

WHAT LOCAL MEDIA TELL US ABOUT POST-COMMUNIST DEMOCRACY

The Impact of Local Media on Local Government Performance
and Participation in Local Elections

A Study of Hungary, Poland, Romania and Latvia

By

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Abstract

The dissertation examines the effects of local media in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Latvia. Transition literature often assumes that media exert a positive influence on the development and consolidation of new post-communist democracies. This impact is also assumed to carry down at the local level. The dissertation takes seriously the claim that a diverse, plural and independent local media foster good governance and citizens' engagement, and puts it to the test. The results debunk some commonly held ideas about the virtues of competition and the adverse influence of local government ownership. By the yardstick of citizens' inclusion in local policy making and involvement in local politics, local media have a modest, yet tangible positive influence on local democratic life in post-communist countries.

Chapter One features an analysis of the determinants of four features of local media scenes: how many media outlets provide information about local public affairs and to what extent, who sponsors them, and how many citizens attend local media. It finds that the presence of political parties and civic organizations bolsters the size of local media scenes, even in the absence of widespread ownership links. Chapter Two reveals that greater coverage of town hall politics in local media outlets is associated with local governments' decision making practices that are more open to citizens' input and participation in the four countries considered in the study. Chapter Three presents an aggregate analysis of local turnout in Poland and Hungary. It finds that a higher number of local outlets and larger audiences are linked to higher participation rates in Hungary. The chapter also highlights the significant role of political competition in local elections and the importance of the powers and autonomy devolved to local governments.

Chapters Four and Five pursue further the investigation of local media influence on local political participation with Polish electoral survey data. Findings indicate that local media use makes a limited contribution to political knowledge, but facilitates opinionation about the locality and the conduct of local public affairs. The impact of local media on engagement in local electoral activities is largely mediated by opinionation, especially positive opinion holding.

The results indicate that media effects vary according to the type of election and level of government. They suggest that local media effects owe much to their ability to develop and reinforce a sense of community and, to a lesser extent, their role as disseminators of information about salient local issues. Local media may well join the wider media chorus to generate a sense of excitement about national elections, but do not inspire equal enthusiasm for local electoral contests.

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Introduction

Local Media: A Neglected Aspect of Local Democracy in Post-Communist Countries

1. Opening Remarks

The media often receive only a passing remark or a footnote in works pertaining to the transition of post-communist societies in Central and Eastern Europe. For example, Dawisha (1996, 54) writes: “It can be generally assumed that the greater the independence and pluralism of the media ..., the greater will be the level of civic trust and civic involvement.” This connection is also assumed to operate at the local level, but there has been no attempt to validate this assumption, as the absence of literature demonstrates. It has become almost a truism to say that the plurality and independence of local media are important and have a positive effect on the performance of democratic local government. Given that the local level is often perceived as a “training ground” of democracy (de Tocqueville 1835/1990; Vetter 2002), the omission is even more striking. This study takes seriously the assumption that widely available, independent, diverse, and well-attended local media play a positive role in strengthening local democracy, and puts it to the test in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Latvia.

Little is known about local media in Central and Eastern Europe. In the United States, much of the research on local media and their effects is organized around local markets, well-defined areas about which detailed information on the number of outlets, circulation, number of employees, advertisement revenues, etc., is available to researchers. This state of affairs has yielded a body of works pertaining to a number of local media characteristics such as content quality, the consequences of competition

between outlets, and the impact of local media on political attitudes or behaviour (e.g. involvement in political activity and heterogeneity of opinions).

The profitability objectives behind much local media-related data collection in the American context – local media constitute important advertisement markets – are not equally relevant in Central Eastern European countries. While information tends to be more accessible in the case of broadcast media outlets due to licensing requirements, the large majority of local outlets belong to the print press. A cursory examination of local media quickly reveals large variations. One locality can count two or three media outlets while a similar, neighbouring municipality has none. Local papers range from the parish paper and the more or less regular leaflet issued by a local association of ecologists to large regional dailies. Local television or radio stations may reach the citizens of a few neighbourhoods or cover an entire county or region, as do regional branches of state broadcasters.

This wide variety of local media commands non-negligible attention from citizens. According to the Public Opinion Barometer surveys¹ carried out in Romania between 1995 and 1997, the proportion of Romanians who read local dailies hovered around 20% for those who read a local newspaper the day before and up to 36% for those who read one in the previous seven days. In Hungary, more than 30% of respondents who participated in a recent survey reported reading a regional daily every day or several times a week. Fewer than 15% said they listen to local radio or watch local television channels equally frequently.² The 1999 Polish General Social Survey showed that almost 54% of the 1,143 respondents read a regional newspaper at least

¹ Survey data available from the Romania Open Society Foundation at www.osf.ro/ro/bop/cercetare.html.

² Central European University Post-Election Survey 2002 (1,200 respondents), funded by the CEU Foundation.

once a week, while 27% stated they never read such newspapers.³ Finally, according to a survey conducted in Latvia in 2000, among nearly 1,000 respondents who were asked which newspaper they read most often and consider as their main source of information, almost 15% identified local and regional publications. When asked about their newspaper consumption, 23% said they regularly read a regional or local paper in Latvian, and 9% a regional or local paper in Russian. Only 6% reported listening to local radio programs.⁴ While these numbers come from single time-point observations (except in the case of Romania) and provide more information about print than broadcast outlets, they show that consumption of local media in Poland, Hungary, Romania and Latvia is far from negligible.

The main research question that motivates this dissertation is “What are the effects of local media on local democracy in Central and Eastern Europe?” To answer it, the dissertation draws on theories largely developed in other contexts - mainly the United States and other industrialized democracies – and, in most cases, with national media as their main object of interest. The research focuses on local outlets as carriers of local public affairs content and their impact on local political life, notably on local government performance and citizens’ political involvement. That is not to say that local media do not play a role outside the sphere of local politics. Elizabeth Fraser (1999, 126) suggests a useful illustration when she describes the media as operating in a series of parallel and overlapping “public arenas”. Only one of these arenas is “town hall” politics. Various media roles are explored in this study. Yet, the thrust of most of

³ The data revealed little difference between readership of regional and national papers. A little more than 51% of respondents read national papers at least once a week, while nearly 32% claimed never to read them. The data is available at www.iss.uw.edu.pl/osrodki/obs/pgss/en/index.html. The machine readable data file 1992-1999 of the Polish General Social Surveys is produced and distributed by the Institute for Social Studies, University of Warsaw (2002). Investigators are Bogdan Cichomski (principal investigator), Tomasz Jerzyński and Marcin Zielinski.

⁴ The survey was conducted in the framework of the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences’ project “Towards a Civic Society;” the data is available at www.bszi.lv.

the hypotheses developed in the dissertation, and the research called upon to shape them, relate to the realm of politics.

Similarly, the research addresses the issue of “Why the local media are the way they are?” from a political point of view, privileging linkages between local media and politics. Of course, many other factors, notably historical ones, contribute to shape the media and their influence. Some local outlets existed well before 1989; a number of county papers in Hungary and Poland even have roots in the pre-Second World War period. Others were set up during the first years of the transition or later. The focus of a doctoral dissertation is too narrow to consider all possible relevant explanations behind the state of local media. At the same time, the media can hardly be understood on their own, in isolation from their context. Consequently, the dissertation takes advantage of new survey data to first brush a general portrait of local media in four CEE countries. Then, it examines how local outlets are linked to other elements of the environments in which they operate - local institutions such as political parties and associations and the socio-economic profile of the localities they serve. Finally, the dissertation makes use of aggregate and individual level survey data to study the effects of local media on local political behaviour.

The purpose of the dissertation is to present a different view of local media. Strong ideas circulate in CEE about what local media are and what they do. According to an often-heard view, they merely are a propaganda tool used by local authorities. As a result, little investigation has been thought worthwhile. Just like the assumption that local media constitute an essential ingredient to the development of local democracy in post-communist societies has remained untested, the image of local media as a homogenous and rather unimportant lot needs to be broken to raise critical questions about the effects of these outlets. By the same token, the dissertation challenges the

dismissal of the local level as an unfruitful terrain of investigation in Central and Eastern European countries. While examining local media, the dissertation also addresses underexplored aspects of politics in the region such as the performance of local governments, participation in local elections, as well as some of the consequences of the decentralization reforms carried out since the early 1990s, notably on incentives for citizens to get involved in local public affairs.⁵ The objective is to grant “analytic importance” (Jacobs 1993, xii) to local media, without overemphasizing their impact. I argue that local media do make a difference, even if their contribution is not the main source of support for local democracy as gauged by the measures developed and used in this research.

The rest of this Introduction situates the topic of local media in the wider fields of scholarly inquiry linking political communication and behaviour. It provides a description of the data used throughout the dissertation, also addressing the scope and limits of the research project. A detailed review of the extant literature is presented in each chapter, which constitute complete and coherent readings for readers particularly interested in the specific topics taken up in the different parts of the dissertation.

2. Media and Comparative Research

Calls for comparative accounts about the media arose in the field of communication and media studies more than thirty years ago (Blumler and Gurevitch 1975). Owing partly to the lack of adequate data and the difficulties involved in comparing institutions deeply embedded in different contexts, much of the research on media systems has been “ethnocentric”, focusing on one country at the time, more often

⁵ Fiscal policy is probably the only domain that received significant attention among the consequences of the decentralization reforms in the 1990s (see for example World Bank (2004) on Hungary). However, the political aspects of fiscal decentralization is not tackled by these publications, which largely focus on

than not the United States (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Many recent comparative works compile country studies in one book (e.g. Ostergaard 1992; Gunther and Mughan 2000). A common approach has been to limit the scope to a group of democratic industrialized countries. However, more systematic comparisons have also been published (Norris 2000). The research design of this dissertation combines two strategies. Firstly, it adopts a “most similar systems” approach by selecting to focus on a group of four post-communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe. The media of the region share a similar history as all outlets were submitted to one form or another of control by political authorities until 1989, and until 1991 in Latvia (see Leftwich-Curry 1990 for a fascinating account of forms of censorship in Poland). Such a design allows for greater sensitivity to variations and similarities in local media characteristics and effects rooted in other, more immediate sources than history and the common communist background. Secondly, the dissertation also emphasizes variations by comparing the characteristics of media outlets in a large number of localities using statistical analysis, permitting cross-locality generalizations. Not only does this dual strategy extend the empirical foundations of the theories tested, but it also makes “clear to what extent observed relationships are tied to specific settings and contexts” (Schmitt-Beck 2004, 293).

The choice of countries reflects concerns for geographic representativeness and survey data availability. Hungary and Poland are in Central Europe, experiencing what have been considered among the most successful transitions in the region. Latvia, in the northern part of CEE, also became a member of the European Union (EU) along with Hungary and Poland in May 2004. However, it has experienced slower economic development, and differs from the three other countries included in the study by its size

transfers between national and local budgets, local government borrowing constraints, etc. (The political

and the depth of the ethno-linguistic fault line that divides its population. In the South-East, Romania's transition process trails behind that of the three other countries in many respects, including media freedom (Freedom House 2005).

A similar motive to include countries from all corners of CEE also animated the group of scholars and practitioners who sat together to devise a survey questionnaire destined to Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) in over 2,000 localities in four post-communist countries: Hungary, Poland, Romania and Latvia. The goal of the survey was to collect information about the main actors of local public life, their interactions and their contexts. One of the aspects covered by the survey is local media. This unique and original data set, collected in 2001, gave its impetus to the initial dissertation project. It also defines the notion of local media used in the analyses presented in the following chapters. Local media refer to outlets identified by local Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) as those that provide coverage of local public affairs in the municipality at least "from time to time" (see Appendix I for the exact question wording; more details on this and other survey data used in the study are provided in the Data section below). The data provides information about four general characteristics of local media scenes: the number of available local outlets, the extent to which they cover local public affairs, their ownership structure, as well as the size of their audience.

The structure of the survey data encourages comparisons between localities along the lines defined by these four attributes of local media. Arguably, a research scheme considering each local outlet separately, or grouping them according to another criterion than locality – such as ownership structure (political party or church outlets) or content (advertisement or entertainment) – could constitute a better, more refined

aspect of national-local transfers was raised in Russia (e.g. Treisman 1996).

tool of analysis than media scenes defined by location. However, two counter-arguments can be opposed to this view. The first is a technical objection founded on the poor state of knowledge about local media, which makes it impossible to identify all media owners with precision. Nor do we possess sufficiently detailed information about local media content. The inclusion of 2,000 localities in four different countries, and up to five local media outlets in each municipality, precludes the use of content analysis on any significant scale.

Second, and more importantly, local media scenes are made up of a *range* of outlets to which the citizens inhabiting a particular territorial area are exposed or have access to. Therefore, a “system” view of local media reflects the coexistence and interactions between outlets. Addressing research questions to local media as a whole thus becomes a highly relevant exercise.

3. Macro and Micro Perspectives

The study of media, including local media, has developed in two different fields: communication studies and political science. Communication and media studies largely focus on a macro perspective, considering media as systems. On the other hand, works conducted within the political science stream tend to investigate the effects of media use on individual citizens. The dissertation takes up theories developed in both fields and tests them using in turn macro and micro survey data, bringing together two strands of research that long ignored one another.

3.1 The Macro View: Media Systems and Communication Studies

The expression “media systems” emphasizes the media’s embeddedness in the larger social, political and economic environment (Siebert et al. 1956; Blumler and

Gurevitch 1975, 1995; Hallin and Mancini 2004, 8). Media scholars have been searching for a common vocabulary, an analytical framework to discuss “media-in-society” (Nerone 1995, 17). Much efforts to define media systems have concentrated around linkages between the media and political institutions, as is well illustrated by nomenclatures like the “authoritarian”, “libertarian”, “social responsibility”, and “communist” models of the press (Siebert et al. 1956), Altshull’s (1984) “market”, “Marxist”, and “advancing” models, or Picard’s (1985) classification of Western media organizations into “social democratic”, “social responsibility” and “libertarian” versions.⁶ In the same vein, the authors of the latest classification suggest the “liberal”, the “polarized pluralist”, and the “democratic corporatist” media models (Hallin and Mancini 2004). What is novel in late nomenclatures is that the use of the media systems concept no longer implies homogeneity (McQuail 1994, 133). Recent classifications exhibit greater concern for intra-country differences between media outlets. For example, discussions of media effects have paid closer attention to the specificities of quality and popular press content, differences between local and national outlets, and the varying characteristics of public and private broadcasting (e.g. Schmitt-Beck 1998; Browne 1999; Voltmer 2000). Earlier definitions of media systems also emphasized what Hallin and Mancini (2004, 8) call the “reflective” quality of media, that is a conception of media reflecting other elements of the socio-political structure like political parties or regimes. Nowadays, the media are increasingly considered as an institution, an exogenous factor capable of influence on politics and the society in general (Mazzoleni, Steward and Horsfield 2003; Mazzoleni and Schulz 2001; Robinson 2002).⁷

⁶ Another strand of comparative works specifically focuses on sub-aspects of media systems such as journalistic values and practices (e.g. Kocher 1986; Weaver and Wilhoit 1996).

