Aanund Hylland[#]
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ELECTIONS IN NORWAY

Notes on the electoral system[1]

1 Overview

In Norway, there are public elections in all odd-numbered years, alternating between parliamentary elections and elections for regional and local bodies. Hence the term of office is *four years* in all cases. Election day is a Monday in September, usually the second Monday of that month.

The national parliament is called *Stortinget*, which literally translates "the Great Assembly". Elections were held in 2005 and are planned for 2009, 2013 etc.

The country is divided into *19* provinces ("fylker") and *431* municipalities ("kommuner"). *Oslo* is both a province and a municipality.

A provincial assembly ("fylkesting") is elected in each of the 18 provinces outside Oslo. In each municipality, a municipal council ("kommunestyre") is elected. The Oslo municipal council also has the powers of a provincial

[#] Professor of economics and decision theory at the University of Oslo. Address: Department of Economics, University of Oslo, Box 1095, Blindern, N-0317 OSLO, Norway. Electronic mail: aanund.hylland@econ.uio.no. Office telephone: (+47) 22 85 42 71. Fax: (+47) 22 85 50 35. Private telephones: (+47) 22 60 47 00 (home), (+47) 952 75 685 (mobile).

[1] These notes were prepared for a visit by a parliamentary delegation from New Zealand and have been revised and extended after the meeting with the delegation. All statements about the future are of course contingent on present law not being changed. Details and supplementary remarks are placed in footnotes. Hopefully, the main text will make sense even if the footnotes are not read.

assembly, but it is elected by the rules for municipal elections.[2] There were elections for regional and local bodies in September 2007, the next elections being planned for 2011, 2015 etc.

The voting right age is *18*. In parliamentary elections, only Norwegian citizens can vote. In regional and local elections, residents who are not Norwegian citizens can also vote if they satisfy certain length-of-residence requirements.

For the elections discussed here, there are no ethnic quotas or set-aside seats for special groups.[3] Some parties have imposed gender quotas on their own nomination process, but this is not required by law.

2 Parliamentary elections

2.1 Structure of the electoral system

Elections every forth year; no possibility of dissolving parliament and calling early elections[4]

Proportional elections in districts, with compensatory seats to improve proportionality

Fixed house size: *169* seats

19 electoral districts, corresponding to the provinces mentioned in Section 1

Parties and other groups can run lists of candidates in the districts.[5]

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[2] See Section 3. Oslo is divided into *15* administrative units (”bydeler”), each having an elected council (”bydelsutvalg”). In 2007, all these councils were directly elected, by a system similar to that used for municipal council elections.

[3] A special body, *Sametinget*, is elected by the *Sámi* people to represent their interests.

[4] Norway is the only country with a parliamentary form of government where there is no possibility of calling early elections.

[5] Lists not associated with national parties have occasionally won parliamentary seats, but do not play an important role. — Conditions for running lists, such as required number of signatures, are not discussed.

2.2 The geographical composition of parliament

1814: strong overrepresentation of the cities ("kjøpstedene")[6]

1859 – 2003: geographical distribution specified in the Constitution, hence any change required a constitutional amendment

1919 – 2003: overrepresentation of remote and sparsely populated districts; unsystematic, sometimes quite strong

In 2003, the constitutional provisions determining the geographical composition of parliament were thoroughly revised. The disadvantages of having the distribution specified in the Constitution were widely recognized.[7] There was, however, disagreement concerning the representation of remote and sparsely populated districts compared to the central ones. In parliament, a clear majority concluded that it was (still) justified to give the former some degree of overrepresentation, but a significant minority wanted the seats to be distributed among the districts in proportion to population.[8]

The chosen solution is designed to make the overrepresentation of remote and sparsely populated districts systematic.[9] Moreover, it guarantees that demographic changes automatically lead to changes in the distribution of

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[6] The Norwegian constitution was adopted in 1814. The years mentioned below are the ones in which constitutional amendments changing the electoral system were adopted. For example, the present rules were adopted in 2003 and took effect when parliamentary elections were held in 2005.

