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# Swedish Regional Reform and the Political Map: Party Interests at Stake

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## **School of Public Administration Working Paper Series: Published Papers**

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# Preface

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Versions of this paper have been presented at the NOPSAs Conference in Vaasa and the XX NORKOM Conference in Gothenburg in the fall of 2011. This time period was something of a formative moment in Swedish regional politics, when a regional amalgamation reform had the potential to be realized through a bottom-up process. In late 2011 and early 2012, all Swedish regions were courting each other in order to find suitable partners for future fusions. Arguments for and against an amalgamation reform were heard in local and regional councils and in local newspaper all around the country.

The intention behind this paper was to provide greater understanding for the on-going process, primarily taking place behind the scenes, and its potential outcomes. To our knowledge, no one has before discussed structural reforms in Sweden in terms of gerrymandering.

In the spring of 2012 the reform rather unexpectedly collapsed. Even though the interest for amalgamation was high in many parts of the country, not a single constellation of counties presented an amalgamation proposal to the sitting government commission on regional reform. In light of this development, our analyses in this paper lost some of their acute relevance.

However, the discussion on regional reform in Sweden is not over. In December 2012 the government commission presented solutions for a new regional organization of state authorities, and new initiatives for amalgamation of county councils may very well arise in the years to come. The wish for reform is very strong, at least in some parts of the country. We hope that the analyses and discussion provided in this paper could contribute to continued discussions, and when new maps in the future may be put on the table, this study have provided a framework for understanding the motives and consequences of the proposals in terms of party interest.

Gothenburg December 2012

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### *Abstract*

In this paper we conduct a contra-factual thought experiment, applying the practice of gerrymandering to the regionalisation process of Sweden. By applying the actual election data from 1998 to 2010, we discuss the various outcomes of four regional models; i) the present system, ii) a realistic scenario of regional reform (a roadmap commissioned by SALAR), and two hypothetical but possible models based on which regional structure would mostly benefit iii) the left-wing parties and iv) the right-wing parties. The overall aim of the paper is to estimate the implications of a regional reform on the political geography of Sweden and to provide instruments for future research on whether and how party interests affect the regional reform process.

The analyses also provide fuel for a number of relevant discussions on regional reform and its political outcomes. For example, our results highlight the possible lock-in effects in the present discussions concerning the Stockholm/Uppsala regions, Västra Götaland and Halland/or Värmland, as well as the region of Southwest Sweden.

One suggestion is that if citizens are to have long-term confidence in any future regional structure, it should be arranged in such a way that both the left *and* right wings are satisfied – a double-packing strategy. Such a strategy would make it relatively harder for smaller local/regional parties to affect the political stability of a region. If political stability is pursued, we suggest that the solution of the Wise Men (appointed by SALAR) is more functional than the present structure.

### *Keywords:*

*regions, regional reform, county councils, political geography, parties, gerrymandering, packing, cracking, Sweden*

## Studying Regional Structure Reform – An Introduction

The multi-level systems of Europe are undergoing structure reforms in many countries, and Scandinavia<sup>3</sup> and Sweden are no exception. For several years, there has been a clear movement towards an amalgamation reform of the Swedish regions.<sup>4</sup> But the reform process has been complicated and many political actors on different political levels have been involved. At the time of writing we might be reaching an endpoint in the discussions, but it is also possible that the process will carry on for several years to come.

The question of regional structure reform is, despite its political importance, more or less absent from any public debate in the national arena. But the real game is played behind the public scenes, and the players are regions with a variety of cards at hand. Some of the regions, mainly in the big city areas, are regarded as growth regions which it would be beneficial to be partnered with. Other counties constitute more stagnating regions with failing economies, skewed demographic patterns and gloomy future prospects. On the political dance floor, counties invite their more attractive but often indifferent neighbours and at the same time try to politely fend off invitations from less attractive counties. In this partly overt, partly concealed political game, a key task for all students of Swedish regional reform is to explain how the process has developed, what interests are involved and how possible outcomes of the process could be explained.

This paper will focus on the interest in the role of political parties and political geography in the regional process. While the regional reform is rarely mentioned in the public debate, the issue of political geography is totally absent. This is remarkable, since a reform could potentially have a significant

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<sup>3</sup> Regional reforms are being implemented and discussed in all Scandinavian countries (Sandberg 2009). By tradition, the regional authorities in Scandinavia have been responsible for health and hospital care, but increasing health spending and a discussion on who should be responsible – the state, the “middle level” or the local governments (*kommuner*), have fuelled various reforms in each country. In Denmark, the *amter* were removed at the beginning of 2007 and replaced by five regions. By means of a ‘quick and efficient’ reform, the Danish government decided to redraw the municipal and regional map decided upon a few years earlier (Mouritzen 2010, s. 28f). Hospital services remained at the regional level while health care was transferred to local governments. The Danish regions also lost their tax collection power, and the health services were financed by a combination of state and local subsidies. Looking east, Finland has been comprised of six larger regions since 2010, when the 12 state authorities (*län*) were transformed into the six *regional state administrative agencies* with responsibility for hospital services.<sup>3</sup> The state is the financial agent for hospital services in Finland. While Denmark and Finland have more or less removed the middle tier, the regional level, Norway has retained the system of local governments and county councils. The latter did not benefit from taxation power before 1976, but since that date they have had direct elections and direct tax collection power. In 2002, the main task for the regional bodies, *fylken*, was raised by the Labour government to the state level (Baldersheim & Rose 2010: 93).

In light of the development in the other Scandinavian countries, the Swedish regional process is a remarkable exception. Instead of downgrading the influence of regional authorities by centralisation to the state, decentralisation from the state level to the regions is the present trend. And if the amalgamation reform is carried out fully, the regional level will most likely end up much stronger than ever before in the Swedish political system.

<sup>4</sup> In this paper we use the term *region* (Swedish: *landsting*) for County Councils, the 20 ‘mid-level’ self-governing entities, whose budgets are 90 per cent used for hospital services. Other responsibilities are transport, infrastructure, culture, and middle-level education.

impact on which political parties will govern the regional authorities in the future. If the regional border-drawing favours the right-wing or left-wing coalition, the end results would look rather different in the middle parts of the country. To modify political maps along with party interests is a phenomenon known primarily from the US, where population changes in constituency districts regularly call for the redrawing of borders. This is rarely done in the Scandinavian context, as the national registration of all citizens implies that at election times, “levelling seats” can be distributed in order to mirror the election result correctly. Evidence from Denmark also indicates that party political factors did not play an important role in its recent municipal amalgamation reform (Bhatti & Hansen 2011).

Our aim in this paper is to estimate the implications of regional reform on the political geography of Sweden. It is a given fact that the way in which an amalgamation reform is carried out could potentially benefit different parties or party coalitions, and since important party interests are at stake, it is not unreasonable to assume that party strategists are attempting to gerrymander the process, i.e. to actively adjust the boundaries of regions in order to benefit party interests. Since such strategies are planned and implemented behind closed doors, it is impossible for us to answer whether, and to what extent, gerrymandering is a part of the reform process. Instead, our analysis will show how gerrymandering of Swedish regions could be carried out, and what the ultimate effects would be if gerrymandering was allowed to influence the reform process. The contribution of this analysis is to provide instruments for future research into whether, and how, party interests are affecting the regional reform process.

On the basis of the election results from 1998 – 2010, we will analyse the likely effects of Swedish regional reform in terms of political majorities in future elections. Our two main research questions are: Which political parties stand to gain or lose if the most likely reform proposals are implemented? Which realistic reform outcomes are most favourable to either side? The results of these analyses should be of interest to all actors involved in the process, not least the inhabitants of the regions undergoing reform.

