than fifteen per cent of the vote. The election of 1997 was successful for the Norwegian centre parties, but their support has been generally declining since then, ending in a near catastrophic election in 2009 (Aardal 1999, 2011). The Liberal Party (Venstre) is below the threshold for equalization,¹ The Agrarian Party's (Sp) support is decreasing and the Christian Democratic party (KrF) have low support and are without a chance of exercising an influential role in a coalition government at this moment (Aardal 2007, 2011). Today, all three centre parties receive low support in polls and elections. It is interesting to find out whether the centre parties have an electoral platform for the future, or if they are losing ground to the larger parties on the wings of the party system. This transpires as several changes in the Norwegian political culture are occurring. New issues are becoming more important, and the Norwegian voters base their vote choice on more than partisanship and class. These changes also pertain to the centre parties, and it is very interesting to see how these changes might affect their electoral support in the future.

In this thesis I analyse the effects of ideology and issue ownership on the support of the Norwegian centre parties from 1997 to 2009 with the purpose of reviewing their continued viability in Norwegian politics. My aim is to see if there are any tendencies that may suggest a more constant decline in the support of the centre parties, or whether their current position is a result of mere fluctuation in vote distribution over time. The main objective will be to define and describe the factors that affected the changing support of the centre parties.

The ideology and perceived issue ownership of the electorate are major factors influencing the support a party can be expected to receive in an election (Aardal and Karlsen 2007; Narud and Valen 2001; Petrocik 1996; Stubager 2003). Ideology is the underlying political orientation of a person, which guides his or her political opinions and actions (Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1963). Issue ownership is the process in

¹ Because of the proportional electoral system each constituency in Norway has an equalization mandate

which a party's perceived superiority in the handling of a specific issue increases its electoral support (Petrocik 1996). I use the Norwegian Election surveys from 1997 to 2009, and have analysed the effects of ideology and issue ownership on vote choice through a logistic regression.

Different circumstances, actors and events characterize every election, but there are certain long-term factors that affect each election (Aardal and Karlsen 2007; Budge and Farlie 1983; Rokkan 1976). Some of the most important factors are the underlying ideological orientations of the electorate, and issue ownership. I have chosen to test the effects of these long-term factors rather than the events characterising single elections. Ideology and issue ownership are variables that affect the choices of voters at every election, and represent more basic traits in the individual voter than other variables might represent (Aardal and Karlsen 2007).

The effects have been different for each of the parties, but the changes have affected KrF the most. Changes in the ideological orientations, and perceived issue ownership of the electorate have negatively affected KrF electoral support. The effects for Venstre and Sp are minor but positive. The ideological orientation of the electorate has moved away from KrF on the ideological dimension with the largest effect on their support, and the party has lost a large part of their ownership over their most important issue. Sp and Venstre have not seen changes like these and remain as viable in 2009 as they were in 1997. The ideological orientation of the electorate has remained relatively stable throughout the period with regards to the ideological dimensions affecting their electoral support the most, and their ownership over their most important issues have improved through this period. The effects of ideology and issue ownership have been negative for KrF, and positive for Venstre and Sp.

This thesis makes a contribution to Norwegian electoral studies by reviewing these factors over a longer time period than is usually done. The results from one election are usually just compared to the results from the previous election. One of my contributions is to compare the results from four consecutive elections. By doing so I will shed more light on the stability and effects of the ideological orientations of Norwegian voters, and issue ownership over time. This is particularly interesting for those interested in studying changes in the Norwegian political culture. The centre parties represent special interests in Norwegian society and their continued viability is crucial to keeping a balance in the societal conflicts they take part in.

2 Norwegian Electoral Politics 1945–2009

In this chapter I outline the history of Norwegian party politics and the historical roots of the Norwegian party system. Building on this, the developments through Norwegian elections from 1945 until today are described, and the circumstances surrounding the elections from 1997 to 2009 are explained. This is to put the analysis in a historical context, so as to be able to draw conclusions based on a more complete picture.

Norwegian elections were relatively stable after WW2 with only small fluctuations in electoral results. This was the case up until the end of the 1960's. In the 1970's the smaller parties gained a better position, and new parties emerged. Things seemed to cool down after a rough period, and by the middle of the 1980's the situation was back to normal with small fluctuations in electoral support between elections. Since then the changes in electoral results from one election to the next have stabilized at a degree, which is relatively high, historically. The average change in support for each party lays around fifteen per cent for each party. It is important to emphasize that fifteen per cent is the average because many parties experience larger changes in support from one election to the next (Aardal 2007; Østerud 2007).

2.1 The First Liberal Parties in Europe

Liberal parties emerged all over Western Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. This is also the case in Norway where Venstre was formed in opposition to the King and the aristocracy's rule, fighting for a constitutional and democratic government. The Liberal parties of Western Europe constituted the political left at the time, but were soon placed in the centre when socialist parties were founded. The political placements of the liberal parties have, to a great extent, been decided by their main opposition. In Germany and the Netherlands the centre parties have been mainly in opposition to Christian-democratic parties, and the liberal parties assumed a position further to the right on economic and welfare issues. In Norway, and the rest of Scandinavia, the liberal parties opposed the conservative right and assumed a moderate centre position (Østerud 2007; Rokkan 1987).

Liberal parties used to have a central position in European countries, but have struggled with low electoral support in the latter part of the 20th century. They have lacked a clear political platform, and a clear electoral basis. It is possible to argue, that the liberal parties have in fact achieved their goals, and most parties today support their original claim for constitutionality and democracy (Rokkan 1987).

2.2 The Centre Parties

In this part I will describe the Norwegian centre parties, Venstre, Sp and KrF, and present their basis in the Norwegian party system and societal cleavages. Venstre (The Liberal Party) was the first political party in Norway, and was founded in opposition to the King's administration.² It was founded as a liberal party, and sought a constitutional and democratic government. The party was founded in 1884 and is based on the ideology of social liberalism. Venstre has brought through some of the largest political reforms in Norway such as universal suffrage and parliamentarism. The party does not, however, focus on the same issues as they did in its earlier stages. Today it is based on a social-liberal ideology and stand for environmental protection and strong school and education policies. As many others, the Norwegian liberal party has tried to find a new basis for their existence. The conflict between environmental protection and continued economical growth has become a new line of conflict in Norway (Rokkan 1987). Venstre has been re-founded on an environmental platform, albeit with limited success so far (Allern 2010; Bell 1960; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Inglehart 1977).

Sp (The Agrarian Party) was founded in 1920 as a party for the rural population and farmers. It is an agrarian party, founded on the territorial and economic lines of conflict and still front regional and agrarian issues. The party does not have a clear ideological basis, but is based more on the issues they front. Sp stands for protection of primary industries such as agriculture and fishery, and regional issues in general. A corollary to their stands on these issues is their opposition to further European integration (Allern 2010).

KrF (The Christian Democratic Party) was founded in South-western Norway in 1933. Its main focus was opposition against the Norwegian state church, but soon incorporated other issues into its platform. KrF splintered from Venstre, because of dissatisfaction with the morals in the established political system. Its founders and supporters consisted of Lutheran laymen, temperance movements and other cultural protest groups. It was established as a national party in 1938, but further developments were delayed by the war. In the election of 1945, however, the party gained eight seats in the parliament against one in the last free election. KrF is mostly based on the religious line of conflict, and the socio-cultural line of conflict. Their core issues are child and family issues, and moral/religious issues. They also focus on care for the elderly and

² Interestingly, all of the parties in the centre of Norwegian party politics today emerged out of the first Norwegian political party, Venstre (the Liberals) formed in 1884.

poverty (Allern 2010). The other main parties, from left to right, of Norwegian politics are SV (The Socialist party), AP (The Labour Party), Høyre (The Conservative Party), and FrP (Conservative Populist Party).³

2.3 The Campaigns and Elections from 1997 to 2009

The analysis begins in 1997, which was a dramatic election, but the most successful election in history for KrF, and an acceptable election for Venstre and Sp. Sp had experienced a boost in the previous election of 1993, caused by the relevance of the EU-issue. In 1997 this issue seems to have lost a lot of its saliency, but Sp was still larger than they were before the battle over Norwegian EU-membership. Høyre got one of the worst results in its history, and AP also lost a lot of its earlier support. FrP apparently got many of the votes that usually go to Høyre, and increased its size as much as Høyre decreased.

One issue that was important in the campaign was cash support for stay at home parents. KrF owned this issue and benefited significantly from this in the election. Another issue, which Sp might have benefited from, was the question of Norwegian EU-membership. This issue had dominated the previous election, and was still salient among many voters. Other issues that were relevant in the campaign were health care, pensions, education and environmental protection. Environmental protection is one of the core issues of Venstre, and the party may have had some benefits from the saliency of this issue. The current government handled the other salient issues poorly and received hard-hitting criticism from the opposition and the press. All of this came on top of the famous speech, where Prime Minister Jagland (AP) demanded 36.9 per cent of the vote or else his government would step down (Narud 1999). Another important aspect was the alternatives for government and government coalitions. Centre parties, being in the centre, are often potential coalition partners when governments are formed, and the link between the potential for partaking in government and increased electoral support is well accounted for (Aardal 2011). This was also the case in 1997, where Venstre and KrF was part of a government coalition alternative along with Høyre, and this probably had an effect.

The election of 2001 was just as eventful as the previous election. A very interesting feature of Norwegian politics in this period is the frequent changes in Government between elections. This turns the tables in the campaign, because the

³ On the established political continuum, the centre parties are placed between SV and AP to the left and Høyre and FrP to the right. The order from left to right is: SV, AP, SP, KrF, Venstre, Høyre, FrP.

opposition is suddenly in position and vice versa. The most dramatic outcome of this election was that AP lost almost ten per cent of their support since the last election. KrF, Venstre and Høyre formed a minority government with the Christian Democratic candidate, Kjell Magne Bondevik, as Prime Minister.

Minority governments has been the norm in Norway since the 1880's, but in 2005 the first majority government in 20 years consisting of AP, SV and Sp won the election (Rasch 2004). AP had received a terrible result in the last election, and sought a strong government alternative to remedy the crisis. This is also the first time Sp took part in a government coalition with socialist parties. The continued viability of the sitting government was challenged by its relationship to FrP,⁴ and this had great effect on the election result (Aardal 2007: 17f). KrF received a weak result in 2005, and lost nearly 50 per cent of their support compared to the last election. Venstre made a strong result, as did Sp. It seems that the presence of a majority government alternative, and the questionable viability of the sitting government had great effects on the results of this election, along with ideological issues over welfare and tax policies (ibid.).

In the election of 2009 the sitting government coalition was re-elected, and kept their majority in the parliament. Again, the parties to the right had difficulties with presenting a viable government alternative, and this seems to have had a negative effect. The election of 2009 was also the worst election for the centre parties collectively since WW2. Venstre went back below the threshold for equalization, and KrF continued the decline they had experienced since 1997. Sp lost a little support, but perhaps less than can be expected after four years in government. There were fewer voters changing parties from the last election in 2009, than had been the trend in the last 20 years (Aardal 2011; 13f).

The trend in the period described here is that the centre parties have had a small but firm foundation in the electorate, and gained more support when they have been part of a coalition alternative or been the owner of salient issues. The electorate has also been uneasy, and voters have moved a lot from party to party. This trend seems to have slowed down in 2009, but this remains to be seen. The developments in the support of the centre parties, and especially the results of 2009, makes it interesting to study the underlying factors affecting their electoral support.

⁴ FrP had not been a formal partner of the sitting government, but served as a close supporter in the the Parliament.

3 Theory and Previous Research

The focus of this thesis is what effects ideology and issue ownership have had on the electoral support of each of the Norwegian centre parties from 1997 to 2009, and whether or not any changes in these variables can explain changes in their support. In this chapter I will present the most relevant theories of political behaviour, and what ideology and issue ownership is, how these variables can be measured and what effects they have on vote choice. The purpose of this is to establish a framework for the analysis.

3.1 Models of Political Behaviour

This thesis belongs under the research tradition of political behaviour. The most general goal in the study of political behaviour is to understand why actors in the political system act the way they do, that is, why people vote for certain parties (Rokkan 1970, 1972; Østerud 1997; Listhaug et al. 1995). In this part I will present the most general and largest research traditions of political behaviour.

3.1.1 Social Cleavages and Class Based Voting

One of the most prominent theories of political behaviour is the theory of class-based voting. It holds that voters identify themselves as part of a class, and vote accordingly. The concept of class can also be substituted with membership in groups based on other political conflicts. These conflicts are referred to as societal cleavages. A cleavage is a major line of conflict in a society, and is an important concept for explaining the way in which the political system encompasses larger conflicts. When these cleavages are included in the political system, political attitudes and actions can be seen in connection to on going conflicts along one or more cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Listhaug 1989b; Mair 2007; Sartori 1976).

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) provided the founding work in the study of cleavages in western industrial societies. They did not, however, give a precise definition of what constitutes a cleavage in a society. Bartolini and Mair (1990: 215) define a cleavage as “outgrowths of social stratification, organized thusly”. Which means that it is necessary for the social distinctions to become organized as part of the political system for it to become a cleavage. Conflicts in a society need to become institutionalized by parties or organisations to become “full” cleavages. There have been several attempts at forming a general framework for the study of cleavages in western societies. Sartori (1976) emphasizes the left–right conflict between labourers and capital owners, as well as the

amount of government intervention in the economy (Mair 2007: 207). This being the main conflict, he presents a four-dimensional framework, also including secularism against religiosity, immigration against solidarity and democratic against authoritarian values. This framework serves as a basis for the continued discussion on cleavages in western society (Deegan-Krause 2007; Sartori 1976). Rokkan and Lipset (1967) defined four basic cleavages in Norwegian society:

1. Urban-Rural: Representing geographical cleavages
2. Labour-Capital: Representing socio-economic differences
3. Centre-Periphery: Representing cultural differences
4. Church-State: Representing religious differences

More recent additions to the discussion include cleavages based on international integration, globalization, immigration and environmental protection. New issues have emerged through increased globalization, and many of these conflicts have been institutionalized through political parties and interest groups. Immigration has been a relevant issue in Norway in recent years, as well as international and European integration and environmental protection (Cole 2005; Jenssen 1993: 10; Stubager 2003). The Norwegian electoral surveys have sought to measure the different cleavages in Norwegian society. Up until 2001 the cleavages identified in the surveys have been:

1. The Public vs. Private cleavage
2. The Environmental Protection vs. Economical Growth cleavage
3. The Religious vs. Secular values and culture cleavage
4. The immigration vs. Solidarity cleavage

Since 2001 the Norwegian Electoral Surveys have also included:

5. The Centre vs. Periphery cleavage
6. The Global vs. National orientation cleavage

The cleavages have been identified through factor analyses of attitude questions in the surveys. Fifty per cent of the respondents are re-interviewed at the next election, and approximately 60 per cent of the questions are repeated to ensure the reliability of the

findings. It is certain that there is a relationship between the variables year after year, but there is some disagreement on what these factors actually represent. Aardal (2011) describes the factors as underlying ideological dimensions. Jenssen (1993: 37) states that there is little evidence supporting the thesis that the factor analyses measure underlying political values. He suggests that what is being measured might be the political loyalties and party identification of the voters. Still, the factor analyses are sound and definitely measure the underlying factors of the sets of attitudes held by voters. Whether the factors represent deeply rooted and internalized values, or are based on political allegiances, the empirical evidence suggest that they account for the electorate's placement on different institutionalized conflicts in Norwegian society. Hence, I choose to refer to the placement on these cleavages as ideology, or at least portions of an individual's ideology.

Cleavages in Norwegian Society

As elaborated on, there are cleavages in society that affect the political system and public discourse. I will now present the theories describing the forming of the Norwegian political system.

Stein Rokkan (1987) laid the foundation for Norwegian electoral studies.⁵ Through his depiction of the emerging Norwegian political system he describes how the cleavages in Norwegian politics materialised. By examining the historical lines of conflict since the union with Denmark⁶ he illustrates how both the party system and the individual parties are based on different conflicts among various groups in Norway. The lines of conflict emphasized by Rokkan are territorial and cultural in nature, and his depiction begins at the same time as the modern Norwegian political system emerged in the 1800's. The periphery was in opposition to the power elite in the Capital, farmers stood against the King's administration, and defenders of rural traditions fought against increasing urban secularization and nationalization (Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

Rokkan describes how industrialization, economic growth and the introduction of universal suffrage led to the division between the working class and the middle class. The Labour Party became the representative of the working class, and the Conservative party became the representative of the urban middleclass and business owners, instead of defending the King and the position of the established government. Rokkan goes on to

⁵ There are, of course, other names that deserve recognition for founding Norwegian electoral studies such as Henry Valen and Hanne Marthe Narud. There might also be others.

⁶ The union between Denmark and Norway ended in year 1814.

illustrate how these lines of conflict created polarization in almost every city and industrialized area between socialists and conservatives (*Ibid.*).

Egalitarian communities in the south and west resisted this polarization, and collectively defended their local culture and identity. Political mobilization led to a struggle against urbanization and secularization through religious and cultural movements. These movements resisted the liberalization of the official Church, and the official written language of the Capital. In regions where mobilization against the central government proved ineffective the functional lines of conflict between labour and capital became dominant (*Ibid.*).

3.1.1.2 Voting based on Class

The theory of cleavages in society is closely connected to *social identity theory*, which is a prominent tradition in political behaviour (Tajfel 1974). This theory holds that political opinions and actions depend on membership in different social groups. This can be a group based on class, ethnicity, gender or religion. If an individual is aware that he or she is a member of such a group, and finds value in the membership, it is assumed that this will affect the opinions and behaviours of that individual. The theory of social identity holds that group interest has an effect on the vote choice of individuals (Tajfel 1974; Turner 1978). In the Norwegian setting, this means that a voter will identify with the class or group he or she belongs to based on one or more of the cleavages identified above, and vote accordingly. Cleavages, as institutionalised conflicts in a society, are understood in connection to ideological differences and political controversies. This means that an individual's position in societal cleavages is reflected in his or her ideological orientation and perceptions of issue ownership (Listhaug 1989a).

3.1.2 Party Identification

According to Lipset and Rokkan (1967), the Norwegian political system had encompassed all significant cleavages and mobilised the largest groups in society by the 1920's. After this, the political system froze and the structure of conflict remained stable. The parties that were established to represent certain groups and interests remained the same up until the 1960's, and party identification became an important factor in determining the individual's vote choice (Listhaug 1989a).

The American Voter is a seminal work in the study of political behaviour by Campbell et al. (1960). Using surveys they studied the American presidential election of 1956. The research tradition based on their work is also known as the Michigan Model.

In the study of the election of 1956 they found that party identification was the determinant that best explained vote choice among American voters. Party identification is a voter's general and long-lasting identification with a political party, and is usually directly transferred from generation to generation with small changes from parent to child. Bartels (2000) finds that party identification is strong among American voters and that the effects are growing stronger. Individuals who do not identify themselves with a party are less interested in politics and tend to vote less than partisans.