[7] In particular, demographical changes could only lead to changes in the composition of parliament if a constitutional amendment was adopted, requiring a two-thirds majority in parliament. As the population structure developed, the existing geographical distribution of the seats could hardly be justified from any point of view. That is, whether or not one is of the opinion that remote and sparsely populated districts should be overrepresented, the pre-2003 distribution is far from optimal.

[8] In the parliamentary vote, *162* representatives were present and voting. (Parliament had *165* members at the time.) Hence at least *108* votes (a two-thirds majority) were needed to pass constitutional amendments. It appears that *107* representatives had the adopted solution as their first choice, while *55* members preferred that the geographical distribution be based solely on population. However, *33* of the latter members cast a subsidiary vote for the majority view, which finally was adopted by *140* votes to *22*. (If nobody had cast a subsidiary vote, *status quo* would have prevailed.)

[9] In addition, the overrepresentation has, on the average, been weakened.

seats. This is achieved by basing the geographical distribution of seats on a formula counting population and area.[10] For each district, a "distributional number" is computed, equal to its population plus 1.8 times its area in square kilometers.[11] Based on these numbers, the 169 seats are distributed by the Sainte-Laguë method.[12] The distribution is recalculated every eighth year.

In the present distribution, valid for the two election periods 2005 - 2009 and 2009 - 2013, the number of seats per district varies from *four* to *17*.

In each district, *one* seat is a compensatory seat and the rest are district seats. All in all, there are *150* district seats and *19* compensatory seats.

2.3 Distribution of the district seats

In each district, the district seats are distributed among the list by the modified Sainte-Laguë method, with divisors 1.4 – 3 – 5 – 7 – 9 etc.[13]

The distribution of the district seats is final.

For later reference, the total number of district seats won by party *i* is denote d_i.

In the distribution of the 150 districts seats, the largest parties will typically

[10] Of course, the intention is not that the area in itself shall be represented in parliament, but the use of area is found to be the best way systematically to realize the idea of giving overrepresentation to remote and sparsely populated districts.

[11] In Denmark, the geographical composition of parliament has been based on a similar formula for more than 50 years. (The representation in parliament for the autonomous regions of Greenland and the Faeroe Islands is specified by law and not determined by the formula.) The Danish formula involves both population and number of voters, and each square kilometer gets a much higher weight than in Norway. — For Norway as a whole, area contributes 11.3 % to the distributional numbers. Of course, this varies from province to province; otherwise, including area in the formula would hardly make sense. For the northernmost and least populous province, *Finnmark*, area contributes 54.5 %. If the distribution had been based solely on population, *seven* seats would have been placed differently. (This refers to the calculations valid for the 2005 and 2009 elections. Over time, as population probably increases, the relative weight of area is likely to decrease.)

[12] This procedure for proportional distribution is assumed known and is not explained.

[13] The original Sainte-Laguë method is assumed known. Increasing the first divisor from 1 to 1.4 makes it somewhat more difficult for a small party to win a seat; this can be seen as an implicit threshold.

be overrepresented. Also, parties with strong support in remote and sparsely populated districts tend to be overrepresented, since there are fewer voters behind each district seats in these districts.

In order to improve political proportionality, *eight* compensatory seats were introduced in 1988. The number was increased to *19* in 2003.

2.4 Distribution of the compensatory seats

Only parties that get at least *four percent* of the national vote can be awarded compensatory seats. This is called the *threshold*.

Parties not reaching the threshold and lists not affiliated with parties can win district seats. The number of such seats is denoted n.[14]

The parties that reached the threshold shall together get 169 - n seats. The 169 - n seats are distributed among these parties according to their national votes by the Sainte-Laguë method.[15] The number of seats thus awarded to party i is denote c_i.