Our empirical analyses in this paper have the form of contra-factual experiments. Since it is impossible to have certain knowledge of which parties the Swedes will support in regional elections in the future, we have to rely on historical data. In our analyses we test what would have happened to the political landscape of Swedish regions if a regional amalgamation reform had been implemented in 1998. By assuming that a Swedish voter would vote for the same party in a regional election independently of which region he or she was living in, we estimate what the outcomes of regional elections would be in three hypothetical regional models: a most likely scenario (“The Wise Men Model”, presented in a report commissioned and endorsed by SALAR<sup>5</sup>), a model that would benefit the left-wing parties

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<sup>5</sup> SALAR is the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. A commission under SALAR had the mandate to negotiate and suggest a new regional solution with its members, and the solution was presented in March 2011, becoming the official proposal of SALAR (2011).



(The Left Model) and a model that would benefit parties on the right (The Right Model). All of these three results are then compared with what has actually happened within the regions of the present structure in the four election periods since 1998.

It may very well be that the results of similar calculations are already well known to the party strategists in some closed circles. If this is the case, it is also reasonable to assume that party positions on the national level are influenced by rational calculations regarding voter maximisation. With our results at hand, it is possible to analyse whether party positions on the national level could in any way be interpreted as the result of such lines of reasoning. But it is also likely that such mathematic efforts on the national level are of little use at present, since the process is for the time being controlled by the counties and is played as a “who-takes-who” game. The paper will end with a discussion on how our findings bear on the ongoing process. But firstly we will present a short overview of the regional structure in Sweden and the Scandinavian context.

## Regions and regional reform in Sweden

As of 2011, the second political tier in Sweden consists of 21 regional units, and these territories are governed in parallel by the state county administrative boards (*CABs*) (Swedish: *länstyrelser*) and the self-governing authorities, not being linked to the state but maintaining tax collection privileges and being responsible for hospital care, formally referred to as *county councils (CCs)*, (Swedish: *landsting*).<sup>6</sup> The terminology is confused, as a limited amalgamation reform was initiated after Sweden became an EU member in 1995, at which time the regional experiments were allowed in Skåne (M) in 1996 and in Västra Götaland (O) in 1998 by the merging of two and three counties, respectively. In this process, the responsibility for regional development issues was transferred from the state authorities to the self-governing authorities on the regional level (prop 2009/10:156). To mark the significance of this, the newly created units were given the right to call themselves regions (Swedish: *regioner*) – referring both to the CCs and the CABs simultaneously.

Two existing and much smaller counties, Gotland and Halland, were in 2011 also given the status of regions – a decision which in practice gave these counties immunity to further amalgamation processes<sup>7</sup>, at the same time as the regional experiments in Skåne and Västra Götaland were made permanent

Figure 1 – Present structure of Swedish regions and their official letter symbol



<sup>6</sup> The island of Gotland is a county but since the whole island consists of only one municipality, the local authorities carry out the responsibilities of the county council and there is no middle tier on Gotland.

<sup>7</sup> At least in the short term – the future remains to be seen.

(prop 2009/10:156). When the ongoing reform process is over it is likely that all counties will have been transformed into regions. To avoid any terminological confusion, we will in the rest of the paper refer to all self-governing CC units on the regional level as *regions*, to avoid confusion with the CABS.<sup>8</sup>

### The ongoing reform process

Traditionally, Swedish regional politics is often regarded as taking place in the shadow of national and local politics (Erlingsson 2009). Media interest is generally low, especially in regions where there is a lack of newspapers or TV-/radio stations that cover the whole region (Johansson & Danielsson 2010).

But when Sweden entered the European Union in 1995, the regional level underwent a political revival of sorts. Encouraged by Europeanisation and general globalisation processes, regional bodies have since invented various forms of partnerships, innovation and governance structures in order to continue as legitimate service providers and to attract regional growth and bilateral networks; with other regions or in order to attract investment from the EU regional funds (Loughlin, Hendriks & Lidström 2010). It was in line with these trends that the regions of Skåne and Västra Götaland were given a mandate by the Swedish parliament (*Riksdagen*) to take over responsibilities concerning regional development issues.

Instigated by the European membership and the partial reforms of Västra Götaland and Skåne, the state commission *Investigation of Responsibilities (Ansvarsutredningen SOU 2007:10)* was given the assignment of making an overview of how public responsibilities should be distributed and, if necessary, producing proposals for necessary structural reforms.<sup>9</sup> The commission was active during the years 2003 – 2007, and under the umbrella of the *Investigation of Responsibilities*, a 2006 consultant report proposed that, in order to maximise economic growth, Sweden should redraw its regional territorial borders in order to obtain between six and fourteen regions.<sup>10</sup> Ultimately the commission proposed a structural reform in line with this report. The proposal suggested that each region should ideally be formed so that it comprised a university hospital and an approximately similar number of inhabitants.

A general argument by the *Investigation of Responsibilities* was that various governmental agencies had one by one developed various territorial maps of how they administered sectorial issues within their sector of jurisdiction. Overall, it was impossible to achieve an overview of the administrative borders of all different authorities; this was referred to as the '*regional mishmash*', even though the 21

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<sup>8</sup> Confusion is very likely to occur at this point, as the regions of Skåne, Västra Götaland, Halland and Gotland function as CABS and CCs in parallel, a difference not easily discerned by their citizens.

<sup>9</sup> Direktiv 2003:10. Översyn av strukturen och uppgiftsfördelningen inom samhällsorganisationen.

<sup>10</sup> This was carried out by Nordregion and EuroFutures, [http://www.sou.gov.se/pdf/Blandat/pdf\\_avslut\\_utr/Sveriges%20regionala%20indelning.pdf](http://www.sou.gov.se/pdf/Blandat/pdf_avslut_utr/Sveriges%20regionala%20indelning.pdf)

CABs going back to 1634 were a common denominator. The commission was composed by members from all parties in the national parliament, and the conclusion on regional reform was unanimous. But soon it became clear that the conservative Moderate party opposed any regional reform.

The traditional position of the Moderates is that Sweden should abolish the self-governing middle tier of government altogether, and even if the party has not stated this idea in the national debate for some time, it is obvious that strong forces within the party oppose any reform of the regional level that would strengthen rather than reducing its importance.<sup>11</sup> As the Moderates dominate the government and are the holders of the offices of Prime Minister and Finance Minister, their opposition cannot be ignored. On the other hand, all other established parties are positive towards reform, and so is the SALAR. A report written on commission by SALAR in March 2011 concludes:

*“In all counties except for Stockholm there is strong support for the conclusion drawn by the Investigation of Responsibilities, in order to constitute larger regions with extended responsibilities”* (The State in the Regional Issue, 2011 p. 5)

The primary motive of SALAR for furthering the regionalisation process is claimed to be strengthened conditions for health services and an increased influence in regional development and growth. Other supporting motives are claimed to be the need to create an organisation which can collaborate with a new state administration with regards to infrastructure, employment and innovation. The SALAR report also provided a proposed map for how the future regions of Sweden should look, adding up to eight regions in total, and the commission that produced this proposal is informally referred to as the *Wise Men*.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, we will refer to the SALAR commission as the *Wise Men* and their proposed regional division as *The Roadmap of the Wise Men* or *The Wise Men Model*. We will soon use this map in our analysis as a “most likely scenario”.

But despite the positive stance of many of the involved actors, the solution for the conflict within the national government has hitherto been to explicitly decentralise the process to the regions. It is now up to them to build alliances with neighbours and to put forth proposals for new amalgamated regions. In recent years, all regions have been involved in the process of doing just that (Eriksson 2009, Gustafsson & Karlsson 2010).<sup>13</sup> The bottom-up approach to reform has, not surprisingly, very strong support among regional political representatives (Karlsson 2010).

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<sup>11</sup> DN debate 11/11/2007 and DN 01/03/2008.

<sup>12</sup> The three commissioners were Roland Andersson (Former Chair of Executive board, Västra götaland, Social democrat), Jerker Swanstein (Former Chair of Executive board, Skåne, Moderate) and Kent Johansson (Former Member of Executive board, Västra götaland, Centre party).