Ever since Campbell et al. (1960) claimed that partisanship is the most important and lasting determinant of vote choice the role of partisanship in electoral behaviour has been discussed. If a voter identifies clearly with a party, this can affect the way in which the voter interprets and adapts to new information (Evans and Anderson 2006; Goren 2002). Bartels (2002) states that partisanship can affect what people accept as truths, while Gaines et al. (2007) argue that partisanship can screen out inconvenient and uncomfortable information about issues, the party or politicians. The causal relationship between ideology, attitudes and partisanship is widely discussed. Partisanship might act as the most important variable for political opinion making, when voters change their opinions to reflect the party line (Green, Palmer and Schickler 2002). If an issue is salient in the media and political debate, voters might change their party allegiance to reflect their attitudes on the salient issues (Franklin and Jackson 1983). Carsey and Layman (2006) find that if an issue, which is not personally important to voters is salient, then the voters will modify their attitudes to the stance held by the party. If, however, the salient issue is personally important to the voters, they will change their partisanship to satisfy their personal interest (Laver and Budge 1987: 25–26). Listhaug (1989b) finds that partisanship in Norway is strong and still effective in explaining vote choice. He says that while changes may occur in the electorate and the political culture, parties have the ability to adapt to these changes and remain as an important factor in determining vote choice.

3.1.3 Rational Choice Theory

One of the first and most important works in political behaviour is the economic model of voting articulated by Downs (1957). In his seminal work, *An Economic Theory of Voting*, he introduces the concept of studying voting in economical terms. He states that since most voters have little political knowledge and information, they rely on easily accessible information, such as the state of the economy, to make their decisions. Besides affirming that voting is not a rational action for the individual, he says that when

voting, the voter compares the expected benefits of the policies each party leads and votes for the party that will benefit him, or her, the most. This is also called pocketbook voting, referring to the support of policies benefiting the state of the individual's personal economy. Key and Cummings (1966) expanded on the theories of Downs and said that voters not only consider the prospective benefits of the future, but also take the past performance of the parties and politicians into account. The work of Downs and Key has been expanded upon into what is called the *public choice theory*. It is closely connected to the *theory of rational choice*. Rational choice theory also assumes that voters aim at maximising their benefits while minimising their costs when voting. What separates it from the work of Downs is that it assumes that voters have full information about their choices and the consequences of these, and that they have stable and consistent preferences. In this tradition it is assumed that people will base their vote on self-interest, and that self-interest will be more important when costs and benefits are clear to the voters (Dunleavy 1991; Hollis and Neil 1975; Listhaug 1989a; Riker and Ordeshook 1968).

The theory of rational choice has received much critique from followers of the *theory of cognitive schema*. It holds that individuals develop opinions about political issues based on internal cognitive schemas. The key question in this theory is how the internal cognitive schema is made up and whether it is coherent and deep-seated in most individuals. Converse (1964) initiated a long lasting discussion concerning whether voters have clear ideological values. He argued that only a small minority of voters have a consistent ideological mind-set, and that few voters think about politics in ideological terms. His article is the point of departure for most studies of political belief systems. Zaller (1992) followed up the discussion by arguing that voter attitudes are shaped and affected by the media and political discourse. A voter's ideology affects each individual's stand on different issues and what parties they deem fit to vote for. This does not necessarily mean that ideology leads an individual to vote for the same party election after election. It is merely the basis on which voters interpret new information. In the theory of cognitive schema, it is assumed that political values and the current political culture affect the vote choice of the individual voter. It seems that there are several theoretical and methodical challenges to this view, namely that (i) it is not generally agreed that there is such a thing as deeply rooted political values, and (ii) that internalised values are difficult to measure accurately.

This discussion seems to be alive today represented by two of the most influential experts on political behaviour in Norway.⁷ Aardal (2007, 2011) claims repeatedly that the Norwegian electorate have stable underlying ideological values, and has shown this through the Norwegian Election Surveys since the end of the 1970's (Aardal 2011: 81f).⁸ On the other hand, Jenssen (1993) doubts that there is such a thing as internal deep-seated political values in the Norwegian electorate. He finds little correlation between central issues, and holds that political loyalties such as party identification can be stable and ore internalised.

3.2 The Contemporary Debate: A Silent Revolution?

In recent years there have been several changes in the political culture in Western Industrial societies. The changes are different in every country, but some changes are more prominent all over the West. These changes include that (i) a person's socio-structural status has less effect on his or her political attitudes, (ii) that different issues become more prominent and suppress old issues, and (iii) that the electorate is characterized by less stability and lower turnout than before. It is especially the fact that the left-right axis seems to become less prominent in the political culture that forces the question of whether a new theoretical foundation is needed (Inglehart 1977; Jenssen 1993; Knutsen 1985). As the socio-structural status of an individual becomes less important for his or her vote choice, the question is then what does explain voting behaviour.

There seems to be a wide agreement on the fact that these changes are occurring in Norway as well, but there is no consensus on the exact nature or cause of these changes (Aardal 2007; Jenssen 1993; Knutsen 1985; Listhaug 1989b). Listhaug (1989b) finds that voting based on socio-structural factors has become less prominent, but that the effects of partisanship still remain. There has been a decline in class-based voting, but partisanship is still strong in Norway. Inglehart (1977) proposes that the changes are a shift from class-based conflicts, towards conflicts based on different and opposing values. Norwegian researchers do not agree with this thesis, but propose other explanations for the changing political culture (Jenssen 1993). Knutsen (1985) claims that the socio-structural conflict between left and right lives on despite the diminishing relevance of socio-structural factors. He says that the main conflict today is a conflict

⁷ Surely, a disagreement between two nestors of Norwegian electoral studies leaves a student in a pickle.

⁸ In the Norwegian Election Surveys 50% of the respondents are interviewed in the survey for the next election. This ensures that it is possible to measure the stability in the underlying ideological dimensions.

between socialist and bourgeois ideology, which lives on because it has been institutionalised in the political system. Valen and Aardal (1983) find that political controversies and ideological orientations have become more important to the vote choice of the individual voter.

3.2.1 The Changing Norwegian Political Culture

Voting based on class and socio-structural factors have diminished as a new generation of voters has risen. Instead of voting based on group affiliation, Norwegian voters have based their votes more and more on their personal attitudes and opinions (Aardal 2007, 2011). This has led to political controversies such as the EU-issue, moral/religious issues, environmental protection, and the individual's underlying ideological orientation becoming more important. It is changes in the effects of these factors I will review in this thesis (Aardal and Karlsen 2007; Jenssen 1993; Listhaug 1989b). As a result of these changes the election campaign has increased its relevance to the vote choice of the individual voter. This means that the events and issues of the campaign influence the results more than before. The voters that do not identify clearly with one single party will depend on the campaign to decide whom they will vote for. A voter's ideological orientation and political convictions will guide this decision, but the campaign will influence the decision between different potential parties (Aardal 2007).

3.3 Ideology

Before studying the effects of ideology it is necessary to have a clear definition of the concept. In the study of political behaviour, ideology is not discussed in the classical philosophical sense, but as the composition of values and beliefs in the electorate. (Aardal 2011; Converse 1964; Jenssen 1993; Knutsen 1985; Lipset 1960; Rokeach 1960, 1973) A fundamental question in the study of political behaviour has been whether there exists a measurable political landscape or continuum of the electorate's political orientations. The most applicable and well known is the left-right continuum. It is based on the idea that politics is a struggle between different classes in society. The terminology stems from the seating arrangements during the first constitutional convention during the French revolution, when the King's supporters sat to the right and his to-be executioners sat to the left. Ever since, there have been conflicts between liberals, conservatives and socialists (Mair 2007). Lipset (1960) describes the left-right continuum as a struggle between the different classes in society, where the right is supported by the upper classes, the middle class supports the centre and the working

class supports the left. The left–right continuum forms a basis for the understanding of electoral politics, but gives an incomplete picture of the issues and groups that form the political composition of a society. New issues go across and beyond left and right (Rokkan 1987). As Rokkan (1987) described there are motivations and interests besides the functional economic line of conflict, which needs to be taken into account, especially for the Norwegian centre parties. Some base their vote on religious convictions, and others on the state of the environment. These are issues that fall outside of the economic left–right continuum.

Another framework for the study of political convictions has been based on psychological personality traits. This tradition uses traits such as intro or extroversion, and attitudes towards change as predictors of political convictions. This tradition has been criticized on theoretical and methodological grounds because it can hardly be connected to a political left–right scale. It does, on the other hand, provide a good basis for understanding how political convictions are formed and where they come from (Knutsen 1985; Rockeach 1960, 1973).

3.3.1 Values and Attitudes

The most basic foundations for attitudes and actions are values. They can be seen as the foundation for people's actions and beliefs (Almond and Verba 1963). Rockeach (1973) defines values as a permanent conviction that a specific behaviour or end-state is personally or morally preferable to other sorts of behaviours and end-states. Values are the antecedents of beliefs and attitudes. While an attitude is an organised set of beliefs about an object or issue, values are deeper-rooted beliefs of a more abstract nature. Abstract, meaning that it is a belief not concerning a specific object or issue, but it transcends the specific towards the ultimate (Knutsen 1985). Values are the underlying predispositions that lead to beliefs, attitudes, actions, considerations and comparisons with regards to objects and issues. When presented with a new issue, it is the values a person holds that lead to his or her attitudes towards that issue. Attitudes also determine the following actions, but values are the most basic determinants and more permanent personality traits. A value can be described as a preference for certain behaviours and end states, while attitudes are more specific with regards to single situations (Almond and Verba 1963; Rockeach 1960, 1973). To summarize this discussion it should suffice to say that values are seen as the foundations of human behaviour. Values are prescriptive or proscriptive beliefs that certain modes of behaviour and certain end-states are preferable to other modes of behaviour and end-

states. Values are formed by personality, socio-structural factors and culture. Values, in turn, form the attitudes and behaviour of a person (Rockeach 1973: 25).

With regards to *political values* there are several objections to the thesis of their existence. Granted that there is such a thing as values, it is doubtful that anyone will have deeply rooted, and abstract beliefs about something they do not have any interest in. According to Jenssen (1993) the Norwegian electorate is not particularly interested in politics, and it could therefore be a stretch to assume that many have deeply rooted political values. A person has values about all of the different aspects of life, and some values concern the parts of life that has to do with politics. These could be referred to as political values. It is, however, a simplification to say that some values are political in nature, because different values can be activated by different causes. Political issues could activate some values, and these values could be referred to as political (Rokeach 1960).

There is a difficulty with the causal relationship with regards to values and attitudes. In a survey it is possible to measure attitudes, but what the underlying factor of a set of attitudes represents is difficult to know. As Jenssen (1993) says, the underlying factor can be party identification or other political loyalties. I conclude that the causal relationship between values and attitudes is not sufficiently justified for the political context, and does not meet the methodological requirements. However, sets of coherent political attitudes reflect the underlying political motivations of a voter, whether these be values, party identification, group membership or other loyalties. Such a set of attitudes is abstract, to some degree, because an underlying factor can be measured, albeit not specifically identified.

3.3.2 Belief systems and Ideology

Having explained the fundamental concepts of attitudes and values, I will now move towards a definition of ideology that can be applicable in this analysis. In the famous book *The American Voter*, Campbell et al. (1960) defines ideology as a worldview that says something about what is good and desirable, and what is not. It is an abstract level of political opinion making, and require that opinions on specific issues be formed in relation to broader notions (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). With this definition the use of the word “abstract” can be emphasized, which leads back to Rockeach’s (1960, 1973) definition of values. Values are the underlying and unspecified convictions, which lead to the specified beliefs about specific object and issues. Using these terms coherently it is

clear that Rockeach and Campbell both emphasize the abstract nature of underlying convictions.

Converse (1964) defined ideology as a set of ideas and attitudes, where the elements have a degree of cohesiveness, and interdependence. He does not use the same terms as Rockeach and Campbell, but emphasizes that there needs to be a logical relationship between the convictions that form a persons ideology. Converse calls it ideological constraint, which means that the attitudes of an individual towards similar issues have to be empirically coherent. Being familiar with one of the attitudes a person holds should suffice to predict other similar attitudes.

Synthesising this discussion into a single sentence, ideology could be defined as a coherent set of attitudes an individual holds about what political behaviours and political end-states that ultimately would be preferable, personally or morally, that exceed immediate goals towards more ultimate goals. This definition satisfies the theoretical requirements of Campbell with regards to ideology being more abstract than single goals, and Converse's constraint requirements. Through a factor analysis of attitudes it will be possible to create scales representing dimensions of a persons ideology. A factor analysis satisfies the requirement of ideological constraint, because it measures co-variation and defines a common underlying factor. A set of correlated attitudes suggests an abstract underlying factor. Through a scale reliability analysis it is also possible to ensure the co-variation of the attitudes. It is, however, difficult to define the nature of the underlying factor. The only thing I can be certain of is that the attitudes of voters have a certain degree of ideological constraint. This is not a problem, however, since what I am interested in is the effect of these correlated attitudes on vote choice, and not the exact nature of their underlying factor (Huckfeldt et al. 1999).

One criterion for identifying ideological traits in the electorate is the presence of an empirical correlation. By asking about beliefs and attitudes in surveys it is possible to measure the cohesion and direction of a persons attitudes. To justify ideological findings in the electorate it is therefore necessary to have a theoretical foundation, and coherent empirical relationships between the values of individual voters (Converse 1964; Campbell et al. 1960; Rockeach 1960; Rockeach 1973; Sartori 1969). I will establish the theoretical foundations of the ideological dimensions studied in this thesis later in this chapter, and assess the correlation and cohesiveness of the electorate's attitudes in the next chapter.

3.3.3 Stable Ideological Orientations

The stability in the ideological orientations of the Norwegian electorate has been widely debated. It is also an important issue in this thesis, because it would be pointless to review the effects of changing ideological orientations if the changes were tangential. In the Norwegian Election Surveys (NES) and subsequent reports, Aardal (2011: 81f) states that the ideological orientations of the Norwegian electorate are stable, with only minor changes from election to election. Kim and Fording (2001: 59) find that there are significant changes in the ideology of Norwegian voters in a study ranging from 1952 to 1989. Both studies are, however, recipients of criticism on methodical grounds. The NES re-interview 50 per cent of the respondents in the following election, and change less than 40 per cent of the questions from one election to the next, with the purpose of ensuring reliable results. The problem with this approach is that it may be only the respondents and questions that are stable, and not the ideological orientation of the electorate (Jenssen 1993: 37). Kim and Fording's (2001) study uses data from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) to define the ideology of the median voter. The CMP measures the ideology of parties, and Kim and Fording define the ideology of the median voter by multiplying the measured ideology of the parties with the percentage of support each party received in the election. The median ideology of the parties can hardly be an accurate measure of the ideology of the electorate, but might suffice to define the ideological orientation of the median voter. Jenssen (1993: 37) also object to the notion that the electorate have stable ideological orientations, and states that different measurements produce different results. I conclude that the ideological orientations of the Norwegian electorate might not be as stable as stated by some researchers. In this thesis, I employ data from the NES and my analysis will suffer from the same methodical issues as described in Aardal (2011) above. I will, however, do my own analyses, and design the analysis to detect changes in the ideological orientation of the electorate, although changes might be smaller due to the data selection.

3.3.4 How ideology affects vote choice

Ideological orientations can affect vote choice in different ways. All of the three main theories of voting behaviour described above offer explanations as to how ideology affects the vote choice of the individual. Politics is the distribution of goods and burdens in society, and voting is a mean through which the individual can affect this process. The ends of this effort will be based on the ideological orientation and political loyalties of each voter. In the theory basing vote choice on social cleavages and class, the individual

will review the stands of the political parties, and vote for the party supporting the same causes as him or her (Rokkan 1973).

Ideology can also be characterised as group thinking, and be formed by belonging to a certain class or group, or identifying with a certain party. In this setting ideology is not the only factor affecting vote choice, but is formed along with the desire to act as the rest of the group (Conover and Feldman 1981).

The theory of rational choice states that an individual will vote for the party that benefits him, or her, the most. Ideological orientations may be based on personal needs and desires, but also on moral convictions. The benefits of voting for a certain party can therefore be personal, or more general, but ideology will affect voting because an individual will vote for the party offering the largest benefits according to his or her ideology (Dunleavy 1991; Zaller 1992).

3.3.5 Theoretical foundations for Ideological Dimensions in the Norwegian Electorate

As elaborated on earlier in this chapter, there needs to be a theoretical foundation for assuming that there are certain ideological dimensions in the electorate, as well as empirical evidence of these for it to be a certain finding. In this part I will present the theoretical foundations for the ideological dimensions used in this thesis. There are many conceivable ideological dimensions, and it is possible that individuals have unique ideological dimensions. I am looking for such dimensions that are shared by large portions of the electorate. This does not necessarily mean that they share similar attitudes, but that they have attitudes about similar issues. I find the theoretical basis for ideological dimensions in the Norwegian electorate in previous research and theory. Some of these have already been elaborated on but I will give a brief discussion on how these theories and findings are applied to define the assumed ideological dimensions in the electorate.

Public vs. Private

As Rokkan described there has always been a conflict between the working class, and business owners. Represented respectively by Høyre and AP. This conflict has continued ever since, and is the classical left–right division. It has evolved through the expansion of the welfare state into a question of what tasks that should be performed by the government and what should be left to the market. The working class generally supports government or public solutions and the middle and upper classes generally support private solutions. This is the theoretical historical foundation of the ideological

dimension called Public versus Private. It has also been used in the Norwegian Electoral Survey and the studies related to it for decades (Rokkan 1973; Aardal 2011).

Environmental Protection vs. Economical Growth

The conflict between environmental protection and economical growth is a relatively new line of conflict in Norway. It is a question of continued economical growth, and how far natural resources and the climate should be strained for the purpose of growth. Venstre was re-founded on the basis of a non-growth platform, and represents one side of the issue. This suggests that it is an issue that is important to some people, and it is definitely true that others support more growth at the expense of the environment. The issue has evolved along with the growing concerns with unsustainable growth and climate change. In Norway it is associated with issues such as gas power plants, oil and gas production and the damming up of rivers for energy production (Aardal 2001; Østerud 2007).

Religious vs. secular values

Opposition between traditional religious values and secular worldviews has been salient in Norwegian politics since the party system started to form. It was part of the opposition fronted by the original liberal party and the basis for the founding of the Christian Democratic Party. As described above the resistance against the High Church⁹ and secular elites in the Capital formed the religious line of conflict in Norwegian politics. While Rokkan focused on membership in Low Church congregations, it has become more common to focus on the values associated with religious convictions. These values concern Christianity's place in society, and moral issues where religion has strong influence. This is the foundation for the religious versus secular line of conflict. There are many issues in addition to Christianity's place in society such as marriage legislation, abortion, and child- and family issues that are based in this conflict and that are relevant today. The Norwegian Election Surveys and related studies have detected this underlying ideological dimension for decades (Rokkan 1973; Aardal 2011).