For each party that reached the threshold, the difference c_i - d_i is computed. That is, the party's number of district seats (d_i) is subtracted from the number of seats it was awarded when the 169 - n seats were proportionally distributed (c_i). These differences determine the distribution of the compensatory seats.[16]

It is possible that a party wins more district seats than the number of seats awarded to it by proportional distribution of 169 - n seats. This means that $c_i < d_i$ for some i. Since the house size is fixed at 169 and the distribution of

[14] In the elections held since compensatory seats were introduced, the values of n have been as follows: 1989: 1; 1993: 2; 1997: 1; 2001: 3; 2005: 0.

[15] In principle, the modified version of the Sainte-Laguë method is used; see footnote 13 and accompanying text. Since a party that takes part in this distribution has won at least four percent of the votes and certainly gets mote than one seat, the exact value of the first divisor is irrelevant.

[16] The sum of the numbers c_i is 169 - n, while the sum of the numbers d_i is 150 - n; sums being taken over the parties that reached the threshold. Hence the sum of the numbers c_i - d_i is always 19. If $c_i \geq d_i$ for all i, the distribution of the 19 compensatory seats has been determined.

the district seats cannot be changed, a new computation must be carried out, excluding the parties for which $c_i < d_i$ and the district seats they have won. This procedure may have to be repeated.[17]

There is *one* compensatory seat in each district. When the political distribution of the compensatory seats has been determined, it remains to be decided which party shall get the compensatory seat in each district. This issue is not discussed further.[18]

The seats awarded to a list are filled by its top candidates.[19]

2.5 Equality of votes and voting weights

Geographical inequality: Due to intended overrepresentation of remote and

[17] See the description of the 2005 elections in Section 2.6, in particular, the text following Table 5. — There is another way to proceed if $c_i < d_i$ for some i, namely letting a party for which $c_i > d_i$ get $c_i - d_i$ compensatory seats, while the other parties keep their district seats. Then the house size is increased above the normal situation; a so-called *overhang* is created. The alternative procedure gives better proportionality among the parties that reach the threshold; see footnote 25. (If full proportionality among the parties reaching the threshold shall be achieved while the distribution of the district seats is respected, the house size must be increased to the smallest number h such that, when $h - n$ seats are proportionally distributed among the parties that reached the threshold, each of them gets at least as many seats as its number of district seats.)

[18] The choice of the party that wins the compensatory seat in a district will not always fit the election result *in that district*. For example, one party may win the seat although it has fewer votes in the district than another party which wins neither a district seat nor the compensatory seat there. This anomaly is unavoidable. The political distribution of the compensatory seats is designed to secure – as accurately as possible – proportional representation of the parties that have reached the threshold. The geographical distribution of the compensatory seats is an essential element in realizing the consciously determined geographical composition of parliament. These aspects of the electoral system are considered more important than which party wins the compensatory seat from each district, since the latter question neither affects the political nor the geographical composition of parliament, but only the choice of persons to fill the seats. — An alternative is not to assign the compensatory seats to districts at all, but have the parties run not only district lists, but also national lists from which the compensatory seats are filled.

[19] Hence those who nominate a list, be it a party or another group, determine the choice of candidates. That is, the Norwegian parliament is elected by a *closed-list* system. At least, this is the practical reality. Voters are allowed to make changes on the lists. Such changes can in theory affect the result, but this has never happened, not since the present rules for electing persons from a list were adopted in 1919.

sparsely populated districts, there are fewer inhabitants behind each seat in these areas than in the central districts.

Political equality: Due to the compensatory seats, all votes have close to the same influence on the political composition of parliament. There are, however, some sources of potential inequality:

– The threshold: A vote for a party that does not reach the threshold will have no influence on the political composition of parliament (unless the party wins district seats). There is, however, equality in the sense that all voters have equal influence on whether the supported party reaches the threshold.
– The possibility that $n > 0$: National parties that win a few district seats without reaching the threshold will typically be underrepresented. If a list not affiliated with a party wins a seat, it may very well be overrepresented, that is, there may be fewer voters behind such a seat than the national average. In particular, this is the case if the seat is won in an overrepresented district.
– The possibility that $c_i < d_i$ for some i: Such parties are overrepresented and their voters have more influence on the political composition of parliament than the average voter.

