political parties and interest groups in norway

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This chapter presents and discusses the major insights that existing studies have provided into the relationship between parties and interest groups. First, major contributions from the scholarly literature taking party organisations as the starting point are reviewed. Second, the chapter briefly examines the research emphasising interest groups. Here the argument is that more knowledge is needed on the nature of parties’ contemporary relationship with other organisations. Formerly integrated relationships have in some cases declined significantly, but how distant the relations have become, and to what extent variation exists, is not a settled question. To what extent and how parties are linked with those organisations which are not their traditional associates is also a fairly moot point. Next, the review shows that more attention should be paid to the factors that shape a party’s relationships with interest groups.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF POLITICAL PARTIES WITH INTEREST GROUPS

In recent decades, considerable effort has been devoted to investigating long-term party change, including some studies on the development of the relationship between parties and interest groups. However, before taking a closer look at this research, let us see what the scholarly literature on party development in the early years of mass politics has to offer. As will become clear, research on party relationships with interest groups has not been a growth area in political science, but the topic has long-established roots in party research in the West (Key 1942/1964).

In Retrospect: Integrated, Class-based or Confession-based Relationships

After the introduction of mass suffrage and consolidation of national party systems, elections grew to be the domain of organised political parties (see Duverger 1954/1972; Epstein 1967). However, this is not to say that interest groups vanished from electoral politics. In the United States, most interest groups did not ‘encroach on the parties’ dominance of the electoral process’ but ‘co-operated with parties to achieve their policy goals’ in the early stages of democracy (Thomas 2001d: 86; see also Hrebenar et al. 1999). In Western Europe, several parties emerged from social movements in opposition to the political establishment, and some political parties were even formally founded – and later largely controlled – by interest groups. A major example is the trade unions’ establishment of the British Labour Party (Duverger 1954/1972; Panebianco 1988).
Party-Interest Group Relationships as Manifestations of Political Cleavages

As far as the nature of party links with interest groups is concerned, a reasonable starting point is the sociological literature which dominated political science in the 1950s and 1960s. Here both political parties and interest groups are seen as manifestations of underlying social cleavages. Pairs of parties and interest groups articulate similar interests through the corporate and electoral channels respectively. In Rokkan’s classical triangular model of political conflicts in Norway (Scandinavia), parties and interest groups are primarily organised around three poles along the ‘economic-functional’ axis: labour (trade unions and a social democratic party), capital (business organisations and a conservative party) and agrarian interests (farmers’ unions and an agrarian party) (Rokkan 1966: 92). Similar patterns were found also elsewhere. Many West European parties originated from social movements in the nineteenth century, and maintained close relationships with their organisational origin (Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

However, in his triangular model, Rokkan does not specify how the relationship between parties and interest group(s) materialised. It could be argued, as Sundberg (2003: 90–1) does, that the model implicitly includes some sort of organised co-operation between the party and the associated interest group. Success in elections and public decision-making requires co-ordinated action. Moreover, Lipset and Rokkan (1967: 15) themselves emphasised that some parties – especially the labour and the church movements – from early on developed a network of social organisations themselves: for example youth organisations, sports clubs and leisure associations (see also von Beyme 1985: 191–2; Poguntke 1998: 159; Luther 1999: 4, 8). Yet, there has been more emphasis on the differing foci of parties and interest groups than on the elaboration of the organisational structure of their interlinkages (Rokkan 1966: 105). Party elites are themselves, it was argued, capable of producing voter alignments by establishing parties as independent poles of attraction over time (Lipset and Rokkan 1967: 3), but party organisations were – as in classic political sociology – analysed largely as ‘transmission belts’ to the state for well-defined interests (Warner 2000: 18). A parallel view has appeared in traditional functional analyses. Here parties are interpreted as performers of certain systemic functions like interest aggregation, responding to the demands of ‘their’ interest groups (La Palombara and Weiner 1966; King 1969). Once formed, a close relationship is more or less ‘on autopilot’ (Warner 2000: 18). The question of why parties may later choose to loosen such a relationship is thus also neglected.25

Links with Interest Groups as a Distinguishing Feature of Party Organisations

More informative studies, in both regards, are provided by those who have analysed the early development of parties as organisations. According to scholars like Duverger (1954/1972) and Epstein (1967), sociological factors play