⁷ Intra-media effects have also been investigated. For example, Soroka (2002) examines agenda-setting effects between press and broadcast media; Mazzoleni, Steward and Horsfield (2003) factor in the

This dissertation does not to propose a new nomenclature of media models. Rather, it draws from the many insights generated by this line of work. Voltmer (2000, 1-2) underscores that the structure of media systems, defined according to her by “hard” constraints such as laws on ownership control or content regulation and “softer” ones like journalistic values and practices, is one of the most important determinant of how much, and what kind of information the media disseminate. In turn, the quantity and quality of media messages shape media performance as evaluated by the yardstick of democratic norms.⁸ The first three chapters of the dissertation follow Voltmer’s lead, first describing the structure of local media, and linking it with other political and socio-economic elements of the local environment. It then turns to an evaluation of the influence of local media characteristics on local government performance and citizens’ political participation.

3.2 The Micro View: Media Effects and Political Science

The study of the effects of media on citizens’ political knowledge, attitudes and behaviour is not a new phenomenon⁹ but has recently witnessed a vigorous regain of interest. Since the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, a growing number of political scientists have endeavoured to link media use and content on the one hand, and evaluation and opinion about electoral candidates, knowledge about political issues, voting and other forms of involvement in public affairs, as well as vote choice on the

“tabloidization” of quality newspapers under the pressure of competition from tabloids, arguing that it partly accounts for the rise of populism.

⁸ The intricate relationship between media roles and normative expectations is considered in the next section.

⁹ The interest in information, included that made available by the media, has long-established roots in the study of voting behavior. Lazarsfeld and his collaborators (1944, 1954) found that better informed and more politically knowledgeable voters were more likely to participate in politics. However, the impact of campaign information on participation and vote choice was smaller and did not operate as they expected it to. Although they has assumed that, as consumers according to their preferences, voters would be very sensitive to information disseminated during the course of the presidential campaign, they found that

other. These developments have gone hand in hand with renewed interest in linkages between the above mentioned elements, notably between how much people know about politics and their involvement in political activities (see Delli Carpini 2004 for a review).

Lately, media scholars, especially those interested in local media, have come to draw from this new stream of studies and combined it with theories developed in the first half of the twentieth century by sociologists interested in the links between community ties and media use. Works like those by McLeod and his colleagues (1996, 1999, 2001) about the impact of (American) local media use on participation in local public affairs constitute good examples of the result of the greater circulation of theories between media studies and political science.

Adopting a micro perspective, the second part of the dissertation explores three aspects of local media influence on individual citizens: the levels of information about local public affair, opinionation, and participation in local elections. The goal is to shed further light on the different roles played by local media in fostering and sustaining local democracy.

4. Ethnocentrism and Normative Issues in the Study of Media

This dissertation builds on American research and, to a lesser extent, on work pertaining to the media of other industrialized democracies. Until recently, to speak of American studies in political communication was a near pleonasm (Neveu 1998, 445). Hallin and Mancini (2004, 3) point that the ethnocentrism of media studies has been encouraged by the strong normative flavour of much communication theory. The libertarian and social responsibility models proposed in the first and most famous

only a small minority of the voters changed their mind in the course of the campaign (Lazarsfeld,

classification of media models, the “*Four Theories of the Press*” published in 1956, and recuperated in later variants, go hand in hand with the ideal of the objective reporter and the media’s general role as watchdogs of governments. While this study is first and foremost dealing with what the media do rather than what they should be doing, it is hard to separate the two (as Sartori (1987, 7) pointed out with respect to the study democracy in general). Media freedom, responsiveness, diversity, informativeness – all are and will remain legitimate concerns to scholars (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 14). Via the theories that it draws on, the dissertation thus raises the normative question of quality standards that apply to local media, and assesses their performance in the light of such standards.

Unsurprisingly, media performance in the wake of regime change has been one of the first topics tackled by media scholars interested in the region. The rapid privatization of the press and growing ownership concentration, the generalized politicization of public broadcasters, the lack of professional standards among journalists, as well as the treatment of minorities in the media attracted widespread attention. To paraphrase Nerone (1995, 6), the press required significant autonomy to play its crucial role as a check on the new, sometimes fragile governments. Yet, it also had to work in the interest of the public – that is, towards democratization and the consolidation of nascent democratic practices, and against a potential return to authoritarianism or slippage toward populism.¹⁰ A number of authors who described the changes in the media and discussed their impact voiced doubts about the beneficial nature of media influence on young post-communist democracies, sometimes picturing the newly acquired media freedom like a risky bet (e.g. Kovacs and Whiting 1995, 118;

Berelson, Gaudet 1944: xi).

¹⁰ In the post-war era, freedom of the press in Western democracies was seen as a safeguard against fascism, yet could not be left so free as to leave any owner express anything he or she wanted, “a luxury

O'Neil 1997).¹¹ When democracy is fragile as is the case during transition periods, “there tend to be serious disputes over whether media should emphasize their critical role as watchdogs, on the one hand, or their constructive role in development and strengthening the new government’s ability to rule effectively, on the other” (Kuper and Kuper 2001, 355).

Comparatively, little research has been done in the way of individual media effects (with a few exceptions, e.g. Popescu and Toka 2002 on the impact of exposure to public television during the Hungarian electoral campaigns of 1994 and 1998). As the initial interest for “transition media” is waning, and with it the number of descriptive accounts published every year, a new space is opening for the integration of the study of CEE media into the wider analytical frameworks developed in other settings, offering the possibility to enrich these theories with new results.

Of course, models and theories developed in different contexts, more frequently pertaining to national than local media outlets, cannot perfectly explain the determinants and effects of CEE local media. However, as discussed earlier, issues of media performance are certainly equally relevant in the fluctuating situations that characterize post-communist democracies than in older - and not always so tranquil - democracies. Furthermore, the changes that affected the media in CEE bear some resemblance to events that took place elsewhere not so long ago. For example, private television, which entered in CEE markets in the mid-1990s, did not break the monopoly held by some Western European public televisions until the 1980s. The rapid process of privatization of the press has resulted in levels of media ownership concentration

that neoliberal societies can no longer afford their presses. [...] The press had responsibilities; the public had rights.” (Nerone 1995, 6).

¹¹ These doubts were certainly not shared by all. See for example Millard (1998) for a positive account of the influence of the Polish press.

similar to those displayed by media systems in other countries in Europe and North America.

In addition, “borrowed” theories have the potential to yield increasing returns in a variety of contexts as global media models are clearly gaining influence, including on media development in CEE. An analysis of the discourse of young Hungarian journalists in the late 1990s about their profession (Gosselin 1998) illustrates how values promoted by the Anglo-American model of journalism have a wide reaching impact. The homogenization of journalists’ professional discourse (see de Albuquerque 2005 for a review), the commercialization of media content (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 12; Papathanassopoulos 2001; Machin and Papatheoderou 2002; Syvertsen 2003), and the “Americanization” of largely mass mediated electoral campaigns (Blumler and Gurevitch 2000; Hallin and Mancini 2004b; Semetko et al. 1991; Isotalus 2001; Nord 2001; Schulz, Zeh and Quiring 2005) definitely place media systems on a converging trend.

5. Media for Democracy: What Role?

The long debate about the role of media raises questions that “touch upon the degree of independence of the media from societal and political mainstreams” (Mazzoleni, Stewart and Horsfield 2003, 7). This view was particularly clearly expressed by liberal theorists from John Milton to John Stuart Mill. However, by the nineteenth century, liberal theory saw a different current take root, one that promoted press freedom as a means to hold political leaders accountable. This idea translated in to the “watchdog” and “fourth estate” role of the media that we know today (Splichal 2002, 26).

Another aspect of media's democratic role lies with the opening of a space for public deliberation to which all citizens have access, and in which the diversity of societies may express itself (Dahlgren and Sparks 1995). This has placed the notions of access and diversity at the core of media responsibilities, to be achieved either by market competition or aided by government. Consequently, independence and access are probably the most frequent benchmarks by which the democratic character of media is measured (e.g. Norris 2004, 118).

Splichal (2002, 27-32) discusses how, from the idea of media responsibilities, social sciences came to "impose" functions on the media. The notion of media functions was proposed in 1948 by Harold Lasswell, who differentiated three universal roles of communication: the surveillance of the environment, the correlation of the parts of the society, and the transmission of social heritage. Splichal points out that the use of the word "function" immediately suggests that of "dysfunction", clearly revealing the socially constructed nature of the goals assigned to the media. This is a helpful reminder of the normative character of any discussion about media roles and effects. However, we need not relinquish the functionalist vocabulary once that we have recognized that it "tacitly assumes a set of duties [to the media] without attempting to justify their universal validity" (Splichal 2002, 29). Because of the generalized - explicit or implicit - normative concern for media performance, nearly all media theories can be formulated in functionalist language (McQuail 1994, 78). In his seminal handbook, McQuail (1994, 78-9) lists five main media functions: informing; interpreting facts and events; expressing or fostering common values and cultures; entertaining; and mobilizing. These functions have been framed alternatively from the point of view of the society and of the individual. Some studies of media functions are specifically concerned with local media (Le Bohec 2000; Ewart 2000; Jeffres, Cuttieta,

Lee and Sekerka 1999; Kosicki, Becker and Fredin 1994; Olien, Tichenor and Donohue 1970). This dissertation assesses how these functions can help us to understand local media effects in CEE, focusing more particularly on information, mobilization, and value transmission in building a sense of community.

Nowadays, the mass media, notably television, have become the main source of information about politics (Ansolabehere, Behr and Iyengar 1993). Besides word of mouth, most effective in very small localities, local media constitute the main if not the only source of information about local events, including candidates and issues at stake in local elections. As a result, citizens who attend local media are likely to know more about local politics and hold an opinion about the way their locality is run. The transmission of information is probably the most commonly expected function of the media. Cognitive mobilization (i.e. awareness, knowledge, opinionation), the by-products of the information function, may result from media consumption. Not entirely distinguishable from this informational role, the media can play interpreting and persuasion functions. This type of influence puts forward more explicitly the political aspect of local media content. Media content provides facts as well as opinions - at least in most cases. The simple selection of contrasting facts and views, either within the same outlet or by addition when different outlets presents various viewpoints, may help local media consumers to make up their minds on how to cast a ballot and get involved in local public life.

Lemert (1984, 1992) claims that the media provide “mobilization information”, that is content that goes beyond information and opinions to also help its consumers to make sense of events in the context of the larger community, as well as inform as to where and how to participate. A more general mobilization role of the role of media has

been exposed by Hansen and Rosenstone (1993), who underline the mobilizing role of media used by political parties and elites, notably during electoral campaigns.

Local media have also been considered to act as builders of a form of expression of a local identity. This type of effects registers within McQuail's role of expressing common values and cultures. It recalls the construction of reality resulting from media images and discourse, a role frequently echoed in cultural studies (Hall 1996; Carey 1988). A conceptualization of media wielding the power to promote or prime certain values, ideas, or issues is highly visible in works focusing on issues of gender, sub- or minority cultures, and the preservation of the existing social order via media content (McQuail 1994, 96, 76).¹²

One example of a political approach to the identity building role of local outlets can be found in the work of Olien, Tichenor and Donohue (1970). For these authors, a key function of local media is to promote or dampen conflicts within communities. The focus of the Chicago School on communities ties and other macro features of community life have later been recuperated in the idea of social capital developed by Putnam, and reappeared into political communication studies via this concept (Shah, McLeod and Yoon 2001).

6. The Data

A quantitative approach is well-suited to the large number of units of observation involved in this comparative analysis. The present section provides more details about the Local Government Survey (LGS) that the first three chapters of the dissertation rely on to investigate the determinants of local media attributes and their impact on the performance of local governments and participation rates in local

elections. It also presents the individual survey data featuring in the second part of the dissertation to analyze the impact of media on citizens' involvement in local politics.

6.1 Aggregate Survey Data

The Local Government Survey data was gathered in the framework of the Indicators of Local Democratic Governance Project (ILGDP) sponsored by the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI) of Budapest, as well as a group of organizations composed of the Open Society Institute (a sponsor of LGI), the World Bank Institute, the OECD, USAID, and the Council of Europe. In-depth interviews were conducted with chief administrative officers (CAOs) in over 2,000 municipalities (280 in Latvia, 557 in Romania, 580 in Poland, and 646 in Hungary). The final sample size includes 2,023 valid cases. Among other questions pertaining to local political parties, factions, civic organizations, and local government staff, budget and decision making process, CAOs were asked 15 questions specifically pertaining to local media. Appendix I can be consulted for the wording of questions about local media included in the LGS questionnaire. The complete questionnaire is available at the Tocqueville Research Center website, the organization in charge of generating and collecting the data. The Center carried out the interviews in Hungary, and supervised the field work conducted by local polling firms in the three other countries. The author of this dissertation collaborated to the drafting of the media-related questions included in the questionnaire.

Respondents were requested to identify the number of local media outlets that cover local public affairs, and to indicate, for up to five of them, whether they cover four different aspects of public debates: (a) decisions and (b) proposals discussed by the

¹² Such a constructionist view has also been recently emphasized in a very different manner by the notion

local assembly, (c) arguments and counterarguments raised during local policy debates, as well as (d) interviews with local authorities' leaders. CAOs also indicated if the outlets were local government- or privately-owned and, finally, estimated the proportion of citizens that attend to each local media outlet.