Immigration

The dimension for attitudes towards immigration has received more and more attention as immigration to Norway has increased. It is a question between resisting immigration

⁹ The terms "High and Low church" stem from the Anglican church tradition where High church refers to the groups supporting the established government supported church favouring the theology and organization of the Anglican church, and low church refers to the groups seeking reform and liberalization of church structure.

and solidarity with the immigrants seeking asylum or residence. The resistance of immigration is based on fears of losing national distinction, fear of immigrants taking jobs away from native Norwegians and racism. The desire for cultural unity within the country seems to be more salient than e.g. opposition to sharing welfare benefits. This view is countered by the willingness by many to help those who are in need, and support other countries when needed. The immigration dimension is connected to the political values of collectivism and solidarity against individualism and authoritarianism (Aardal 2011; Brader et al. 2008; Hernes and Knudsen 1992; Jenssen 1989; Sides and Citrin 2007).

Centre vs. Periphery

The centre vs. periphery dimension is based firmly on the work of Rokkan (1987). It has existed as long as the Norwegian political system and goes a lot further back. When the political system was forming, the provinces were in opposition to the control of the Capital, and regional autonomy is still an important issue today (Allern 2010).

Global vs. National Orientation

The increased globalization has in recent years become an issue in Norwegian politics. It includes issues about international cooperation and agreements such as the UN and the EU. The core of the conflict whether Norway should be oriented more towards the rest of the world, or be more closed up. This includes attitudes towards Norwegian EU-membership, or Norway's relationship to the EU, attitudes towards international agreements and whether the Norwegian economy is dependent on globalization for continued growth (Aardal 2011; Allern 2010).

3.4 Issue Ownership

In this section I will outline the theory of issue ownership, how it is measured and what effects it has on electoral results. Issue ownership is the process in which a voter finds an issue to be important, and votes for the party with the best reputation for handling that issue (Petrocik 1996).

3.4.1 Mediatization

Iyengar and Kinder (2010) showed through a series of experiments and time-series data in the 1980's that television news shape the political priorities of American voters, and have a great agenda-setting effect. The effects of what issues are handled in the news seem to be neither momentary nor permanent, but happen as the news focus on different issues. When the television news focuses on a problem, the public follows the

news and worry about what they are told. By focusing on some matters rather than others, the television news is setting the standard for what issues the electorate considers when evaluating politicians (Iyengar 2011; Lippmann 1997; McCombs and Shaw 1972). This is called agenda setting and goes hand in hand with the concept of priming. While agenda setting is the process in which the media influence what people are thinking about, priming is the process in which, the media alter the way people judge and evaluate politicians and political issues. Thinking about an issue is not sufficient to base any decisions on it. It is not until the issue has been primed that an individual might base his or her decisions on different issues than before the priming occurred. By focusing on one issue rather than others, the media alter the standards by which the politicians are evaluated (Iyengar and Kinder 2010). Framing is the process in which information given about an issue or object constructs and defines that issue or object in a certain way for the receiver.¹⁰

The emergence of interpretive journalism as opposed to descriptive journalism is very important in this setting. Journalists have developed a need for autonomy, which lead them to regard simply describing what political actors say and do as professional suicide. Instead, they want to emphasize their own words, and interpret and analyse the actions of politicians. This has led to a climate where politicians and political parties cannot communicate their message directly to voters, but only through the interpretation of journalists and “experts” (Iyengar 2011). This is also true for Norway. As the party-independent journalism has developed, the power of political parties to set the agenda and mobilize voters has diminished. It is the media that has the power over what issues are salient, and what political parties can communicate to their voters. The political parties used to be a channel for information on their own, not only through the party-loyal press, but through their entire organization. This is no longer true, and before the rise of social media, the news media were the only channel for political information. Political parties cannot communicate their message to the population on their own terms anymore, and are at the mercy of the media to reach voters. This gives the media a lot of power over what issues that are important, and what political parties that get the most coverage (Aalberg and Jenssen 2007; Iyengar 2011). The agenda

¹⁰ The Oxford dictionary of Political Communication offers more than 40 different definitions of framing. I mention framing because it is a salient part of the literature on media effects and issue ownership, but the confusion brought by the many different definitions and usages of the concept leaves me no advantages by including it in the further analysis. It should suffice to say that the way the media present and define issues has an effect on opinion making, albeit not an effect directly controlled for in this analysis.

setting power, interpretive journalism, and the information monopoly places the media in a position where they to a large degree control what issues are important in the minds of voters.

3.4.2 Issues and Ownership

The theory of issue ownership has been discussed and improved since it was first articulated. Issue ownership can be applied to both party¹¹ and voter behaviour. Parties will focus on the issues they “own” and try to emphasize to the voters that they are the best party to handle specific issues. By priming these issues the party will seem credible to the voters, and keep in line with the party’s image. In this thesis I am, however, concerned mostly with voter behaviour. Voters will, according to the theory, base their vote on what party they think is better at handling an issue. Parties are judged on more than their core principles, campaign documents and speeches. They also develop reputations on how well they handle various issues. A party’s reputation is based on the policy positions it keeps, and the voters it tries to reach out to. But it is, more importantly, influenced by the party’s performance once in office (Petrocik 1996). In Norway many parties base their policies on issues that originated, like the party itself, as a result of the traditional lines of conflict in Norwegian society. Hence, the parties that came into being as a reaction to a conflict have a reputation for handling these issues better than other parties (Jakobsen and Listhaug 2012; Knutsen 1985; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Narud and Valen 2001; Van der Brug 2004).

3.4.3 Issue Ownership and its effect on vote choice

Parties have issue reputations, and voters will evaluate parties when making a vote decision. The voter will identify the party he or she feels is the most competent at handling a specific issue and vote for that party (Budge and Farlie 1983). The theory has so far not taken the agenda-setting power of the media in to account, but assumed that political parties and politicians have the power to set the agenda on their own. As Iyengar (2011) showed, the media has a tremendous power over what voters are thinking about, and much more so than politicians who depend on the media to get their message across. For an issue to be important in a campaign and in an election it is necessary that the media put focus on it. If the issues a party owns are downplayed in the media before the election they will lose votes. For issue ownership to have an effect, the issue at hand needs to be salient. Voters need to be aware of the issue and believe

¹¹ Or candidate in some countries.

that it is important (Bélanger and Meguid 2008; Dancey and Goren 2010). For issue ownership to have an effect it is necessary for the individual voter to be aware of the issues, and each party's issue positions (Carsey and Layman 2006). It is also important that a party holds a rather extreme position on an issue for it to have an effect on their support in an election. If a party holds a mild or centrist position it will not entice voters to support them, because it is deemed as neutral (Listhaug, McDonald And Rabinowitz 1991).

With regards to issue ownership it is important to make the distinction between valence issues and position issues. Valence issues are most common and are issues with a generally agreed upon end, but there is disagreement on the means to achieve that end. Position issues are issues where there is no agreed upon end, and the ends sought are often directly conflicting. If a party is the owner of a valence issue the effect of issue ownership will apply in most instances. But if a party owns a position issue it is not necessarily so. If a voter disagrees with the party's policy stance on a position issue it is irrelevant if the party is the issue owner or not (Bélanger and Meguid 2008; Narud and Valen 2001). If a voter is concerned with an issue, he or she will probably vote for the party with the best reputation for handling that issue.

3.4.4 Measuring Issue Ownership

According to the theory of issue ownership put forth in the previous section, Aardal (2007) has created a categorization of the different degrees of issue ownership, which I will employ in my analysis. In this categorization the electorate is divided in to four categories based on whether each individual think an issue is important, and what party he or she thinks is best at handling this issue. Measuring issue ownership in this way is coherent with the theory of issue ownership because it accounts for the saliency of the issue in the mind of the voter, and the reputation of each party for handling different issues as perceived by the individual voter (Aardal 2007; Bélanger and Meguid 2008; Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996). The electorate is divided in to four groups based on whether each individual believes that the issue at hand is important, and by what party they think is best at handling the particular issue. This is done for each party and each issue.

Group 1: ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOLICIES

Group 2: ISSUENOTIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOLICIES

Group 3: ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYNOTBESTPOLICIES

Group 4: ISSUENOTIMPORTANT*PARTYNOTBESTPOLICIES

Figure 1. Issue ownership and Saliency

		Saliency	
		Important	Not Important
Issue Ownership - Does the party have the best policies regarding this issue?	Best	Group 1	Group 2
	Not Best	Group 3	Group 4

- Is the issue important for vote choice?

Note: Figure replicated from Aardal (2007: 113).

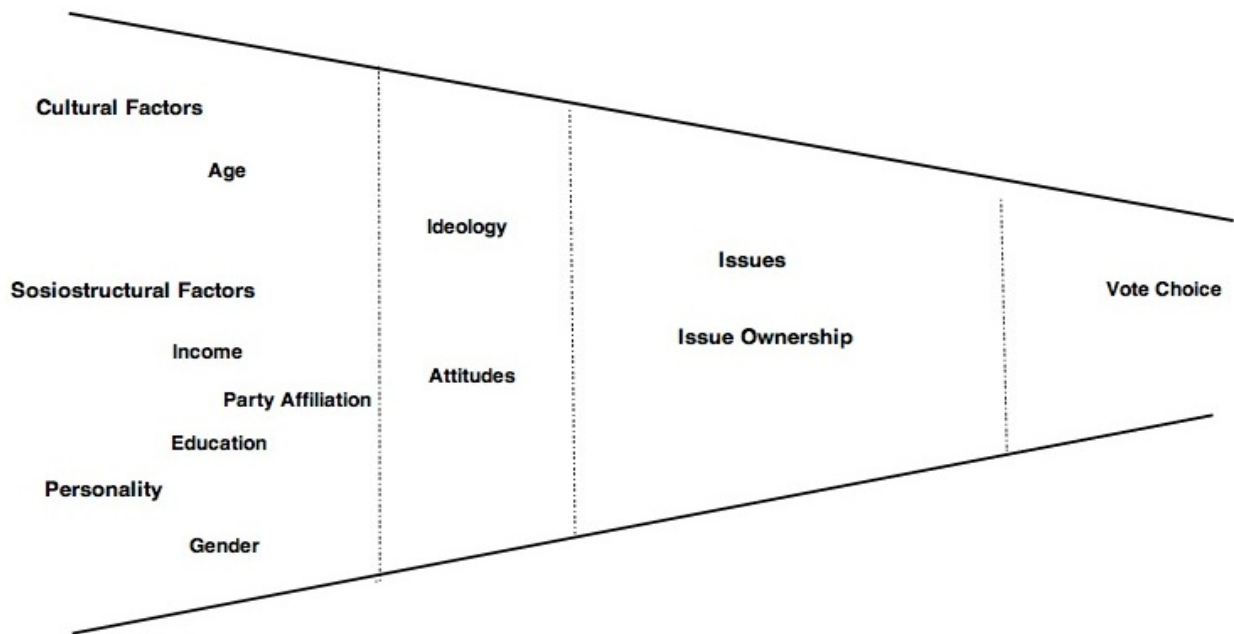
The probability of a voter choosing to vote for a party based on an issue decreases steadily from Group 1 to Group 4. If a voter is in Group 1 it is probable that he or she will vote for the party at hand. For voters in Group 2 the fact that they believe that the party is best at handling the issue might be an influential factor in addition to others leading to them voting for the party. Voters in Group 3 will probably not vote for the party at hand, but the party they actually think is best at handling the issue. Still, if the voter acknowledges that the party at hand does have a good reputation for handling this issue and have other reasons for voting for it, being in Group 3 might have an effect. Voters in Group 4 will have no reason for voting for the party at hand. In the analysis I will only test the effects of belonging to Group 1–3, because belonging to Group 4 is assumed to have no effect.

3.5 An Integrated Theory of Voting

In this thesis I investigate the effects of ideology and issue ownership on vote choice. To explain the causal relationship between these and other variables I will use Campbell et al's (1960) funnel of causality, which is a metaphor used as a presentation of the factors influencing the vote choice of the individual. In the figure below I present my version of this funnel, to present the factors relevant for this thesis. The most important factors are ideology and issue ownership, and the figure shows the causal connection between them, their possible antecedents and vote choice. I will seek to investigate and explain

the effect these factors have had on the support of the Norwegian centre parties from 1997 to 2009 and how they might have changed in this period (*ibid.*).

Figure 2. Funnel of Causality



Since the end of the 1960's the election campaign has become more important for the election result. More voters are reporting that they make their vote choice during the campaign, and close to the actual election. Eleven per cent, on average, reports that they decided on whom to vote for on the day of the election. One of the causes of this is the decline in class based voting. Instead of relying on group membership for making a vote choice, voters rely more on ideological values and issue ownership. When vote choice is based on ideology, and not party identification, there is usually more than one party that a voter can consider. The parties a voter considers based on his or her ideology is called that voter's party-set. It consists of the parties the voter considered voting for in the election. When this is the case, competition between the parties becomes more intense and the campaign more important (Aardal 2007: 20f, 2011: 20f; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). In a multi-party system it is possible for a voter to consider voting for several parties. The parties a voter considers voting for is called a party-set (Holmberg and Oscarsson 2004). The parties included in a party-set are defined by the voter's ideological values. A party-set is relatively constant and represents the underlying ideological dimensions of a voter (Aardal 2007: 114). Vote choice within a party-set is affected by, among others,

the issues salient in the election campaign and issue ownership. While ideological orientations explain what parties a voter considers voting for, issue ownership and saliency explain the choice between the parties within the party-set. The campaign is then about convincing voters with a positive attitude towards the party, that their core issues are important, and that they have the best policies in that policy area (Karlsen 2004).

The funnel of causality gives a complete and simple picture of the assumed causal relationship between the different variables in this thesis. Ideology explains what happens closer to the opening of the funnel, while issue ownership explains what happens closer to the end of the funnel. Ideology is a more basic trait in a voter, and affects vote choice directly, but also the voter's perceptions of issue ownership. These are, of course, but two variables among many that can affect vote choice (Aardal and Karlsen 2007). Ideology is then the most basic determinant of political attitudes and actions. The effects of issue ownership are happening closer to the actual vote choice, and are therefore apparently larger than the effects of ideology. It is reasonable to expect that voters will vote for a party representing ideological values similar to their own, and decide between parties with similar ideologies based on issue ownership (*ibid.*).

3.6 Hypotheses

The Norwegian electorate has ideological orientations that can be measured on different scales. Ideology is a coherent set of attitudes held by an individual concerning what political behaviours and end-states that are preferable personally or morally. These attitudes affect the vote choice of individuals, and it is therefore relevant to study changes in them with regards to the electoral support of the Norwegian Centre Parties. As the political culture changes, there may also be changes in the ideological orientations of voters. The most important change being that a person's socio-economical status has less effect on voting behaviour (Jenssen 1993; Knutsen 1985). This means that the left-right scale is becoming less important, and that other ideological dimensions might become more important. The relative importance of the different ideological dimensions, and the effects of each of them on the vote choice of individuals may be changing. With the changes described by Inglehart (1977), Knutsen (1985) and Jenssen (1993) it is relevant to test whether changes in the ideological

orientations of voters has affected the electoral support of the centre parties. I therefore pose this hypothesis:

H1: Changes in the ideological orientations of voters have negatively affected the electoral support of the centre parties.

I will test this hypothesis on each of the centre parties separately. I therefore pose these hypotheses also, which are the same as H1, but specified for each party:

H1.1: Changes in the ideological orientations of voters have negatively affected the electoral support of KrF.

H1.2: Changes in the ideological orientations of voters have negatively affected the electoral support of Sp.

H1.3: Changes in the ideological orientations of voters have negatively affected the electoral support of Venstre.

The theory of issue ownership as described above, states that parties have ownership over an issue when voters perceive the party as most competent at handling that particular issue. If a voter is concerned with that issue, the probability of that individual voting for the party owning the issue increases. Hence, if a party owns an issue, and the saliency of that issue increases, the party is likely to receive more support based on that issue. The changes in the political culture also include decreased stability in the electorate, and that different issues become more prominent, and sometimes suppress the old issues (Jenssen 1993; Knutsen 1985). Less stability in the electorate is a result of changing political loyalties, and this means that the election campaign becomes more and more important to the vote choice of individual voters (Aardal 2011; Jenssen 1993). The increased importance of the campaign makes issue ownership a more important factor for the electoral support of a party (Belanger and Meguid 2008; Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1993). New issues, and changing importance of issues, could also have an effect on the electoral support of the centre parties. I therefore pose this hypothesis:

H2: Changes in the effects of issue ownership have negatively affected the electoral support of the centre parties.

I will test this hypothesis on each of the centre parties separately. I therefore pose these hypotheses also, which are the same as H2, but specified for each party:

H2.1: Changes in the electorate with regards to KrF's issue ownership have negatively affected the party's electoral support.

H2.2: Changes in the electorate with regards to Sp's issue ownership have negatively affected the party's electoral support.

H2.3: Changes in the electorate with regards to Venstre's issue ownership have affected the party's electoral support.

4 Research Design

In this chapter I will present the methodological, ontological and epistemological presumptions of the statistical method. I also present the underlying assumptions of logistic regression, which is the main method of this thesis, and examine the potential problems that might occur with this method. Lastly, I present the data, variables and the design of the analysis and the benefits and shortcomings of these.

4.1 Methodology

Put simply, ontology is the study of being, or the study of reality. Epistemology is the study of knowledge, or the nature of knowledge. Methodology is the study or science of knowing, and denotes the philosophy or logic behind research methods. My ontological position is that there exists a real world, which consist of regularities. This position is in line with the positivist tradition, and goes hand in hand with the epistemological view that regularities in the world can be detected and measured, and that it is possible to infer knowledge about the world by observing it (Hay 2002: 61f; Landman 2003: 16; Moses and Knutsen 2007).

Moses and Knutsen (2007) emphasize the need to have a firm methodological basis for the choice of methods in research. My positivistic ontological and epistemological positions guide my choice of research methods. I am looking for regularities and correlations in the world, and need a way to detect and measure these. I have chosen to use the statistical method for testing my hypotheses. My analysis concerns the electoral actions of people, and how their attitudes affect these. According to the positivist tradition an experiment is the ideal method because of its ability to control external factors and infer causality. Since, I aim to make generalizations it is appropriate to use the statistical method. The statistical method is the method that most closely resembles the experiment because it is possible to control for many external factors. It cannot control for all possible factors influencing electoral decisions, but it is the best and most appropriate method for finding regularities and correlations in the electorate (Moses and Knutsen 2007; Ringdal 2001).