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25. An exception is, in one sense, the literature on the labour movement which emphasises the dilemma of unions when the social democratic party is in power, and to a certain extent the literature on the Church and the rise of Christian Democratic parties (see Warner 2000: 18).
parties and interest groups: overlooked relations of democracy? | 35

an important part, but so does the parties’ pursuit of votes in competitive elections. Consequently, the organisational aspect is made more explicit. In Duverger’s seminal work on European political party organisations, links with interest groups are a focal point. A key finding is that the social base and organisational structure primarily distinguished the mass party of the twentieth century from the originally predominant cadre party – the caucus of notables of the late nineteenth century (Duverger 1954/1972). Another distinctive feature of the mass parties was their relationship with organisations in civil society.

The socialist mass party emerged outside the national assemblies on the basis of trade union movements, co-operatives and friendly societies (Duverger 1954/1972: 24–7, 17, 75). The party organisation represented the tool of a rising working class who lacked political rights, financial resources and actual influence. Its fundamental unit was the branch with its members (ibid: 25, 63), but the firm social roots were also manifest in close relationships with trade unions. The unions financed the socialist parties – or more specifically Labour parties – which were seen as the political wing of the trade unions in their respective countries.26 According to Duverger, the strongest links were manifested by parties with an indirect structure – parties whose members were collectively, not individually, affiliated through the trade unions.27

The early British Labour Party was the prime example of unions linked through collective membership (Duverger 1954/1972: 5–7; Panebianco 1988: 89). National trade unions affiliated their memberships, or significant proportions of them, to the party organisation (Minkin 1991). A large union might pay party dues for a million members, thereby gaining considerable power within the party (Epstein 1967: 147). Affiliated members could not participate in constituency party meetings, but affiliated unions had the right to attend the annual congress, with votes proportional to their financial contributions (Koelbe 1987: 255). Consequently, the highest decision-making organ was dominated by the unions’ allotting of votes as a single unit (‘bloc vote’). The trade union representatives were in the majority on the National Executive Committee (see Padgett and Paterson 1991: 182; Jordan and Maloney 2001: 30; Quinn 2002), and played a decisive role in candidate selection (Denver 1988: 52–3). A similar relationship could also be found in Australia and New Zealand (Epstein 1967: 148; Truman 1980). In fact, according to Rawson (1969: 314), the Australian Labour Party came closest to the ideal type, if the archetype is defined in terms of the effects of collective union membership on the party organisation as whole.

The labour parties of Sweden and Norway were established before the national
confederations of unions, but also developed collective membership – at the local (branch) level. In practice, the weight of the unions in Scandinavia, financially and in terms of membership, apparently approximated that of British unions. National unions made large grants to the national party and, as in Britain, furnished much of the campaign apparatus at election time (Epstein 1967: 149–50).28 Most importantly, the guaranteed representation of the Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) in the national party executive provided formally interconnected organisational structures at the national and federal levels (Allern et al. 2007). Ironically, according to Padgett and Paterson (1991: 182), in Britain there was no formal relationship between the Labour Party’s extra-parliamentary organisation and the Trade Unions Congress (TUC), since the trade union movement was highly fragmented. In contrast, the Scandinavian trade union movements were characterised by comparatively strong internal cohesion (Sundberg 2003: 93; Padgett and Paterson 1991: 179).

Duverger further identifies two other kinds of indirect parties in the early twentieth century: the Catholic parties and agrarian parties (Duverger 1954/1972: 5–7; see also von Beyme 1985: 191). Whereas the labour parties were based upon a single social class, Catholic parties could bring together different social classes, each of which retained its own organisations. Accordingly, Catholic parties were not only dependent on the Church and religious organisations, but appeared as federations of Catholic workers’ unions and co-operatives, peasants’ associations, associations of industrialists and others (Duverger 1954/1972: 6; Rawson 1969: 313; von Beyme 1985: 192). In the deeply divided societies often termed ‘consociational democracies’, organised pillars developed between major parties and organisations that shared the same identity of their respective subcultures (Kitschelt 1989: 28), so these parties have, in order to ensure maximum loyalty to each segment, also been characterised by a particularly high number of party-created ancillary or auxiliary organisations (Lipset and Rokkan 1967: 15–16; Luther 1999: 4, 8; Poguntke 2006: 396). By contrast, the organisational network of the agrarian parties was comparatively moderate. These parties were primarily made up of farmers’ unions and agricultural co-operatives (Duverger 1954/1972: 6).