Due to his or her central position in the local government, a CAO is well-informed about a wide range of aspects of the municipality and its government. As a non-elected member closely associated with the running of day-to-day affairs, the CAOs is also likely to provide more impartial information than mayors or councilors. (It has to be noted that in Poland, mayors were sometimes interviewed instead of CAOs). As for any survey, the data volunteered by respondents remains imperfect. For example, a number of CAOs did not answer the question about the identity of the sponsors or owners of local outlets. We can think of a number of reasons to explain this state of affairs. For example, the CAO of a small locality might know better about the ownership of the one or two local outlets, or offer a more accurate estimate of the local paper's readership than his or her counterpart in a larger city. On the other hand, the CAO of a small municipality who devotes limited time to local administration because of low financial compensation might know less about local media than a CAO holding a full-time position in a big city. Concerns about the reliability of the data provided by CAOs are relevant. However, potential sources of bias remain difficult, if not impossible to identify with any degree of certainty. One of the motivations for conducting the survey was the lack of information about local public life. For most of the aspects surveyed, the media among them, there are no independent sources against which the data collected can be systematically verified. As in many situations involving little explored topics, the data is taken "as is." When other aspects than media are

of framing (see Scheufele 1999).

considered and more reliable data exists for all the countries involved - such as official data from national statistical offices - the analyses makes use of the latter.

Similarly, some questions are affected by missing answers more than others. The already mentioned ownership question is a case in point. Its' response rate is significantly lower than that for the query about the number of available outlets. Again, there is little basis on which to decide how to replace the missing values of the affected variables. Consequently, only localities for which there are valid answers for the relevant media questions are retained in the analyses.

Finally, the sampling method used by the Local Government Survey's designers merits to be described at some length. The sample of localities in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Latvia was composed as to, when applying appropriate weights, represent either all the municipalities of a country in terms of their population size, or to provide a representative picture of where the average citizen lives. In the first case, each municipality had to have an equal chance of figuring in the sample. In the second case, the probability of a municipality being selected should have depended on the size of its population. The selected sampling formula reflects the compromise made between these two goals. The strata – defined by population size – that cities were selected from contained at least one percent of all localities in each country, and at least a few percents of the population of the given country. Approximately 14 strata were thus distinguished in each country. The final formula determined how many cities from each level were to be included; the probability of a locality ending up in the sample increased monotonically with its size. The last step involved the random selection of the appropriate number of municipalities from each stratum in each country using the random number generator of the SPSS software. Most municipalities with a population larger than 25,000 inhabitants were retained in the Hungarian, Polish and Romanian

samples. In Latvia, all cities counting more than 3,500 dwellers were included.¹³ Finally, the polling companies were not allowed to replace a municipality where they could not obtain an interview with another locality. Rather, they were provided with a list of approximately 700 localities in each country (280 in Latvia) for which completed interviews were to be paid for.¹⁴

6.2 Individual Survey Data

The second part of the dissertation turns to the examination of media effects on individual citizens. It relies on four surveys carried out by two major polling companies in Poland: Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (CBOS) and Ośrodek Badania Opinii Publicznej (OBOP) (the latter joined the international group Taylor Nelson Sofres in 1998). The surveys were conducted shortly before or after the local elections held in Poland in 1994, 1998, and 2000. The surveys were selected because they included a number of questions about local electoral participation and other aspects of local politics. Such surveys could be found only in Poland. The territorial reforms debated throughout the 1990s, combined with the timing of local elections - before rather than after the general elections - probably explain why topics of local politics have been of concern to pollsters and survey sponsors in that country. While they were not specifically designed to gauge media effects, the four data sets allow to test a number of propositions related to the role(s) and impact of local media.

¹³ This is a summary of a more detailed description of sampling methodology that can be found on the Tocqueville Research Center's website.

¹⁴ This dissertation is largely deductive in its approach, starting from the results of previous studies and theories of media effects and testing them with the CAOs and individual survey data. However, a more inductive method is privileged in Chapter Two, which deals with local media and local government performance. External and comparable measures of performance, such as the accumulated deficit measure used in Hagen's and Vabo's (2005) evaluation of Norwegian local governments, are simply not available for thousands of CEE localities. Therefore, the chapter makes use of a measure constructed with LGS data.

7. Plan of the Dissertation

Why can one find a plural and lively local press and many popular local radio stations in one town while 30 kilometers further, another town has virtually no local media at all? If we take seriously the assumption that politically well-informed citizens contribute to the well being of democracy, the question is far from trivial. The aim of the first chapter is to describe the local media scene in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Latvia, and explore whether political parties, a dense civil society, social cleavages and local government resources contribute to the development of a plural and rich political information environment in these four post-communist societies.

After a review of the concept of media systems and the studies that used it, the empirical part of the chapter describes the four characteristics of local media: how many outlets are available to citizens, who owns or sponsors them, the extent to which they cover local public affairs, and how many people expose themselves to local outlets. Then, it focuses on potential patterns connecting these features. Finally, the chapter tests a number of hypotheses pertaining to the links between these four characteristics of local media outlets and 1) political divides, 2) social and geographic cleavages, and 3) local government resources. Findings indicate that the presence of political parties and civic organizations is clearly associated with a larger local media scene. Cleavages appear to play little role in shaping local media scenes, while the financial capacity of local governments and citizens matters only in Poland and Hungary.

Chapters Two and Three propose to examine local media effects at the aggregate level. What impact do local media have on the workings of politics in local communities? The second chapter investigates the influence of local media on local government performance. The main research question is: “Do local media influence the

manner in which local office holders conduct the affairs of the community?” Again, the four key aspects of local media systems are considered: the number of media outlets present in the locality, the diversity of the ownership structure, the extent to which media cover local political affairs and the size of their audience. The chapter is divided into two sub-sections dealing respectively with democratic performance, that is the extent to which local authorities are open to citizens’ input in the decision-making process, and efficiency. This second aspect of performance concerns the capacity of local authorities to respect legal deadlines for budgeting, as well as to take daily decisions in a cohesive and timely manner. Findings show that the amount of public affairs coverage, the number of outlets and the diversity of the ownership structure are positively associated with democratic performance. Such media features, however, have virtually no impact on how quickly and smoothly local authorities reach decisions.

This chapter also examines the hypothesis that the impact of the media on democratic performance may be enhanced by certain characteristics of the local civil society. In Hungary and Romania, the coverage quality and the number of local media outlets are found to exercise a greater influence on the performance of local governments in localities counting more civic organizations and where citizens are more involved in public life.

Chapter Three considers the effects of local media on participation in local elections. It proposes a comprehensive model of local turnout which evaluates the impact of three groups of factors likely to influence individuals’ decision to participate in local elections: the information available to citizens, gauged by the attributes of local media and density of the network of local associations; party competition, measured by the number of contenders and closeness of results; and the influence of local authorities’ social assistance spending, shaping the stakes of local elections notably for

disadvantaged segments of the population. Using data pertaining to local elections in Hungary and Poland, the chapter compares the instrumental and expressive approaches of voting and tests their implications for the role of local media. Findings point to a very limited impact of local media on turnout, which is difficult to link with one or more of the three functions with certainty given the aggregate nature of the data. Both expressive and instrumental voters may be modestly influenced by local media in casting a ballot in local elections. What emerges more clearly from Chapter Three is that the “calculus of voting” explanation promoted by rational choice theory receives next to no support when models are adequately specified. Yet, the stakes of local elections, measured by how much local governments spend on poverty alleviation, appear to weigh in people’s decision to participate. Local politics also matters for turnout: more candidates in races more closely contested tend to draw more citizens to polling stations.

The second and third chapters use city-level data to explore the connection between local media and the political behaviour of local authorities’ representatives and citizens. Chapters Four and Five test the three main mechanisms through which media influence might be felt on participation with individual electoral survey data gathered in Poland before and after the local elections of 1994, 1998 and 2002. More precisely, the fourth chapter explores whether local media use is associated with knowledge about politics, and political participation in local elections. The analysis indicates that local media registers a limited but positive impact on political knowledge, but none on participation. Furthermore, the influence of media is not mediated by knowledge as the latter is not related to engagement in local electoral politics.

Local media might influence a “close cousin” of knowledge, opinionation, or the fact of holding an opinion about the locality one lives in and the way it is managed

by local representatives. Taking the analysis begun in Chapter Four one step further, the last chapter concentrates on the links between local media use, opinionation, and participation. Drawing notably on insights from political psychology, the fifth chapter examines whether users of local media are more likely to harbour an opinion about their locality than other citizens, and how media use may color their opinion in a positive or negative fashion. Local media use turns out to be associated with both opinionation and with holding positive opinion. The latter also constitute positive factors in casting a ballot in local elections. However, the least favourably inclined toward their locality are more likely to actively involve themselves in the campaign. As for knowledge in the previous chapter, local media use is not directly linked to participation.

Chapters Four and Five well illustrate how different types of media have a different impact on various aspects of political participation. They also adduce further evidence to support the interpretation given to the results of previous chapters. Out of the three suggested mechanisms of local media influence, the informational and the community building roles appear to contribute most to explain the effects of local media outlets observed in this study.

Chapter One

Assessing and Explaining Features of Local Media Systems in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Latvia

1. Introduction

The 1990s witnessed in-depth economic, social and political reforms in Central and Eastern Europe. The national media attracted a significant amount of attention during this process, assumed to have a major impact on structural changes and public sentiment about them. Observers of national outlets focused on a variety of issues, including the privatization of the press and broadcast media, changes in practices and values of journalists and, perhaps most frequently, the politicization of the media and situations in which journalists acted as political appointees or were treated as such by ruling governments (as accounts of the “media war” that raged in Hungarian public media sphere until 1996 illustrate).

The main obstacles to media plurality and independence have been mapped out by a number of authors, including those focusing on post-communist media (e.g., Bajomi-Lazar 1999, 2001, 2002; Galik 1996; Giorgi 1995; Goban-Klasz 1994; Gosselin 2003; Gross 1996, 2002; Jakubowicz 1996; Kovats and Whiting 1995; Millard 1998; O’Neil 1997; Sparks 1998; Splichal 1994, 2004; Sukosd 1997-98). They have examined factors such as monopoly situations, government control, the grip of commercial interests, the legal framework and, though less often mentioned, weak political party competition.

However, scant attention was given to local media and their role in the development and strengthening of local democracy. Specific information on local

media is much harder to obtain; scandals about local media rarely make headlines.¹⁵ However, recent reports about the increasing concentration of ownership and political manipulation of local outlets in certain regions (see Preoteasa 2003 and SAR 2003 for examples from Romania) have raised concerns that a significant number of citizens may not have access to adequate information about local public affairs. These developments further underscore the gap in our knowledge about the state of local media in Central and Eastern Europe.

Little is known about how accessible local media outlets are, who sponsors them, what kind of content they propose, and how large a proportion of the population they reach. We also do not know to what extent local media systems resemble one another in post-communist societies. Certainly different experiences of communist rule¹⁶ and uneven media traditions - going back to the pre-war period in some countries but not in others – need to be acknowledged. Variations in the economic and political situation that characterized the first years of the transition have facilitated or inhibited to a different degree the penetration of foreign ownership and the prominence of domestic political interests in local media markets. However, we yet have to explore to extent of these differences between local media systems.

This chapter takes a first step towards filling the knowledge gap about local media by making use of original survey data based on interviews with chief executive administrators (CAOs) in over 2,000 localities in Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Romania. CAOs provided information about local media and a number of aspects of local environments including party politics, civic associations, and local government budget. The aim of the chapter is two-fold; firstly, it maps out the contours of local

¹⁵ Descriptions of the privatization of the Hungarian press do mention the speedy acquisition of regional dailies by foreign media conglomerates (e.g. Bajomi-Lazar 2003).

media scenes in the four countries with a description of four media features: the number of local media outlets available; the extent to which they cover local public affairs; the balance between public and private ownership; and how many citizens attend to local media. Secondly, the chapter investigates the determinants of local media systems. It suggests and compares social, political, and economic explanations behind the four attributes of local media in each country, with a particular emphasis on the number of outlets as perhaps the most visible and influential characteristic of local media. The goal of the analysis is not to fully explain media presence, coverage, ownership structure or audience size, nor to claim that the factors considered in the analysis are the only ones influencing the shape of local media scenes in Central and Eastern Europe. The media are too intricately related to many aspects of the societies in which they are nested to frame their relationship with environmental factors in simple causal terms. Yet, differences in local outlet availability between countries and localities are puzzling, and deserve to be explored in their own right. Equally importantly, unearthing links between local media and local environments can only contribute to a better understanding of local media impact on citizens, the functioning of local authorities and, more generally, the state of local democracy in post-communist societies.

The first part of the chapter develops the discussion initiated in the Introduction about the concept media systems as a useful framework for the study of relationships between the media and various aspects of the societies they are embedded in, including media effects on policy makers and citizens. Then, it proposes a number of hypotheses to investigate potential linkages between local government resources, political divides, and a number of cleavages in the local society on one side, and the attributes of local

¹⁶ See Kitschelt et al. (1999) for a description of such differences between Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and

media outlets in Hungary, Poland, Latvia and Romania on the other side. The fourth section first maps out the characteristics of local media scenes with Local Government Survey data. It follows with the outcome of the analysis of their political, social and economic determinants. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the results.

2. Local Media and Their Environment

A handful of studies have studied media and their effects from the angle of media systems. Earlier uses of the concept associated media systems with a Cold War, dichotomized vision of the world (see notably Siebert et al. 1956 and Schramm 1964), probably contributing to temper scholarly enthusiasm in later years. Yet, the framework provided useful insights for the comparative study of media, as the current renewal of interest attests (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Esser and Pfetsch 2004). Since its inception, the idea of media systems has focused on the relationship between the media and politics. In the *Four Theories of the Press*, Siebert and his colleagues focused on liberal democracies and communist regimes and the kind of media associated with them. Features such as freedom, ownership structure, and the local nature of media content constituted the variables to be explained (Schramm 1964). In his study, Seymour-Ure (1974) concentrated more narrowly on loyalty and ideological linkages between political parties and the media, defining various degrees of “party-press parallelism.”