<sup>13</sup> It should also be mentioned that in parallel with this process, another state commission is investigating the future of the regional state authorities. This commission should present its results by the end of 2011.

## The Swedish regional issue: a target for gerrymandering practices?

The established term for the practice of establishing a political advantage for a particular party by manipulating geographic boundaries to create partisan election districts is “gerrymandering”.<sup>14</sup> The possibility of manipulating district boundaries in order to secure election results is always an issue in countries that lack any levelling instrument within their election systems. It is especially effective to gerrymander in single-winner systems with a first-past-the-post rule, where only a relative majority is needed in order to win a district. Gerrymandering is generally seen as morally dubious, especially if it is carried out by the ruling parties in order to secure elections results in their own favour.<sup>15</sup> But there are also arguments claiming that gerrymandering practices could have positive outcomes (Gelman & King 1994).

The Swedish election system is pretty much immune against gerrymandering. There is no way a constituency revision would affect the results in national elections, and it is likewise unlikely to happen in relation to regional elections. The reason for this is the use of “levelling seats” which ensure that party mandates in Swedish parliaments are proportional to the popular vote in the whole electorate. But there is one way in which a creative cartographer could change the Swedish political map in favour of a political party or a coalition of parties, which would be through a structural reform of municipalities and regions – and at present the discussion in Sweden concerns changing a pattern that has largely prevailed since 1634.<sup>16</sup>

Since gerrymandering is very much a current phenomenon in the USA, where Congress regularly needs to redraw the constituency borders in line with population and demographic changes (Yoshinaka and Murphy 2011, p. 438), almost all research on the matter is dominated by US authors. The mathematics behind effective gerrymandering could be made very complicated and researchers have readily provided models for how party strategists should act while redrawing districts (Sherstyuk 1995; Owen & Grofman 1988). But the research field has also reputedly discovered that gerrymandering is not an easy business, and gerrymandered districts do not always generate ‘safe seats’ (McCarty, Poole & Rosenthal 2009). Other authors conclude that gerrymandering leads to a loss in competitiveness between local candidates but strengthens party polarisation (Mann 2007).

Two terms developed within this field are the gerrymandering strategies of “packing” and “cracking” (Friedman & Holden 2008; Puppe & Tasnádi 2009). To use packing in gerrymandering is to concentrate as many opponent voters as possible into as few districts as possible. These districts will be secure

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<sup>14</sup> Elbridge Gerry was governor of Massachusetts, and when in 1812 he determined the outlines of the boundaries of the districts of his state, they were said to resemble salamanders (hence the term Gerrymander).

<sup>15</sup> Some countries with single-winner systems, such as the UK and Canada have decided that non-partisan institutions should be in control of the necessary redrawing of boundaries, while this activity is still in the hands of the parties in the USA.

<sup>16</sup> The use of the term “gerrymandering” when talking about regional reform rather than redrawing election constituencies is perhaps stretching the meaning of the term. But since the ultimate goal and much of the same logic is applied in either activity, we will continue to use the term in this paper when discussing the active manipulation of a regional structure in order to advance a political interest.

seats for the opposition party but since opposition voters are rarer in all other districts, the overall victory of the gerrymandering side is guaranteed. To gerrymander by cracking is to spread out the opposition voters in as many districts as possible, but at the same time to ensure that one's own side keeps a relative majority most districts possible. In practice, the two strategies can be combined, as when the opposition voters are packed in minority of districts and cracked across a majority of the districts.

Skilful cracking could, in theory, create a landslide victory for a party which in reality has the support of a relatively small percentage of the electorate. But cracking also brings the question of risk into the equation since it is normally built on narrower margins in elections. Packing is thus a more secure strategy, but one that will never lead to a complete victory. The American research on gerrymandering, including the strategies of packing and cracking, could to some extent be adapted for the case of the Swedish regional reform. But there are also significant differences that we must acknowledge before proceeding to our analysis.

Firstly, in this paper we are not talking about creating districts of seats in a parliament, but regions with parliaments of their own. When gerrymandering election districts for a parliament, a substantial number of opponent seats could be tolerated as long as one's own side wins the majority. But when we are gerrymandering a regional structure, each region where one's own side does not win is a substantial loss. Secondly, the electoral systems in the USA and in Sweden are very different. While in the US representatives are elected in single-winner districts by a first-past-the-post system, Swedish representatives are elected in a proportional system with multiple-winner districts and levelling mandates. In the US, the largest party always wins a district, even with a small relative majority. The seats in a regional council in Sweden will always be proportional to the party preferences of the regional electorate, and small parties are always represented in accordance with their popularity among the voters. Thirdly, Sweden has a multiparty system where the US in practice has a two party system. This means that one party can rarely count on winning a majority in any district or region in Sweden.

As a consequence of this last circumstance, it is more feasible to base an analysis of Swedish political geography and potential gerrymandering strategies on party coalitions as the central actors. Due to their size, two parties dominate the political scene on both the national and the regional level in Sweden: the Social democrats and the Moderate party (conservative). The Left Party (socialists, former communists) and the Green party have on the national level been closely associated with the Social democrats (the "Red-Greens") but on the local and regional levels, the Greens are just as likely to align with parties on the right. The three centre/right parties are the Liberal Peoples' Party, the Centre party (agrarians) and the Christian democrats. These three tend to have similar views in left-right issues, and since 2006 they have been coalition members of the national government together with the Moderate party, the coalition calling itself "Alliance for Sweden". Today "Alliance"-coalitions are the most common ruling majorities on the local and regional level in Sweden. The Sweden Democrats

(populist nationalists) have recently gained prominence in Swedish politics, but all of the established parties have distanced themselves from the party and its controversial views on immigration. As a result the Sweden Democrats are not included in a ruling majority in any region or municipality.

On the local level, there is a great variety of coalitions between different parties. However, on the regional level, most coalitions tend to follow the national pattern and are either based around the centre right parties of the Alliance for Sweden or the two Socialist parties on the left, with the Greens often controlling the balance of power.<sup>17</sup>

If the aim of gerrymandering is to control who will win an election in a future region rather than to maximise the election results of a particular party, the combined support for either the socialist parties (Social democrats and the left party – the “Left”) or the Alliance for Sweden parties (Moderates, Liberals, Christian democrats and Centre party – the “Right”) should be in focus.

In former times, most elections results would give a straight forward result; either the left or the right would win. But with Greens and Sweden Democrats gaining support during recent years, neither side can be certain of winning a majority in an election. The side which has a relative majority, i.e. larger support than the other side, generally has the greater chance of leading the executive and attracting support from the Greens. With this in mind, we have chosen to illustrate the regional political geography of Sweden by using four categories: regions where Social democrats and the Left party have a majority of the votes (Left majority), regions where the Alliance for Sweden parties have a majority (Right majority) and regions where none of these have a majority of their own but where one of the sides is stronger than the other (Right stronger than left or Left stronger than right). It should here once again be noted that these categories are built on election results and do not reflect the coalitions that actually are or have been ruling the regions.

In our analysis we have chosen to include results from the four most recent regional elections. An alternative possibility would have been to build the analysis only on the basis of the most recent election. However, that would be to ignore the electoral fluctuation that takes place over time. Since the 1930s, the Left has been more successful in elections at all levels of government, but during the last two election periods the Right has been the stronger side.

In the following analysis we will attempt to answer the question of how the political map of regional Sweden would change if regional reform was implemented. The first step in this exercise is to describe the political geography within the present system. The next step is to investigate how the present situation would change in a most likely scenario (the Roadmap of the Wise Men), and the third step is to engage in the art of gerrymandering and to study the potential outcomes of a fully partisan reform.

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<sup>17</sup> The region of Västra Götaland was a prominent exception to this rule by forming a centre-left coalition for many years, but following the election of 2010 (and re-election of 2011) this region is also ruled by a Red-Green minority.