The bourgeois parties primarily represented the upper classes, and normally could start out with sufficient financial resources and easy access to public office. But in systems with universal suffrage, the cadre parties had to follow the example of the mass parties if they were to retain their influence over time, according to Duverger (1954/1972: xxvii). In the early 1950s, when he published the first edition of his book, non-left parties were trying to incorporate supporters in formal organisations (Scarrow 2002a: 94). Duverger concluded that liberal and conservative parties would continue to adapt to the mass party model in order to maintain electoral support. Duverger (1954/1972) concluded that liberal and conservative parties would continue to adapt to the mass party model in order to maintain elec-

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28. In fact, Valen and Katz (1964: 316) suggest that precisely the local character of the collective membership strengthened the power of trade unions: Union activists attended the party congress as delegates from party branches and were thereby able to show more political flexibility; avoiding adaptation to unrealistic views for symbolic reasons.
parties and interest groups: overlooked relations of democracy?  37
toral support, and it turned out that their organisational adaptation actually encompassed establishment of links with particular interest groups.

According to von Beyme (1985: 191), liberal and conservative parties used contact with peasants’ associations, lodges, middle-class citizens’ associations and other similar organisations ‘to compensate for lack of internal organization’. However, they preferred a looser form of affiliation. Some liberal parties in Europe have had close ties to certain trade unions, and later, white-collar groups, but these links were never well-developed (Kirchner 1988b: 480). Eventually, bourgeois parties formed more stable alliances with employers’ and business organisations, and professional associations as well (Schmitter 2001: 82). The Christian Democratic parties established after the Second World War in Europe avoided any indirect, class-based structure (von Beyme 1985: 194), but the Catholic Church formed alliances with such parties in the post-war era (Warner 2000).

Indeed, formal affiliation of other organisations was not a widespread phenomenon in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century, not even among socialist parties (Duverger 1954/1972: 13–14). As indicated above, collective membership developed primarily when the party was established before the unions. Moreover, the direct structure dominated in countries with a more fragmented and divided trade union movement. In predominantly Catholic nations such as France and Italy, trade unions have always been less strongly linked with political parties than in Great Britain or Scandinavia, and the principal trade unions were originally most closely aligned to communist parties (cf. Padgett and Paterson 1991: 184).

Eventually, indirect parties also opened up for individual memberships (Duverger 1954/1972: 9–17). Exactly how parties may be linked to the aligned interest groups when there is no collective membership has not been elaborated (Duverger 1954/1972; Rawson 1969: 316; von Beyme 1985), even if it should be noted that Duverger (1968: 455–8) distinguishes between no links, formal or informal subordination of interest group to party, formal or informal subordination of party to interest group, or egalitarian (permanent or ad hoc) co-operation between interest group and party elsewhere. The general literature on socialist parties has more specifically shown that individual parties and interest groups could be closely connected through for example liaison committees, leadership and membership overlap and interchange, and a wide arena of common collective activities (see Harrison 1960; Kassalow 1963; Elvander 1980; Koelbe 1987: 256; Padgett and Paterson 1991: 177–85; van Biezen 2003a: 23). Most importantly, however, Duverger (1954/1972) identifies two key aspects of party relationships with organised groups in civil society, apart from power relationships: how close relations they have, and with what interest groups.