4.1.1 The Statistical Method

In this thesis I use the statistical method. As I described above, the statistical method is ranked highly in the positivist hierarchy of methods. Hume (1740) stated that it is only possible to detect correlations and regularities in the real world, and that causal relationships are impossible to observe or infer. Mill (1891) agrees that causality is

impossible to observe, but held that when there is a correlation, there is always some sort of causal relationship causing it. This separation leads to the two main ways statistics is used: Descriptive and Inferential. King, Keohane and Verba (1994:8) say that the goal of scientific research is to make conclusions that go beyond the data. This is also what I am attempting to do. With large-*N* studies it is possible to make generalizations about the relationships between the variables that can be said to be causal. I am using the inferential approach and aim to make generalizations about the causal relationships between the variables that go beyond the sample population in the data towards the whole population. This method is the most commonly used in the study of political behaviour. By basing my models and analyses on a firm theoretical, methodological and methodical foundation, I can draw conclusions based on a clear causal relationship between the different variables (Eikemo and Clausen 2007; Hamilton 1992; Hellevik 2002; King et. al. 1994; Moses and Knutsen 2007; Ringdal 2001).

There are some requirements that need to be fulfilled for the quality of the analysis to be acceptable. The most important of which concern the validity of the measurements and the reliability of the data collection. The validity of a variable or dataset concerns whether the variable actually measures what it is supposed to measure. Reliability concerns the generalizability of the results, and whether or not the analysis would produce the same results over and over if the same procedures were followed. Other requirements concern the replicability of the study, and require that the researcher record all steps taken (Eikemo and Clausen 2007; Hamilton 1992; Hellevik 2002; King et. al. 1994; Moses and Knutsen 2007; Ringdal 2001). In this thesis validity concerns the choice of variables for measuring the phenomena in question, and will be discussed along with the description of the variables. With regards to reliability, I am relying on data supplied by the Norwegian Data Service (NSD), collected and prepared under management of Bernt Aardal. I have, of course, done certain reliability analyses, but have to assume, in good trust in superior researchers, that the data is collected and prepared in a reliable manner. What is important when collecting data of this nature is that the questions in a survey are designed in such a way that it is likely that the answers represent the attitudes or behaviours that is being studied.¹²

¹² Advice for formulating questions asking about attitudes is listed in Ringdal (2001) and upon review it is clear that the questions in the Norwegian Election Survey adhere to these standards.

4.1.2 Sample Theory

My data consist of a sample of the whole Norwegian electorate, and my aim is, as mentioned, to generalize the results from this analysis to the Norwegian electorate as a whole. Hence, I am generalizing within sample theory (Ringdal 2007: 343). The population in this thesis is the Norwegian electorate, and the sample is a percentage of the whole population. The sample consists of roughly 2500 respondents resembling the whole population on most demographic variables. *The central limit theorem* states that as a sample size reaches 1000-1200 units the sample distribution becomes approximately normal, and resembles that of the population (Ringdal 2007: 342). To be able to make probable generalizations, the number of units in the sample needs to be larger if the analysis seeks to describe characteristics of more complex groups. The respondents voting for the Norwegian Centre parties are a small group, and a larger sample is needed to be able to make generalizations about this group. A sample of 2500 should suffice, but might still suffer from homogeneity (Hamilton 1992: 27).

4.3 Logistic Regression

In this thesis I am investigating factors that may explain the decreasing support of the Norwegian Centre parties from 1997 to 2009. The dependent variable is thus if the subject voted for one of the Centre parties, and the categories are: voted for the party (1) or did not vote for the party (0). It is a dichotomous variable; hence I will use a maximum likelihood logistic regression model. A logistic regression model calculates the probability of the dependent variable having the value 1, based on the values of the independent variables (Hamilton 1992: 223).

Logistic regression, being different from linear regressions, produces measures of the model's explained variance that are unsatisfactory for my analysis. I will therefore run an OLS-regression also, but only report the explained variance, since the other coefficients will be unreliable with a dichotomous dependent variable (Ringdal 2007; Hamilton 1992; Hellevik 2002).

4.3.1 Assumptions of Logistic Regression

In logistic regression there are four assumptions that have to be met if the results are to have the desired properties. These properties are unbiasedness, efficiency and normality, and can be obtained if the required assumptions are met in samples of a certain size (Hamilton 1992: 225).

The assumptions that need to be met are (i) that the logit of Y needs to be a linear function of the X variables. Hence, the model must be specified correctly, to ensure

linearity. (ii) The model must include all relevant and important variables, and no unwarranted variables must be included. The selection of variables should be based on strong theoretical arguments, justifying the model and the causal relationships between the included variables. (iii) The cases need to be independent of each other, and (iiii) none of the X variables can be linear functions of other X variables. This will result in multicollinearity, which can make estimation imprecise or impossible (*ibid*).

Influential cases may also be a problem in logistic regression, and needs to be controlled for in the analysis. If these requirements are met, “maximum likelihood estimates of logit parameters should, theoretically, have the desired properties of unbiasedness, efficiency, and normality – in large enough samples” (*ibid*).

4.3.2 Interpretation of Logistic Coefficients

I will now describe the different coefficients in logistic regression, the relationship between them, and how they can be interpreted with regards to this analysis. In logistic regression the predicted values of the dependent variable, can be interpreted as the probability of the dependent variable having the value of 1 ($Y=1$). The core in the logistic regression model is the transformation of probabilities into odds. $P(Y=1)$ is the probability of the dependent variable having the value of 1 (Midtbø 2007). The probability of Y not being 1 is $P(Y \neq 1) = P(Y=0) = 1 - P(Y=1)$. The odds(φ) of $Y=1$ is then:

$$\varphi (Y=1) = P(Y=1) / 1 - P(Y=1)$$

The odds of $Y=1$ range from 0 when $P(Y=1)=0$ to ∞ when $P=1$. The odds cannot make a linear function, so to meet the requirement of linearity a *logit* can be calculated from the odds. The Logit is the natural logarithm of the odds of $Y=1$, and produces a linear function in the model:

$$L = \log_e \varphi$$

The coefficients can be interpreted as the effect the independent variables have on the probability of the dependent variable having the value 1, $P(Y=1)$. The mean value in the population, $E(Y_i)$, for dichotomous variables is estimated by multiplying the two values (0 and 1) with their respective probabilities and adding together the results (Ringdal 2001: 407f).

$$E(Y_i) = 1 * P(Y=1) + 0 * P(Y=0) = P(Y=1)$$

Since the second part of the equation is multiplied by zero it falls out of the equation and what is left is the probability of $Y=1$. The dependent variable in logistic regression is the Logit, L_i . The Logit is the natural logarithm of the odds for $Y=1$.

$$L_i = \log(P/(1-P)) = \log(\varphi)$$

This produces a dependent variable, which is free to vary between all negative and positive values. The equation for logistic regression can thus be defined as:

$$L_i = \log(P/(1-P)) = \log(\varphi) = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_{k-1}X_{ik-1}$$

$$L_i = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_{k-1}X_{ik-1}$$

In this model the logit is a linear function of the independent variables. The logistic coefficients can then be interpreted as the change in the logit caused by a change in the independent variable (Hamilton 1992: 217f; Ringdal 2007: 407f).

The Odds Ratio

In this thesis I have chosen to present the odds ratio in the logistic regressions models.¹³

The logit is the natural logarithm of the odds ratio.

$$OR = \varphi(Y=1) / \varphi(Y=0)$$

From the odds ratio it is possible to calculate the changes in the odds of $Y=1$ in percentages. This is a value that is easier to interpret than the logit, but it is still difficult to determine more than the significance and direction of the variables. Still, it is obvious that when the odds ratio is larger, the odds of $Y=1$ is larger and the probability increases.

The standard errors of the logistic regression coefficients are, as stated, calculated through the process of maximum likelihood estimation, and the probability of these is normally distributed. The results of these are stated in the logit models presented in the appendix (Hamilton 1992: 229). In the regression analysis I employ significance tests at .05, .01, and .001 and the results of these will be presented using asterisks.

¹³ I also present the logit and standard error in appendix D.

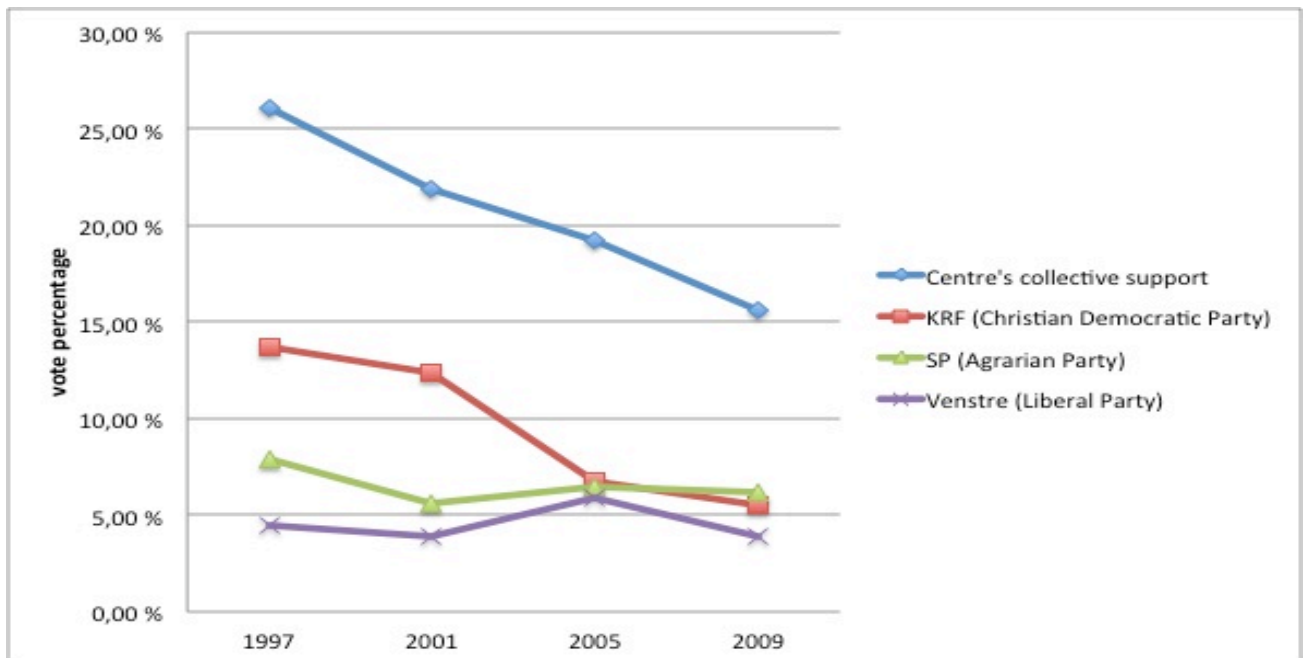
4.4 Variables

My analysis covers the Norwegian electorate at the time of national elections from 1997 to 2009. The main dataset used in the analysis is the Norwegian Election Surveys, which are conducted at the time of each national election in Norway and contain roughly 2500 units each year.

4.4.1 The Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is vote choice in the aforementioned elections. There is a separate dependent variable for each of the centre parties; KrF, Sp and Venstre. It is coded as voted for the party (1) or did not vote the party (0).

Figure 3. Vote percentage for the centre parties 1997-2009



The graph in figure 1 shows that there definitely is variance in the dependent variable. The collective support of the centre parties has fallen, and KrF stands for most of the loss. Sp and Venstre have also lost some support, and all three are in danger of falling beneath the threshold for equalization. If the table started at the 1993 election the trend would have been the same. I chose to start in 1997 because the 1993 election was strongly influenced by the debate on Norwegian EU-membership, and can hardly be used to draw general conclusions.

4.4.2 Ideological dimensions

In this part I will present the way in which I have created the variables for ideology. The variables for ideology are scales created from coherent attitudes in the sample, and are understood in connection to different cleavages in Norwegian society. The discussion and definition of ideology in the previous chapter guides the methodical steps towards measuring ideology in the electorate. Ideology, being defined as a set of coherent attitudes held by an individual, can be assessed by measuring these attitudes. Through a factor analysis I have identified the variables that share a common underlying factor, and created scales based on these variables.

4.4.2.1 Principal Component Analysis

To measure the underlying ideological dimensions in the electorate I use factor analysis. Factor analysis is used to identify and understand the relationship between a set of variables. There are two types of factor analysis; exploratory and confirmatory. In this analysis I will use exploratory factor analysis. I do have some assumptions about what factors that exist in the data set and what variables that might be correlated, but I have sought to do the analysis with an open mind, so as to find the factors that are actually there and not only the factors I expect to find (Ulleberg and Nordvik 2003). The variance in a variable consists of communality, unique components and measurement errors. The communality is the part of the variable, which is explained by the common factor, and the unique component is the part of the variable, which is not explained by the common, underlying, factor (Kim and Muller 1978).

I use Principal component analysis, which is a method of exploratory factor analysis used to reduce multidimensional datasets into factors representing underlying dimensions. Principal component analysis improves on factor analysis by trying to explain all of the variance in each variable, and not just the communality. However, if the N is large the benefit decreases, and principal component analysis is often referred to as factor analysis (Ulleberg and Nordvik 2003). The principal component models in the following tables confirm that the variables have underlying dimensions, and that the factors are one-dimensional. There are two main measurements to ensure the reliability and validity of a factor or scale. The KMO-measure for sampling adequacy measures the homogeneity in the variables. The factors have an adequate sampling if $> .80$, and can then be used to make scales. The other measure is Cronbach's Alpha, which measures the reliability of a scale and should be $> .70$ (Spector 1992; Ringdal 2007). In the factor

analysis I could easily identify the underlying ideological dimensions that were present in the dataset.

Table 1. Principal component analysis from the Norwegian election survey of 1997, using varimax rotation.

	Variable/Factor	1 Public/ Private	2. Environment	3. Religious/ secular	4. Immigration
1	Reduce economic differences	.660			
2	More employment with governmental control	.675			
4	Attitude towards different compensation	.581			
5	Share wealth with poorer countries	.510			
8	Governmental control of business	.668			
12	Economic growth before environment		.718		
13	Growth and productivity important		.591		
14	Gas Power in Norway		.649		
15	More hydro power in Norway		.598		
16	More Oil and gas production in Norway		.526		
17	Society based on Christian Values			.776	
18	Christianity in schools			.706	
19	Abortion			.648	
20	More regulation of Alcohol			.454	
21	Rights for cohabitating same-sex couples			.526	
22	Immigration threat towards distinction				.721
23	Work for Norwegians first				.669
24	Foreign aid				.698
25	Support for training in native language				.583
	Cronbach's Alpha	.690	.625	.614	.640

Note: Factors loading lower than 0.35 have been suppressed. The KMO measure of the sampling adequacy is .787.

In table 1, the principal component analysis from 1997 reveals 4 underlying ideological dimensions: Immigration, Public vs. Private, Environment and Moral/Religion. Later the Norwegian Election Surveys has included variables to cover other dimensions such as Rural vs. Urban and National vs. Global. I have chosen to include these in the analysis covering the other elections, but they will be missing in the analysis for 1997. The KMO-measure of 0.787 is satisfactory and Cronbach's Alpha is low, but satisfactory for creating scales based on each of them. The underlying ideological dimensions found in the data for 1997 are PUBLICVSPRIVATE, IMMIGRATION, ENVIRONMENTAL and RELIGIOUS.

Table 2. Principal component analysis from the Norwegian election survey of 2001, using Varimax Rotation

	Variable/Factor	1: Public/ Private	2: Environm.	3: Religious/ secular	4: Immigr.	5: Global/ National	6. Centre/ Periphery
1	Reduce economic differences	.768					
2	Enough social equality	.674					
3	Attitude to different compensation	.630					
4	Foreign Aid	.435					
5	Attitude towards social differences	.667					
6	Economic growth before environment		.716				
7	Growth important		.581				
8	More emphasis in environment		.364				
9	Gas-Power in Norway		.663				
10	Christian Values in Society			.755			
11	Abortion			.605			
12	Limit alcohol distribution			.534			
13	Equal rights for same-sex couples			.450			
14	Immigration threatens nat. distinction				.725		
15	Work to Norwegians first				.713		
17	Attitude towards immigration				.764		
18	Immigrants equal rights				.645		
19	Globalisation threat to independence					.353	
20	More International Orientation					.647	
21	Globalisation necessary for growth					.700	
22	EU-membership					.539	
23	Spend more oil-surplus					.526	
24	Focus on Rural Norway						.598
25	Decentralisation						.694
26	Gov. attitude towards periphery						.603
27	Attitude towards the EU						.546
	Cronbach's Alpha	.658	.578	.600	.736	.602	.624

Note: Factors loading lower than 0.35 have been suppressed. The KMO measure is .797.

In table 2 the factor analysis from 2001 is presented. The KMO-measure of 0.797 is satisfactory, and Cronbach's Alpha is satisfactory for each factor, but low for the environmental protection factor. The model reveals six underlying ideological dimensions in the electorate. The two factors that were present in 2001, but not 1997, were the Global/National factor and the Centre/Periphery factor. With the KMO-measure and Chronbach's Alpha it is certain that the same underlying factor is being measured. Keeping the theoretical foundation of the ideological dimensions in mind it is clear that the factor analysis reveals empirical findings coherent with the theoretical foundations of the underlying ideological dimensions. Hence, in 2001 the factor analysis has revealed the underlying ideological dimensions called PUBLICVSPRIVATE, IMMIGRATION, ENVIRONMENTAL, RELIGIOUS, GLOBALNATIONAL and CENTREPERIPHERY.

Table 3. Principal component analysis from the Norwegian election survey of 2005, using Varimax Rotation

	Variable/Factor	1: Public/ Private	2: Environment	3: Religious/ Secular	4: Immigration	5: Global/ National	6: Centre/ Periphery
1	Private Schools	.765					
2	Public services before decreased tax	.620					
3	Privatisation	.761					
4	Higher tax for higher incomes	.504					
5	Economical growth vs. environm.		.627				
6	Environmental Protection		.473				
7	Oil and Gas in the Barents sea		.690				
8	Gas power without CO2 cleansing		.751				
9	Christian Values in society			.777			
10	Separation of Church and State			.571			
11	Euthanasia			.615			
12	Same-sex couple adoption			.575			
13	Immigration threat to nation distinction				.713		
14	Work to Norwegian first				.714		
15	Foreign Aid				.576		
16	Attitude towards immigration				.787		
17	Expel criminal immigrants				.606		
18	More Global Orientation					.722	
19	Globalisation necessary for growth					.669	
20	International Agreements important					.684	
21	Pro Decentralisation						.605
22	Politicians know little about Rural Norway						.691
23	Government cares about rural Norway						.613
24	Wolves in Norway						.522
	Cronbach's Alpha	.629	.621	.576	.727	.659	.542

Note: Factors loading lower than 0.35 have been suppressed. The KMO measure is ..815.