### Step I: The political map of Swedish regions in the present system

The election results in Swedish regions 1998-2010 are summarised in Table 1. In this period, 84 elections have been held in the 21 regions. Of these 84 elections, 32 have ended in a regional council with a right-leaning majority (or relative majority), 48 leaned to the left and 4 ended with an even result. 42 elections (50 percent) ended in a result with a clear majority for either the left or the right side, while the other 42 elections ended in a result where no side had a majority of their own.

Over time, the number of regions where no side has a majority of their own has increased. What has happened during this period of time is that parties traditionally not affiliated with either the left or the right side have grown stronger, especially the Greens and the Sweden Democrats but also some regional parties.<sup>18</sup>

Table 1. Election result in Swedish regions 1998 – 2010.

Regions	1998		2002		2006		2010	
	Left %	Right %	Left %	Right %	Left %	Right %	Left %	Right %
<b>AB</b> Stockholm	40	53	44	50	34	56	32	55
<b>C</b> Uppsala	45	48	45	47	38	52	37	49
<b>D</b> Södermanland	53	40	54	41	48	44	43	43
<b>E</b> Östergötland	48	45	49	44	39	42	39	42
<b>F</b> Jönköping	42	53	44	52	40	54	38	52
<b>G</b> Kronoberg	46	49	47	48	43	51	40	49
<b>H</b> Kalmar	49	48	48	48	46	47	46	45
<b>I</b> Gotland (municipality)	41	46	48	44	40	50	41	47
<b>K</b> Blekinge	54	41	53	41	48	42	44	39
<b>M</b> Skåne	43	45	46	43	39	47	34	47
<b>N</b> Halland	38	51	41	52	36	54	33	54
<b>O</b> Västra Götaland	44	45	44	44	40	47	37	45
<b>S</b> Värmland	54	42	44	35	48	39	46	39
<b>T</b> Örebro	55	40	55	39	51	41	51	39
<b>U</b> Västmanland	54	41	54	40	44	44	45	41
<b>W</b> Dalarna	52	41	50	41	45	44	44	41
<b>X</b> Gävleborg	57	37	48	41	46	41	44	38
<b>Y</b> Västernorrland	55	31	55	33	50	37	46	38
<b>Z</b> Jämtland	54	40	52	38	48	45	48	42
<b>AC</b> Västerbotten	56	37	56	39	53	40	55	37
<b>BD</b> Norrbottens läns landsting	59	23	50	22	51	25	52	24

□ = Left majority    ◻ = Left wing largest minority    ◻ = Right wing largest minority    ◻ = Right majority    ◻ = Tied

<sup>18</sup> The average share of *other parties*' votes in 1998 was 7.7 percent (across all regions), while the corresponding number at the regional elections in 2010 was 9.8 percent. This pattern is well documented for the Swedish national elections (Holmberg & Oscarsson 2004), as well as the municipal elections (Wörlund 1999; Bäck 2003; Loxbo 2008).

This is the reality which has formed Swedish regional politics during the last 13 years. In step II we will use the map drawn by the Wise Men in March 2011 as a most likely scenario for future regional reform and show how Swedish regional councils would have looked if the proposal had been implemented in 1998.

### **Step II: The Roadmap of the Wise Men reflecting regional election results 1998 – 2010**

The differences between the actual regional election results in the present structure and the hypothetical results of the Wise Men Model are illustrated in Table 2.

The electoral wind blew to the left in 1998; 46.5 percent of Swedes voted for the left parties and 45.0 percent for the right parties. 62 percent of the councils in the present system leaned left this year and 48 percent leaned right. However, only 38 percent of Swedes lived in a left leaning region. If the Wise Men Model had been in place, 38 percent of the regions would have had left leaning councils but 49 percent of the Swedes would live in left leaning regions. The Wise Men Model would thus benefit the left in terms of citizens ruled over, but it would benefit the right in terms of percentage of regions ruled.

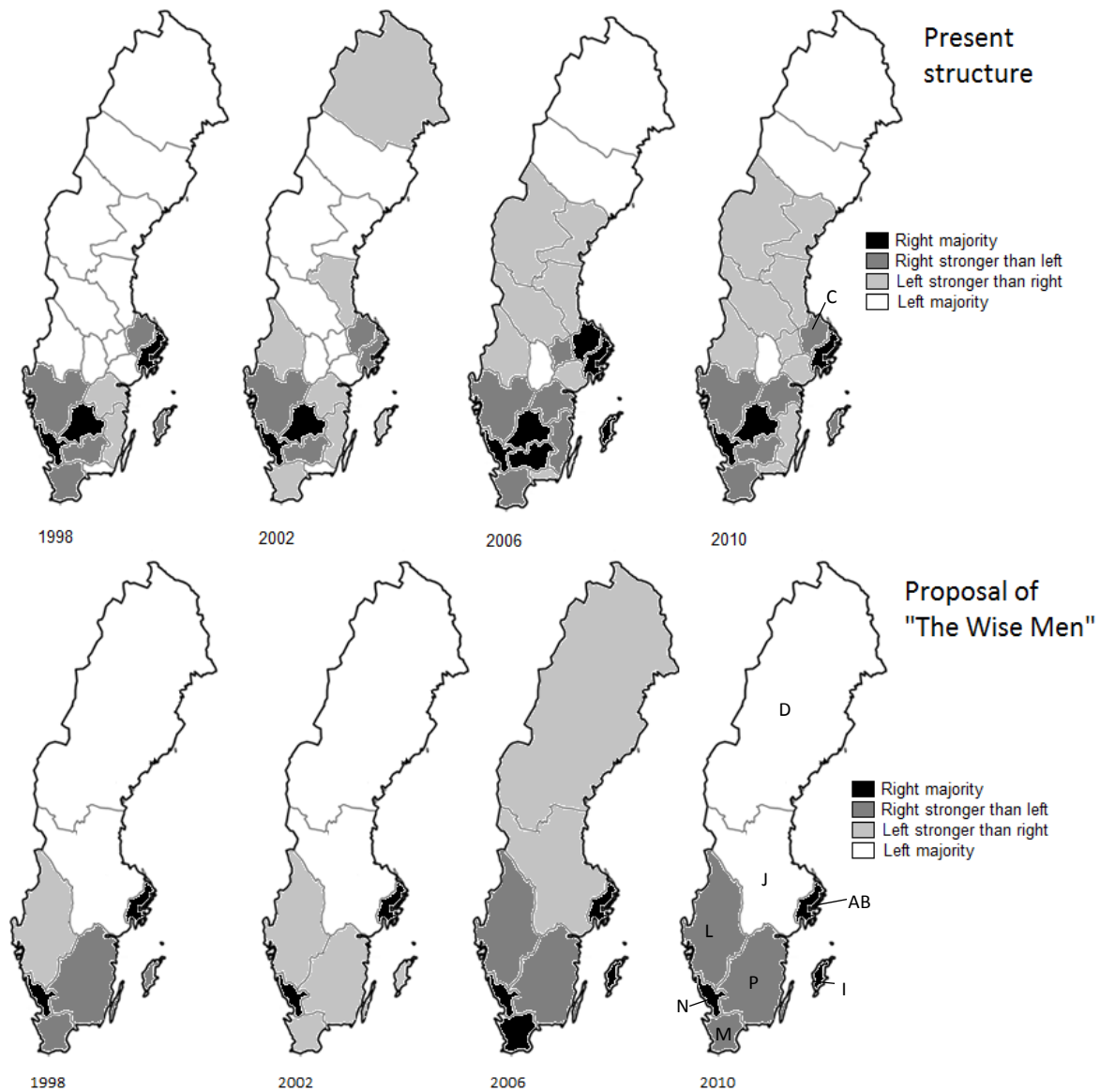
Next we turn to the 2002 results. This year was even stronger for the left side as 46.9 of Swedish voters supported parties to the left and 43.8 percent supported parties to the right. 71 percent of the regions had left leaning councils and 50 percent of Swedes lived in left leaning regions. In a world in which the Wise Men proposal had been implemented, 75 percent of the regions would have been left leaning and 76 percent of Swedes would have lived in a left leaning region. The Wise Men Model would undoubtedly favour the left parties in 2002.