29. Epstein (1967: 152) adds a third category to the list: the American example, in which there is no connection to a socialist working-class party and only non-structural connections to middle-class parties – usually the Democratic Party. While Padgett and Paterson (1991: 179-85) distinguish between the British model, the Swedish way, the West German and Austrian model and finally, the French and Italian. Kitschelt (1994: 225) groups the British and Austrian Left together, argues that Sweden and Germany represents an intermediate pattern, whilst the leadership of socialist parties in France, Italy, and Spain has been more autonomous of trade unions.
As regards what *shapes* party relationships, Duverger’s approach is fairly inductive, but he points to correlations and strong regularities. He suggests that electoral competition would mean convergence of party organisation and behaviour after the introduction of universal suffrage. Whether the core organisation – or core organisations – are formally affiliated or not appears, as indicated above, to be correlated to the national cleavage and organisation structure, the constituency’s need for resources, and, in the case of collective membership, whether the party or the interest group was established first. Rawson (1969: 315) also argues that a key variable is whether the party’s origin is external. If an organisation has been involved in the formal founding of the party, it is more likely to accept or demand formal affiliation. The fact that Norwegian and Swedish unions were affiliated only at the local level reflects that the Labour Party was established before the Confederation of Trade Unions. The Danish case, where the trade union movement developed earlier and collective membership has never existed (Bille and Christiansen 2000), is an exception that relates to influence from Germany and the tradition of guilds, among other factors (Rawson 1969: 326). Later von Beyme (1985), who supports Duverger’s basic distinction between collective affiliation and other kinds of links, has emphasised the significance of party ideology. For example, he argues that the syndicalist and anarchist elements in Latin socialist parties called for a territorial base, whilst the British model was in line with the country’s tradition of guild socialism. Nevertheless, neither Duverger (1954/1972) nor Rawson (1969) nor von Beyme (1985) explore systematically under what more specific conditions a party is likely to have distant or close relationships with interest groups, and when a party is likely to favour exclusive to inclusive links.

**Towards the Twenty-first Century: Dissociation from Core Organisations?**

Since the mid-1970s, there has been a general shift towards the analysis of (continuing) change in many different facets of parties as organisations (Mair 1997; Luther 1999: 5). Followers of Duverger’s rather inductive approach to parties have devoted considerable effort to disproving the thesis of the ‘modernity’ of the mass party. It is argued that social, technological, cultural and political developments have made this party model obsolete for parties organising for fierce electoral competition (Katz and Mair 1995; Harmel 2002: 125). The debate encompasses numerous organisational and behavioural aspects, often depicted as a historical sequence of various party organisational archetypes. Here we concentrate on the most discussed ones – the *cadre party* or the *mass party*, which can be seen as a

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30. As will become clear in Chapter 6, however, the choice of local collective membership in Norway is quite certainly also correlated to the fact that some unions were still dominated by liberals at the time of the establishment of a confederation.

31. The classic sociological approach is today most important in studies of electoral change and voting behaviour. Functionalism is, on the other hand, generally criticised for emphasising stability and the functionality of institutions over change and conflict. More radical criticisms have pointed to its tautological character: the fulfilment of the different functions is seen as a necessary condition for the maintenance of a given political system. Functionalist perspectives lack testable hypotheses (Montero and Gunther 2002: 10).
In this chapter, we move from the Norwegian parties that were established before the Second World War to one of those that have later challenged the political establishment. Norway’s Socialist Left Party (originally SF; from 1975 Socialist Left Party, SV) is one of the few significant European New Left parties that emerged in economically advanced, small and corporatist welfare states in the 1960s (Kitschelt 1988). During its first years, SV cultivated links with both the old trade union movement and new anti-establishment groups, but not well-organised ones.

BACKDROP: CONSOLIDATION OF A ‘NEW POLITICS PARTY’

After the electoral success in the early 1970s, SV found itself pushed to the sidelines of Norwegian politics, until a new election breakthrough in the late 1980s. Meanwhile, the party’s ideological profile had changed significantly. According to Ersson’s analysis (2005: 67–8) of the Manifesto Data (see Volkens and Klingemann 2002), the leftist orientation of SV’s party programmes was definitely less pronounced in the 1980s and 1990s. SV has continued to promote itself as a radical left-wing alternative concerning domestic policies, but less so in terms of nationalisation of industry, state management, and a controlled economy. Marxist ideas have partly been replaced by less radical economic policies and new politics values such as participation and individual autonomy (Knutsen 1997: 247–8; see also SV’s Election Manifesto 2001–2005).