Other researchers have studied the media in a country comparative framework without necessarily using the expression of media systems. Nonetheless, their approaches also considered the media as “a whole.” They have looked for correlations between media access and communication measures such as the number of newspapers and their circulation, the number of households with radio, television sets, and

the Czech Republic. Also, some countries witnessed greater freedom of expression and ownership in the

telephones on the one hand, and economic and political development on the other (Lerner 1958; Pye 1963). These studies have to be set in the context of the development of modernization theory in the 1960s. One stream of the theory considers media as agents of change that promote economic development and the establishment of democratic institutions through the dissemination of information and education (see Hadenius 1992 for an overview of modernization theory and its implications for media effects). These theories and findings find an echo in recent studies linking media availability and measures of good governance (e.g. Djankov et al. 2001), notably in developing countries.

Another group of researchers associated with the Chicago school of sociology examined the media and the characteristics of the society they are embedded in: socio-economic divisions and the presence of minorities at the aggregate level, and community attachment, length of residence, or having children where individual citizens are concerned. Such indicators have been associated with the presence and success of local media in studies spanning sixty years. A landmark study is that of Janowitz (1952 [1967]), in which he argues that the popularity of local media in Chicago contradicts the claim that urbanization seriously undermines community life and citizens' interest in it. This last strand of media research, centered on the American context, echoed the neglect of the media-politics nexus also apparent in political science research from the 1960s onward.

Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch (1975) were the first to call for a return to the comparative research of media systems from a political perspective, some 15 years before political communication scholars began to engage in this direction. They proposed a modified definition of media systems. According to the two authors, media

years leading to 1989; Poland and Hungary are cases in point.

systems vary along four key dimensions: (1) the degree of state control over the media (including control over appointment of media personnel, media finance and content); (2) the degree of media partisanship, which Blumler and Gurevitch suggest to measure by the strength of the organizational connections of media with political parties, the stability and intensity of editorial commitments, as well as the presence or absence of legal restraints on the rights of the media to support political parties; (3) the degree of media-political elite integration, that is the extent to which members of media and political elites share the same social and cultural background, the informal relationships between the two group, as well as the more obvious overlap in personnel; finally (4), the nature of the legitimizing creed of media institutions, referring to the media role journalists and editors adhere to, whether it expects media personnel to pay allegiance to party-determined ideology or, on the contrary, require media professionals to behave as if they were above the political battle (1975, 172-177; 1994, 29-31). Hallin and Mancini (2004, esp. chap. 2) suggest a wider but similar analytical grid centered around 1) market structures, notably newspaper readership; 2) political parallelism, or the political orientation of news content and governance of broadcast media; 3) professionalization, focusing among other themes on the specificity of journalistic education, autonomy, and creed; and finally, 4) the role of the state in broadcasting and, more generally, in regulating hate speech, libel, professional secrecy, concentration of ownership, access to government information, etc.

These two classification schemes suggest that media systems are largely shaped by political and socio-economic forces of the societies in which they are nested. Other recent examples of studies comparing media systems' structures, content, as well as journalists' routines and values, also devote significant attention to the links between media and party politics, while recognizing the impact of historical and environmental

factors that shape the media as well as their effects on citizens (e.g. Kocher 1986; Schmitt-Beck 1998; Voltmer 2000; Browne 1999).

These theories and findings suggest that the four characteristics for which survey data is available provide a solid basis to compare local media systems and to assess their links with other aspects of their local environments. The number of local outlets and audience size gauge the state of local market structure. Sponsorship or ownership inform not only about the market structure of local media scenes but also sheds light on political parallelism, as the prominent role played by local authorities reveals (see Results section below). The legal aspect of media systems is not covered in this study.¹⁷ The eventual partisan character of local news disclosed by content analysis also lies outside its scope. The issue of professionalization, including journalistic creed and roles, is largely taken to be constant given the similar communist and transitional background of current media practices in the four countries.

3. Hypotheses

This section outlines a number of hypotheses pertaining to linkages between local environment's characteristics and the attributes of local media in Hungary, Poland, Latvia and Romania. It focuses on factors related to political organization, social cleavages, and local government resources. The number of outlets is a defining feature of local media scenes that is submitted to the influence of the economic, social and geographical make-up of local environments. As a structural determinant of the diversity of view points available to citizens, media availability can be considered as a measure of media systems performance (Voltmer 2000). The number of outlets is also

¹⁷ Many of the local outlets concerned in this study – but certainly not all, e.g. local branches of public broadcasters - are very small and their sheer number defies any serious monitoring of their formal or informal structures. In addition, laws themselves have been in a state of flux in many countries for a period of time.

likely to influence other features of local media; for example, the diversity of the ownership structure is constrained, by definition, by the number of media present on the local scene. However, the environmental factors examined here may also impact on ownership structure, as well as the extent to which local media cover local public affairs and the size of their audience. Consequently, the hypotheses and discussion below largely focus on the determinants of the number of local media even if the statistical analysis also includes the three other aspects of local media. For the sake of brevity, the hypotheses are presented along with short descriptions of variable operationalization. Readers can refer to Appendix III for a detailed description of the measures used in the analysis.

3.1 Political Parties and Associations

In the aftermath of 1989, the new and unstable (as reflected by high electoral volatility) party systems had a limited following in Central and Eastern Europe, some parties even avoiding the very label of political party (Toka 1997). While some civic and labor movements played an important role throughout the transition period, notably in Czechoslovakia and Poland, the general weakness of civil society prevented it to act as a significant channel for grass-root involvement in public debates and decisions (Howard 2003). Yet, the (re)emergence of political and civic forces¹⁸, even if weak, might have been instrumental in the setting up or use of media outlets to air divergent views. In the case of parties and would-be political parties, stakes must have been particularly high in the early days, when large numbers of voters were politically unattached. More generally, political parties also have an interest in targeting their mobilization message to local voters.

¹⁸ Accounts of civil society at the turn of the 1990s also point to an important element of continuity as communist organizations took new names, or former elites set up NGOs to sever links with the former regime – e.g. Rychard 1998; Mischlivetz and Jensen 1998).

NGOs need not be politically oriented to contribute to the dissemination of local political information and to the articulation and aggregation of local interests. Social organizations play a role in forming citizens to tolerate their peers, interact and work with them socially as well as politically. They confer a sense of trust, confidence, and efficacy that may translate into the political sphere.¹⁹ Since Putnam's (1993, 1995) work, much attention has been devoted to private civic associations and group membership and their positive effects on democratic practices, including on citizens' political engagement in CEE countries (Letki 2003; Duch 1998). I therefore expect localities in which political parties and NGOs are established to witness a larger media scene. The variables used to test the hypothesis are the number of political parties with a branch in the locality and the number of civic organizations active in the municipality. The survey data does not reveal any information about the type or goals of organizations; the figures provided by CAOs include both groups with and without an overt political mission.

Hypothesis 1.1: A larger number of political parties and active NGOs is expected to be associated with a greater number of local media outlets.

3.2 Social Cleavages

On the other hand, local parties and civic organizations may prove too weak to channel all local cleavages. Political parties and NGOs in CEE have low membership (Howard-Morje 2003) and in many smaller communities, non-party candidates and representatives dominate local politics (Swianiewicz 2002). Yet, the likelihood of dissent in divided societies makes it more probable that citizens will express their views

¹⁹ See the review in Bowler, Donovan and Hanneman 2003, who also sound a cautionary note about the generalization of these effects to all types of organizations. For example, while Verba et al. (1995) find that church membership has a positive impact on engagement in the United States, Bowler and his colleagues find no such effect in the European context. However, the latter authors find that belonging to art and charity groups is associated with greater political involvement.

in and seek different outlets.²⁰ Social divides may also be reflected in a more segmented advertisement market for profit-oriented media, notably in larger cities. Therefore, salient cleavages rooted in income, geographic, and ethnic disparities may be associated with the number of available local media. Oliver (1999) makes a similar argument in a study in which he finds that the rate of local political participation is higher in American suburban cities characterized by larger economic diversity – that is, where scarce resources are allocated among a larger number of groups disagreeing over the means and goals of distribution.

Works related to the Chicago school of sociology offer a competing claim with respect to linkages between media and various local divides. Their findings systematically associate local media presence and popularity with homogeneity and stronger community ties²¹. According to this view, local media are expected to flourish in places where social, economic and other cleavages are weak or non-existent. Smaller communities, low amalgamation, and large proportions of people living and working in the same neighborhood or city may thus reflect a generalized sense of community favorable to the development of local media.

The Local Government Survey data provides information about city size, the number of commuters, and the number of settlements included in the municipality. It also includes indicators pertaining to a number of cleavages: income; religious beliefs; political views; parts of locality; urban and rural character; ethnic origins of the inhabitants, and long-time residents versus new comers. The cleavage questions were formulated as to obtain information about the tensions caused by the divides rather than

²⁰ Dahl and Tufte (1973) similarly hypothesize that larger cities will be the siege of more groups conflicts as dissent is likely to appear and to be backed by a large number of citizens.

²¹ See Katz (2001, 270) for a review of studies related to the “Chicago interest in media as agents of national and communal integration” - among others, Stamm and Fortini-Campbell (1983); Jeffres, Dobos and Jae-won Lee (1988); Emig (1995); and McLeod et al. (1996).

about the divides themselves.²² While this formulation may render the measure less precise in certain cases (e.g. ethnic cleavage) and may occult “non-problematic” divides within communities, it is useful to highlight the most salient cleavages.

Hypothesis 1.2: The presence of salient divides, notably when left untapped by parties or civic organizations, should be linked to larger media scene. However, a different view expects media to emerge and maintain themselves in especially homogeneous and tightly knit communities.

3.3 Local Government Resources

The state of the local economy impacts on both potential sponsors of local media and their audience. Richer local governments have the means to invest in a local outlet if they wish to do so, and wealthier citizens have the resources (time, interest, and financial capacity) to consume more media. The wealth of local communities is captured by CAOs’ estimate of the percentage of unemployed people in the local population.²³ Unemployment varies widely across cities, as well as across countries. It is significantly higher in the Romanian sample, reaching an average of nearly 30%, compared to an average of 8% in the three other countries.²⁴ The largest disparities between same-country localities can be observed in Hungary and Latvia. Since local government revenues are based to various extents on the share of personal income tax paid by local inhabitants, unemployment is likely to directly impact local governments’ capacity to support eventual local media outlets.

²² The exact wording of the question was the following: “To what extent to the following differences cause social tensions between people in your community? Please answer with the help of the 7-point scale where 1 refers to very little tension and 7, very high tension. a) Differences in income; b) differences in religious beliefs or affiliation; c) differences in political views; d) differences between parts of the municipality; e) differences in ethnic (or racial) origins; f) differences between parts of the municipality; g) differences between people who always lived here and those who moved here only recently.”

²³ Official statistics on unemployment were not available at the local level for all countries and for the relevant years (2000 or 2001). That is why the analysis relies on unemployment rates reported by CAOs.

²⁴ The OECD reports unemployment rates of 6.5% for Hungary, 16.1% for Poland, 8.4% for Latvia, and 11.2% in Romania in 2000. The differences with the rates reported by CAOs, most notable in Poland and in Romania, may be the result of sampling.

Hypothesis 1.3: Lower unemployment figures are expected to be associated with a larger media scene.

4. Results

Before reporting the results of the tests of the hypotheses pertaining to the determinants of local media, a description of the survey data is necessary to provide us with a general picture of local media systems.

4.1 Mapping Out Size, Coverage, Ownership and Audience Size of Local Media

The portrait of local media systems in the four countries in terms of size, coverage of local politics, sponsorship, and audience size of local media is based on survey data compiled in the Local Government Survey (LGS) described in the Introduction of the dissertation. Let us recall that in-depth interviews were conducted with chief administrative officers (CAOs) in over 2,000 municipalities in Latvia (280), Romania (557), Poland (580), and Hungary (646). Among a large array of questions pertaining to local political parties, factions, civic organizations, local government budget, CAOs were asked 15 questions specifically pertaining to local media.²⁵ They were requested to identify up to eight local media outlets that cover local public affairs. They were then invited to provide further information about the first five outlets mentioned. They indicated whether each of these five outlets regularly covers town hall politics, whether they are local government or privately owned and, finally, estimated the proportion of citizens that attend to each local media outlet.

The local media in each country are organized somewhat differently. In Hungary and Poland, for example, local print media structures reflect territorial

divisions.²⁶ Regional newspapers in Poland are distributed in at least one *voivodship*, the largest territorial subunit of the country. Similarly, Hungarian regional papers are typically in their respective counties. Other subnational papers in Hungary cover events in towns or villages. In Poland, two levels of local media exist as a reflection of the three-tier territorial organization: “local” papers cover less than a *voivodship* but at least one *powiat* (the second largest territorial entity), and the “sublocal” media encompasses all other local publications, i.e., municipal, town, or parish papers.²⁷ Foreign ownership predominates in both countries’ regional markets, to a larger extent in Hungary than in Poland (see Millard 1998), while domestic owners are present at the local level.

4.1.1 Number and Types of Local Media Outlets

Many studies concerned with media effects suppose that media availability is more or less constant across space. The Local Government Survey (LGS) data shows that this assumption does not apply to the local media systems of the four countries examined in this research. Table 2.1 below shows that a large number of localities simply have no media outlets.²⁸ Of the 29,460,752 inhabitants living in the self-government units included in the survey, almost 8% have no access to information about local public affairs. At the other end of the spectrum, nearly 40% of the population live in media-rich environments, i.e., with access to six or more outlets. The number of media covering local public affairs varies significantly from one country to

²⁵ The complete questionnaire is available on Tocqueville Research Center’s website at www.t-rc.org. The part of the questionnaire including media questions is available in Appendix 1.

²⁶ See Bajomi-Lazar (2001) and Chorawski (2001). I am unaware of similar accounts about Romanian and Latvian local media.

²⁷ In reality, Polish readers of regional dailies, covering at least one voivodship, also call these newspapers “local” dailies. These dailies will be at the center of the analyses in Chapters 4 and 5.

²⁸ Throughout this chapter I use the term “local media” for the sake of convenience but all survey questions refer to media outlets which provide information about local public affairs.

the next. Only 2% of localities in Poland and 3% in Latvia have no such outlets. In Hungary and Romania, 45% and 51% of localities respectively do not count any local media.