Table 3 contains the factor analysis of the variables from 2005. The KMO-measure of 0.815 is satisfactory. Cronbach's Alpha is satisfactory for every factor, albeit with low scores for the Religious Vs. Secular values dimensions and the Centre vs. Periphery Dimension. Some of the variables have been changed, but as in 2001 there is still every reason to assume that the factor analysis is measuring the same underlying factors. In 2005 the factor analysis has revealed underlying ideological dimensions for PUBLICVSPRIVATE, IMMIGRATION, ENVIRONMENTAL, RELIGIOUS, GLOBALNATIONAL and CENTREPERIPHERY.

Table 4. Principal component analysis from the Norwegian election survey of 2009, using Varimax Rotation.

	Variable/Factor	1 Public/ Private	2: Environment	3: Religious/ secular	4: Immigration	5: Global/ National	6. Centre/ Periphery
1	Private Schools	.657					
2	Public services before decreased taxes	.592					
3	Privatisation	.602					
4	Income differences	.673					
5	Private solutions better	.643					
6	Decreased taxes	.549					
7	Higher taxes for higher incomes	.612					
8	Economic growth before environment		.589				
9	Environmental protection		.699				
10	Climate change		.810				
11	Jobs over environmental protection		.562				
12	Climate changes are man made		.718				
13	Christian Values in society			.722			
14	Abortion			.673			
15	Euthanasia			.615			
16	Same-sex couple adoption			.632			
17	Immigration threat to national distinction				.747		
18	Work to Norwegians first				.694		
19	Equal rights for immigrants				.621		
20	Attitude towards immigration				.742		
21	Expel criminal immigrants				.618		
22	International Agreements					.726	
23	Globalisation necessary for growth					.708	
24	International Orientation					.768	
25	Rural Norway						.580
26	EU-Membership						.528
27	Decentralisation						.641
28	Politicians understand little of rural						.530
	Cronbach's Alpha	.737	.744	.562	.751	.648	.546

Note: Factors loading lower than 0.35 have been suppressed. The KMO measure is .870.

Table 4 contains the factor analysis from 2009. The KMO-measure of 0.870 is as good as it can get. Cronbach's Alpha is satisfactory for every factor, but still low for the moral/religious factor. Some of the variables have been changed from the last election, due to changes in the dataset but the variables still represent the underlying ideological dimensions based on the theory, and are also similar to the empirical findings in the earlier years. The factor analysis for 2009 has revealed underlying ideological dimensions for PUBLICVSPRIVATE, IMMIGRATION, ENVIRONMENTAL, RELIGIOUS, GLOBALNATIONAL and CENTREPERIPHERY.

The variables for ideological dimensions are the scales created through the principal component analysis above: PUBLICVSPRIVATE, IMMIGRATION, ENVIRONMENTAL, RELIGIOUS, GLOBALNATIONAL and CENTREPERIPHERY. The last two, GLOBALNATIONAL and CENTREPERIPHERY, cannot be created in the dataset from 1997, and are only included from 2001 to 2009.

4.4.3 Issues and Issue Ownership

The issues that are worth taking into account are the issues that were important to the voters at the time of the election. I aim to define the issues that were important to the centre party voters at the time of the election, and whether the core issues of the centre parties have become more or less salient in the minds of voters. To operationalize what issues were salient in the minds of voters at the time of the election I have used the variable for what issues that were important for the voter's electoral choice. In the election surveys voters were asked: *Can you mention one or two issues that were especially important for your vote choice?*¹⁴ On this question the respondent could mention two issues, on two separate questions with the same possible answers. The data from the four elections show what issues that were important to the voters of each party with regards to their vote choice. I have chosen to divide and present the answers along party lines. It is interesting to see what issues that are important in general, but for this thesis it is more relevant to see what issues were important to the voters of the different parties.

Table 5 shows what issues that have been most important to voters. The issues that are important to the voters vary to some degree,¹⁵ and some issues such as EU-membership loses its saliency over time. Among the different parties it is also noticeable that some issues are party specific, while others are important to the voters of many parties. School and education, for example, is a very important issue to voters from almost every party.

The regression only accounts for the effect of the one issue that was most salient in the minds of the party's voters at the time of the election. It is therefore conceivable, that other issues may be almost as important, and that the other issues together might have an effect similar to, or greater than the effect of the most salient issue. I can only control for this to some extent, but will take in to account the relative importance of the most important issue compared with the others. I will also take the analysis of experts in

¹⁴ "Kan du nevne en eller to saker som var spesielt viktige for din stemmegivning?"

¹⁵ See Appendix C for the full lists of what issues were important to voters

to account with regards to how issue ownership affected the election outcome. In general, it will be reasonable to assume that issue ownership has had a larger effect than the effect that is shown in the analysis of one issue per party. On the other hand this is similar for each party, and the effect of the most influential can say a lot about the effect issue ownership has on the party's electoral result. The issues studied in this thesis are also the core issues of the parties, and are, in that respect, very relevant for their continued electoral viability.

Table 5. Issues most important to voters, by party in %, 1997-2009

Party	Issue	1997	2001	2005	2009
V	Environment	17	16	19	30
	School And Education	11	19	19	18
	Health Care	11	13	3	8
Sp	Regional Politics	17	17	25	16
	Agricultural Politics	6	14	14	13
	Care for the Elderly	13	9	9	2
	School And Education	4	8	12	10
	EU	13	4	6	4
KrF	Child And Family	21	20	22	23
	Moral/Religious Issues	9	9	22	22
	Care for the Elderly	16	10	12	7
	School And Education	6	16	14	9
	Health Care	10	12	6	7

The issues that have been most important to Venstre's voters are the environment, and school and education. Health care was also an important issue in 1997 but has become less important over time. Environment, however, has become very important to the Liberal voters.

For Sp's voters the issues that have been important are regional politics, Agricultural politics, and the EU-issue. The emphasis on regional politics is recurring every year, and the focus on agriculture is becoming more important as the EU-issue is becoming less salient.

KrF's voters thought that child and family issues, and moral/religious issues were very important. Care for the elderly used to be very important, but the two former issues cover almost 50 per cent in 2005 and 2009.

The variables for issue ownership are the variables called group 1 to 3. Using the issue that was most important to the party's voters each year I have combined the variables for how important the issue is, and what party the voter thinks is best at

handling that issue to create 4 groups. The voters in Group 1 (ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOLICIES) are the voters who think that the party is best at handling this issue, and that the issue is important. Group 2 (ISSUENOTIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOLICIES) are the voters who think that this party is best at handling this issue, but that the issue is not important. Group 3 (ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYNOTBESTPOLICIES) are the voters who think that the issue is important, but that this party is not best at handling it. Group 4 consists of the voters who do not think that the issue is important and that the party is not best at handling it. These voters are not assumed to have any effect of issue ownership, and are hence not included in the analysis.

4.4.4 Demographic Control Variables

The main variables of this analysis are, as mentioned above, ideological dimensions and issue ownership. Based on previous findings I will include demographic variables to control for the effects of age, gender and income. The variable for age goes from 18 and up year-by-year, gender is coded as male (1) or not male (0), and income is divided in three equal groups as low, middle and high income (1-3).

4.5 The Analysis

In this part I will present the design of the regression models, and the argument for this design. I will also explain the way in which the results will be interpreted, and what substantial findings this can produce.

4.5.1 The Models

I have designed the models to be able to extract the explained variance of the variables representing ideology for it self, and the variables representing issue ownership for itself. The first model¹⁶ (0) contains the demographic control variables. The second model (1) contains the demographic control variables, and the variables for ideological dimensions. The third model (2) contains the demographic control variables and the variables for issue ownership. The fourth and final model (3) contains the demographic control variables, the variables for ideological dimensions and the variables for issue ownership. The advantage of designing the regression in this manner is that subtracting

¹⁶ The first model is referred to as a null-model (0), because it contains only the demographic control variables, and does not give any results pertaining to testing the stated hypotheses.

the explained variance of the first (0) model from the explained variance of model 1 or 2, will result in the explained variance of the set of variables added in that model.¹⁷

Table 6. The Regression Design¹⁸

Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Demographics	Demographics	Demographics	Demographics
	Ideology		Ideology
		Issue Ownership	Issue Ownership
1-0= Ideology R ² 2-0= Issue Ownership R ²			

The explained variance, of course, is a measure of how much of the variance in the dependent variable the set of independent variables in question explains. This gives a general picture of what effects ideology and issue ownership has had for each party at each election. By interpreting the regression coefficients it will be possible to see the effect of each variable, and consider the relative effect on the explained variance. The results will indicate the significance of each set of variables for each party, and any changes in the significance of each set of variables. By reviewing the explained variance of ideology and issue ownership, respectively, it will be possible to see the effect it has had in each election from 1997 to 2009 and how each factor might have changed. In the analysis there is a table like the one illustrated above for each party from each election from 1997 to 2009. These are put together into one table for each party, consisting of the tables from each election for that party.

4.5.2 Interpretation

The next chapter begins with a description of the variables included in the analysis. The logistic regression reveals what variables that are significant, and the direction of their effects. To identify the actual effect in the population it is necessary to review the changing size of the groups having the effect revealed in the logistic regression. If the logistic regression reveals that issue ownership is significant and has an effect on the support of a party, it is necessary to see if the group affected by issue ownership for this party is becoming larger or smaller. The effect of being in this group can be the same,

¹⁷ The explained variance of each set of variables can also be calculated from the final (3) model, by subtracting the explained variance of model 1 or 2 from model 3. I have chosen not to do this, because of apparent interaction effects between the variables for issue ownership and ideology and the demographic control variables.

¹⁸ This is done by Aardal (2007: 131) to illustrate the respective effects of ideology and issue ownership. My model is altered to meet the needs of this analysis, and rectify some methodical issues.

but the effect on the electoral support of the party depends on the amount of voters in the group affected by issue ownership.

To confirm hypothesis 1, at least one ideological dimension must be significant each year for each party.

H1: Changes in the ideological orientations of voters have affected the electoral support of the centre parties.

The strongest result would be if the same variable(s) was significant every year, and preferably the variable for the ideological dimension(s) most closely associated with each party. If an ideological dimension is significant for a party, it is relevant to review the direction of that variable. Each ideological dimension represents a conflict in Norwegian society, and the direction of the variable indicates what side the voters of the party hold in this conflict. By reviewing the descriptive statistics for the significant ideological dimensions it will be possible to see if the electorate is moving in the same direction as the party and its voters, or if fewer voters can be expected to vote for the party based on this ideological dimension.

To confirm hypothesis 2, at least one of the variables for issue ownership must be significant, each year for each of the parties.

H2: Changes in the effects of issue ownership have affected the electoral support of the centre parties.

The variables for issue ownership represent 3 groups, where Group 1 represents the strongest measure of issue ownership and Group 2 and 3 represent respectively weaker measures. The strongest result would be if all three variables were significant, but the most important variable is Group 1. If these variables are significant, the direction of them needs to be positive if they are to have an effect worthy of further analysis. If the variables are significant, and the direction is positive, the next step will be to review the sizes of the different groups, and any changes in these. The larger the group the more voters are affected by issue ownership for this party, and the effect of issue ownership on the party's electoral support will be larger. The changes in the size of the different groups can reveal if the issue is becoming more important to voters, and whether or not the party is gaining more or less ownership over the issue. If the size of the groups is increasing this will mean that the potential electoral support based on issue ownership is growing for this party. If the size is decreasing the potential for electoral support based on issue ownership is becoming smaller.

For both hypotheses it is the logistic regression that identifies the effect, and the descriptive statistics revealing the potential effects on the electoral support of each party. The analysis will end with a discussion of how ideology and issue ownership has affected the support of each of the centre parties, and about whether or not this gives any clues regarding what support the centre parties can be expected to receive in the more immediate future.

5 Empirical Analysis

In this chapter I present the descriptive statistics of the main variables in the analysis, and the regression models. The descriptive statistics are analysed to emphasize the potential support each party had at each election, and to detect any changes in the variables that might be relevant for this discussion. The regression models are divided by party, and I present one model for each election year, put together into one table for each party. I have used logistic regression, but rely on the explained variance from an OLS-regression to define the explained variance of each group of variables.

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

In this part I will describe the main independent variables, with focus on changes from election to election that might be salient in the analysis. While the regression in the next part show the effects the different variables have had on the dependent variable, vote choice, the descriptive statistics show the electorate's distribution among the different categories of these variables. This is very important and informative for one very important reason; the logistic regression shows the change in the probability of an individual voting for the party at hand. It does not show how many voters are in the category of the variable having this effect. So, if a variable improves the probability of the voters within voting for the party, it is necessary to review the size of this group of voters, and changes in this between elections, to identify the effect this will have for the party's overall electoral support.

5.1.1 Descriptive Statistics for Ideological Dimensions

The descriptive statistics for the ideological dimensions show how the electorate is distributed along the underlying ideological dimensions found in the data from year to year, and how the ideology of the voters has developed in these years. The logistic regression will show what ideological dimensions that are important for each party's electoral support, and the electorate's distribution on these dimensions will show the party's potential for gaining support based on the ideological dimensions affecting their electoral support. I will therefore present the changes in the electorate's distribution on these ideological dimensions, and will discuss the importance of these changes after presenting the logistic regression.

Table 7. Mean scores of ideological dimensions 1997-2009.¹⁹

	1997	2001	2005	2009
Public-Private	.392	.454	.415	.566
Immigration-Solidarity	.471	.581	.434	.456
Growth-Environment	.481	.443	.462	.574
Religious-Secular	.544	.491	.575	.654
Global-National	-	.332	.415	.343
Periphery-Centre	-	.488	.379	.481

Note: Mean scores are divided by range. Because the scales have different ranges comparing the mean score would be pointless. I have therefore divided the mean score with the range of the scale to be able to compare them accurately. Values for GLOBALNATIONAL and CENTREPERIPHERY do not exist in 1997; hence they are missing throughout the analysis. Values ranges from 0 to 1,

Table 7 contains the descriptive statistics of the electorate's placement on the ideological dimensions identified in this analysis. The values in the table are the mean scores of each dimension, divided by the range. The values thus range from 0 to 1. The most salient finding in the descriptive statistics for the ideological dimensions is that there are no major changes from year to year, but some changes are definitely occurring. The values in the table are the mean scores of each ideological dimension divided by the range of the scale, the electorate's distribution on these change with five to ten per cent from election to election.

The Public vs. Private dimension ranges from Public (0) to Private (20). From 1997 to 2009 the mean score for the Public vs. Private dimension has gone from 0.392 to 0.566 with most of the change happening from 2005 to 2009. This means that the electorate is leaning more towards private solutions and less government interference than they were before.

The ideological dimension for Immigration ranges from negative attitudes towards immigration (0) to positive attitudes towards immigration (20). The electorate's distribution on this dimension has remained stable throughout the period, except for an increase towards more liberal immigration policies in 2001. After that it went down to the same level as before and stayed there.

The Environmental dimension goes from favouring economical growth (0) to favouring environmental protection (20). It has remained stable from 1997 to 2005, but had a boost towards environmental protection in 2009.²⁰

¹⁹ See appendix B for full list of descriptive statistics for these variables, and appendix E for box-plots illustrating the electorate's distribution.

²⁰ See table E2 in appendix E for box plot describing the changes in the electorate's distribution on the growth vs.. environmental protection dimension.

The Religious vs. Secular values dimension goes from Religious values (0) to Secular values (20). Since 2001 it has moved more and more towards secular values.²¹

The Global vs. National ideological dimension ranges from favouring a more global orientation (0) to favouring a more national orientation (20). It has been stable throughout the period, and the electorate leans towards a global orientation rather than a national.²² There seems to be a shift towards more national orientation, but it is a small and slow-moving shift.

The Centre vs. Periphery dimension goes from periphery (0) to centre (20), and it has also been stable throughout the period with a turn towards the periphery in 2005.²³

The ideological orientations of the Norwegian electorate change slowly, but there are certain trends worth noticing. The electorate is moving towards favouring more private solutions rather than public solutions. On the Religious Vs. Secular values dimension the electorate is leaning more and more towards secular values, and this will be relevant for KrF's support. The electorate is also leaning more towards favouring environmental protection in favour of continued economical growth. This will be relevant for Venstre in the continued discussion. On the dimensions for Global Vs. National orientation, and Centre Vs. Periphery there is a shift favouring Sp's positions, where the electorate is moving towards favouring national orientation and support of the periphery. These developments are positive for Venstre and Sp, but negative for KrF. The logistic regression will show what effects these dimensions have on each party's electoral support, and I will discuss these findings further later in the analysis.

5.1.2 Descriptive Statistics for Issue Ownership

The statistics describing the variables for issue ownership show how the units are distributed between the three groups of voters included in the analysis. They are divided in to three groups, where Group 1 are voters who believe that the party at hand has the best policies for the particular issue, and that the issue is important. Group 2 are voters who believe that the particular party has the best policies for the issue, but do not think that it is important. Group 3 are voters who think the issue is important, but that the particular party is not best at handling it. According to the theory of issue ownership put forth in chapter 3, the voters in Group 1 will be most likely to vote for that particular

²¹ See table E1 in appendix E for box plot describing the changes in the electorate's distribution on the Religious vs. Secular dimension.

²² See table E3 in appendix E for box plot describing the changes in the electorate's distribution on the Global vs. National dimension.

²³ See table E4 in appendix E for box plot describing the changes in the electorate's distribution on the centre vs. periphery dimension.

party, and the probability decreases from Group 1 to 2 and from Group 2 to 3. If this issue were the most important factor guiding the voter's choice, a voter in Group 3 would probably not vote for the party at hand but for the party it considers the issue owner. The percentage of voters in Group 1 is therefore the most relevant part of these tables, but larger numbers in each group is assumed to increase the party's support in the election. Belonging to Group 2 is also a significant measure of the party's potential support if their issue were to become salient. The voters in Group 2 believe that the party is best at handling the issue at hand, but do not find it important. If it were to become salient more voters would find it important and move from Group 2 in to Group 1, hence increasing their probability of voting for the party.

The analysis of the descriptive statistics concerning issue ownership will give a picture of how much each party potentially could benefit from their issue ownership of the issue handled in the analysis. The issue studied in the model is the issue most important to the party's voters at the time of each election and an issue, which the party has established ownership over. The regression in the next part of the thesis will show what effects each variable has actually had.

Table 8. KrF. Descriptive statistics for issue ownership.

	1997	2001	2005	2009
1: ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOLICIES	1.6	2.7	0.7	1.1
2: ISSUENOTIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOLICIES	41.4	29.7	17.9	19.9
3: ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYNOTBESTPOLICIES	0.3	3.2	1.2	1.4

Note: Issue of 1997 is Religion. Issue for 2001, 2005 and 2009 is Child and family issues. Group 1 is the group of voters who believe that KrF has the best policies for this issue, and that the issue is important. Group 2 is the group of voters who believe that KrF has the best policies, but that the issue is not important. Group 3 is the group of voters who do not believe that KrF has the best policies, but do think the issue is important. Values are for the whole sample of voters.