In the 2006 the electoral wind blew in favour of the right. 47.3 percent of Swedes voted for parties on the right and 41.0 percent voted for parties on the left. Within the present structure, 53 percent of the regions were leaning right, and 74 percent of Swedes lived in these regions. If the Wise Men Model had been implemented, 75 percent of the regions would have been leaning to the right and 72 percent of Swedes would have lived in these regions. This means that the outcome of the 2006 election would have been very similar in the Wise Men Model compared to the present model.

In the 2010 elections, which started the ongoing election period, the electoral wind was continuously blowing right. 46.0 percent of Swedes voted for parties on the right in the 2010 elections while 38.8 percent voted for parties on the left. As of today, 43 percent of the regions have right leaning councils and 68 percent of Swedes live in these regions. If the Wise Men Model was implemented today, 63 percent of the regions would be leaning right and 73 percent of Swedes would live in these regions. The results indicate that the Wise Men Model would not much alter the political geography in 2010, at least in terms of how many Swedes are living in left or right leaning regions.



**Table 2. Present results from regional county elections 1998 – 2010 (upper row) and likely outcomes if the proposed *Roadmap of the Wise Men* had been adopted in 1998 (below).**



	Election results 1998						Election results 2002						Election results 2006						Election results 2010					
	Present structure			Wise Men proposal			Present structure			Wise Men proposal			Present Structure			Wise Men proposal			Present structure			Wise Men proposal		
	N	%	V%	N	%	V%	N	%	V%	N	%	V%	N	%	V%	N	%	V%	N	%	V%	N	%	V%
Left Majority	11	52	31	2	25	29	8	38	21	2	25	28	3	14	9	0	0	0	3	14	9	1	13	10
Left Stronger	2	10	7	1	13	20	7	33	30	4	50	48	7	33	18	2	25	28	9	43	23	1	13	18
Right Stronger	5	24	35	3	38	28	4	19	43	0	0	0	5	24	40	2	25	34	6	29	40	3	38	48
Right Majority	3	14	27	2	25	23	2	10	7	2	25	24	6	29	34	4	50	38	3	14	28	2	25	25
Total	21	100	100	8	100	100	21	100	100	8	100	100	21	100	100	8	100	100	21	100	100	8	100	100

N = number of counties/regions

% = percentage of counties/regions

V%=percentage of the Swedish electorate within the borders of these counties/regions

The comparison between the two models clearly indicates that the present structure heavily benefits the left in terms of number of regions ruled. Since 1998, 50 of the 84 regional councils in the present system (60 percent) have leaned to the left, while only 13 of 32 (41 percent) of the regions would do the same if the Wise Men Model had been implemented. The present model contains a number of right-leaning small regions in Northern and Middle Sweden that would disappear in an amalgamation reform, and this is the main explanation for these differences.

However, in terms of citizens ruled over, the Wise Men Model seems to benefit the left, at least in years in which the electoral wind is blowing in that direction. On average over the four years, 37 percent of Swedes lived in left leaning regions and 63 percent in right leaning regions in the present structure. With the Wise Men Model, the same shares would have been 45 percent in left leaning and 55 percent in right leaning councils.

Let us now push the discussion a little further and in step III take a closer look at scenarios which are the most beneficial for the political left and the political right from a national standpoint, with the assumption that in a rational-choice manner we want to maximise the number of i) left-wing regions, or ii) right-wing dominated regions.

### **Step III: The art of gerrymandering Swedish regions, and its implications**

In the next section of this paper we will conduct a contra-factual experiment. By assumptions of rational maximisation<sup>19</sup>, we will try to construct regional solutions that would be the most attractive to the political left and the political right respectively. We will determine the desirability of future regional reform by examining the kind of election results it would have produced if it had been implemented 13 years ago.

On the surface, gerrymandering in Sweden looks like an easy task. Historically, the election result may have produced different majorities in the same region, but the underlying political geography is fairly constant. The party selection of Swedish voters is continuously strongly dependent on “class voting” (Oskarsson 1994), and the socio-economic structures that determine the social status of voters are inter-

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<sup>19</sup> To presuppose the occurrence of gerrymandering in a reform process is to ascribe utilitarian rationality to the actors involved. Rationality is not always present in political processes. In a regional reform several “irrational” motives for actions are visible, such as identity politics and a general unwillingness to change anything. But if we acknowledge this and assume that the involved actors may have rational reasons for seeking different outcomes from a regional reform, party interest and voter maximisation are definitely aspects to account for.

The rational actors are in this case party representatives, or representatives for coalitions of parties. However, it is here important to remember that parties are multi-level organisations. Party actors are present both on the national, regional and local levels in a multi-level manner. The party as a whole, and its leadership, is often in focus as the top prize of politics: winning the national elections and implementing policies on the national level. But one should not underestimate the fact that party representatives on regional and local levels could have very different goals from their party affiliations on the national level. The definition of what is in the interest of the party could vary depending on which level a party strategist occupies.

woven with the economic geography, changing only very slowly. Territories where the left or the right have their strongest support are roughly the same as 90 years ago (Berglund & Dellenbrandt 1986).

The left is continuously stronger in Northern and Middle Sweden, provinces that comprise two-thirds of the land area of the country, but a much smaller proportion of the population. Parties to the right dominate politics in the Greater Stockholm area, including Stockholm (AB) and Uppsala (C). The right is also traditionally stronger in Southern and Western Sweden, especially in the counties of Halland (N) and Jönköping (F). The east coast of Southern Sweden leans slightly more to the left.

However, even if this political geography is fairly consistent and easy to identify, it is no simple matter to draw political maps which would permanently benefit either side. In conducting our contra-factual experiment of gerrymandering the Swedish regions, we have identified three major choices that a political strategist with gerrymandering ambitions would have to face:

- 1) Should the gerrymandering be orchestrated towards benefitting a *single party, or a coalition* of parties?
- 2) Should the gerrymandering be directed towards maximising the *number of regions* ruled by a party/coalition, or maximising the *number of citizens ruled over*? A winning tactic in the first case would be to create a number of relatively small regions ruled by the preferred side and concentrating the opponents in fewer and possibly larger regions.
- 3) Should the gerrymanderer maximise a limited number of secure regions for the foreseeable future and leave unsecure territories aside, or should the gerrymanderer aim at directing larger regions but with more narrow margins? In other words, how high a *risk* is the political strategist willing to take; does the gerrymanderer choose a *packing strategy* (low risk) or a *cracking strategy* (high risk)?

We contend that the choices a political strategist makes in these three aspects depend on several factors tied to the political system in question and on the level the strategist occupies.

The first choice, between maximising the votes of parties or coalitions, would depend on the party structure and election system of the country in question. The latter strategy would probably be more likely to be found in a multi-party system like that of Sweden and its regions. In our contra-factual experiment we assume a focus on the two traditional political sides in Swedish politics: the left (Social democrats and the Left party) and the right (the Alliance for Sweden parties: Moderates, Liberals, Christian democrats and the Centre party).