Table 1.1. Localities per Number of Media Outlets

Media outlets	Pooled data (% localities)	Latvia (% localities)	Hungary (% localities)	Poland (% localities)	Romania (% localities)
0	30	3	45	2	51
1	17	18	30	8	12
2	16	34	14	13	13
3	12	21	5	21	7
4	8	11	3	15	6
5	9	8	2	20	7
6	3	3	1	6	1
7	2	1	0	6	1
8 +	4	2	1	10	2
	N= 2,023	N=241	N=646	N=579	N=557

Unweighted data. Percentage figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

The press is by far the dominant type of local media. This is hardly surprising since print media are less costly to set up and operate. What is more surprising is that local television enjoys a significantly stronger presence than local radio. Among the localities counting at least one local media, only 8% do not have a paper while the proportion is over 50% for television channels and reaches nearly 65% for radio stations. When there is only one media in town, in three out of four cases that outlet is a paper. By comparison, the proportion is one in five for electronic media. In media-rich environments, the pattern weakens as there is greater space for a diversity of media types.

4.1.2 Ownership and Control

The Local Government Survey respondents were asked to identify the owner of local media by selecting among a list of eight options: the local government or a

company owned by the local government; another government (regional or national) or a company owned by this government; a local public institution; a political party; a not-for-profit organization; a business enterprise; private citizens; or “others”. CAOs also had the possibility to indicate that they did not know who owns one or more of the outlets.

Table 2.2. reveals that in over 40% of localities, the local government owns at least one local media outlet. Private citizens and business enterprises have a foothold in more than 30% of local media scenes. Other owners come far behind, none of them achieving ownership in 10% of localities. By law, political parties are not allowed to own broadcast media in Latvia (CIT 2001). Elsewhere, political parties own outlets in only a handful of localities, mostly in Poland (5.8%).²⁹ At the country level (separate tables displaying ownership structure in each country can be found in Appendix II), the ownership picture is varied. In Hungary and Latvia, local governments are strong sponsors of media, owning at least one outlet in respectively 78.1% and 63% of localities where local media are present. The contrast is sharp with Romania, where less than 10% of localities count local government-owned media. Poland stands somewhat in the middle with local government media in 26.6% of localities. The proportion of private media, owned either by enterprises or private citizens, stands between 40% (Hungary) and 65% (Poland). Poland offers the most diverse range of local media sponsors, notably with a significant presence of public institutions (18%) and “other owners” (15%).

²⁹ This does not mean that political parties do not publish local papers. Competition is particularly fierce in some districts of Budapest where major parties provide readers with small newspapers.

Table 1.2. Localities per Number of Media Outlets and Types of Ownership - Pooled Data Set

Outlets	Local Govt. (% localities)	Other Govt. (% localities)	Local Inst. (% localities)	Political Party (% localities)	NGO(s) (% localities)	Business (% localities)	Private Citizen(s) (% localities)	Other (% localities)	Don't know (% localities)
0	58	90	91	98	96	69	69	93	75
1	36	6	6	2	3	16	15	5	9
2	5	2	2	0	1	8	8	2	7
3	0	1	2	-	0	4	5	1	5
4	0	0	1	-	0	2	3	0	2
5	0	0	0	-	-	1	1	0	2

N=1,425.

Percentage figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted data.

Source: Own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

4.1.3 Coverage of Local Political Affairs

The quality of media coverage is not a concept that easily translates into quantitative terms. Concepts such as fairness, lack of bias, good faith and credibility are obviously relevant (McQuail 1992, 211-2). Most attempts to assess quality in a quantifiable manner have made use of content analysis. For example, the proportion of local content of a news report or a newspaper has often been used by scholars seeking to assess the quality of local media content. However, such content analysis- or survey-based measures are not available for local media outlets in Hungary, Poland, Latvia and Romania. Similarly, information pertaining to the number of journalists employed, editorial budget or circulation, also used as indicators of news quality, has not been systematically assembled.³⁰ It is doubtful that such information will be collected in the foreseeable future; a simple listing of local media outlets can hardly be exhaustive, as reckoned by the author of a catalogue of media in Poland (Chorawski 2000). More modestly, the Local Government Survey allows gauging the extent to which local outlets are mindful of local political debates and their main actors, local politicians. Attention to local politics is measured by the presence or absence of four elements from local media outlets' regular coverage: 1) reports about local assembly's decisions; 2) reports about proposals debated by the assembly; 3) reports about arguments and counterarguments discussed at local assemblies; 4) interviews with local government leaders or councilors.

Significant differences between the attention devoted to these four elements are illustrated in Table 2.3. While interviews with local leaders and reports about local assembly's decisions are regularly included in local media's coverage in more than

³⁰ Among others, indicators such as the number of own news-gathering staff (McQuail 1992, 268), the size of editorial budget or the workload of journalists (defined as the number of articles or news pieces produced per day - Riffe and Shaw 1990; Lacy and Fico 1990) have been used. In the case of newspaper

80% of localities, information about arguments and counterarguments raised during local debates, as well as about policy proposals, are missing in 36% and 48% of cases. The pattern is consistent in all four countries. This points to the potential weakness of coverage of municipal affairs, with a tendency to focus on personalities (featuring interviews) and on *faits accomplis* (coverage of decisions) rather than on reports about issues and arguments that provide citizens with greater opportunities to actively participate in the exchange of ideas and policy-making process at a point when they can exert an influence - that is, before proposals are decided upon by the council.

Table 1.3. Local Media Outlets' Coverage of Local Political Affairs

	Pooled Data	Hungary	Latvia	Poland	Romania
Coverage Quality (5 th quintile = highest)	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)
1 st quintile	20	13	11	9	29
2 nd quintile	20	20	22	23	7
3 rd quintile	16	11	17	24	4
4 th quintile	23	31	31	23	2
5 th quintile	21	26	19	21	5
	N=1,398	N=349	N=229	N=561	N=259

Percentage figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted data.

Source: Own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

4.1.4 Audience Size

A measure of local media's audience size is calculated using CAOs' estimates of the proportion of the local population reached by each outlet, ranging on a scale from 0 ("less than one person out of 10") to 10 ("almost everyone"). Local audience size is obtained by adding up the scores and dividing the result by the number of local media.³¹

with relatively large circulation, a rule of thumb has been to rely on a ratio of editorial staff/circulation (Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman 1976; Turner 1995).

³¹ However, this measure of audience size does not reveal whether the same or different people are reached by a locality's outlets. Here the average audience of all outlets present in one locality has been selected as the measure of audience size.

Table 1.4. Localities per Average Size of Media Audience

	Pooled Data	Hungary	Latvia	Poland	Romania
Average Audience (out of 10 citizens)	% localities	% localities	% localities	% localities	% localities
Very low (0 to 2.9)	20	6	11	33	20
Low (3 to 4.9)	28	16	18	38	31
Average (5 to 6.9)	27	27	40	21	31
High (7 to 8.9)	15	27	21	6	14
Very high (9 to 10)	10	25	11	2	6
	N=1,399	N=348	N=233	N=563	N=255

Percentages figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted data.

Source: Own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001

Table 2.4 shows that Hungarian and Latvian local media achieve considerably larger audience size than their counterparts in other countries. In Romania, local outlets reach a significantly lower proportion of the population. Hungary and Poland present similar penetration patterns with almost 50% of outlets achieving an average score or higher.

4.2 The Determinants of Local Media Features

4.2.1 Assessing the Links Between Characteristics of Local Media Systems: Size, Coverage of Politics, Ownership and Audience Size

In the previous section of the chapter, no explicit hypotheses were made with respect to the relationships between size, coverage of public affairs, sponsorship and audience size of local media outlets. Yet, the general assumption is that they bear upon one another in a significant manner. The coefficients in Table 1.5 below are indicators of the strength of the partial relationship between pairs of variables once the locality's population size is controlled for. Note that the number of valid cases appears in

parentheses. The results are weighted to adjust for the inclusion of a greater number of large cities in the country samples.³²

Table 1.5. Partial Correlations Between Elements of Local Media Systems
(population size controlled for; pooled data)

	Audience Size	Ownership Diversity	Local Govt. Monopoly	Coverage Local Politics
Size (up to 8 outlets)	-.196*** (1,286)	.432*** (1,148)	-.319** (1,148)	.027 (1,282)
Audience Size		-.166*** (1,130)	.364*** (1,130)	.137*** (1,267)
Ownership Diversity			-.359*** (1,148)	.068** (1,130)
Local Govt. Monopoly				.143*** (1,130)

* p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Standardized coefficients; the number of cases is indicated in parentheses.

Source: Own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

The coefficients reported in Table 1.5 show that the amount of coverage devoted to political affairs is not related to the number of local media. This suggests that competition, minimally defined as the number of media available in town, does not result in outlets engaging in a contest for audiences – at least, not over news about local public affairs.³³ Local political content is however more abundant when a number of

³² Weighting is described in Section 6.1 of the Introduction. More details are available at www.t-rc.org under the Sampling heading. In this dissertation, the weight giving equal weight to localities included in the sample is applied when indicated.

³³ See Lacy (1989) for an outline of a model of demand for media suggesting that competition yields higher quality. The notion of competition currently used in this chapter is relatively crude due to limited data availability. Competition can be divided into two specific aspects: extra-local system competition (competition from national publications, channels and stations), and intra-local system competition (competition between local media outlets). To a great extent, intra-system competition is endogenous to local media systems. The two types of competition would not be expected to associate with size and quality in the same way. Higher extra-system competition would be hypothesized to yield a smaller number of local media achieving smaller audience size; greater intra-system competition would be expected to correlate with higher content quality and larger audience size. With respect to quality, the effects of competition have been investigated by a number of studies. Most of them find that competition has little or no effect on papers' content (McCombs 1988; Graber 1997). Rarick and Hartman (1966) found competition to be associated with more local news. More recently, findings showed that cross-ownership of television stations is related to more local programming, while concentration meant less overall local programs but more local news and public affairs. Furthermore, locally owned newspapers covered better local controversies but chain-owned publications were more inclined to take position on local issues in their editorial pages (see Picard 1989, 80). The details about the identity of each media

outlets are in the hands of different people and institutions. Yet, it is in municipalities where the local government holds a monopoly on local news that political affairs receive the most coverage. These outlets also reach more citizens than those vying for attention in larger local media scenes where the ownership structure is also more diverse.

These results are hardly surprising. Private media dominate bigger cities' market, while it is not rare that smaller localities have only one outlet, often a newspaper, either published by the local authorities or dependent on local government funds. It is logical that the content of such outlets should be more focused on local party politics. In addition, the stronger community ties typically characterizing smaller municipalities, combined to the lack of media competition, favor greater penetration of local government outlets. Therefore, the oft-voiced idea that local democracy, if gauged by coverage of public affairs, is better served by diverse and plural media scenes does not correspond with the reality depicted in Table 1.5. The outlets that convey more information about local political affairs to a larger share of inhabitants are precisely those in the hands of local governments, and often constitute the sole source of local information available in town.

An alternative explanation for the results in Table 1.5 could be that localities with less competitive media scenes tend to be run by less cohesive governments, notably because of the prominence of independent representatives. The parties and people involved in those governments could be acting as checks upon one another, ensuring that news about a wide range of political opinions and policy options are present in the local government media outlet, as opposed to a situation where a local authority controlled by a majority of deputies from the same party can “capture” the

outlets identified by CAOs necessary to the construction of differentiated competition indexes are not

town's newspaper. The resulting internal diversity of news content would then be reflected by the greater amount and depth of local political news coverage, which would in turn increase the local outlets' audience. While not implausible, a test of this explanation would necessitate more detailed data than is currently available about both local media content and local government composition.

The rest of the section considers the relationship between local factors and the number of local media outlets citizens have access to. Size is arguably the aspect that defines local media scenes to a large extent. Partial correlations between size and each local factor are discussed first. I then turn to the results of regression analyses. Although the right-hand side of four equations features the four characteristics of local media, the discussion of the results is largely limited to findings concerning the number of available local media.

4.2.2 Correlations

Coefficients in Table 1.6 illustrate the strength of the relationships between the number of media and local factors when population size is held constant. Coefficients are displayed for the pooled data set and for each country individually. As in Table 1.5, the number of valid cases appears in each cell. 'NA' indicates that the question was not asked in a particular country.

Table 1.6. Partial Correlations (controlling for population size) Between Number of Media and Financial Resources, Political Divide and Community Cleavages

	Pooled Data set	Latvia	Hungary	Poland	Romania
Total Population of Municipality	.293*** (2,022)	.218*** (241)	.577*** (646)	.169*** (578)	.292*** (557)
Cause Tensions: Income Differences	.132*** (1,964)	.157** (241)	.016 (633)	-.005 (575)	.038 (515)
Cause Tensions: Religious Beliefs	.084*** (1,907)	.129** (241)	-.017 (628)	.075* (566)	.080* (472)
Cause Tensions: Political Views	.214*** (1,938)	.141* (240)	.062** (626)	.077* (572)	-.060 (501)
Cause Tensions: Urban vs. Rural	.103*** (976)	.226*** (240)	Na	.143*** (556)	Na
Cause Tensions: Different Ethnicity	-.149*** (1,886)	.107* (241)	-.012 (628)	.103** (558)	.083* (459)
Cause Tensions: Parts of Locality	.264*** (1,891)	.138** (241)	.083*** (628)	.059 (569)	.089** (456)
Cause Tensions: Long vs New Res.	-.046** (1,878)	.065 (240)	.010 (626)	.075* (559)	-.002 (452)
# Settlements in the Municipality	.255*** (1,357)	.031 (241)	Na	-.089** (569)	-.006 (547)
% Commuters in Local Population	-.141*** (2,001)	-.005 (241)	-.063** (646)	.034 (557)	.079** (557)
Unemployment	-.134*** (1,952)	.029 (241)	-.120** (603)	-.114*** (568)	.105*** (540)
Number of NGOs	.312*** (2,011)	.068 (241)	.482*** (646)	.223*** (567)	.251*** (557)
Number of Parties	.122*** (2,012)	-.001 (241)	.334*** (646)	.164*** (578)	.175*** (557)

p<.10, **p<.05, *** p<.01

Entries are beta coefficients obtained from linear regression. In the case of population size, the Pearson R value appears in the cell.