Changes have also occurred along the other axis on which the Socialist Left was originally based. In 1989, the revolutionary events in Eastern Europe transformed the left socialists’ ‘bridge-building neutralism’ in foreign policy into ‘a blind alley’ (Christensen and Midtbø 1998: 4). Although the war in Iraq – and especially the trans-Atlantic relationship with the United States – has made foreign policy more salient in recent years, this policy field is usually no longer SV’s primary focus in elections. Attention has been increasingly paid to environmental policy. Anti-capitalist arguments have declined in SV’s environmental policies, and more modest concepts like ‘justifiable ecological development’ were introduced during the 1980s and 1990s (Aardal 1993: 147–8, 164). Particular attention has also been paid to children’s living conditions and public education (Socialist Left Party Annual Reports 1997–2001).

In other words, the Socialist Left has consolidated itself as Norway’s left-libertarian party, linking green and libertarian values with the Old Left’s emphasis on equality (Kitschelt 1988; Knutsen 1997; Knutsen 1998b: 25). But it should be noted that de-emphasis of traditional Marxist ideas has not been replaced by a

156. Although SV and SF were formally two different parties, I will use only the label Socialist Left (SV) for the sake of simplicity.
strongly ideological ‘new politics’ profile. In the early 2000s, the Socialist Left presents itself – in the public sphere – as a rather pragmatic left-wing party. The political platform is today extensive, covering a wide range of policy fields. After decades of permanent opposition in the Storting, it even decided to form a coalition government with the Labour Party and the Centre Party in 2005.\textsuperscript{157} Although the party organisation certainly has had a hard time adapting to SV’s new role as a part of the government, there is no doubt that SV’s policies have become less radical and the anti-establishment profile has decreased.

SV’s electorate has also approached the pattern predicted by ‘new politics theory’. At the voter level, in its early years SV did not primarily appeal to the new middle class, more highly educated, and post-war generations: it was supported more strongly by workers than other groups of employees (Knutsen 1990: 522; Knutsen 1998b: 52).\textsuperscript{158} Originally, it termed itself a ‘people’s party’ (SF), inspired by the Danish equivalent. The purpose was to highlight what the party founders saw as the common interests of employees, farmers, fishermen, benefit recipients, homemakers, and youth in putting capitalism to an end (Alldén 1980: 58). Party members were blue-collar workers and white-collar workers as well as students (ibid: 256). From the late 1970s the voter profile changed. Economic growth and the advanced character of the welfare state brought a relatively heavy emphasis on post-materialist values in the Nordic countries (Knutsen 1989), and in elections SV increasingly focused on civil servants, administrators, clerks (funksjonærer) and voters with higher education.

Election studies show that SV has become a party for the new middle class. According to Berglund (2003: 130) highly educated voters have been gradually more attracted to the Socialist Left Party, but that in general the party’s social profile is diffuse. However, Knutsen (1998: 52, 59) demonstrates there is an increasing tendency for the Socialist Left to gain especially from the new middle class since the late 1970s, and from public-sector employees since the late 1980s. In fact, sector is more closely correlated with SV support than is social class (Knutsen 1998b: 52, 59). Moreover, in the 1990s ‘the proportion of women supporting the left socialist parties is nearly twice as high as the proportion of men’ (ibid: 68, 86).\textsuperscript{159} SV has clearly attracted the most post-materialist electorate in Norway in terms of anti-authoritarian and green values (Knutsen 1990). SV’s voters are also characterised by a particularly secular orientation (Aardal 2003b: 87–8), as the counterpart of KrF in moral issues (Heidar and Saglie 2004: 60). Thus, today’s Socialist Left seems to be an indication of a post-industrial cross-cutting cleavage in Norwegian politics (Knutsen 1990, 2004b). Equally important, the party itself aims to hold on to this broader range of core voters among the middle class (Melve

\textsuperscript{157} Already in 1993, the party leader introduced the idea of formal collaboration with DnA for the first time.

\textsuperscript{158} The underlying figure includes both the Socialist People’s Party (SF) and Norway’s miniscule Communist Party.

\textsuperscript{159} The figure includes both the Socialist Left Party and the very small Red Electoral Alliance (RV).
Beyond doubt, SV has consolidated its profile as a new politics protest party since the 1970s.