2.6 The 2005 elections

The results of the last parliamentary elections, held in September 2005, are used to illustrate how the electoral system works.[20]

Seven parties won districts seats. The same parties reached the threshold. They are listed in Table 1.[21] Other parties and lists were far from winning seats and are omitted.

[20] Official results can be found in *Innst. S. nr. 1 (2005-2006)*, available electronically at http://www.stortinget.no/inns/2005/pdf/inns-200506-001.pdf
The distribution of the district seats in the 19 districts is presented on pages 22 - 40. Page 40 corresponds to Table 2 below. The tables on page 42 show how the political distribution of the compensatory seats is determined; see Tables 4 - 6 below. (The relevant pages mainly consist of numbers. Understanding the tables should not depend on knowledge of Norwegian.)

[21] The number of valid votes was 2 638 261, and the threshold was 105 531 votes. The largest party that did not reach the threshold got 32 355 votes (1.2 %). — The first three parties, A, SV and Sp, make up the present government coalition. They have a majority: *87* seats of *169* (see Table 7). The next three parties, KrF, V and H, formed a minority government in the election period 2001 - 2005. FrP has never been in government.

Table 1

Norwegian name	Abbreviation	English translation
Det norske Arbeiderparti	A	Norwegian Labour Party
Sosialistisk Venstreparti	SV	Socialist Left Party
Senterpartiet	Sp	Centre Party
Kristelig Folkeparti	KrF	Christian Democratic Party
Venstre	V	Liberal Party
Høyre	H	Conservative Party
Fremskrittspartiet	Frp	Progress Party

An example of how the district seats are distributed is given in Table 2.[22]

Table 2

Østfold fylke				
Party	**Votes**	**Seats**	**Last**	**Next**
A	52 984	3	10 597	7 569
SV	10 721	1	7 658	3 574
Sp	7 236			5 169
KrF	10 205			7 289
V	5 943			4 245
H	17 697	1	12 641	5 899
Frp	39 816	3	7 963	5 688
Sum for the above parties	144 602	8		
Last / next			7 658	7 569
Sum valid votes	148 243			
Votes for unrepresented lists	3 641			
Largest unrepresented list	1 350			964
Votes needed for a seat	10 721			

These results are added for all the 19 districts. The aggregate distribution of district seats is given in Table 3.

[22] With reference to the modified Sainte-Laguë method (see Section 2.3, footnote 13 with accompanying text), the column ”Last” contains the smallest quotient for which the party has won a seat, and the column ”Next” contains the largest quotient for which the party did not win a seat. In the row ”Last / next”, one finds the smallest quotient for which a seat was won and the largest quotient for which a seat was not won.

Table 3

Party	Seats (d_i)
A	61
SV	13
Sp	9
KrF	4
V	6
H	19
Frp	38
Sum	150

No district seat was won by a party not reaching the threshold or by a list not affiliated with a party. In the terminology of Section 2.4, $n = 0$.

The first step in the distribution of the compensatory seats consists in distributing 169 seats among the parties that reached the threshold, proportionally based on national votes. The results are given in Table 4.[23]

Table 4

Proportional distribution of 169 seats among the eligible parties				
Party	**Votes**	**Seats**	**Last**	**Next**
A	862 455	57	7 632	7 500
SV	232 971	15	8 033	7 515
Sp	171 063	11	8 146	7 438
KrF	178 885	12	7 778	7 155
V	156 113	10	8 216	7 434
H	371 948	25	7 591	7 293
Frp	581 895	39	7 557	7 366
Sum for the above parties	2 555 330	169		
Last / next			7 557	7 515
Sum valid votes	2 638 261			
Votes for unrepresented lists	82 931			

The result of distributing the compensatory seats is given in Table 5.