Source: Local Government Survey of the ILDGP data, 2001.

4.2.3 Population size, number of settlements and commuters

Not unexpectedly, population size is significantly related to the size of local media scenes. The coefficient is particularly high in Hungary. This could be due to the structure of the local government system in that country. The level of amalgamation - the extent to which settlements are grouped together in a self-governing entity - is minimal in Hungary. Nearly every settlement, regardless of its size, has its own self-government. Therefore, Hungary counts a large number of small self-government units with small populations, strengthening the relationship with the financial capacity of

both citizens and local governments to maintain local outlets. Amalgamation is moderate in Latvia, and important in Romania and Poland, where the correlations between population size and number of outlets are lower than in Hungary.

A greater number of distinct settlements in one local government unit is associated with less, rather than more media in Poland and Romania, albeit not significantly so in the latter country. The explanation may again lie with territorial structure and size. In highly amalgamated systems, local government units comprising a large number of settlements (typically rural) often count significantly less inhabitants than units corresponding to a single town's boundaries, and thus smaller audiences are less likely to support large media scenes.

Coefficients associated with the percentage of commuters send mixed signals; they are negative in Latvia and Hungary, but positive in Poland and Romania. Furthermore, they are significant only in Hungary and Romania. People who earn a living and spend most of their earnings elsewhere than in the locality where they live may be less likely to consume local media. Thus a high percentage of commuters would, via a lesser demand, depress the size of the local media scene. At the same time, a large number of commuters can signal the (sub)urban nature of a settlement. Located in the vicinity of a larger urban center, such localities could see their local media scene "boosted" by more important advertising markets, as well as the greater politicization of local politics due to the proximity of a large urban center. Consequently, a large number of commuters can be associated either with a smaller or greater size of the local media scene. In the absence of variables assessing more directly the content of competing outlets and the strength of local community ties, it is difficult to further interpret the observed correlations. However, the potential for mixed effects is apparent.

4.2.4 Financial resources

The coefficients associated with the share of unemployed inhabitants indicate that wealthier localities in Hungary and Poland count significantly more media outlets. In Latvia and Romania the coefficients exhibit a positive sign, reaching significance in the case of Romania. The results may reflect differences in systems of local finances, notably the role played by personal income tax in each of them. In decentralization systems where local governments shoulder an important responsibility in poverty alleviation (e.g. Hungary), or depend to a significant extent on a share of personal income tax perceived on their territory (e.g. Poland), localities with higher unemployment are less likely to enjoy very developed media scenes.

4.2.5 Political parties and civil society

In spite of the fact that neither political parties nor NGOs are major sponsors of media, the presence of both is significantly associated with a higher number of media, except in Latvia. The relationships are particularly strong in Hungary, which boasts one of the most stable party systems among post-communist societies. It is interesting to note that the positive relationship with the number of NGOs is even stronger than with political party presence in all three countries where NGO presence is linked with the number of local media. This could be an indicator that local groups are significant actors on the local public scene over and above political parties, notably in smaller localities. In Romania, where local politics tends to be heavily politicized even in small towns, close links between political and NGO leaders might explain the positive correlation. Indeed, many Romania NGOs have been set up by political parties eager to collect funds to finance their campaigns (Badescu, Sum and Uslaner 2004; Roper and Fesnic 2003). Local associations can field candidates in local elections in all countries.

However, since 2001, only political parties can do so in Latvian larger cities (see footnote 21 below). The results in Table 1.6 seem to indicate that organized local actors favor the emergence of local media, and contribute to translate local politics into mediated events (as illustrated by the positive link between political party presence and coverage of political in local outlets in Table 1.7 below).

4.2.6 Cleavages

The last group of variables pertains to cleavages susceptible to be associated with more media outlets. Divisions between different parts of localities are positively related to the number of media in all countries save in Poland. The other measure of divisions that exhibits a systematically positive relationship with the number of local media is the cleavage between rural and urban settings, even if the measure only applies to Latvia and Poland.

Income differences are associated with more media only in Latvia. The case of divergences related to political orientation is more convincing as coefficients are significant and positive in all countries save Romania. The variable measuring tensions rooted in religious belief differences yields its most prominent result in Latvia, potentially reflecting the deep divide between the mainly Lutheran Latvian- and largely Orthodox Russian-speakers in that country. The ethnic divide is also significantly linked with the number of local media in Latvia, Romania and Poland - oddly, the correlation is strongest in ethnically homogeneous Poland.

Overall, the correlations in Table 1.6 offer little support for an explanation of the size of local media scenes based on community ties and homogeneity, except if the strong showing of NGOs is interpreted as an expression of social cohesion and sense of community. Tensions rooted in political, geographic and ethnic diversity tend to

correlate with larger media scenes. The presence of formal groups, either parties or civic organizations, is even more clearly associated with a higher number of media outlets, except in Latvia. Local wealth is an important factor but only in Hungary and Poland, two countries that feature very different local media markets. In the first country, local governments often act as sponsors of local media, while private interests dominate in many Polish localities. A similar effect of local affluence in such different settings lends credence to the hypothesis that local financial resources matter for local media, possibly through different mechanisms. It might also indicate that general wealth has to be somewhat higher for its effect to be felt (Latvia's and Romania's GDP figures trail behind Hungary's and Poland's – see World Bank 2004). A stricter test of the three hypotheses involving regression analysis is provided in the next section.

4.2.7 Regressions

To assess the relative role played by the variables included in Table 1.6, they are included in a multivariate regression equation with the number of local media outlets as the dependent variable. Regressions featuring the three other media characteristics are also presented. Table 1.7 displays the results of regressions performed with the pooled data set only; country-specific results (for the number of media only) are available in Appendix II. Dummy variables are added to the basic equations to account for the country in which the towns are located.

Table 1.7. Determinants of Local Media Features

	Number of media	Coverage	Audience Size	Ownership Diversity
	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)
Number of NGOs	.082*** (.009)	.003 (.002)	-.004 (.015)	.022*** (.004)
Number of parties in municipality	.079*** (.023)	.014** (.005)	-.054 (.045)	.006 (.013)
Total population of municipality	.001*** (.000)	.000*** (.000)	.000 (.000)	.000 (.000)
% of commuters	.000 (.001)	.001** (.000)	.006** (.003)	.000 (.001)
Unemployment	-.003 (.003)	-.001 (.001)	.009 (.007)	-.000 (.002)
Cause tensions: income differences	.008 (.020)	-.001 (.004)	-.029 (.039)	-.010 (.011)
Cause tensions: religious beliefs	.082* (.038)	-.005 (.008)	.056 (.074)	-.001 (.021)
Cause tensions: different political views	-.017 (.027)	.013* (.006)	.076 (.053)	.006 (.015)
Cause tensions: different ethnic origins	.012 (.029)	.001 (.007)	-.160** (.067)	-.016 (.018)
Cause tensions: different parts of the municipality	.091*** (.027)	.002 (.006)	-.046 (.050)	.027** (.014)
Cause tensions: old vs recent residents	-.004 (.029)	-.006 (.007)	.036 (.058)	.026 (.016)
Latvia	-.503*** (.133)	.335*** (.037)	2.56*** (.3270)	-.044 (.093)
Hungary	1.57*** (.140)	.385*** (.033)	1.62*** (.297)	.388*** (.086)
Poland	2.13*** (.125)	.282*** (.032)	-.680** (.282)	.446*** (.083)
N	1,738	1,115	1,119	1,009
Adjusted R sq	.553	.223	.261	.166

p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Entries are coefficients obtained from linear regression.

Constants not shown. Source: Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

The variables regressed on the number of local media explains 55% of the variance in the size of local media scenes between the 1,738 localities included in the analysis – 85% of the localities in the initial sample. The country dummies play a prominent role; roughly 20% of the explanatory power vanishes when they are removed from the equation. However, their inclusion carries a cost as they potentially overlap with, and dampen the effects of local factors such as wealth and divides within local societies.³⁴

Hypothesis 1.1 states that the presence of political parties and NGOs is associated with a greater number of media reporting on municipal affairs. Despite the fact that neither parties nor NGOs are significant sponsors of outlets, the hypothesis is well supported by the study's results, except in the case of Latvia. Along with population size, the two variables exhibit the highest substantial (i.e non-dummy) coefficients presented in Table 1.7. The impact of NGOs is particularly strong, while that of party presence is more subdued, approaching significance in Hungary and Poland, and clearly significant in Romania (see Table A1.6 in Appendix II). The convincing impact of NGOs points to two, not mutually exclusive interpretations. The first refers to the link identified in previous studies between community ties and thriving local media. Such an explanation puts little emphasis on a more political mission of local civic organizations, acting as channels of citizens' interests. In practice, both effects may well be at work.

The more potent effect of parties observable in Romania can be explained by a local politics structure dominated by political parties, while NGOs enjoy little public confidence. In Poland, Hungary and Latvia, non-party and independent candidates

³⁴ Country-specific table A1.6 in Appendix II displays moderate “dampening” effects at work.

enjoy considerable electoral success in many localities.³⁵ Conversely, candidates lacking a party political affiliation stand little chances to be elected in Romania. Local elections are also very competitive in the latter country, counting approximately ten candidates for each available councilor position (Lup 2002, 345), compared with 2.7 in the 1997 Latvian local elections (Vanags and Vilka 2000, 129). In Latvia, political parties are particularly active in localities where minority presence is more important. At the same time, the local electoral law leaves a significant segment of the Russian-speaking population disenfranchised (roughly 20% of the country's population does not have the right to vote). This state of affairs might provide a further reason why the number of media outlets is not associated with that of local associations or parties, less able to channel citizens' interests than in other, less polarized contexts.

Hypothesis 1.2, according to which cleavages foster a larger local media scene, receives mitigated support. Geographical divisions in the forms of tensions rooted in differences between neighborhoods are significantly and positively related to the number of media in the pooled data analysis. However, country-specific analyses reveal no impact of tensions based on various types of divides, except for those rooted in religious beliefs in Romania – an effect that also appears in the pooled data regression. The lack of effect of ethnic divisions, particularly salient in Latvia and in some regions of Romania, might in fact reveal a leveling effect of the minority factor for the number of outlets. Minorities tend to group around a limited number of outlets, defined by language more than local boundaries or characteristics.

The findings for the pooled data set do not support Hypothesis 1.3, which posited that wealthier communities can afford a larger number of local outlets. The

³⁵ In Latvia, parties have used local voters' associations to put candidates forward in order to counter a generally negative stance towards politicians. Since 2001, only entities registered as political parties can propose candidates in the 48 municipalities counting more than 5,000 inhabitants (Vilka, Pukis and Vanags 2002, 170).

unemployment variable assessing localities' financial resources exhibits the expected negative sign but the coefficient does not go above the statistical significance threshold. However, country specific results shown in Table A1.6 underscore the effect already visible in Table 1.5 displaying correlations, namely that Hungarian and Polish localities counting more unemployed citizens also have less local media outlets.

5. Conclusion

Drawing on original survey data gathered during interviews conducted with chief administrative officers in over 2,000 municipalities, this chapter highlighted significant differences between the local media scenes in Latvia, Hungary, Romania and Poland in terms of size (number of media outlets), ownership (especially local government versus private sponsorship), coverage of local political affairs (defined by whether media outlets carry or not information about local assembly representatives and debates) and audience size. While nearly half of localities in Hungary and Romania do not have any local media providing information about local public affairs, the large majority of Latvian and Polish towns count at least one local media outlet. Local governments are sponsoring a significant part of the media scene, most notably in Hungary and Latvia, to a lesser extent in Poland, and only minimally so in Romania. The majority of outlets provide citizens with average or above average amount of coverage about local political life; CAOs' estimates also suggest that print media provide slightly more coverage of local public life than their electronic counterparts. As for average audience size, survey data demonstrate the relative success of most local outlets, especially in Hungary and Latvia.

A correlation matrix illustrated that size, ownership structure, coverage of local politics and audience size constitute a web of interrelated elements. Local government

owned media outlets tend to be more prominent in smaller local media scenes; they also provide more information about local politics and are attended by larger numbers of citizens than their privately owned counterparts.

Three aspects of local environments were examined for their potential linkages with the number of local media and other media scenes' attributes. The findings confirm the role of formal organizations. Both the number of political parties established in the locality and, to an even greater degree, the number of active civic organizations are associated with more local outlets. The notable exception is Latvia, where neither local parties nor NGOs register any impact on local media presence. The idea that salient social, economic, ethnic and geographical divides encourage the emergence of different outlets voicing divergent interests, also separating the audience into segments that potential sponsors of local outlets can target with advertisement, receives limited support. Among the types of divides included in the analysis, only tensions rooted in differences between neighborhoods show a moderate relationship with the number of local outlets in the countries that exhibit a degree of amalgamation. The data does not uphold the competing proposition that deeper social or other types of fractures weaken community ties, and thus correspond with less local outlets.

Lastly, the supposition that richer communities count more local outlets held in Hungary and Poland, but not in Latvia and Romania. This differential finding highlights the difficulties related to wealth measurement. Unemployment rates, the measure employed in this chapter, are not fully comparable between countries as they are influenced by factors such as the degree of decentralization and the local finances system. These factors could not be satisfactorily taken into account in the chapter given the limits of the available data, and themselves represent a challenge for scholars interested in their comparative quantitative assessment.

A significant portion of the observed variance in media scenes' characteristics remains unexplained; furthermore, the size of the variance differs across countries. This diversity is probably rooted not only in differences between decentralization and political systems, but also in media traditions that defy measurement through survey data. Despite its limits, the survey data served well the twin goals of the chapter: to describe the state of local media in four countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and unearth possible reasons why the number of local outlets, a defining character of media scenes, differ from one town to the other. The results point to a mainly "top-down" explanation; political parties and NGOs need outlets to mobilize citizens around their goals, even in the absence of direct ownership links. The finding echoes Splichal's (2004, 62) evaluation that CEE media remain by and large depending on political authorities.