In 1997, 1.6 per cent of the electorate thought that KrF was best at handling religious issues, and that this was an important issue. It is also well established that the issue of cash support for parents staying home with their children was an issue that increased KrF's support in 1997.²⁴ In 2001, 2.7 per cent of the electorate belonged in Group 1 for

²⁴ Religious issues were not actually the issue most important to the voters this year, but the only issue possible to measure in this manner. Child and family issues were actually most important, with religious issues in a close second place. Religious issues are however one of the core issues for the Christian Democratic Party and they certainly have ownership of it.

child and family issues, and twenty per cent of the party's own voters. Since 2001 the percentage of the electorate in this group has declined. This suggests that KrF has lost part of the potential support it could be expected to receive on the basis of issue ownership. The percentage of voters in Group 1 decreased drastically in 2005, and went from 2.7 per cent to 0.7 per cent, which is a drastic loss. In 2009 the percentage of the electorate in Group 1 was but one per cent. Taking the effect from the cash support issue in 1997 into account it seems that the Christian Democratic Party has had decreasing effects from issue ownership from their main issues in this time period.

The percentage of voters in Group 2 is very large through the whole period, although it is declining. This may be the most interesting finding for KrF. Voters in Group 2 believe that KrF has the best policies for handling religious issues, and child and family issues, but do not think the issue is important at this point. If the issue were to become salient, and more voters find the issue important it is probable that many will turn to KrF to handle this issue. The percentage of the electorate in Group 2 has gone from 40 per cent in 1997 to but 20 per cent in 2009. This leaves KrF with a much smaller potential for increasing their support. Group 3 is very small for this issue, both for the party's own voters and, more importantly, for the whole electorate. Next to none who believe religious issues, or child and family issues, are important think that other parties have the best policies to deal with them.

The percentage of voters who think KrF is best at handling religious issues and child and family issues, and believe that these issues are important is a small group consisting of around one per cent of the electorate. The percentage of voters who think KrF is the best party at handling these issues, but do not think the issues are important at this time is a larger group, but it is decreasing. This suggests that if the issue were to become salient in a future election, KrF has a large potential for increasing their support, but this potential has been decreasing since 1997.

Table 9. Sp. Descriptive statistics for issue ownership.

	1997	2001	2005	2009
1: ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOLICIES	3.2	1.8	6.0	1.5
2: ISSUENOTIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOLICIES	28.6	19.6	31.8	35.6
3: ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYNOTBESTPOLICIES	1.2	1.2	2.2	0.2

Note: Issue for all years is Regional politics. Group 1 is the group of voters who believe that the Agrarian party has the best policies for this issue, and that the issue is important. Group 2 is the group of voters who believe that Sp has the best policies, but that the issue is not important. Group 3 is the group of voters who do not believe that Sp has the best policies, but do think the issue is important. Values are for the whole sample of voters.

Sp's voters have had regional issues as their most important issue every year from 1997 to 2009. The percentage of voters in Group 1 is fairly large, and it is clear that Sp has a firm ownership over regional issues. The percentage fluctuates a bit from year to year, but the party has a firm basis in the electorate based on this issue.

Sp's firm ownership of regional issues, is also clearly evident in the amount of voters belonging in Group 2. More than one third of the electorate believe that the party has the best policies for dealing with regional issues, and the percentage is growing. Group 3 is, on the other hand, very small. This means that among those who believe that regional politics is important, almost no one believes that other parties have good policies for this issue.

The percentage of voters who believe that Sp is the best party at handling regional issues, and that the issue is importance is a relatively large group. The size of the group changes, but when the issue is salient the group becomes large, as in 2005. There is also a very large group of the electorate who believe that Sp is the best party at handling regional issues, but who do not think the issue is important at this time. This means that if this issue becomes salient in the election the party definitely stands to benefit from it.

Table 10. Venstre. Descriptive statistics for issue ownership.

	1997	2001	2005	2009
1: ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOLICIES	0.8	0.9	1.8	2.8
2: ISSUENOTIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOLICIES	4.1	11.4	10.3	12.1
3: ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYNOTBESTPOLICIES	7.1	2.3	6.5	7.5

Note: Issue for all years is Environmental politics. Group 1 is the group of voters who believe that the Liberal party has the best policies for this issue, and that the issue is important. Group 2 is the group of voters who believe that The Liberal party has the best policies, but that the issue is not important. Group 3 is the group of voters who do not believe that the Liberal party has the best policies, but do think the issue is important. Values are for the whole sample of voters.

Venstre has increased its ownership over the issue of environmental protection. The percentage the electorate in Group 1 has increased steadily from 1997 to 2009, and it seems that Venstre has got a well-established ownership over environmental protection. This has not resulted in overwhelming support yet, but if environmental protection becomes a salient issue in the future the party stands to be one of the parties gaining increased support from it.

This is also evident in the size of Group 2, which has grown from four per cent in 1997 to more than twelve per cent in 2009. Most of the effect happened from 1997 to 2001, and the size of the group has remained stable in the elections since then.

Group 3 is fairly large, and Venstre does not seem to be the sole owner of this issue. Further analysis show that SV (Socialist Party) is what most of Group 3 put as the party they are most confident in for handling environmental issues.

The percentage of the electorate, who believe that Venstre is the best party at handling environmental issues, and that the issue is important, is increasing. The percentage of voters who believe that Venstre is best at handling this issue, but do not think the issue is important at this time is also very large. Venstre has established a solid ownership over this issue and will be able to benefit from it in the future.

5.1.3 Summary of the Descriptive Statistics

It is clear from these data that certain groups find the issues represented by the centre parties important. Among the voters who find one of these issues important, almost all of them think that the corresponding party has the best policies for the issue. A large group of the electorate do not mention these issues as important, but this group still recognize that the centre parties have the best policies for dealing with the issues they

own. If one of these issues were to become salient in an election, the Centre parties will definitely be able to benefit from their ownership.

The centre parties have a strong ownership over their issues, but the issues they own are limited to the core issues they are based on. KrF has a strong ownership over Religious issues and child and family issues that they do not seem to share with any other party. Sp has a strong ownership over regional issues that they do not share with any other party. Venstre has ownership over environmental issues, but share it to some extent with SV. This makes it more difficult for them to exploit the benefits of their issue ownership. When the core issues of one of the centre Parties is not salient, the voters in Group 1 will be a group of special interest voters, and the effects will be strong. When an issue owned by a party is salient, the percentage of that party's voters in Group 1 will increase, but the effect of this group on vote choice will be weaker. This is because Group 1 includes more than the special interest voters; it also includes those who have become concerned with it recently. The voters who have become concerned with the issue recently will be less likely to base their vote solely on this issue, than the voters who have always been concerned with this issue. There will be more voters believing that the issue is important and that the party is best at handling it, so the party will get more votes. But the effect of this group as a whole will be weaker, albeit there will be a positive effect overall. In this part I have examined each party's potential for gaining support through ideology and issue ownership. In the next part I will test what effects this has actually had on vote choice.

5.2 Logistic Regression

In the last part I presented the variables that will be included in the analysis, and the changes in the electorate's distribution on these variables. In this part I will investigate what effects ideology and issue ownership has had, and what variables that account for most of the effect through a logistic regression.

5.2.1 KrF

KrF stands for most of the loss in support of the centre parties in the period studied. In the previous section I have shown that the mean score on the religious vs. secular values dimension has gone towards more secular values since 1997, for the whole population. This is the dimension assumed to be most important for KrF's electoral support. I have also shown that the party's potential for gaining support based on issue ownership has decreased in this period.

The R²-statistic measures how much of the variance in the dependent variable, which is explained by the independent variables. As explained above I have designed the analysis, in such a way that I can extract the explained variance of the variables for ideology and issue ownership, respectively. Ideology meaning the variables defined and created through the factor analysis of sets of attitudes in the last chapter. Issue ownership is the effect of voters finding an issue important, and their opinions on what party is best at handling this issue. In table 11 it is clear that issue ownership explains more of the variance in the dependent variable. The variance explained by ideology seems to be relatively stable and ranges from twelve to nineteen per cent.

The explained variance of issue ownership is also relatively stable, and ranges from eleven to nineteen per cent. Issue ownership explains more in 1997 and 2001, but slightly less than ideology in 2005 and 2009. Ideology being the more basic determinant, this suggests that issue ownership has had less effect on KrF's electoral support in this period.

Table 11. Change in R² for variable groups for Ideology and issue ownership for KrF 1997–2009.

Variables/Year	1997	2001	2005	2009
Ideology	.130	.135	.118	.190
Issue ownership	.175	.170	.115	.187

Note: The values in this table are from the logistic regression presented below. The value is calculated by subtracting the R²-value of model 0 from the R²-value of model 1 to find the explained variance of ideology alone, and by subtracting the R²-value of model 0 from the R²-value of model 2 to find the explained variance of issue ownership alone.

Table 12 shows the logistic regression for KrF. The coefficients are odds ratios, which indicate how much the odds of $Y=1$ change if the independent variable changes by 1. A value smaller than 1 means that the odds decrease, whereas a value larger than 1 means that the odds increase.

There are three ideological dimensions that are significant in the analysis for KrF every year; namely the dimensions for immigration, environmental protection vs. economical growth and religious vs. secular values. The dimensions for public vs. private, and Global vs. National orientation are also significant in 2005. The ideological dimension with the largest coefficient is the dimension for religious vs. secular values, and it is the most important ideological dimension in determining a voter's decision to vote KrF. The coefficients for Religious Vs. Secular values show that the odds of voting

KrF increase when a voter leans towards religious values, and decrease when a voter leans towards secular values.

The variables for issue ownership are significant every year for Group 1 (ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOL) and Group 2 (ISSUENOTIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOL). The largest coefficients are for Group 1, and a bit smaller for Group 2. Both say that the probability for voting KrF increases if a voter is in any of these groups.

Gender is significant in 1997 and 2009 and the probability for voting KrF is larger for women than for men.

The most important ideological dimensions affecting KrF's electoral support is definitely the Religious vs. Secular values dimension. Favouring religious values increases the probability of voting KrF greatly. Belonging in Group 1 or 2 for issue ownership also increase the probability of voting KrF. Believing that KrF have the best policies for handling religious or child and family issues, and finding these issues important increases the probability of voting for the party. These variables are significant every year, and have great effect on KrF's electoral support.

Table 12. Logistic Regression KrF. Effect of Ideological Dimensions and Issue Ownership on Voting for KrF 1997–2009. Odds ratio.

Variables	1997				2001			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Constant	.129**	.695	.046**	.193***	.095***	3.561*	.026***	.558
Gender	.530**	.671*	.598**	.697*	1.010*	.644*	.656**	.741
Age	1.018**	.999	1.007	.998	1.012*	.987	1.021**	.998
Income	.834*	.972	.933	.963	.095	1.126	.841	.988
Ideological Dimensions								
Immigration		1.069**		1.068***		1.054**		1.054**
Public/Private		1.042		1.048*		.973		.962
Environment		1.069***		1.057***		1.058*		1.058*
Religious		.727***		.778***		.641***		.683***
GlobalNational		-		-		1.008		1.016
CenterPeriphery		-		-		.995		.998
Issue Ownership								
Group 1			83.097***	9.975***			70.81***	42.522***
Group 2			6.89***	2.975***			6.234***	4.438***
Group 3			15.487*	4.954			2.45*	2.113
-2LL Change	44.16***	327.161***	126.934***	164.596***	19.748**	257.01***	64.453***	207.843*
R2 (OLS)	.025	.155	.200	.238	.010	.145	.180	.255

Variables	2005				2009			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Constant	.035***	.015***	.024***	.009***	.049***	57.975**	.013	20.698
Gender	.757	.879	.671	.775	.805	.496*	.540	.358**
Age	1.013	.995	1.005	.992	1.005	.966**	1.004	.958**
Income	.926	1.023	.856	.939	.876	.936	.709	.693
Ideological Dimensions								
Immigration		1.198***		1.172***		1.146***		1.109*
Public/Private		1.129***		1.11*		.977		1.018
Environment		1.073*		1.073*		1.088**		1.123**
Religious		.676***		.709***		.378***		.361***
GlobalNational		1.166***		1.165***		1.034		.965
CenterPeriphery		1.017		1.037		.987		.993
Issue Ownership								
Group 1			88.235***	25.791***			428.376	502.704***
Group 2			11.246***	5.755***			32.786	9.208***
Group 3			.000	.000			8.759	1.585
-2LL Change	5.831	227.316***	94.527***	149.503**	2.602	306.341***	140.852**	199.292***
R2 (OLS)	.003	.121	.118	.188	.001	.191	.188	.295

Note: Significant values marked 0.05 (*), 0.01 (**), and 0.001 (***). Group 1: ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOL; Group 2: ISSUENOTIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOL; Group 3: ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYNOTBESTPOL. R²-statistic is drawn from a separate OLS-regression using the exact same variables and models.

5.2.2 Sp

In the descriptive statistics above I showed that the ideological orientation towards Sp's most important issues, global vs. national and centre vs. periphery, has remained relatively stable through this period, but moves slightly towards the positions represented by Sp. The party also have a strong ownership over regional issues, although it seems to have lost some saliency in 2009.

Table 13. Change in R2 for variable groups for Ideology and issue ownership for Sp 1997–2009.

Variables/Year	1997	2001	2005	2009
Ideology	.025	.030	.081	.043
Issue Ownership	.211	.310	.258	.200

Note: The values in this table are from the logistic regression presented below. The value is calculated by subtracting the R²-value of model 0 from the R²-value of model 1 to find the explained variance of ideology alone, and by subtracting the R²-value of model 0 from the R²-value of model 2 to find the explained variance of issue ownership alone.

Table 13 shows the changing effect of ideology and issue ownership, and it is clear that the effects have been relatively stable. Most of the effect goes through issue ownership, but this varies from year to year. The variance explained by ideology ranges from two to eight per cent, while the variance explained by issue ownership ranges from 20 to 31 per cent.

Table 14 shows the logistic regression for Sp, and reveals what variables that had most effect on the voters who chose to vote Sp. The ideological dimension for centre vs. periphery is significant every year from 2001 to 2009. The Global vs. national orientation dimension is significant in 2005 and 2009. The Centre Vs. Periphery dimensions shows that the more a voter favours the periphery side of the cleavage the greater is the possibility for that voter voting Sp. The same goes for the Global vs. National dimension where voters leaning towards national orientation have increased possibility of voting Sp.

The variables for issue ownership are significant every year, with strong coefficients. Believing that Sp has the best policies for dealing with regional issues, and/or that the issue is important greatly increases the probability of voting for the party.

Gender is also significant in 2009, and the probability for voting Sp is larger for men than for women. The Global vs. National dimension, the Centre vs. Periphery dimension and Group 1 for issue ownership are the variables affecting the probability for voting Sp the most. The variables that have the greatest effect on the probability of voting Sp are the ideological dimension for Global Vs. National orientation and Centre Vs. Periphery. Issue ownership is also significant every year, and has a great effect.

Table 14. Logistic Regression Sp. Effect of Ideological Dimensions and Issue Ownership on Voting for Sp 1997–2009. Odds ratio.

Variables	1997				2001			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Constant	.043***	.018***	.007	.003***	.036***	.0717**	.007***	.019***
Gender	1.079	1.421	.795	.974	1.103	1.502	.909	.932
Age	1.018**	1.017**	1.021	1.022**	1.014*	1.004	1.011	1.005
Income	.802	.865	.871	.895	.840	1.087	.841	1.031
Ideological Dimensions								
Immigration		.968		.955		1.002		1.004
Public/Private		.948		.982		1.031		1.042
Environment		1.159***		1.119***		1.054		.995
Religious		.968		.992		1.033		1.049
GlobalNational						1.013		1.004
CenterPeriphery						.711***		.762***
Issue Ownership								
Group 1			136.046	113.522***			539.692***	192.674**
Group 2			9.179	8.036***			13.571***	10.946***
Group 3			7.493	6.443			16.945	5.562*
-2LL Change	13.769**	45.912***	174.14***	16.58***	7.193	183.5***	59.043**	94.16***
R2 (OLS)	.007	.032	.218	.225	.004	.034	.314	.320

Variables	2005				2009			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Constant	.046***	.035***	.003**	.003***	.031***	.013***	.003***	.002***
Gender	1.363	1.591*	1.155	1.151	1.853*	2.603***	2.196**	2.611***
Age	1.011	1.005	1.007	1.002	1.241	1.002	1.003	1.002
Income	.868	1.112	.863	1.059	.844	1.071	.793	1.104
Ideological Dimensions								
Immigration		1.070**		1.048		1.044		1.029
Public/Private		0.937**		.945		1.081***		1.047
Environment		.966		.947		1.001		1.003
Religious		.935**		.952		.966		.985
GlobalNational		1.233***		1.199***		1.097*		1.108*
CenterPeriphery		.835***		.925**		.812***		.813***
Issue Ownership								
Group 1			253.661***	131.499***			874.804***	606.072***
Group 2			22.533***	14.999***			31.468***	21.999***
Group 3			5.414	2.129			.000	.000
-2LL Change	8.236*	167.77***	129.269***	63.792***	10.436*	115.005***	35.595***	95.675***
R2 (OLS)	.004	.085	.262	.286	.008	.051	.208	.223

Note: Significant values marked as 0.05 (*), 0.01 (**), and 0.001 (***).
 Group 1: ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOL; Group 2: ISSUENOTIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOL; Group 3: ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYNOTBESTPOL. R²-statistic is drawn from a separate OLS-regression using the exact same variables and models.

5.2.3 Venstre

Table 15 shows that issue ownership explains more of the variance in the dependent variable than ideology. While ideology explains two to three per cent in this period, issue ownership explains from 12 to 23 per cent and most of the effects go through issue ownership.

Table 15. Change in R2 for variable groups for Ideology and issue ownership for Venstre 1997-2009.

Variables/Year	1997	2001	2005	2009
Ideology	.021	.027	.035	.031
Issue Ownership	.129	.234	.116	.144

Table 16 shows the logistic regression for Venstre. The logistic regression for Venstre reveals that the ideological dimension for economical growth vs. environmental protection is significant every year from 1997 to 2009, and the probability for voting for the party increases when a voter leans towards environmental protection. Immigration is also significant in 1997 and 2005, and a favourable attitude towards immigration also increases the probability of voting Venstre. The public vs. private dimension is significant in 2005 and 2009, but the direction of the coefficient changes from favouring public solutions in 2005 to favouring private solutions in 2009. This does not seem to be an important variable for voting Venstre.

Issue ownership is significant every year from 1997 to 2009, and the variables have strong coefficients. If a voter is part of Group 1 or 2 the probability for voting Venstre increases drastically.

The ideological dimension for environmental protection, and the issue of environmental protection has great effect on the electoral support of Venstre. Leaning towards environmental protection on the economical growth vs. economical growth dimension increases the probability of voting Venstre. Believing that Venstre has the best policies for dealing with environmental issues, and that this is an important issue also increase the probability of voting Venstre.

Table 16. Logistic Regression Venstre. Effects of Ideological Dimensions and Issue Ownership on Voting for Venstre 1997–2009. Odds ratio.