What characterised SV’s approach to the interest-group community during the 1980s and 1990s? No systematic research exists, but there is little doubt that SV continued to cultivate relationships with both the old trade union movement and new anti-establishment groups. Like green parties and socialist left parties elsewhere, SV established a participatory party organisation, in opposition to the traditional socialist centralism. Over time, the emphasis on alternative modes of organisation has weakened (Svåsand et al. 1997: 118), but interaction between the parliamentary group, the party organisation with its numerous policy-making committees, and external movement organisations and citizens’ initiatives was a part of its modus operandi in both the 1970s and 1980s (see Socialist left Party Annual Report 1979–81, 1983–85: 2). The peace movement, international solidarity organisations, and the women’s movement continued to attract the party’s attention. Party activists and officials were encouraged to keep in touch with numerous protest groups (see Annual Reports 1977–85). The proportion of local office holders from the trade unions in the party’s executive committee remained relatively large throughout the 1970s (Haaversen-Westhassel 1984: 102–3, 114–5).

As electoral support and number of parliamentary seats increased towards the end of the 1980s, SV gave less priority to both internal and external extra-parliamentary work (Heidar and Saglie 1994: 139), but consideration for social movements did not disappear. The ideal of mass participation and interaction with social movements remained a core value in party accounts (Heidar and Saglie 1994: 139; Socialist Left Party Annual Report 1985–87: 1). True, the peace and women’s movement have declined over time in Norway, but environmental groups are still significant actors and new protest organisations, like Attac, have emerged. Accordingly, the party leadership has increasingly emphasised contact with the environmental movement. Furthermore, in the early 1990s, the general concept of the ‘Open Party’ (Åpent parti) was launched. The idea was to incorporate external circles in traditionally internal decision-making processes like manifesto-making and candidate selection (Allern 2001: 32).

However, the dual anchorage in old and new politics did not vanish despite increased emphasis on the new middle class and libertarian values throughout the 1980s. An important long-term goal has been to make the trade unions more independent of the Labour Party. In the 1980s, the internal party-union committee – consisting of members and officials from various LO unions – suggested that the special links between DnA and LO should be replaced by a contact committee for...
the labour movement as a whole, including SV. Tensions between the unions and 
DnA over wage settlements paved the way for more, but not sufficient, support 
for this attempt, according to SV’s Annual Reports (Socialist Left Party Annual 
Report 1983–85: 10–11). The internal party-union committee managed to meet 
officially with the leadership of LO once, but the attempt of making such contact 

To conclude, links with social movement organisations have remained a distin-
guishing feature of SV, but the party organisation has since the very beginning had 
a better-organised approach to trade unions than that often associated with ‘new 
politics’ parties. What then characterises SV’s relationships with interest groups 
today?

RELATIONSHIPS WITH INTEREST GROUPS TODAY
Recent organisational documents from the Socialist Left underscore the need for 
openness towards the party environment. Cultivating links with various interest 
groups seems in general to be a priority (Sosialistisk Venstreparti 1999; 2000a). 
SV’s central organisation and headquarters have continued to work for more 
binding co-operation with both individual trade unions and LO (Annual Reports 
1991–97). Since the struggle over Norwegian EU membership prior to the 1994 
referendum, party strategies have increasingly emphasised organised co-opera-
tion with various organisations and ad hoc groups (Socialist Left Party Annual 
Report 1993–95: 3; 1995–97: 20). Involvement in ad hoc campaigns has remained 
‘standing operating procedure’ in party headquarters, and contacts with the more 
established No to the EU (Nei til EU) are also a major priority for the central or-
ganisation. In addition, the anti-globalisation organisations like Attac and citizen 
initiatives against the war in Iraq have received considerable attention in recent 
years, besides the traditionally organisations associated with SV (Solhjell 2003 
[interview]).

Yet, SV still seems to consider the trade unions in LO and the environmental 
movement to be more important than others (Socialist Left Party Annual Report 
1995–97: 20). The party-union committee does not seem to emphasise any par-
ticular need for more focus on employees’ organisations outside the traditional 
ambivalence characterise existing links with interest groups as well? Before we 
turn to this question, however, we need to assess the closeness of the party’s vari-
ous relationships.