The study reveals little of the potential impact of strong local identities on the size of local media scenes.³⁶ A purely sociological explanation of local media presence, according to which outlets emerge out of ethnic or economic differences between groups, does not fare well. Rather, localities where group interests are channeled by organizations seeking a voice in the political arena constitute a fertile ground for a larger local media scene. In smaller municipalities, local media largely remains the domain of local political elites; in larger cities, they are more strongly influenced by market considerations. As a result, a local government media monopoly dominates in many small settlements, while plurality and diversity characterizes big cities. This state of affairs does not necessarily spell negative consequences for local democracy. If citizens who have access to information about local political affairs are also more likely

³⁶ However, it is plausible that the process of fragmentation that took place in Hungary immediately after the changes were an expression of local identity surging after forced amalgamation in the 1970s and 1980s. A number of local outlets probably appeared at the initiative of local governments in localities that acquired self-governing status.

to get involved and to keep a closer and discerning eye on their representatives, then local democracy may be well served by local government-sponsored media that provide more abundant coverage of local politics than privately owned newspapers, radios or televisions. What the survey data cannot tell is how informative this relatively larger amount of local political coverage is, rather than serving as an instrument of self-promotion – or worse even, misinformation. Also, aggregate data cannot directly reveal whether, and to which extent, local media content is conducive to political involvement rather than passivity and cynicism. (The issue of local media use and its impact on political engagement is tackled with individual survey data in Chapters 4 and 5.) Yet, this comparative outline of local media systems in Latvia, Hungary, Poland and Romania begins to lift the veil over a complex and varied picture, and enriches our knowledge about the relationship between local media and the societies they are rooted in. The next chapter opens the investigation of local media effects, considering whether local media features make a difference for local government performance.

Chapter Two

The Influence of Local Media on Local Government Performance

1. Introduction

People often observe that the media have an influence on the well-being of democracy. For example, Dawisha (1996, 54) writes: “It can be generally assumed that the greater the independence and pluralism of the media ..., the greater will be the level of civic trust and civic involvement.” This connection is also assumed to operate at the local level, but there has been no attempt to validate this assumption, as the absence of literature demonstrates. It has become almost a truism to say that the plurality and independence of local media are important and have a positive effect on the performance of democratic local government.

If it is true that politically well-informed citizens contribute to the well-being of democracy, then such effects should be assessed. This chapter seeks to establish empirically whether and how local media enhance the quality of local governance. Relying on survey data gathered within the framework of the Indicators of Local Democratic Governance Project (ILDGP), the analysis focuses on the decisional and democratic aspects of local government performance in more than 2,000 municipalities of Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Romania. I assess the links between four characteristics of the local media (number of outlets, ownership structure, the extent of coverage of public affairs and audience size) and the capacity of local governments to make decisions in a timely and effective manner (decisional performance) that includes citizens in the decision-making process (democratic performance).

The chapter provides an overview of theories buttressing the assumption that

media and local government performance may be linked. This is followed by an outline of the hypotheses to be tested with respect to how media presence, ownership structure, local political content and audience size have an impact on performance. The third section describes the method of analysis, followed by the findings. The conclusion presents an interpretation of the results, suggests new hypotheses and points towards further areas of exploration for increasing our understanding of media effects on local government performance.

2. The Links Between Media, Citizens, and Local Government Performance

The belief that the media make a difference to the quality of democracy is not new. Alexis de Tocqueville underlined the connection between civil society and media in his famous *Democracy in America*. To secure cooperation, individuals have to be persuaded that they serve their private interests by “voluntarily uniting [their] efforts to those of all the others. That cannot be done habitually and conveniently without the help of a newspaper. Only a newspaper can put the same thought at the same time before a thousand readers. . . . So hardly any democratic association can carry on without a newspaper” (1990, 112-113).

The need for communication channels between citizens also arises from the complexity of modern policy-making. Citizens require good information and access to discussion about the merits of policies, particularly since it is impossible for any one individual to pay attention to how a city is run all the time or to possess all the necessary knowledge to evaluate representatives’ every decision (Page 1996, 2). Nowadays, the mass media, notably television, have become the prime source of political information (Ansolabehere, Behr and Iyengar 1993), enabling citizens to identify and articulate their interests, to voice them at election time and to participate in

public life in general. Factual political information “assists individuals in their civic actions, helps explain group differences in political access, and serves as a collective good, strengthening the likelihood that the polity functions both responsively and responsibly” (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, xi). Behind this stands a normative assumption that political knowledge, democratic citizenship and political power are inextricably linked (ibid., xii). Delli Carpini and Keeter observe that civic action is both more necessary and more common at the local level, thus making a clear case for the necessity of citizens well aware of local public matters. The arguments they put forth are both instrumental – e.g. a relatively equal distribution of political knowledge among the citizens makes it more likely that the government’s actions will represent the people’s interests and bolster cooperation for policy implementation –, and rely as well on a conception of political information as a valuable good in itself for individuals, as informed citizens are “politically and socially oriented and so more fulfilled” (Putnam 1993, 59). Except in very small communities, where interpersonal communication provides nearly all strata of local society with access to information about local affairs, the development of meaningful democracy - rather than just a more or less liberal oligarchy - at the local level clearly requires substantial and diverse media coverage of local politics.

In classical liberal theory, this requirement was fulfilled by the existence of a marketplace of ideas ensuring that citizens are exposed to diverse information and points of view. Even if individual outlets were biased, competition would allow media consumers to weed out true information from the false. From early- to mid- 20th century onward, this idea of the press as the cornerstone of representative democracy - the “fourth estate” - gave way to calls for a more defined, substantial role for the media. In the modern media context, competition was found either to be unrealized or to privilege

profit-making over other goals such as achieving political and other freedoms. These changes gave rise to the notion of social responsibility of the media, media ethics, and the development of journalists' professional roles such as that of "watchdog" (see McQuail 2000, 146ss for a detailed account of these developments, as well as Splichal 2002). In this role, journalists and the media in general act as a check on authorities' power, ready to expose wrongdoings (Kocher 1986; Weaver 1996).³⁷ Thus, media "publicity provides an effective external control over the competence, responsiveness and accountability of public officials" (Swoboda 1995).

Reasons to suppose that the media have an effect on local government performance are not only based in normative theories and journalists' discourse about their professional role. They are also rooted in two strands of research about media effects. The first leans toward cognitive psychology and examines how media consumption or exposure affects people's knowledge, attitudes and behavior. Studies belonging to this group have been preoccupied with how people (and which people, in terms of socio-demographic characteristics) learn and retain political information distilled by the media. Delli Carpini and Keeter's seminal book about the determinants of political knowledge in America is a good example. Literature focusing on electoral campaigns has also contributed to this stream, notably the agenda-setting theory and its extension, priming. Agenda-setting holds that the media are able to influence what issues people think about. Priming takes place when the media influence the importance that people assign to different issues or considerations when making a choice (Iyengar 1991). A number of studies specifically concerned with the impact of local media have addressed the relationship between media consumption and community ties (Neuwirth, Salmon and Neff 1989), and between local media use and

³⁷ This idea of journalism's function in society also emerges in studies of the public's expectations of

participation in local public affairs (McLeod et al. 1999; McLeod, Scheufele and Moy 1999).

A second stream of research concentrates on media effects at the aggregate rather than the individual level. Recent studies have examined the association between access to media as well as media freedom on the one hand and good governance³⁸ on the other (Norris 2001; Adsera, Boix and Payne 2003; Stromberg 2004). Links between the media ownership structure (public or private) and national indicators of education, health and freedom are another focus of interest (Djankov, McLiesh, Nenova and Shleifer 2003; Besley and Burgess 2002). Studies in this group address media effects from a wide range of perspectives, including links between various local media characteristics such as competition, ownership and content (Lacy 1989; Bernstein and Lacy 1992; Lacy, Coulson and St. Cyr 1999). Media features have also been linked with aspects of the local environment such as diversity of public opinion or ethnic heterogeneity (Lasorsa 1991; Johnson and Wanta 1993; Hindman, Littlefield, Preston and Neumann 1999).³⁹ None of these studies provides a directly applicable framework of analysis for examining the relationship between media and decisional or democratic performance of local governments. However, they do provide a useful theoretical and empirical background against which to set the study.

Another related strand of research, mostly qualitative but not exclusively so, has been concerned with the impact of media on public policy and on policy-makers. Do media have a direct impact on governmental decisions and the opinions of the decision-

what the media should do (see Protess et al. (1991, 14) for an American survey).

³⁸ In a nutshell, less corruption, greater administrative efficiency and responsiveness, higher political stability, and a more effective rule of law.

³⁹ The large majority of empirical studies of local media pertain to the American context, where detailed information about local media markets and a number of content analyses are available.

makers, or does public opinion first mediate this influence?⁴⁰ The question is relevant to the concerns of this chapter. Media effects on local government procedures or policies can occur when citizens learn the information they need to hold their representatives accountable, to engage actively in local public life⁴¹, and so on. The media can also affect local representatives directly and, consequently, their performance as those who make the decisions and establish the rules for how those decisions are arrived at. “Media attention to an issue affects legislators’ attention, partly because members [of Congress] follow mass media like other people, and partly because media affect their constituents,” notes Kingdon (1995, 58). In their study, Lomax Cook et al. (1983) found that media reports about fraud in public programs had an impact on policy-makers’ opinions and on policy mostly because of the “active relationship” that developed between journalists and policy-makers, rather than as a result of pressure from public opinion. Stromberg (2004a, 2004b) argues that significant policy effects take place without altering vote intentions or public opinions; rather, the growing reach of media forces decision makers to take into considerations the interests of smaller, dispersed and less well-politically organized groups as they become better informed.⁴²

These last remarks highlight the complex nature of media effects. The aggregate nature of the available survey data does not allow for a full account of the mechanisms underlying local media influence on the performance of local governments in Hungary,

⁴⁰ See Lomax Cook et al. (1983) for an empirical approach, and Protess et al. (1991) for a qualitative take on the issue.

⁴¹ The media can fail to inform and also misinform. The impact of misinformation is difficult to gauge outside of a near-experiment like framework. Kuklinski et al. (2000, 809) conclude that, without knowing how much misinformation (measured in their study by wrong beliefs about welfare) affects citizens’ policy preferences or political behavior, we do not know whether changes in media practices would or could impact misinformation.

⁴² Stromberg refers largely to expansion of radio in the 1930s and 1940s in the United States and the more recent one of television. He notes that the latter phenomenon may also lead to less coverage of news pertaining to small, economically disadvantaged groups of lesser interest for advertisers (2004b, 281).

Latvia, Poland and Romania. Nonetheless, the analysis will generate useful insights on how local media work in the region, and what influence they have on (some of) the nuts and bolts of local democracy.

2. Hypotheses

Before presenting the hypotheses linking media features with local government performance, a few words about the meaning and measures of local government performance used in this chapter are in order. When information is “sufficiently full, accurate, and well interpreted, then citizens can decide what policies they want in an informed way, consistent with their basic values and interests” (Page 1996, 2). Here I assume that citizens prefer a local government that runs smoothly, as opposed to one frequently bogged down by delays, lack of quorum and other similar impediments. Also, a central tenet of democratic theory is that governments do what citizens want them to do. While I do not have sufficient information to evaluate citizens’ preferences with respect to local public matters, I assume it is more likely that the interests of citizens will be reflected in decisions taken by the local assembly when they are more involved in the decision-making process. The construction of the performance indices, described in Section 3.2, reflects these assumptions.

This chapter evaluates the impact of local media with respect to two aspects of local government performance: decisional, that is, the capacity of local authorities to make decisions in a timely and effective manner; and democratic, defined as local authorities’ ability to favor the input of citizens and various elements of local civil society in the decision-making process. The indices of decisional and democratic performance take into account only elements that were included in the survey. It is useful to keep in mind that, while attempting to design “universal” measures, surveys

involve a selection of questions and indicators that leaves other, potentially relevant dimensions of performance unexplored. Procedural performance is an important component of citizens' satisfaction, along with policies and responsiveness. It has the potential to impact on the legitimacy of the local political processes and outcomes in the eyes of citizens. This legitimacy is particularly relevant in newly established democracies where the recycling of former local elites (in some countries more than others), a degree of continuity in practices rooted in the old regime, clientelism as well as corruption may hinder the functioning of local democratic institutions (see Hiskey and Bowler 2005 for a similar argument about Mexico).

3.1 Media Presence

Evidence abounds that the media have an impact on the way politics are run. To give one famous example, the Watergate affair and Nixon's resignation as a consequence of it are considered to have happened because of media reports (Protess et al. 1991, 3-5). Focusing on the individual level, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996, 149) show that reading newspapers is associated with a higher level of knowledge about local politics in the United States. Reading local newspapers also has a positive and significant impact on citizens' participation as voters and in contacting public officials (McLeod, Scheufele and Moy 1999). This last point about the potential mobilizing role of the media leads us to expect a more palpable impact of media on democratic than on decisional performance. This applies not only to media presence, but to other media characteristics as well.⁴³

⁴³ It is quite possible that local authorities achieve higher democratic performance scores as a result of their own behavior (a "pull" phenomenon), and as a consequence of local inhabitants' and civic groups' demands ("push") to be included in the policy-making process. A "push" effect is less likely in the case of indicators measuring decisional performance. For example, instances of lack of quorum (used as an indicator of decisional performance) are related to councilors' and mayors' behavior rather than citizens' influence. This is why, in addition to the purported mobilization role of the media, democratic

Hypothesis 2.1: Local governments in localities endowed with media outlets will display better performance than others – especially democratic performance.

3.2 Diversity of Ownership Structure

Much has been written about the impact of media owners and ownership on media content, yielding sometimes compelling yet inconclusive accounts (e.g., Bagdikian 1992; see also Page 1996 for a review). Similarly, the effects of competition have been explored in a number of studies. Most find that competition has little or no effect on newspapers' content (McCombs 1988; Graber 1997); However, Rarick and Hartman (1966) found competition to be associated with more local-oriented news.

Franklin's (1988) investigation showed that the content of newspapers published and distributed by English local authorities free of charge to each household was colored by the perspective of the party in power in the local assembly.⁴⁴ Assuming that local politicians wish to be re-elected, it is not implausible to imagine that local governments that have control over the media will ensure that the content is not overly critical of their activities, if not blatantly biased in their favor (see Popescu and Toka 2002 for a description of such an occurrence in Hungary's public television during the 1994 general election campaign). Consequently, media presence in itself may not be sufficient to ensure an impact on performance. What matters could well be who owns the outlet(s), and thus whether local authorities are in a position to insulate themselves and their activities from the media's critical scrutiny.⁴⁵

performance should be more responsive than its decisional counterpart to the presence of media, as well as to other media features.