Variables	1997				2001			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Constant	.041***	.001***	.013***	.002***	.012***	.000***	.008***	.000***
Gender	1.061	1.277	1.247	1.337	1.236	1.558	1.135	1.295
Age	.998	1.009	1.008	1.014	1.007	1.001*	.949	1.004
Income	1.043	0.913	1.004	.901	1.391*	1.635	1.379	1.413
Ideological Dimensions								
Immigration		1.082*		1.073*		1.096***		1.065
Public/Private		1.102**		1.061		1.074*		1.054
Environment		1.154***		1.066*		1.192***		1.154***
Religious		1.002		.997		1.014		1.053
GlobalNational						.957		.968
CenterPeriphery						.994		.988
Issue Ownership								
Group 1			90.017***	59.739***			645.483**	368.706***
Group 2			14.585***	10.697***			11.245***	11.023***
Group 3			4.854***	3.974***			7.028***	3.896*
-2LL Change	.218	42.471***	70.629***	11.97***	6.025*	51.689***	75.105***	56.957***
R2 (OLS)	.001	.022	.130	.135	.004	.031	.238	.247

Variables	2005				2009			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Constant	.005***	.000***	.0003***	.000***	.037***	.005***	.008***	.007**
Gender	1.058	1.277	1.073	1.306	.634	0.675	.844	.745
Age	1.014	1.029***	1.018*	1.033***	.893	1.002	1.001	1.003
Income	2.193***	1.825***	1.736***	1.582**	1.432*	1.165	1.198	1.006
Ideological Dimensions								
Immigration		1.107***		1.105**		1.067*		1.055
Public/Private		1.146***		1.115***		.905***		.918*
Environment		1.151***		1.124***		1.164***		1.099*
Religious		.975		.966		.965		.949
GlobalNational		1.025		1.043		.973		1.006
CenterPeriphery		1.048		1.059		.992		.988
Issue Ownership								
Group 1			37.712***	27.938***			55.701***	38.861
Group 2			9.115***	6.826***			13.599***	11.245
Group 3			2.619*	1.930			4.095*	3.421
-2LL Change	32.866***	69.460***	45.879***	44.879***	8.623*	52.693***	58.384***	35.758
R2 (OLS)	.017	.052	.133	.151	.005	.036	.149	.165

Note: Significant values marked as 0.05 (*), 0.01 (**), and 0.001 (***). Group 1: ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOL; Group 2: ISSUENOTIMPORTANT*PARTYBESTPOL; Group 3: ISSUEIMPORTANT*PARTYNOTBESTPOL. R²-statistic is drawn from a separate OLS-regression using the exact same variables and models.

5.2.4 Summary of the Logistic Regression

The logistic regression revealed what variables in the models that had effect on the electoral support of the centre parties, and the direction of these. The results were as expected, based on the history of each party, and confirmed that the issues the centre parties base their policies on are the issues their voters are most concerned with.

- The Religious vs. Secular dimension, and religious and child and family issues affect KrF's electoral support. Favouring religious values increases the probability of voting KrF.
- The Global vs. National orientation, and Centre Vs. Periphery dimensions affect the electoral support of Sp, along with regional issues. Favouring global orientation and the periphery increases the probability of voting Sp.
- The Environmental protection vs. Economical growth dimension, and the issue of environmental protection affects the electoral support of Venstre. Favouring environmental protection increases the probability of voting Venstre.

These are the main findings of the logistic regression. In the next part I will discuss these findings with regards to the electorate's distribution on these variables, to review the electoral viability of the Centre parties.

5.3 Findings and interpretations

In the passages above I have presented the descriptive statistics, and the logistic regression for this analysis. The logistic regression has revealed what variables that had the largest effect on the electoral support of each of the centre parties. In the following section I will interpret the descriptive statistics in light of the results from the logistic regression. The percentages of the electorate in the categories affecting the centre parties' electoral support will be the most important factor in explaining their support based on these variables. In the following discussion I will first discuss the findings pertaining to hypothesis 1: *Changes in the ideological orientations of voters have negatively affected the electoral support of the centre parties.* Then I will discuss the findings pertaining to hypothesis 2: *Changes in the effects of issue ownership have negatively affected the electoral support of the centre parties.*

I will do this for each party using the party specific hypotheses presented in the theory chapter.

5.3.1 KrF

In this section I will analyse the descriptive statistics in light of the results from the logistic regression for KrF, to determine the effects of ideology and issue ownership on

KrF's electoral support from 1997 to 2009 and to see if there are any trends in the changes in these variables.

The logistic regression revealed that placement on the Religious vs. Secular values dimension was the ideological dimension affecting KrF's electoral support the most. If a voter leans towards religious values on this dimension the probability of him or her voting KrF increases drastically.

In the theory chapter I presented this hypothesis for KrF:

H1.1: Changes in the ideological orientations of voters have negatively affected the electoral support of KrF.

As can be seen in table 7,²⁵ and the box plot in table E1²⁶ the electorate is leaning more and more towards secular values on the Religious vs. Secular values dimension. This means that fewer voters share the ideological orientation of KrF. The logistic regression showed that voters with religious values are more likely to vote KrF. When fewer voters share these values the effect of this variable will apply to fewer voters, and KrF's electoral support will most likely decrease because of this. H1.1 is thus confirmed, and it is clear that changes in the ideological orientations of voters have affected the electoral support of KrF in a negative way.

The second hypothesis for KrF was:

H2.1: Changes in the electorate with regards to KrF's issue ownership has negatively affected the party's electoral support.

KrF owns religious issues and child and family issues. If a voter is concerned with this issue, and think that KrF has the best policies for handling these issues, the probability of him or her voting KrF increases. The effects of ideology and issue ownership are stable for KrF, and issue ownership explains slightly more than ideological orientation.

Table 8 presents the descriptive statistics for issue ownership for KrF. It shows that the percentage of voters in both Group 1 and 2 is decreasing. This means that the large effect of issue ownership applies to fewer voters, and that issue ownership will have a smaller effect on KrF's electoral support than before.

KrF's potential for electoral support has decreased since 1997. The electorate's placement on the religious vs. secular values cleavage has moved away from the positions held by KrF, and they have lost part of the potential support they could expect from issue ownership. Fewer voters think that the issues owned by KrF are important,

²⁵ On page 54.

²⁶ See Appendix E for table E1

and fewer voters think that KrF is the best party to handle these issues. They still have a solid basis for continued electoral viability, but it has become smaller since 1997. This is mostly due to the fact that fewer voters think that KrF have the best policies to handle the issues they stand for, and that the electorate has moved away from the party on the ideological dimension affecting their support the most. If religious issues, or child and family Issues were to become salient KrF would benefit from it in an election, but not as much as they could have expected before. Issue ownership explains most of the variance in the dependent variable, although there seems to be some interaction effects. Still, the electorate's shift away from KrF's ideological placement might also negatively influence their support if the ideological orientation of the electorate remains the same.

5.3.2 Sp

The logistic regression for Sp revealed that Global vs. National orientation and Centre vs. Periphery were the two ideological dimensions that had the largest effect on the probability of voting Sp. Support of national orientation, or the periphery greatly increases the probability of a voter choosing to vote for Sp in the election. Issue ownership also had a large effect on the probability of voting Sp.

In chapter 3 I posed this hypothesis for S:

H1.2: Changes in the ideological orientations of voters have negatively affected the electoral support of Sp.

Table 7²⁷ shows that the ideological dimensions affecting the probability of voting Sp have remained stable throughout the period. The dimensions might lean away from the position held by Sp, but are moving slightly towards their positions. The fact that they remain stable suggests that Sp can continue to count on their ideological basis for support. The effects of these ideological dimensions stay the same, and the groups of voters affected by these variables are growing rather than diminishing. Hypothesis 1.2 is therefore discarded, and the null-hypothesis is kept. There have only been minor changes in the ideological dimensions affecting Sp's electoral support, and these have been beneficial to the parties support in elections.

The second hypothesis for Sp was:

H2.2: Changes in the electorate with regards to Sp's issue ownership has negatively affected the party's electoral support.

²⁷ On page 54.

The logistic regression revealed that a person who thinks regional issues are important, and/or that Sp is best at handling these issues is more likely to vote SP. Issue ownership has a larger effect than ideology, and explains more of Sp's support than ideology.

Table 9²⁸ shows the descriptive statistics for issue ownership for Sp. It shows that the party has a firm ownership over regional issues, and that they are the sole owner. Regional issues seems to have lost some of its saliency in 2009, but the percentage of the whole electorate who think Sp has the best policies for dealing with issue has increased through the entire period. The group of voters who believe regional issues are important, and/or that Sp has the best policies for handling these issues is increasing. This means that Sp can expect continued electoral support based on issue ownership and perhaps increased support based on these issues. Hypothesis 2.2 is therefore discarded. Sp has a strong ownership over regional issues, and the changes in the electorate have been beneficial to the party's electoral support.

Based on the stability in the most important ideological dimensions for Sp they have a firm basis for continued support in the electorate. They also have a solid issue ownership over regional issues, and can expect massive support if this issue were to become salient. Sp stands firmly against further European integration, and protects the interests of farmers and the rural population. This is recognised in the electorate, and could increase their support greatly if these issues become salient.

5.3.3 Venstre

The logistic regression for Venstre revealed that the dimension for environmental protection is significant for Venstre every year. The probability of voting Venstre increases when a voter favours environmental protection.

In chapter 3 I posed this hypothesis for Venstre:

H1.3: Changes in the ideological orientations of voters have negatively affected the electoral support of Venstre.

The descriptive statistics in Table 7 and E2²⁹ above show that the electorate is leaning more and more towards environmental protection on the Economical growth vs. Environmental protection cleavage. This means that Venstre has a small, but growing, ideological basis for receiving support based on their ideological stance. The electorate is growing more concerned with environmental protection, and this is a positive development for Venstre. Hypothesis 1.3 is hence discarded in favour of the null-

²⁸ On page 56

²⁹ See Appendix E for table E2.

hypothesis. Venstre has established itself, as a protector of the environment, and the ideological orientations of the electorate are moving towards their position.

The second hypothesis posed for Venstre was:

H2.3: Changes in the electorate with regards to Venstre's issue ownership has affected the party's electoral support.

The variables for issue ownership are significant every year from 1997 to 2009 and have strong coefficients for environmental issues. Believing that Venstre has the best policies for handling environmental issues, and/or that the issue is important greatly increases the probability of voting Venstre.

The descriptive statistics for issue ownership in table 10 also showed that Venstre has a firm ownership over environmental issues that they share to some extent with SV. There is a small, but growing group that think environmental issues are important and/or that Venstre has the best policies to deal with environmental issues. Hypothesis 2.3 is therefore discarded. Venstre has gained more and more support from their ownership of environmental issues in this period, and stands to benefit from it in an election if this issue were to become salient in the future.

Based on the developments in the electorate's ideological orientation, and issue ownership with regards to environmental protection Venstre can expect increased support based on this ideological dimension and issue in the future. The electorate is moving closer to the position kept by Venstre, and their issue ownership is growing stronger as the electorate is more concerned with environmental protection.

5.4 The Centre

The changing effects of ideology and issue ownership for the Norwegian centre parties resemble the changes in their respective electoral support. While there have been little changes in the electoral support of Sp and Venstre, KrF has lost a lot of support in the period from 1997 to 2009. The same developments can be seen in the changing effects of ideology and issue ownership for these parties in this period. The electorate has moved away from KrF on the ideological dimensions most closely associated with their electoral support. This is not the case for Venstre and Sp, where the electorate has moved closer to the two parties on the ideological dimensions associated with their electoral support.

Table 17. Summary of the Hypotheses

	H1: Ideology		H2: Issue Ownership	
	Accepted	Rejected	Accepted	Rejected
KrF	X		X	
Sp		X		X
Venstre		X		X
Centre		X		X

Note: H1: Changes in the ideological orientations of voters have negatively affected the electoral support of the centre parties. H2: Changes in the effects of issue ownership have negatively affected the electoral support of the centre parties. H1 and H2 are specified with hypotheses pertaining to each party, on page 31–32 and in the discussion of the findings for each party.

As a whole, the Norwegian centre parties have a firm foundation in the conflicts and cleavages they were founded on. Still, the changes in the political culture as described by Inglehart (1977), Knutsen (1985) and Jenssen (1993) are noticeable in the changing effects of ideology and issue ownership. The shift in the electorate towards more secular values, and the increasing importance of environmental protection are among the changes described by the aforementioned scholars (Jenssen 1993: 70f). As shown in table 17 the changes have had negative effects for KrF, while the same cannot be said about Venstre and Sp. The changes in ideology and issue ownership have been minor, but the trend is positive for these two parties.

Still, this is a study of four consecutive elections over a time period of 12 years. It is clear that the changing effects of ideology and issue ownership have been positive for Sp and Venstre, and negative for KrF during this period, but as far as predicting the electoral viability of the centre parties in the future, this study can only define the potential each party has in the status quo. As Listhaug (1989b) described, parties manage to adapt to changes in the electorate, and it may be naive to assume that other parties will stand idle by as any of these changes become more prominent.

6 Summary

In this thesis, I have sought to explain the low support of the Norwegian centre and to review their continued electoral viability. I began by presenting the prevailing theories explaining voting behaviour from the last century. Based on these theories, I presented the changes in the Norwegian political culture and sought to define a theoretical framework for my analysis taking these changes into account. The relevance of ideological orientations and issue ownership has increased, and by reviewing these factors I have analysed the changes in the electoral viability of the Norwegian centre parties.

6.1 Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis is to review the continued electoral viability of each of the centre parties, based on ideology and issue ownership. I have done so by testing the effects of underlying ideological dimensions and issue ownership on the support of each of the centre parties from 1997 to 2009, and reviewed the changes in these variables. The analysis has revealed that the centre parties have a firm electoral basis as representatives of certain sides in cleavages in Norwegian society.

Each of the centre parties represents a particular issue, and a side in a certain cleavage. KrF represents religious values in the religious vs. secular values cleavage. This, in turn, gives them ownership over religious issues and child and family issues. Sp represents the periphery in the centre vs. periphery cleavage, and the side favouring national orientation in the global vs. national orientation cleavage. They also own regional issues sovereignly. Venstre represents environmental protection in the economical growth vs. environmental protection cleavage, and this affects their electoral support. The party also has a firm ownership over environmental issues. I have made conclusions by reviewing the electorate's changing placement on the ideological dimensions and issues having the largest effect on the electoral support of the centre parties.

The electorate has moved away from the position held by KrF on the religious vs. secular values dimension. This means that the effect KrF has from this dimension has become smaller from 1997 to 2009. KrF has also lost a lot of their ownership over child and family issues. This is an issue that affects KrF's electoral support a lot, but the effects have become smaller in the period studied in this thesis. On the centre vs. periphery and global vs. national orientation dimensions the electorate has moved towards the positions held by Sp. Sp has also increased its ownership over regional issues. This

development strengthens Sp's potential for electoral support. Venstre benefits from the electorate becoming more concerned with environmental protection. This is evident in the environmental protection vs. economical growth dimension, and Venstre's ownership over environmental issues.

The changes in the variables for ideology and issue ownership reflect the evolution in the electoral support of the centre parties. KrF is the party that has lost most of the support, and is also the party that has been negatively affected by changes in the electorate's ideological orientation and perceptions of issue ownership. Based on the variables for ideology and issue ownership in this analysis the centre parties as a whole, and separately, are viable for continued and perhaps increased electoral support. The ideological orientation of the electorate is relatively stable, and the changes that have occurred in the period studied in this analysis have been favourable to Sp and Venstre, but not so favourable to KrF. The centre parties have a firm ownership over the issues they focus on, and the electorate recognises them as protectors of special interests and as parties with strong and clear positions on these issues. As reflected in the changing electoral support from 1997 to 2009 KrF is the only party that has had negative effects from changes in ideological orientations and issue ownership.

The changes in the political culture as described by Inglehart (1977), Knutsen (1985) and Jenssen (1993) seems to have affected the electoral support of the centre parties. The changes described by these researchers include issues such as environmental protection and moral/religious issues becoming more important. These changes can be seen in the ideological dimensions, and perceptions of issue ownership among Venstre and KrF's voters, respectively. The changes have been positive for Venstre, but negative for KrF. This is an interesting development, and underlines the findings of the aforementioned researchers. Globalization is also an issue that has affected the support of Sp.

Based on the variables studied in this thesis, the Norwegian centre parties have a small but firm foundation for their continued electoral viability. The trends are positive for Venstre and Sp, but negative for KrF. The coming elections will show if these trends continue, but this has been the overall tendency from the election of 1997 to 2009. It also remains to be seen if the centre parties will be allowed to keep their dominance over these issues, or whether other parties will join in the competition as changes in the Norwegian political culture become more evident.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Descriptive Statistics for dependent variables by party

Table A1. Descriptive statistics dependent variable Voted for Agrarian Party 1997-2009

<i>Categories</i>	1997		2001		2005		2009	
	Frequency	Per Cent	Frequency	Per Cent	Frequency	Per Cent	Frequency	Per Cent
No	1921	93.5	2243	95.8	1879	93.4	1681	94.3
Yes	134	6.5	226	4.2	133	6.6	101	5.7
Total	2055	100	2341	100	2012	100	1782	100

Table A2. Descriptive statistics dependent variable Voted for Christian Dem. Party

<i>Categories</i>	1997		2001		2005		2009	
	Frequency	Per Cent	Frequency	Per Cent	Frequency	Per Cent	Frequency	Per Cent
No	1790	87.1	2115	90.3	1917	95.3	1712	96.1
Yes	265	12.9	226	9.7	95	4.7	70	3.9
Total	2055	100	2341	100	2012	100	1782	100

Table A3. Descriptive statistics dependent variable Voted for Liberal Party

<i>Categories</i>	1997		2001		2005		2009	
	Frequency	Per Cent	Frequency	Per Cent	Frequency	Per Cent	Frequency	Per Cent
No	1971	95.9	2265	96.8	1911	95.0	1711	96.0
Yes	84	4.1	76	3.2	101	5.0	71	4.0
Total	2055	100	2341	100	2012	100	1782	100

Appendix B: Descriptive statistics for independent variables

Table B1. Descriptive statistics demographic control variables 1997.

<i>Variables</i>	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
<i>Male</i>	2055	0	1	.529	.499	-.118	-1.988
<i>Age</i>	2055	17	79	44.0	16.108	.311	-.871
<i>Income</i>	1950	1	3	2.0128	.824	-.024	-1.528

Table B2. Descriptive statistics demographic control variables 2001.

<i>Variables</i>	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
<i>Male</i>	2341	0	1	.5023	.500	-.009	-2.002
<i>Age</i>	2341	17	79	45.06	16.5	.226	-.944
<i>Income</i>	2214	1	3	1.988	.806	.021	-1.462

Table B3. Descriptive statistics demographic control variables 2005.