[23] Concerning the last two columns, the remarks in footnote 22 apply correspondingly. The column ”Seats” contains the numbers c_i.

Table 5

Party	Proportional distribution (c_i)	District seats (d_i)	Compensatory seats (c_i - d_i)
A	57	61	-4
SV	15	13	2
Sp	11	9	2
KrF	12	4	8
V	10	6	4
H	25	19	6
Frp	39	38	1
Sum	169	150	19

The Norwegian Labour Party has gotten 61 district seats, but shall only have 57 seats by proportional distribution of 169 seats. Hence a new computation is carried out, in which this party and its district seats are excluded. That is, 169 - 61 = 108 seats are to be distributed among the other eligible parties. In that distribution, which is not presented in detail, the Progress Party gets 37 seats, that is, less than its number of district seats.[24] A third computation is performed, in which A and Frp and their district seats are excluded. That is, 169 - (61 + 38) = 70 seats are to be distributed among the five other parties. The result is shown in Table 6, while Table 7 sums up the computations and shows the political composition of parliament.

Table 6

Proportional distribution of 70 seats, A and Frp excluded				
Party	**Votes**	**Seats**	**Last**	**Next**
A				
SV	232 971	15	8 033	7 515
Sp	171 063	11	8 146	7 438
KrF	178 885	11	8 518	7 778
V	156 113	10	8 216	7 434
H	371 948	23	8 266	7 914
Frp				
Sum		70		
Last / next			8 033	7 914

[24] It is presented in the document mentioned in footnote 20 (the second table on page 42).

Table 7

Party	Proportional distribution of 70 seats	District seats	Compensa-tory seats	Final number of seats
A		61		61
SV	15	13	2	15
Sp	11	9	2	11
KrF	11	4	7	11
V	10	6	4	10
H	23	19	4	23
Frp		38		38
Sum		150	19	169

Political proportionality is not perfect, not even among parties that reached the threshold. The deviations are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Party	Proportional distribution (Table 4)	Final result (Table 7)	Deviation
A	57	61	+4
SV	15	15	
Sp	11	11	
KrF	12	11	-1
V	10	10	
H	25	23	-2
Frp	39	38	-1
Sum	169	169	0

All in all, there is a deviation from proportionality of *four* seats among the parties that reached the threshold.[25] This is a surprisingly strong deviation,

[25] If the alternative procedure described in footnote 17 had been used, there would have been an overhang of *four* seats and a house size of *173*. The parties would have gotten the following numbers of seats (deviations from proportional distribution of 173 seats are given in brackets): A 61 (+3); SV 15 (-1); Sp 11 (-1); KrF 12 (0); V 10 (-1); H 25 (0); Frp 39 (0). Hence the total deviation is reduced from *four* seats to *three*. The government parties would have gotten a majority, *87* of *173* seats. (In order to get full proportionality among the represented parties without changing the distribution of the district seats, the house size must be increased to 180. (In the terminology of footnote 17, $h = 180$.) The

since there were as many as 19 compensatory seats. By contrast, in the 2001 elections there was just a one-seat deviation, although there were only eight compensatory seats at the time.

3 Regional and local elections

3.1 Political composition of the bodies

Each provincial assembly and municipal council is elected in one electoral district by a list-based proportional system.

Parties and other groups can run lists of candidates. Groups not affiliated with national parties play a much greater role in regional and local elections than in elections for parliament.

The seats are distributed among the lists by the Sainte-Laguë method in its modified form (see Section 2.3). There is no explicit threshold.

Since the body is elected in one district without a threshold, the distribution of seats among the lists is almost exactly proportional to their votes.[26]

3.2 Election of candidates to fill the seats

The voters have a real possibility of influencing the choice of persons to fill the seats won by a list.[27] The rules are different for provincial elections and municipal ones.

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parties would have gotten the following numbers of seats: A 61; SV 16; Sp 12; KrF 13; V 11; H 26; Frp 41. The government parties would have gotten only *89* seats of *180*, that is, not a majority.)