Closeness of Relationships

Inter-organisational Links for Contact with Interest Groups
Table 12.1 shows that in the early 2000s, no joint committees or conferences exist 
and agreements about regular meetings with certain organisations have not ma-
terialised in the case of the Socialist Left. Co-operation agreements have been 
discussed with the Norwegian Graphical Union (Norsk Grafisk Forbund) and the 
Union of School Employees (Skolenes Landsforbund) in LO, but contact con-
tinues to take place ad hoc. There may have been some ambivalence in the party
leadership regarding the formalisation of relationships (Annual Report 1993–95: 6; Kiran 2005 [interview]). According to the internal party-union committee, relations with the trade union movement stagnated towards the late 1990s (Annual Report 1995–97: 46). In the early 2000s, the party leaders and LO chairmen have met officially to discuss the potential for more co-operation, but no formal agreement has yet been established (Solhjell 2003 [interview]).

Table 12.1: Socialist Left Party inter-organisational links with interest groups 2000–04

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Existence</strong></th>
<th><strong>If yes, what kind</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Permanent joint committee</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporary joint policy committees</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Joint conferences</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Written or tacit agreements about regular meetings</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Invitation to the party congress</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Invitations to party meetings, seminars and conferences</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific dialogue seminars and hearings</strong></td>
<td>Unsettled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meetings outside party bodies</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Sources: Various party documents (see appendix A) and (Solhjell 2003 [interview])

162. Interestingly, the 1993–95 Annual Report (p. 6) presents the co-operation agreement as already established, which was in fact not the case. However, the Union of School Employees (Skolenes Landsforbund) mentions both co-operation with DnA and co-operation with SV in its self-presentation on its official website (www.skoleneslandsforbund.no/informasjon/utdanning.htm).
However, numerous other kinds of inter-organisational links exist. In contrast to many other parties in Norway, SV usually invites various interest groups to its party congress – among them, major employees’ confederations and unions, youth organisations, environmental groups, and internationally-oriented organisations, including *No to the EU* and Attac (Thomassen 2005 [e-mail correspondence]). A significant number usually turn up, and one person from party headquarters is responsible for taking care of each representative. Some even get their expenses covered by party (Solhjell 2003 [interview]). The organisation representatives are guests and observers, but they also have the opportunity to address the delegates in plenum. In the early 2000s, representatives of trade unions, the environmental movement and some international organisations have made speeches to the party congress (Party Congress Books of Minutes 2001–03). During the sessions, meetings are also arranged with party leaders (Solhjell 2003 [interview]). In 2003, the LO leadership attended – and the LO deputy chairman addressed – the SV congress for the first time in history (Party Congress 2003 Books of Minutes; see also *Aftenposten* 05.02.04)). In 2001 SV had been – also for the first time – invited to the LO Congress. In 2005, the SV party leader gave a speech at the LO Congress, on equal footing with the Labour Party (Strand 2005).

Equally important, SV still has numerous permanent policy-making committees and temporary working groups which have contact with relevant organisations between congresses. According to the current party secretary, it is common to invite representatives of external organisations to party arrangements like committee meetings and the numerous internal and open conferences. Interest groups contribute by giving talks or participating in discussion panels. The internal party-union committee and the committee for international affairs are among the organisational bodies that frequently invite external contributors. In recent years, external organisations have even been invited to speak at some meetings of the party’s executive committee (Solhjell 2003 [interview]).

Whereas specific dialogue seminars are not routine, ad hoc meetings apparently take place quite frequently, for example with employees’ organisations, parts of the environmental movement, anti-EC organisations, peace groups, cultural organisations and so forth, according to the party secretary (Solhjell 2003 [interview]). After the rapprochement with the LO leadership in 2002, some ad hoc consultations have been arranged between LO and the SV leadership. Annual reports from the late 1990s conclude that the interaction with the environmental movement is significant, but ad hoc based (see Socialist Left Party Annual Report 1995–97: 20, 1997–99: 18).163 With regard to the trade unions, the relationship has become closer in recent years, through more official interaction between elites. Thus we see that SV has more inter-organisational links with interest groups than many long-established Norwegian parties, and relations appear better organised – institutionalised – than what is usually expected of a new left party.