The second choice depends on the construction and role of the multi-level system. In a federal system, with a federal chamber of parliament dedicated to the self-governing regions/states, the actual number of regions won would be much more significant than how many citizens were ruled over by either po-

litical side; especially if the regions differed largely in size. But in a unitary state like Sweden, where the number of regions won is of no importance of its own, the number of citizens ruled over is probably the mostly preferred option for a party strategist. In our experiment, we therefore assume voter maximisation (by population numbers) rather than number of regions.<sup>20</sup>

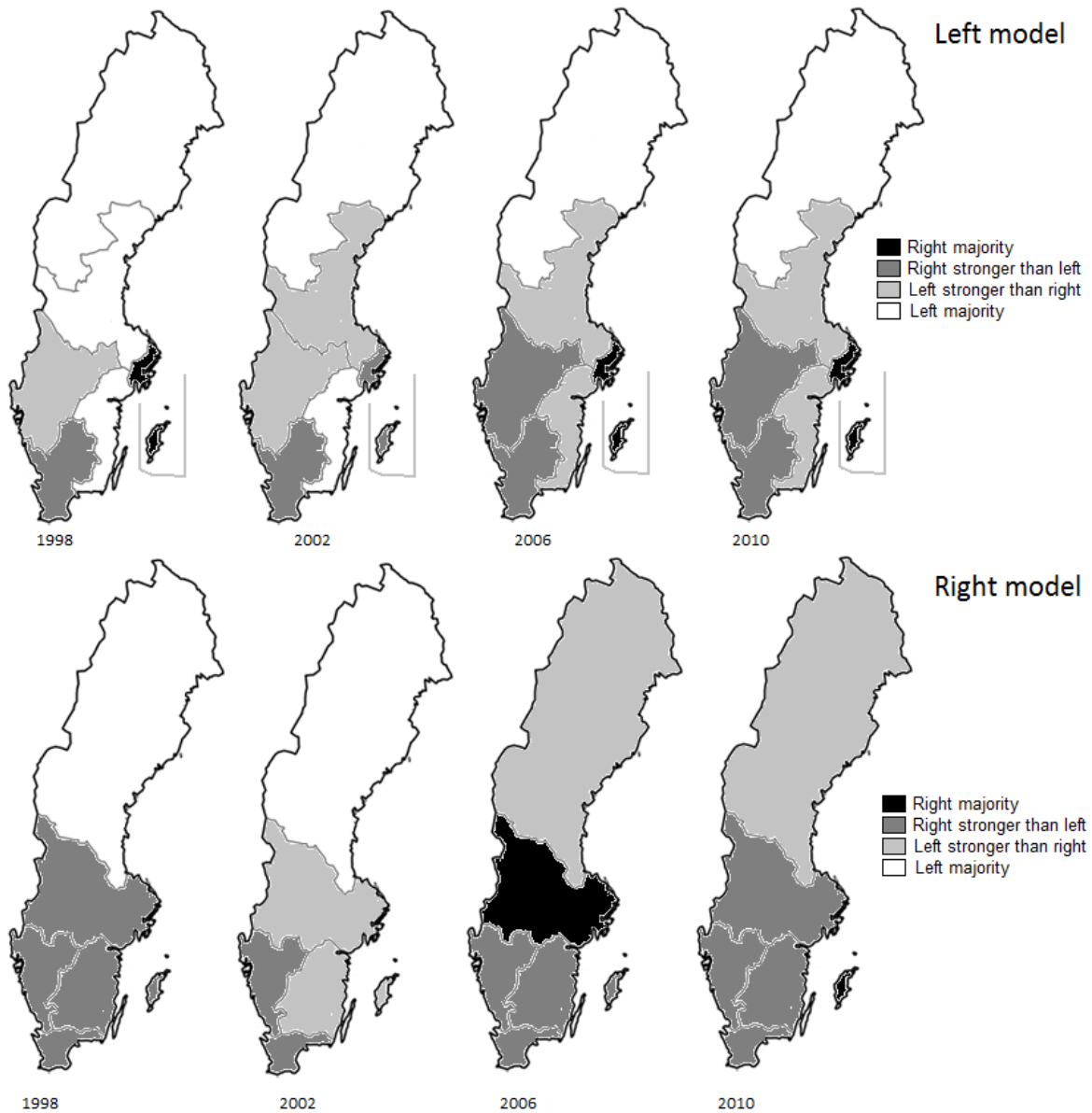
**Table 3. A model for national gerrymandering tactics**

	<b>High risk</b> – winning large areas in good years, risking losing large parts in bad years	<b>Low risk</b> – securing sufficient numbers of strongholds, but conceding large areas to the opposition
Maximising <b>number of regions</b> ruled over	A	C
Maximising <b>number of citizens</b> ruled over	B	D

The third choice concerning the level of risk-taking in constructing new regions would probably depend on the relationship between state and region within a multi-level political system. In a system where the state is heavily dependent on regional authorities to implement national policies, it is of vital importance to maximise the areas and citizens ruled over. To rule regions only in parts of the country is not enough. However, in systems where the distribution of responsibilities between state and region is more separated, this aspect is less important from a national perspective. Regions ruled by the national opposition under these circumstances do not threaten the national government in the same way. Instead the secure rule of certain strongholds could be seen as relatively more important, especially as insurance for times when one’s own political side is in opposition on the national level. In such times, a secure regional stronghold could function as a political base and shop window for alternative politics. As the Swedish multi-level system is based on strong ties and vague boundaries between state and regional politics, we have assumed the more risky strategy in our contra-factual experiment. The joint election-day in Sweden would also make it likely that if you succeeded in winning the majority in the national election, then you would be likely to have the margins on your side in a number of regions with traditionally narrow majorities as well. To win the national elections but have a large number of regions ruled by the opposition would be a great obstacle to implementing national policies. Our assumptions are illustrated in Table 3 below, with strategy B directing us in the subsequent experiment, on the basis of a national gerrymandering strategy.

<sup>20</sup> Additionally, the choice between number of regions ruled and number of citizens ruled over would certainly also be affected by the political level upon which the political strategist was active. For the regional party representatives who at present are deciding on different amalgamation alternatives, this aspect is potentially of great importance. To accept a fusion with another region might directly affect the possibility of securing the re-election of such a representative. On the national level, the preservation of a particular region is of secondary importance. A national strategist would see the larger picture and think of regional reform as winning or sacrificing different parts of the country in order to maximise the ultimate goals of a greater good. An actor on the regional level is likely to be less open to self-sacrifice for a greater good, especially if the electoral situation in the present model is beneficial.

**Table 4. Optimised map proposals for Left model (upper row) and Right model (below), with examples of election results 1998 – 2010.**



	Election results 1998						Election results 2002						Election results 2006						Election results 2010					
	Left model			Right model			Left model			Right model			Left model			Right model			Left model			Right model		
	N	%	V%	N	%	V%	N	%	V%	N	%	V%	N	%	V%	N	%	V%	N	%	V%	N	%	V%
Left Majority	3	50	32	1	20	14	2	33	19	1	20	13	1	17	7	0	0	0	1	17	7	1	20	0
Left Stronger	1	17	26	0	0	0	2	33	38	2	40	53	2	33	24	1	20	13	2	33	24	0	0	13
Right Stronger	1	17	21	4	80	86	2	33	43	2	40	33	2	33	47	3	60	48	2	33	47	4	80	87
Right Majority	1	17	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	17	22	1	20	39	1	17	22	0	0	0
Total	6	100	100	5	100	100	6	100	100	5	100	100	6	100	100	5	100	100	6	100	100	5	100	100

N = number of counties/regions

% = percentage of counties/regions

V%=percentage of the Swedish electorate within the borders of these counties/regions

### *Gerrymandering the Swedish regions – a contra-factual experiment*

In the following analysis, the question we seek to answer is which regional structure would in the long term mostly benefit either political side (the Left Model and the Right Model), and how big the differences in outcome would be if either of these two models were realised.

The identification of the Left and Right Models has not been based on a selection from all mathematically possible solutions. It is quite likely that there are other alternative models that would produce marginally stronger results for either side. But the two models presented here have been developed with two objectives in mind: A) to produce a map that *is more beneficial over time* for each side and B) that the model should be a *realistic alternative*, or at least not unrealistic.<sup>21</sup> As in step II above, we take a contra-factual approach and compare how the election results would have turned out if the reforms had been implemented in 1998.