[26] The only source of deviation from proportionality – apart from the inevitable effects of seats coming in whole numbers – is the fact that a list which gets very few votes does not win any seats. The lists that do win seats, therefore, will typically get a somewhat higher share of the seats than of the votes. The Sainte-Laguë method is modified by increasing the first divisor from 1 to 1.4; see footnote 13 and accompanying text. This makes it a little more difficult for a list to win its first seat. Hence the modification of the Sainte-Laguë method increases the deviation from proportionality.

[27] This contrasts with the rules for parliamentary elections, see footnote 19.

In provincial elections, the candidates on a list are nominated in a specific order. A voter can give a personal preference (”personstemme”) to each candidate on the chosen list, but cannot vote for candidates from other lists. Each voter decides how many – if any – personal preference to indicate, but not more than one for the same candidate.

After the elections, the candidates on a list are ordered as follows:

– Candidates who have received a number of personal preferences equal to or greater than *eight percent* of the number of votes cast for the list are put at the top, in order of the number of personal preferences received.
– Thereafter follow the rest of the candidates, in the order they occur on the list, that is, in an order determined by the party or group that nominated the list.

The seats won by the list are filled from the top of this ordering.

In municipal elections, the candidates on a list are nominated in a specific order. In addition, those who nominate the list can decide to give some of the top candidates a privileged position (”stemmetillegg”).[28] The names of these candidates are printed in bold letters on the ballot. A voter can give a personal preference to candidates on the chosen list, and can also give cross votes (”slengere”) by writing in names of candidates from other lists.[29] A personal preference can be given to each of any number of candidates on the chosen list, but the number of cross votes a voter can cast is limited.[30] No candidate can receive more than one personal preference or cross vote from the same voter.

If a voter has cross voted, the vote is – for the purpose of the distribution of seats among the lists – divided between the chosen list and the list or lists for whose candidates cross votes have been cast.[31]

To determine who shall fill the seats won by a list, the personal preferences and the cross votes are counted for each candidate on the list. Each of the

[28] The law imposes an upper limit on the number of privileged candidates on a list. The limit depends on the size of the municipal council.
[29] It is not possible to vote for a person who is not a candidate on any list.
[30] The limit depends on the size of the municipal council.
[31] If the municipal council has p members and the voter has cast q cross votes, the chosen list in effect gets $\frac{p-q}{p}$ of a vote, while each cross vote corresponds to $\frac{1}{p}$ of a vote.

privileged candidates is given a bonus equal to *25 percent* of the number of votes cast for the list. The candidates are ordered according to the sum of the personal preferences, the cross votes and (if applicable) the bonus, and the seats won by the list are filled from the top of this ordering.

It is highly unlikely that a candidate who is not privileged receives enough personal preferences and cross votes to get ahead of a privileged candidate. Among the candidates on each list, therefore, two separate competitions are in practice going on, one among the privileged candidates and one among the others. Within each of these two groups, however, the order in which the candidates are nominated is insignificant; only the personal preferences and cross votes matter. A small group of voters can have quite strong influence on the choice of candidates from a list.

3.3 Election of mayor

Traditionally, the mayor is elected by the municipal council from among its members. This is still the rule in a large majority of the municipalities, and the same holds for all provincial assemblies.

Since 1999, some municipalities have – on an experimental basis – elected their mayors directly. In 2007, 50 municipalities, most of them quite small, took part in this experiment.[32]

A municipal mayor, whether indirectly or directly elected, has some independent powers, but is mainly the leader of and *primus inter pares* within the municipal council.[33]

In 2007, the direct mayoral elections were conducted by the *alternative vote*.

In this system, the voter casts a *primary vote* for one of the candidates, and

[32] One more municipality planned to participate, but only one candidate was nominated and the direct election was called off. The 50 participating municipalities together have approximately 410 000 inhabitants, which is about 8.75 % of the country's population. The largest one has 37 500 inhabitants.