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163. SV has itself supported various ad hoc groups, like the Climate Alliance (*Klimaalliansen*), an environmental umbrella organisation working against the establishment of (polluting) Norwegian gasworks.
The impression of a party with fairly organised relationships with interest groups in general is strengthened by an in-depth look at the manifesto-making process. As a part of the general project known as ‘Open Party’ in the early 1990s, SV intended to invite external individual and organisations to contribute in the discussion at all levels (Socialist Left Party Annual Report 1991–93: 20). Over time, the idea of greater openness has also been translated into practice. Inclusion of external interest groups in the manifesto-making process has become routine both in local parties and at the national level (Solhjell 2003 [interview]); Brostigen 2003 [interview]). When developing the 2001-2005 Manifesto, the preparing committee invited numerous organisations to have a say through a hearing of memos to organisations covering various policy fields. The party received written comments from various organisations, albeit only from a limited proportion of those who had been contacted (Socialist Left Annual Report 2000: 9; Brostigen 2003 [interview]). Later, the final proposal was published on the Internet, but the response from organisations at this point was low (Brostigen 2003 [interview]). Some organisation leaders were invited to give talks to the committee (Allern 2001: 31), although written comments were the preferred form of communication (Brostigen 2003 [interview]). One committee member, and the committee secretary himself, had previously worked in the headquarters of Friends of the Earth Norway (FoEN – Norges Naturvernforbund). A former leader of this organisation was engaged to draft the section on energy policy. Two other committee members served as national secretaries of an LO union at that time. In this way, the environmental movement and the trade union movement were particularly involved in the SV manifesto-making process.

Unorganised Links for Contact with Interest Groups and Frequency of Actual Contact

Do fairly strong inter-organisational links indicate that there is not that much unorganised contact, or are the organised links supplemented by informal ones in SV? We start by looking at elite’s personal experience from associational life in Norway. The survey reveals that, at the time of the research, as much as 75 per cent of the Socialist Left’s top elite had experience as office holders or staff members in interest groups (see Appendix D for complete frequencies). Figure 12.1 shows there are strong links at the national level in SV to three organisation categories: LO and LO unions, organisations working against Norwegian membership in EU, and community-centred organisations.

In fact, more than 40 per cent – 5 out of 12 – are/or have been officials and staff in anti-EU organisations. About 25 per cent of the elite were currently holding national positions in the category of ‘no’-organisations at the time they were asked. Hence, SV is, like the Centre Party, deeply involved in the non-partisan work against Norway’s joining the European Union. Furthermore, we observe that despite the dominance of Labour in the central leadership of the Trade Union Federation (LO), 25 per cent SV’s top elite (3 out of 12) have local or national

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164. Others sent their action programmes, but probably by routine and not as a direct result of the invitation (Sosialistisk Venstreparti 2002b-e; Brostigen 2003 [interview]).
background from executive bodies or the administration of LO and LO unions. More than 30 per cent have such experience from community-centred organisations, but we should not put much emphasis on the difference since this category is much broader. Otherwise, the link in terms of personal overlaps and transfers is of medium strength to organisations related to non-religious philosophies of life. However, the SV elite do not seem to be a bastion for leaders of international solidarity groups or peace organisations. Neither are officials and staff from feminist organisations and environmental organisations well-represented in the top elite. Significant links of this kind might well exist in the population as a whole, at least with the environmental movement. However, it should be noted that only 8 per cent of the 2001 congress delegates in SV had present or former positions in environmental organisations (Heidar and Saglie 2002: 279).

Figure 12.1: Socialist Left Party links, by top elite members who hold or have held office/who are or have been staff members at the national or local levels in various interest groups 2003/2004.\(^1\) \(N = 12\)

\(^1\) If a respondent is/has been an official and also is/has been a staff member, the answer is registered only in the ‘official category’.

165. Hence, the embeddedness in LO seems not to have weakened so much over time. Haaversen-Westhassel (1984: 102–5) reports that about half of the national executive committee held positions in the trade union movement at the local level. For the record, at the 2005 Congress, two out of the nine elected onto the party executive held national positions in LO unions.