Starting by taking the role of a left-wing gerrymandering strategist creating the *Left Model*; one major problem immediately arises when looking at the Swedish political map. The Stockholm region (AB) is a stronghold for the right and encompasses a large number of citizens. To find a model that would merge a sufficiently large number of left leaning regions with Stockholm in order to put the capital under leftist control is not realistic, since it would mean merging Stockholm into a region that would cover all parts of Sweden to the north of Stockholm. Even such a super region of the north would only be left-leaning in 1998 and 2002, meaning that Stockholm and all land north thereof would be controlled by the right in 2006 and 2010. This model is not only unrealistic; it is also a very risky strategy for a left-wing strategist.

Another very realistic alternative that has been widely discussed is the creation of a Greater Stockholm region, including all counties around Lake Mälaren. However, this would be disastrous from a leftist point of view since a number of traditionally left-leaning counties would be put under more or less permanent rule by the right, due to the strength of the right in populous Stockholm. Instead, the optimal strategy for a left-wing gerrymandering strategist would be to contain Stockholm within its present borders and to secure the surrounding areas for leftist control.

One trait of the Wise Men Model that was very favourable to the left-wing was the amalgamation of right-leaning Uppsala (C) with a number of left-leaning counties in the north and north west. This solution is retained in our Left Model as we put Uppsala (C), Dalarna (W), Gävleborg (X) and Väster-norrland (Y) in the same region. We have reserved a couple of the left-leaning counties in Middle Sweden, which the Wise Men put together with Uppsala, Örebro (T) and Västmanland (U), for an amalgamation with Västra Götaland (O) and Värmland (S). The reason for this is that with such a construction, populous Western Sweden would be under leftist control during the election periods

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<sup>21</sup> Salamander-like regions in the style of Elbridge Gerry are not likely alternatives for Swedish regions.

where the socialist parties were more successful, such as in 1998 and 2002. In election years when parties on the right were more successful, the balance between the two sides would be very even. However, the whole region would also be at risk of being lost to the right parties, as would have been the case in 2006 and 2010. An alternative model could be to secure Värmland (S), Västmanland (U) and Örebro (T) to a left-leaning region in Middle Sweden. But such a strategy would leave the populous Västra Götaland in the hands of the right for the foreseeable future. A more risky leftist strategy is therefore to create a map that put Västra Götaland under leftist rule when the national electoral wind blows to the left, and to be content with even results when the wind blows in the other direction.

The east coast south of Stockholm is also traditionally either left-leaning or even between the two sides. A region covering the present counties of Södermanland (D), Östergötland (E), Kalmar (H) and Blekinge (K) would during the whole period 1998-2010 have been controlled by the left. The small region of Gotland (I) is mostly right-leaning and it would be wise from a leftist perspective to leave it out of any east coast region; in this model Gotland is merged with Stockholm (AB), which is also a realistic alternative that has been considered in the regional debate. Omitted would be the traditionally right-leaning counties of Jönköping (F), Kronoberg (G) and Halland (N), which in this model are merged with Skåne (M), into a permanent right-leaning reservation. The remaining counties of northern Sweden (Norrbotten (BD), Västerbotten (AC) and Jämtland (Z)) are put into a secure left-leaning area.

If we now change party affiliation and try to draw a regional map that would benefit the parties to the right (the *Right Model*), we would obviously try to avoid some of the solutions chosen in the Left Model. For instance, Stockholm (AB) should not be isolated and Uppsala (C) should not be left on its own in a great leftist region. Instead, in the Right Model, both of these counties are used to tilt a large Middle Sweden region (including Södermanland, Västmanland, Örebro, Värmland and Dalarna) to the right. To avoid a left-leaning east coast, the traditionally right-leaning counties of Gotland, Kronoberg and Jönköping should be included in an East Sweden region (which thereby will be larger than its counterpart in the hypothetical Left Model). In the south, a merging of the right-leaning larger Skåne and the left-leaning smaller Blekinge would produce a normally right-leaning region of Southern Sweden.

During the four election periods studied, 1998-2014, the Right Model would produce right-leaning regional councils in three out of four elections in the regions of Middle Sweden, the east coast and South Sweden.

The large current region of Västra Götaland (O) normally produces even election results, but usually with a tilt to the right. By adding the smaller but steadily conservative Halland (N) to the larger Västra Götaland, the new region of the west coast would have been controlled by the right through all four election periods.

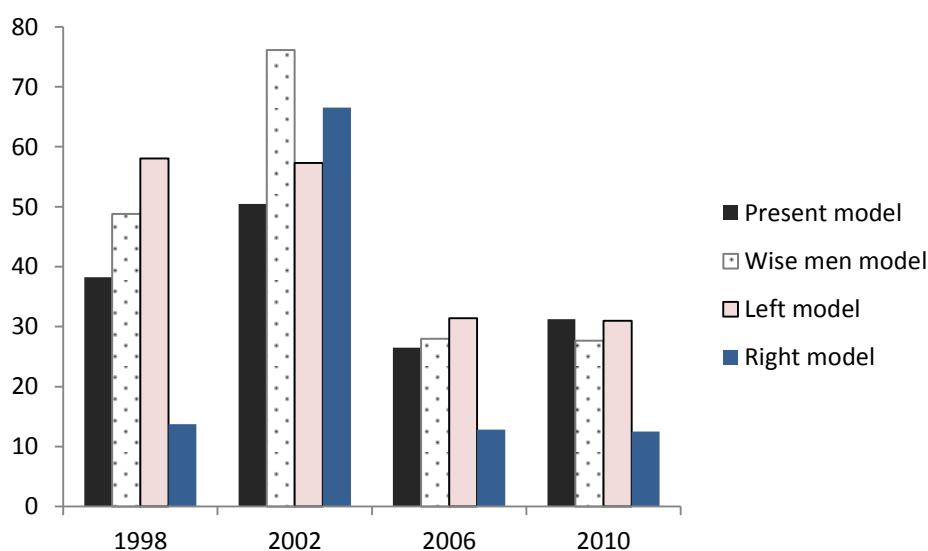
Northern Sweden is forever lost to the right and in this model it is made into a left-leaning reservation; the reasoning here being that even if northern Sweden comprises a large part of the land geographically, only a fraction of the national population live there.

It is now time to draw some conclusions from these exercises by answering two questions: How different are these two partisan models? And how far from the present model and the Wise Men Model are the Left and Right models? Table 5 and Figure 2 summarise the results that answer these questions.

**Table 5. Percentage of the Swedish electorate living in regions where a majority (or relative majority) of the council is comprised by parties on the left (Social democrats, Left party) by election year**

Election year	Present model (PM)	Wise Men Model (WM)	Diff. WM-PM	Left Model (LM)	Diff. LM-PM	Right Model (RM)	Diff. RM-PM	Diff. RM-LM
1998	38	49	+11	58	+20	14	-25	-44
2002	50	76	+26	57	+7	67	+16	+9
2006	27	28	+1	31	+5	13	-14	-19
2010	31	28	-4	31	+/- 0	13	-19	-18
Mean	37	45	+9	44	8	26	-10	-18

**Figure 2. Percentage of the Swedish electorate living in regions where a majority (or relative majority) of the council is comprised by parties on the left (Social democrats, Left party) by election year**



The results show that in three out of four election periods, the Right Model would be the most beneficial for the parties on the right, while the Left Model would be the most beneficial for parties on the left in two out of four periods. The differences between the Right and Left models would have been



largest during the 1998-2002 election periods. In the election of 1998, when 46.5 percent of the Swedish electorate voted for a socialist party and 45.0 percent voted for a party on the right, in the Left Model 58 percent of the electorate would have lived in a region dominated by left parties after this election, which is 44 percentage points more than what would have been the case in a Right Model structure. This is, of course, a remarkable difference.

In the elections of 2006 and 2010, the differences between the Right and Left Models are smaller. Even so, close to a fifth of the Swedish electorate that would have lived in a left leaning region if the Left Model was implemented, would – if the Right Model was adapted – live in a right-leaning region. The most surprising and revealing results of this analysis concern the election period of 2002-2006. After the 2002 elections, the Right Model would have produced a situation in which 67 percent of Swedes lived in a left-leaning region. This is substantially more than would be the case under the Left Model – which has been deliberately created to benefit the parties on the left! Why is this so?