<i>Variables</i>	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
<i>Male</i>	2012	0	1	.5293	.49926	-.118	-1.988
<i>Age</i>	2012	17	79	45.86	16.221	.132	-.919
<i>Income</i>	1870	1	3	1.95	.80	.087	-1.440

Table B4. Descriptive statistics demographic control variables 2009.

<i>Variables</i>	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
<i>Male</i>	1782	0	1	.5213	.499	-.085	-1.995
<i>Age</i>	1782	17	79	46.67	16.217	-.002	-.940
<i>Income</i>	1603	1	3	2.00	.813	-.009	-1.486

Table B5. Descriptive statistics ideological Dimensions 1997

<i>Variables</i>	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
Public Private	2055	0	20	7.84	4.01	.425	-.240
Immigration	2055	0	20	9.41	4.78	-.012	-.714
Environment	2055	0	20	9.62	4.19	.083	-.432
Moral/religious	2055	0	20	10.80	4.70	-.204	-.572

Table B6. Descriptive statistics ideological Dimensions 2001

<i>Variables</i>	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
Public Private	2021	5	31	11.80	4.629	.610	-.168
Immigration	2037	3	26	13.55	5.505	-.110	-.856
Environment	2010	4	28	10.567	3.80	.526	.185
Moral/religious	2052	3	23	9.831	3.122	.063	.026
GlobalNational	2052	5	45	13.28	5.75	2.329	6.872
CentrePeriphery	2052	2	33	15.643	6.56	.329	2.321

Table B7. Descriptive statistics ideological Dimensions 2005.

<i>Variables</i>	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
Public Private	2012	0	20	8.295	4.514	.215	-.601
Immigration	2012	0	20	8.1675	4.64	.168	-.705
Environment	2012	0	20	9.23	4.32	.213	-.544
Moral/religious	2012	0	20	11.49	4.92	-.103	-.867
GlobalNational	2012	0	20	8.29	4.23	.129	-.662
CentrePeriphery	2012	0	20	7.57	4.02	.376	-.231

Table B8. Descriptive statistics ideological Dimensions 2009.

<i>Variables</i>	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
Public Private	1734	7	46	21.75	6.44	-.076	-.537
Immigration	1747	4	34	13.70	5.9	.219	-.636
Environment	1726	3	43	22.87	6.29	-.359	-.045
Moral/religious	1688	4	23	12.52	3.56	-.288	-.504
GlobalNational	1782	3	27	8.24	3.8	2.056	6.821
CentrePeriphery	1782	2	34	15.42	08.des	3.028	6.220

Appendix C: Full list of issues important to voters by party

Table C1: Most important issues for Agrarian Party voters 1997-2009. Percentage of voters mentioning the issue as important (Sp)

Issue/Year	1997	2001	2005	2009
Regional politics	17	17	24,5	16
Agricultural Politics	6	14	14	13
Care for the elderly	13	9	9	2
School and Education	4	8	12	10
EU	13	4	6	4
Taxes	2	13	1	2
Health Care	8	4	8	8
Environment	4	2	3	11
The Economy	5	1	4	3
Child and Family	3	6	2	1
Moral/Religious Issues	2	2	0	1
Social equality	8	4	3	2
Immigration	1	2	1	1
Employment	2	1	3	1
Private vs. Public	1	0	3	3
Transportation	0	3	2	5
N	240	138	204	180

Table C2: Most important issues for Liberal Party voters 1997-2009. Percentage of voters mentioning the issue as important

Issue/Year	1997	2001	2005	2009
Environment	17	16	18	30
School and Education	11	19	19	18
Health Care	11	13	3	8
Care for the elderly	8	7	11	6
Taxes	1	14	2	6
The Economy	11	3	19	3
Child and Family	6	7	8	2
Regional politics	5	2	1	1
Agricultural Politics	2	1	2	0
Social equality	6	2	4	2
Immigration	1	1	1	6
EU	3	2	2	0
Employment	4	0	0	0
Transportation	1	1	1	3
N	142	112	151	131

**Table C3: Most important issues for Christian Democratic Party Voters 1997-2009.
Percentage of voters mentioning the issue as important**

Issue/Year	1997	2001	2005	2009
Child and Family	21	20	21	21
Moral/Religious Issues	9	9	22	24
Care for the elderly	16	10	12	7
School and Education	6	16	14	9
Health Care	10	12	6	7
The Economy	4	1	4	1
Taxes	1	16	2	1
Regional politics	1	2	1	0
Agricultural Politics	1	2	3	1
Environment	4	2	3	5
Social equality	10	1	6	2
Immigration	1	2	1	2
EU	2	2	2	0
Defense and Security	0	0	2	4
Employment	1	1	1	2
Private vs. Public	1	0	3	3
Transportation	1	1	0	2
N	469	306	155	137

Appendix D: Logistic Regression with Logit and Standard Error

Table D1. Logistic Regression Sp, ideology and issue ownership.

SP	1997						2001						2005						2009					
	1		2		3		1		2		3		1		2		3		1		2		3	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Constant	-3.97	.660	-4.92	.523	-5.56	.790	-2.65	.990	-4.89	.612	-3.95	1.24	-3.34	.794	-5.53	.659	-5.57	1.02	-4.29	1.09	-5.72	.736	-6.19	1.35
Gender	.352	.202	-.229	.224	-.026	.232	.407	.246	-.095	.257	-.070	.291	.464	.213	.140	.222	.141	.242	.957	.267	.787	.266	.960	.304
Age	.017	.006	.021	.007	.022	.007	.010	.008	.011	.008	.005	.009	.005	.007	.007	.007	.002	.008	.002	.009	.003	.008	.002	.010
Income	-.145	.126	-.138	.139	-.110	.144	.084	.152	-.172	.165	.031	.186	.107	.138	-.147	.144	.058	.159	.069	.161	-.231	.162	.099	.191
Immigration	-.032	.022			-.045	.025	.020	.024			.004	.030	.068	.026			.047	.031	.044	.025			.029	.030
Public/Private	-.053	.028			-.020	.033	.031	.030			.042	.039	-.065	.027			-.061	.031	.078	.024			.046	.028
Environment	.148	.027			.113	.030	.053	.034			-.005	.043	-.040	.026			-.054	.030	.001	.023			.003	.027
Religious	-.032	.022			-.008	.025	.033	.041			.048	.051	-.067	.023			-.049	.027	-.034	.037			-.015	.043
GlobalNation	-	-			-	-	.013	.026			.040	.032	.210	.028			.182	.033	.093	.044			.103	.053
CentPerip	-	-			-	-	-.340	.035			-.271	.038	-.180	.033			-.077	.028	-.208	.029			-.206	.034
Group 1			4.91	.376	4.73	.384			6.29	.510	5.26	.554			5.53	.488	4.87	.504			6.77	.720	6.41	.780
Group 2			2.21	.288	2.08	.293			2.60	.331	2.39	.350			3.11	.470	2.70	.477			3.44	.519	3.09	.528
Group 3			1.13	.787	1.86	.792			2.83	.686	1.71	.713			1.68	1.11	.756	1.13			-	-	-	-
Cox&SnellR2	.032	.119	.127	.095	.130	.165	.090	.151	.179	.080	.118	.157												
NagelkerkeR2	.086	.321	.342	.292	.400	.507	.235	.394	.468	.233	.344	.458												
R2 (OLS)	.032	.218	.225	.034	.314	.320	.085	.262	.286	.051	.208	.223												

Note: Coefficients significant at the .01 level emphasized.

Table D2. Logistic Regression Venstre, ideology and issue ownership.

V	1997						2001						2005						2009					
	1		2		3		1		2		3		1		2		3		1		2		3	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Constant	-6.70	.804	-4.30	.508	-6.17	.863	-8.51	1.10	-4.73	.526	-8.58	1.32	-9.64	1.01	-5.79	.597	-9.87	1.10	-5.25	1.22	-4.78	.638	-4.85	1.35
Gender	.245	.240	.221	.254	.291	.259	.444	.266	.123	.283	.259	.300	.245	.227	.071	.228	.267	.245	-.392	.268	-.169	.273	-.294	.292
Age	.009	.008	.008	.008	.014	.009	.001	.019	-.010	.021	.004	.022	.029	.009	.018	.008	.033	.009	.002	.010	.001	.009	.003	.010
Income	-.090	.146	.004	.150	-.104	.156	.492	.400	.322	.461	.346	.469	.602	.151	.552	.153	.459	.160	.153	.164	.181	.169	.009	.178
Immigration	.079	.029			.071	.031	.096	.028			.063	.032	.102	.029			.100	.032	.065	.028			.054	.031
Public/Private	.098	.031			.060	.034	.072	.029			.049	.035	.137	.027			.109	.030	-.099	.024			-.085	.027
Environment	.144	.031			.059	.034	.176	.036			.144	.043	.141	.030			.117	.034	.152	.030			.095	.034
Religious	.002	.026			-.003	.029	.014	.046			.052	.053	-.025	.026			-.034	.028	-.035	.038			-.061	.044
GlobalNational	-	-			-	-	-.043	.034			-.032	.040	.025	.030			.043	.032	-.027	.054			.008	.057
CenterPeriphery	-	-			-	-	-.006	.011			-.012	.014	.047	.029			.058	.030	-.008	.012			-.012	.015
Group 1			4.50	.562	4.09	.578			6.47	.786	5.91	.813			3.63	.398	3.33	.412			4.02	.402	3.66	.444
Group 2			2.68	.309	2.37	.330			2.42	.303	2.40	.311			2.21	.253	1.92	.265			2.61	.340	2.42	.358
Group 3			1.58	.340	1.38	.359			1.95	.571	1.36	.607			.963	.430	.658	.455			1.41	.499	1.23	.526
Cox&Snell R2	.022	.057	.063	.030	.084	.095	.053	.077	.098	.040	.081	.098												
Nagelkerke R2	.075	.197	.217	.110	.310	.352	.157	.229	.293	.131	.272	.322												
R2 (OLS)	.022	.130	.135	.031	.238	.247	.052	.133	.151	.036	.149	.165												

Note: Coefficients significant at the .01 level emphasized.

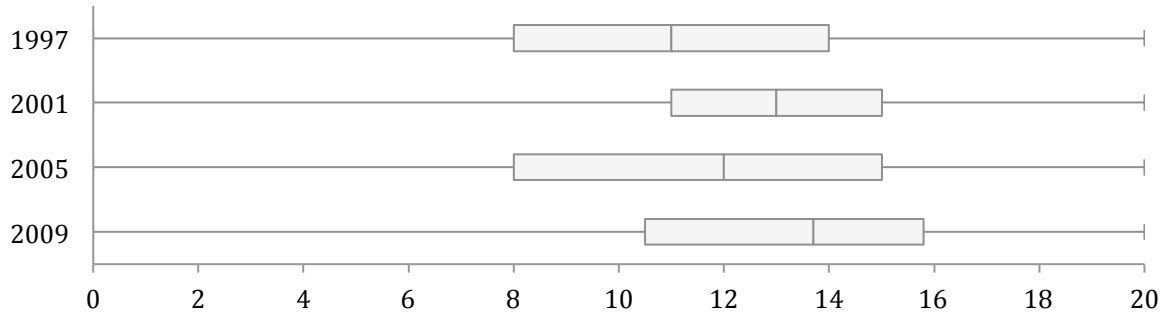
Table D3. Logistic Regression KrF, ideology and issue ownership

KrF	1997						2001						2005						2009					
	1		2		3		1		2		3		1		2		3		1		2		3	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Constant	-.364	.531	-3.1	.340	-1.65	.593	1.27	.675	-3.66	.310	-.585	.763	-4.24	1.05	-3.77	.536	-4.80	1.11	4.06	1.49	-4.38	.693	3.03	1.76
Gender	-4.00	.168	-.515	.156	-3.62	.172	-4.41	.175	-4.22	.164	-.301	.191	-.129	.265	-.399	.236	-.256	.286	-7.02	.357	-6.17	.287	-1.03	.417
Age	-.002	.005	.006	.005	-.003	.005	-.014	.012	.020	.012	-.003	.013	-.006	.009	.004	.008	-.009	.009	-.035	.012	.003	.009	-.043	.015
Income	-.031	.105	-.073	.095	-.038	.108	.118	.260	-.174	.260	-.013	.281	.022	.177	-.156	.154	-.063	.189	-.067	.222	-.344	.181	-.367	.266
Immigration	.067	.019			.065	.020	.052	.016			.052	.018	.180	.033			.158	.034	.136	.038			.103	.044
Public/Private	.041	.023			.046	.024	-.028	.020			-.039	.022	.121	.025			.104	.037	-.024	.032			.017	.039
Environment	.066	.022			.067	.022	.056	.024			.056	.027	.070	.033			.070	.035	.084	.033			.116	.040
Religious	-3.20	.022			-.252	.024	-.446	.033			-.382	.036	-.393	.039			-.345	.041	-.973	.103			-1.02	.135
Global/National	-	-			-	-	.007	.018			.015	.019	.153	.034			.152	.036	.033	.057			-	.068
Center/Periphery	-	-			-	-	-	.007			-	.007	.016	.035			.036	.037	-	.008			-	.008
Group 1			4.42	.462	2.30	.512			4.26	.335	3.75	.367			4.48	.586	3.25	.687			6.06	.635	6.22	1.03
Group 2			1.93	.191	1.09	.214			1.83	.192	1.49	.204			2.42	.254	1.75	.281			3.49	.416	2.22	.528
Group 3			2.74	.886	1.60	.967			.896	.500	.748	.529			-	-	-	-			2.17	1.10	.460	1.35
Cox&Snell R2	.186		.127		.203		.135		.126		.198		.117		.071		.143		.186		.104		.217	
Nagelkerke R2	.347		.236		.378		.270		.250		.394		.374		.228		.455		.614		.360		.717	
R2 (OLS)	.155		.200		.238		.145		.180		.255		.121		.118		.188		.191		.188		.295	

Note: Coefficients significant at the .01 level emphasized.

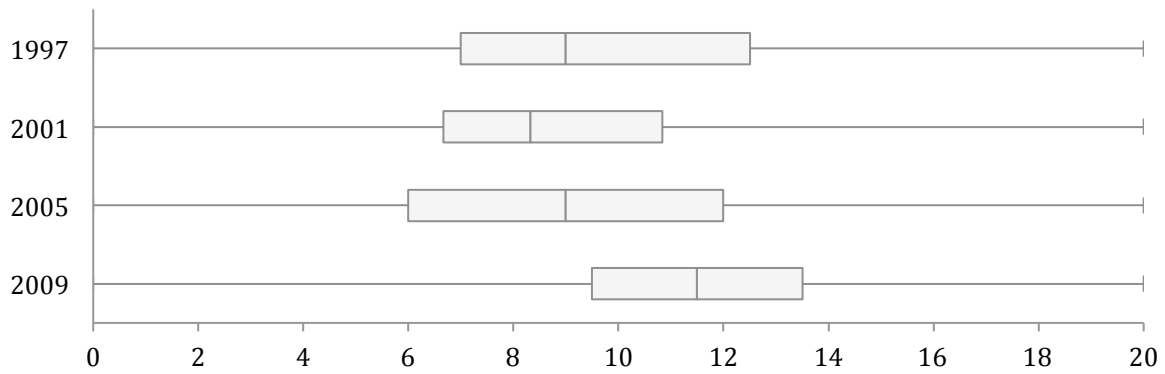
Appendix E. Box plots for electorate's distribution along ideological dimensions

Figure E1. Box plot. Distribution of the electorate on the Religious vs. Secular dimension.



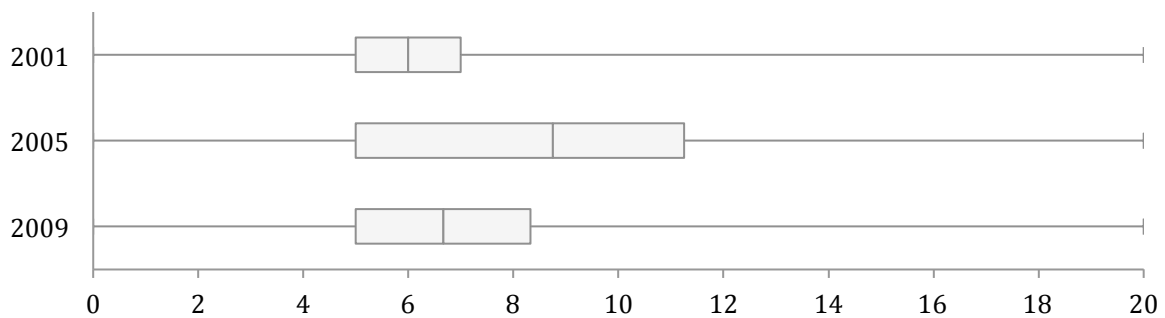
Note: 0 (Zero) represents religious values and 20(max) represent secular values. As can be seen appendix B the scales do not actually go from 0 to 20, but have been modified for this figure.

Figure E2. Box plot. Distribution of the electorate on Growth vs. Environmental protection dimension.



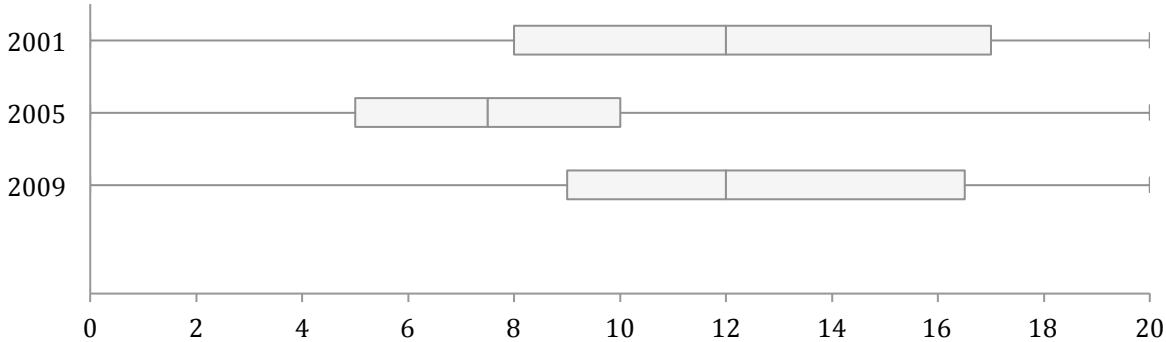
Note: 0 represents economical growth and 20 represents environmental protection. As can be seen appendix B the scales do not actually go from 0 to 20, but have been modified for this figure.

Figure E3. Box plot. Distribution of the electorate on Global vs. National orientation dimension.



Note: 0 represents global orientation and 20 represent National orientation. As can be seen appendix B the scales do not actually go from 0 to 20, but have been modified for this figure.

Figure E4. Box plot. Distribution of the electorate on Centre vs. Periphery orientation dimension.



Note: 0 represents Periphery and 20 represents Centre As can be seen appendix B the scales do not actually go from 0 to 20, but have been modified for this figure.