



FÖRVALTNINGSHÖGSKOLAN

Political Conflicts

Dissent and Antagonism Among Political Parties in Local Government

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Avhandlingen bygger på följande delstudier:

- I. Skoog, L. & D. Karlsson (2018) Causes of party conflicts in local politics. *Politics*, 38(2), pp. 182-196. Copyright © 2017 The Authors DOI: 10.1177/026339571667878
- II. Skoog, L. Where did the party conflicts go? How horizontal specialisation in political systems affects party conflicts. Submitted for publication.
- III. Skoog, L. & D. Karlsson. Conflicting estimations of conflict - How politicians' perceptions of party conflicts are explained by ideology, partisanship and trust. Submitted for publication.
- IV. Skoog, L. & D. Karlsson (2015) Politiska konflikter och marknadisering – utmaningar för politiska ledare? I Aarsæther, N. & K. Mikalsen, *Lokalpolitisk lederskap i Norden* (pp. 112-147). Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk. Copyright © Gyldendal Norsk AS 2015

Akademisk avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i offentlig förvaltning, som med tillstånd från Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten kommer att offentligt försvaras fredag den 1 februari, 2019 kl. 13:15 i hörsal Dragonen, Sprängkullsgatan 19 Göteborg.

ISBN: 978-91-984547-6-5 (tryckt version)

ISBN: 978-91-984547-7-2 (PDF)

Tillgänglig via <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/58103>

Louise Skoog, 2019. Political conflicts. Dissent and antagonism among political parties in local government. English text. Swedish summary. Doctoral dissertation. School of Public Administration, University of Gothenburg, Box 712, S-40530 Göteborg, Sweden. Printed by BrandFactory AB, Källered 2019. 204 pages. ISBN 978-91-984547-6-5 (Print) ISBN 978-91-984547-7-2 (PDF).

Abstract

Political conflicts arise out of, or are at least nourished by, divisions and tensions in society over how resources are distributed between citizens and social groups. In the parliamentary arena, these conflicts are manifested by political parties representing the interests of their voters. However, even though we may agree that political conflicts are essential for politics and democratic systems, there is no consensus on what political conflicts are, what causes conflict and what their effects are. This thesis develops a theoretical framework for political conflicts that is productive in relation to studying causes and effects of political conflicts in local governments. A multi-method approach is applied in the studies. The first three papers and a literature review that is included in the introductory text focus on causes of political conflicts. The literature review, as well as the first paper, centres on structural and organisational explanations. The literature review focuses on the research question: How did Swedish local governments develop into party politicised forms of government, with the first paper dealing with the research question: What are the causes of political conflicts identified by earlier scholars and what effects do they have on local politics? The second paper focuses solely on organisational explanations and examines the research question: How does the organisation of political systems affect how and where political conflicts are expressed? The third paper uses explanations at the individual level and deals with the research question: How do ideology, partisanship and trust affect how political conflicts are perceived? The fourth and final paper focuses on the effects of conflicts and answers the research question: To what extent does party political conflicts affect the influence of political leaders? The findings show that there are at least two forms of political conflict of relevance for parliamentary arenas – political dissent and antagonistic behaviour – and that it is important to distinguish between them. They have different characteristics, are caused by different factors and produce different effects. Manifestations of political dissent clarify differences between political actors and are thus of great importance to a democratic system. However, an overinflated amount of antagonistic and disrespectful behaviour, on the other hand, will create a problematic political working environment. When antagonism turns ugly, democratic institutions and the actors working within them may lose their legitimacy.

Key words

Democracy, political conflict, party conflict, political dissent, antagonistic behaviour, multi-methods, local government, local politics, political parties, causes of conflict, effects of conflicts