The answer lies in the gambling aspect of the model construction. Both models were created with the premise that a larger region with a consistent but narrow majority for the relevant side is better than a smaller region with a larger and more secure majority. The risk of the narrowness of such a model is that in election years in which the opponents are unusually successful nationally, then a covet-all-lose-all situation can occur. In 2002, the right lost three hypothetical regions from the Right Model that would normally have been secure. In 1998, when the national election results were similar but the left's margin of success was slimmer, all of these hypothetical regions would have been controlled by the right.

In comparison with the present model and the Wise Men Model, the Right Model would produce a situation radically more favourable for the right in three out of four election periods (the exception being 2002-2006). The Left Model would produce a more favourable situation for the left parties compared to the present model during the whole period, but the differences in the last two elections would have been very small. Normally, the Left Model would also be more favourable to the left party compared to the Wise Men Model, but not in the exceptional election year of 2002 in which regions that are normally secure for the right were swayed to the left in a way that greatly resembles what would have happened in a Right Model system.

## Concluding discussion – What if gerrymandering ambitions blend into the ongoing process?

A question that has puzzled us during this study is why did Sweden *not* follow Denmark, Finland and Norway in order to direct hospital services to state responsibility with a simple stroke of a pen? To analyse why the issue of regional redrawing of boundaries was decentralised to the regions – alongside with SALAR which acts as an active mediator and proponent of the reform – could be the focus of a future study, but what we can clearly conclude here is that the *regional issue* in Sweden includes a bouquet of considerations, each one tricky for the Moderate-led Alliance government to deal with.<sup>22</sup>

The process of redrawing boundaries is not a day-to-day activity in the state of Sweden. But it is very likely that the ongoing discussion behind closed doors will result in a reform changing the regional political game for the forthcoming centuries. Before taking such a decision, careful consideration should be given to the possible consequences of various values being allowed into the final moment of decision.

First, gerrymandering is essentially an American phenomenon reflecting changing population balances in constituencies and districts, which follows from the regular census in the US, when the population is counted house by house.<sup>23</sup> In the US, the redistricting activities take place in order to secure representation in the federal House of Representatives, an exercise that is not in focus for the current regional reform in Sweden. Therefore, to transfer the US discussion on gerrymandering into the Swedish *regional issue discourse* could risk the initial motives for reform, if the legitimacy of the process is disrupted.<sup>24</sup> Our interpretation is that such a reform must be legitimate in a broad sense for the forthcoming centuries; therefore discussions on which political coalition would gain or lose in a particular case should not direct the final regional remapping decision.

In order to maximise politically stable governments, the roadmap of the Wise Men secured four of the suggested eight regions as either clear left or clear right in all election periods 1998 – 2010, while the

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<sup>22</sup> Possible reasons why the *regional issue* was handed over to SALAR could be that the newly elected Alliance government, who in effect got into power in 2007, wanted to buy time. An easy solution, also exercised in Norway but for local government issues, was to hand the portfolio over to SALAR. During summer 2011, at the time of writing, there are indications that the time is ripe for the government to step in once more.

<sup>23</sup> In Sweden, national population statistics keep track of every birth, emigration, immigration and death, and in the end the constituencies can be adjusted by levelling seats after every election in order to mirror the “true” voting results.

<sup>24</sup> Causes that could disrupt legitimacy are disrupted representation (Yoshinaka & Murphy 2011), cracking strategies could foster political instability at elections and in between elections (Yoshinaka & Murphy 2011), and affect voters’ perceptions of the political system per se, which could harm voting turnouts (Mann 2007). Others argue that redrawing boundaries could produce increased political polarisation (McCarthy, Poole & Rosenthal 2009; Carson, Crespín & Rohde 2007), but this assumes a majoritarian voting system, or “first-past-the-post system”, which is not the case in the Swedish proportional context.

present system generated clear right/left majorities in 14/10/8/6 out of 21 counties during the same time period. This means that unclear governments were allowed in up to 71 percent of the counties (Table 2). If political and fiscal stability is preferred, the proposal of the Wise Men is clearly preferable – seen as an overall picture, and from a national standpoint.

Secondly, *if* a political strategist was inspired by the American debate on the topic, they would need to have the preference pattern of the competing parties clear:

- i) Do competing parties optimise for a single party or for a coalition of parties?
- ii) Is maximum number of regions the most-desired outcome, or is it to rule the maximum number of people?
- iii) Should a packing strategy be employed (involving less risk), or a cracking strategy (high risk but high rewards for the winner)?

Depending on the party to which the gerrymandering strategist belongs, he or she would come up with different preference orderings. In our analysis in step III, we assumed a high-risk strategy (cracking), to maximise the number of people ruled over, but which would also risk losing large areas to coalitions when the political wind was calm, close to the median voter. What we present in our ‘experiments’ in maximising map solutions for either the Left or the Right is that the Stockholm (AB) borders fixed in the present model would most likely favour the Left, as a large share of the east coast (apart from the AB region) would vote for the left. If Stockholm (AB) was to be packed together with Uppsala (C), Södermanland (D), Västmanland (U), Örebro (T), Värmland (S) and Dalarna (W), the region would instead vote left in three out of four cases. For the south west coast, the left-wing solution is to pack Västra Götaland (O) together with Värmland (S), but this strategy only pays off in half of the cases. If Västra Götaland is instead packed together with Halland (N), it would maximise the wishes of the right. Similarly, the south east coast is mixed, with the territories of Östergötland (E), Jönköping (F), Kronoberg (G), Kalmar (H) and Blekinge (K) displaying a politically mixed-up landscape, depending on how the borders are drawn. All in all, the Right Model also leaves more opportunities for uncertain coalition rule than the Left Model, as the Left Model has secured right and left dominance in the north and in Stockholm (except for in 2002), while the Right Model secures a right-wing majority only twice, in 2006, in the ‘Middle Sweden region’ and Gotland (I)<sup>25</sup> in the last election in 2010. All other regions are either left to grey, uncertain minority rule, or to the opposition (northern Sweden). Maximising the regional maps with a cracking strategy in mind could therefore be a rather dubious business.

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<sup>25</sup> Constituted by some 50,000 inhabitants.

In this paper, we have primarily conducted a thought-experiment, applying the practice of gerrymandering to the regionalisation process in Sweden, yet not knowing what the final outcome would be.<sup>26</sup> By applying the actual election data from 1998 to 2010, we have discussed the various outcomes of the present system, the roadmap of the Wise Men and possible risk-maximisation solutions pursued by national gerrymandering strategists of either left or right conviction. Our discussions shed light on the crucial territories to be negotiated, with the key lock-ins probably being the Stockholm/ Uppsala regions and Västra Götaland/Halland in West Sweden. We suggest that, over time, if the maximum number of voters are to be satisfied and the regional territorial map is to be respected, it should be arranged in such a way that both the left-wing parties *and* the right-wing coalition parties are satisfied – a ‘double-packing’ strategy – in order to secure the interests of both the right and the left combined. Such a strategy would make it relatively harder for smaller local/regional parties to affect the political rule of a region, whether the parties arose for a single election period or under a package of Nationalist sympathies. More respected coalition partners, such as the Greens, could easily negotiate with either the right or the left, and such a strategy would not be directed towards them. If political stability is pursued, we suggest the solution of the Wise men is the best option presented so far. But in the end, many other strategies may be involved in the final decision, and the future remains to be seen.

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<sup>26</sup> If there has been a final decision to redraw the regional maps is to this date unknown. However, we estimate that a) the Swedish government will not let the *regional mishmash* halt in its present state, and b) it would be very unlikely that the regional CCs would cover *different* territories than the regional CABs. We believe that, when change is due, the government will apply parallel logics, as was the case with Skåne and Västra Götaland. It is possible, for example, to leave two regional CCs within a state-governed CAB, but this solution does not seem plausible.

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