[33] Hence Norwegian municipalities do not have strong executive mayors with significant independent powers. — Some provinces and municipalities, among them the country's two largest cities *Oslo* and *Bergen*, have adopted a parliamentary form of government. This governmental system is not described and discussed.

can also give a *secondary vote* to another candidate.

First, only the primary votes are counted. A candidate who gets an absolute majority of the primary votes is elected. If nobody gets such a majority, the two candidates with the highest numbers of primary votes still remain in the competition, and the rest of the candidates are eliminated. Ballots on which the primary vote is cast for an eliminated candidate and the secondary vote is cast for one of the two remaining candidate, are *transferable*. Each of these ballots is transferred to the candidate for whom the secondary vote is cast. The candidate with the most votes – primary votes plus transferred ballots – is elected. The winner need not get an absolute majority of the valid votes.

In order to illustrate the procedure, the 2007 direct mayoral election in *Risør* is used as an example.[34] The results are given in Table 9.

Table 9

Direct mayoral election in Risør					
Candidate's party	**Primary votes**	**Percent**	**Ballots transferred**	**Total votes**	**Percent of valid votes**
RV	1 227	36.6	266	1 493	44.5
V	756	22.5	372	1 128	33.6
H	750	22.4	-750		
A	620	18.5	-620		
Sum	3 353	100.0	-732	2 621	

There were four candidates, who are identified by party affiliation. Three of these parties are represented in parliament.[35] The forth, the winner's party, is *Rød Valgallianse*, abbreviated RV.[36]

This party is strongly left oriented. Many of its leading members refer, or have referred, to themselves as marxist-leninists or maoists.[37] It is remark-

[34] Risør is a small town (slightly less than 7 000 inhabitants) on the south coast, in *Aust-Agder* province. The choice of the example is explained below.
[35] They are A, V and H; for full Norwegian names and English translations, see Table 1.
[36] English translation: Red Election Alliance. There has recently been a reorganization of the party combined with a change of name, but for the purpose of the 2007 elections, the name given here was used.
[37] The party is represented in several provincial assemblies and municipal councils, but in parliament it has only been represented in one election period (1993 - 1997), and then by

able that a candidate from such a party could win a mayoral election. This is the reason why Risør was chosen to illustrate the rules for direct election of mayor. It shows that personalities can play a role, even in a country where parties are generally strong and dominate elections.[38]

There is a negative balance of *732* votes in the column "Ballots transferred". This means that 732 of the voters who primarily supported the candidates of H or A, or more than half of all those voters, either did not give a secondary vote or gave it to another eliminated candidates. These voters did not take part in the final competition between the RV and V candidates. They were about twice as many as the margin of victory and could have been decisive.[39]

Another consequence of the large number of non-transferable ballots is that the winner's final vote is less than half the number of valid ballots.

There are other variants of the alternative vote. For one thing, a voter can be allowed to indicate more than two preferences. Moreover, instead of eliminating all candidates but the two frontrunners simultaneously, one candidate can be eliminated at a time, until somebody reaches an absolute majority. In these other versions of the system, there will probably be fewer voters who have no influence on the final result than in the version used in Norwegian mayoral elections in 2007.[40]

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only one member. In the 2005 parliamentary elections, it was the largest unrepresented party and got 1.2 % of the national vote; see footnote 21.

[38] The four last parties in Table 1, which certainly consider themselves non socialist, have a comfortable majority in the Risør municipal council (*17* seats of *31*). Conflicts between the mayor and the council majority must be expected.

[39] This is not to say that a victory for the V candidate would have been likely even if all these 732 ballots had been transferable. If they had divided in about the same way as the ballots that were actually transferred, the RV candidate would still have won the election by a safe margin.

[40] Several variants of the alternative vote are presently used in elections around the world. The variant used in the 2007 direct mayoral elections in Norway, has in recent years been used for electing the mayor of London.