⁴⁴ For different reasons on why local media coverage is generally favorable to local authorities, see Paletz, Reichert and McIntyre (1971).

⁴⁵ As Popescu and Toka's (2002) investigation revealed, the expected positive impact for incumbents does not automatically materialize. They found that when the government overtly used public television as a tool for political propaganda during the 1994 electoral campaign, it actually had the reverse impact on people's voting choice –greater exposure to public television was associated with voting for the challenger, thus showing that mobilization can take place when media outlets are used in an outrageously

Hypothesis 2.2: Local government performance (notably democratic) is expected to improve when the media ownership structure is diverse; that is, when not only government-controlled but also privately-owned, NGO-run, etc., outlets are available.

3.3 Coverage of Local Political Affairs

Defining the quality of media content in quantitative terms is not an easy task. While the general distinction between information and entertainment is useful, such a measure can only be guided by content analysis. Given the unavailability of content analysis data, and regardless of the mechanism potentially at work between media and performance, it is plausible to suppose that whether local media report about local public affairs, and to what extent, does matter for performance. Equally plausibly, reports about local politics can be regarded as quality media content - generally defined as content of “social or political significance... [that] is implicitly intended to help citizens in their role as democratic decision-makers” (Zaller 1999).

Hypothesis 2.3: Greater coverage of local politics by local media is likely to be associated with higher local government performance scores (particularly democratic performance scores).

3.4 Audience Size

In line with the hypotheses presented so far, greater penetration of local media outlets among the population is also expected to bolster the performance of local authorities.

Hypothesis 2.4: The greater the reach of local media among citizens, the better the performance of local governments, especially its democratic aspect.

“If extensive political information is available somewhere in the system, not everyone has to pay attention to it all the time,” writes Page (1996, 7). Because some people - “opinion leaders” - will pay more attention to local political news, some of this

self-serving manner by the government in power. Similarly, Millard (1998) writes that various attempts

information will reach others in the community via face-to-face interaction with family, friends and co-workers (Sniderman, Tetlock and Brady 1991). The theory of the two-step flow of communication (Ansolebehere, Behr and Iyengar 1993, 132) provides grounds to expect that media presence, rather than audience size, could be playing a more central role in influencing both types of performance (as long as a minimal threshold of penetration is achieved by local outlets). If, however, the media should play a direct mobilizing role, the impact of a greater number of people exposed to local outlets should be felt, particularly on democratic performance.⁴⁶

3.5 Other Factors Explaining Performance

The goal of the hypotheses presented so far has been to quantify the impact of media features on the decisional and democratic aspects of local governments' performance. But obviously the media are not the only element influencing performance. Therefore, to test for the robustness of findings related to the hypotheses above, a number of other factors with the potential to bear on performance are considered.

3.5.1 Unemployment

In communities harder hit by unemployment, less people are expected to engage in participatory activities. This could result in a moderately lower democratic performance (moderate because the index of democratic performance also includes elements such as the number of public hearings held. Attendance, rather than the number of hearings, is likely to be affected by unemployment). Positing that unemployment reflects the general financial state of the community, economic

of political manipulation of Polish state broadcasting worked in different directions.

adversity is also likely to generate obstacles for the local assembly in reaching decisions, due to the compromises and trade-offs involved when resources are limited.

3.5.2 NGOs, Political Parties and Citizens' Initiatives

The presence of more parties is expected to undermine decisional performance; when more voices are heard, agreement and decisions are likely to be harder and slower to reach. The presence of NGOs is anticipated to have a similar effect, albeit to a lesser degree since they are not necessarily directly involved in decision-making. On the other hand, NGO presence should enhance democratic performance. Indeed, where more NGOs can contribute to bringing citizens together and better identifying and articulating their interests, it is more likely that citizens will want to make their voices heard. Also, local authorities will have more opportunities to engage in consultation and seek the contribution of citizens before taking major decisions. The anticipated role of political parties in this respect is similar; since more parties implies the presence of more groups with diverse interests in local society, it may reflect positively on democratic performance. Expectations with respect to the impact of citizens' initiatives (petitions, requests for meetings with local authorities, demonstrations and challenges of local government decisions in court) follow suit. The active engagement of citizens in local public life should reflect positively on democratic performance. However, it could also slow down decision-making by adding to the chorus of voices involved in the process.

3.5.3 Level of Education of Local Government Staff Members

⁴⁶ As in Chapter One, the average audience of all outlets present in one locality is selected as the measure of audience size.

The survey queried chief administrative officers about the number of local government staff members having completed higher education. A better educated staff may well be better able to adjust to the fast-paced changes and reforms that continuously affected local systems, as well as better equipped to aid local legislator to identify and serve the need of their communities (Maestas 2000, 663). Therefore, more staff with higher education is expected to impact positively on performance.

3.5.4 Community Homogeneity

When people are similar in many respects such as socio-demographic characteristics, income, beliefs, etc., representation is less problematic. There should be less dissent among local representatives and citizens as how to allocate the available resources. Greater homogeneity is therefore expected to be connected with greater decisional efficiency. The survey data provide information about tensions caused by a number of local cleavages: income, religious beliefs, political views, ethnic origin, long-established residents versus newcomers, differences between local neighborhoods or settlements, and their rural or urban character. I would expect more and stronger cleavages to be linked with poorer decisional performance. Conversely, it is plausible that more diversity brings more frequent opportunities to draw citizens into the decision-making process. However, the positive impact of cleavages on democratic performance might not be felt should these divides have been translated into NGOs or political parties.

Obviously, a larger number of factors would be required to explain performance more fully.⁴⁷ However, the goal of this analysis is not to explain all the observed

⁴⁷ Notably, more detailed measures of financial capacities and autonomy. These elements can only be controlled for adequately in the framework of country comparisons rather than in a study privileging the locality as its prime unit of observation.

variance in performance, but to provide an evaluation of the part played by the media in it.

3.6 Interactions between Media Features and Other Factors

Due to the complex nature of media effects, the hypotheses below include the potential for interaction effects – that is, the possibility that the characteristics of media act together with other variables to yield an effect that can neither be attributed entirely to media nor to the other variables alone.

Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) found that partisan individuals are more likely to learn facts with a partisan color, and that contact by political parties and citizens' knowledge about politics go up together. As they put it, parties and NGOs provide “fertile ground for improving the information environment” (ibid., 282). Consequently, investigating for potential interactions between media and the presence of local organizations could tell us more about how local media influence operates, and in which context. Hypotheses involving the interaction between media and political/civil society specifically concern democratic performance, notably due to the already mentioned “push” phenomenon (see footnote 43). The first hypothesis predicts that the impact of media will be greater in places where there are more NGOs to diffuse information and mobilize citizens more effectively. Similarly, I expect that municipalities that are the theater of citizens' active engagement in public life will also see a greater influence of local media.

Hypothesis 2.5: Media features will have a greater impact on democratic performance in localities where more civic organizations are present.

Hypothesis 2.6: Media features will have a greater impact on democratic performance in localities where local citizens have engaged in demonstrating, petitioning, contacting local officials or challenging local government decisions.

To summarize, I expect the number of media, the quality of their coverage of local public affairs and their audience reach to “push up” performance, especially democratic performance. The same should be true with greater diversity in the media ownership structure. A denser civic network, generally gauged by the presence of NGOs and political parties as well as by citizens’ initiatives, is likely to have different effects, depending on the type of performance considered. If the general hypotheses are supported, more associations, parties and initiatives should go hand in hand with greater democratic performance, but lower decisional performance. The effects of unemployment are expected to be negative. The diversity of interests represented in localities, measured by the degree of tensions rooted in income, religious, geographic and other differences among inhabitants, should lead to lower decisional performance. Lastly, it is posited that opportunities for discussion and dissemination of political information (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995, 5) offered by local clubs, civic associations and various NGOs could amplify the impact of the media on democratic performance.

4. Data and Method of Analysis

The analysis below relies on survey data collected in Hungary, Poland, Latvia and Romania within the framework of the Indicators of Local Democratic Governance Project (ILDGP) in the spring of 2001. Unless indicated otherwise, the data comes from the Local Government Survey (LGS), one component of the ILDGP. The first step consists in verifying whether there is a difference between localities endowed with media and those that have none with respect to decisional and democratic performance. A first set of regression equations, controlling for population size and the country in which the localities are situated, estimates the impact of basic media presence (none versus at least one outlet), and also of the full scale of the number of media available in

town (none to eight or more) on both types of performance. Then two linear regression equations estimate the combined impact of the four local media characteristics on decisional and democratic performance.

A third set of equations assesses the relative impact of these media features together with that of other factors likely to affect local government performance: the presence of political parties and civic organizations, citizens' active participation in public life (measured by a dummy variable indicating whether at least one initiative was undertaken in the locality), unemployment, local government capacity (measured by the number of local government staff members with higher education), as well as community heterogeneity. Finally, another set of equations explores interaction effects, i.e., the potentially greater effect of media features in local environments characterized by denser civic and political networks and more active citizens. The paragraphs below describe the performance indices, as well as briefly recall the operationalization of the media variables used to test the hypotheses presented in the previous section. A detailed description of the variables can be found in Appendix III.

The privileged unit of observation is the locality. Except where interaction effects are concerned, the analyses are based on the pooled data set – that is, all the localities from the four countries together. Dummy variables control for the country in which municipalities are located. They capture country-level variations not accounted for by the factors considered in the models. Hungary is used as the reference category. Population size is also controlled for. In all regression analyses, the data is weighted to adjust for the overrepresentation of bigger localities in the sample, thus assigning equal weight to all municipalities.

Space constraints and the limited information available about the particularities of local media systems in each country - aside from the characteristics assessed by the

ILDGP survey data - restrict the range of country-related hypotheses that that I can draw and test. However, remarks about different country patterns are made in the Findings section.

4.1 Media Variables

The four media features considered in this chapter were presented in details in the first chapter. Nevertheless, a brief reminder of the measures' operationalization might be useful. Otherwise, readers are invited to go to the following section about performance indices.

The variable measuring the number of local media covering local public affairs "from time to time" ranges from zero to eight. When CAOs where asked to qualify the extent to which outlets cover public affairs, how many citizens they reach, etc., they were requested to provide information about the first five outlets. Consequently, the number of media was adjusted to account for a maximum of five outlets in the analyses involving other media characteristics. The response categories of the question pertaining to media ownership were the following: the local government or a company owned by the local government; another government (regional or national) or a company owned by this government; a local public institution; a political party; an NGO(s); a business enterprise(s); a private citizen(s) or "other owner." Chief administrative officers had the option of indicating that they did not know who sponsored an outlet. The variable is coded from 1 to 5, given that diversity cannot exceed the number of outlets for which ownership information is available.

The coverage offered by the local media about political affairs is measured by the presence or absence of four elements from local outlets' regular coverage: 1) reports about decisions of the local assembly; 2) reports about proposals debated in the

assembly; 3) reports about arguments and counterarguments discussed at the local assembly; and 4) interviews with local government leaders or councilors. Absence of coverage is coded “0,” and “1” reflects the presence of these quality elements in outlets’ coverage. The scores for the four elements were added and divided by the total number of outlets in each municipality. Audience size is computed using chief administrative officers’ estimates of the number of citizens reached by each media outlet, on a scale ranging from 0 (“less than one person out of 10”) to 10 (“almost everyone”). These estimates were averaged to take into account the number of available outlets. Chapter One as well as Appendix II present the distributions of media systems’ features for the pooled data set as well as for localities grouped by countries.

4.2 Performance Indices

The decisional index was constructed using CAOs’ answers to survey questions on the number of occurrences of lack of quorum, the frequency of postponed decisions, budget promptness (acceptance of the budget before the legal deadline), as well as the number of extraordinary sessions held in 2000. The results were added to obtain a score for each municipality. A higher score denotes a better decisional performance.⁴⁸

The democratic index measures whether local authorities discussed budgetary plans with local civic associations, whether they held a public forum about the budget and published a draft of the document before it was passed. It also includes an indicator of the number of local associations that participated in the decision-making process during the year via membership in a municipal committee or as experts consulted by the local authorities. The last indicator included is the number of public hearings held

⁴⁸ The indices are not meant as scales or as “objective” measures of performance; what constitutes performance here is solely defined by the available data. The indicators used to build the indices do not necessarily correlate with one another.

in 2000.⁴⁹ Again the measures were summed up. Like the decisional performance index, the democratic index is positive: the higher the score, the better the performance.

Both indices are constructed so that each municipality is compared with other localities in the same country. This step was taken to compensate for the inevitable fact that the indices “perform” differently in each country. For example, a Polish regulation states that the failure to respect the legal deadline to pass the yearly municipal budget should result in the intervention and passing of the budget by a supervisory board. This rule provides a strong incentive to complete the budget on time; accordingly, virtually all municipalities in Poland met the budget deadline in 2000. In Latvia, where such an incentive is absent, approximately 30% of municipalities did not meet the legal deadline that same year. Does this mean that Polish cities are doing better than Latvian ones? The indices do not allow such general conclusions. But according to the selected indicator – budget promptness in this case – Polish localities perform better than their Latvian counterparts. It may well be that according to another indicator not included in the survey, the reverse situation would be true. To control as much as possible for such inevitable disparities, the indicators were centered on their mean, using the mean of each country’s samples before they were added up. Consequently, a Polish city that failed to pass the budget on time was assigned a very low score compared to other, “timely” cities in the country. Latvian towns that did not manage to meet the deadline also received a lower score than the Latvian localities that met it, but not as low because the average of that indicator in Latvia is lower than in Poland.

⁴⁹ The question about discussion of budget plans with journalists was not retained because it is not independent of the presence of media in the locality. A measure of the number of local referenda was also not included because the question was not asked in Latvia.

5. Results

5.1 Media Presence

The first hypothesis was a simple one: that cities endowed with media achieve greater performance than those without local outlets, when the data is controlled for size of locality and the country in which they are situated. Coefficients in Table 2.1 show that the number of local media is not significantly associated with the measure of decisional efficiency of local authorities. It turns out that local media presence is significantly associated with greater democratic performance. However, this impact is significantly felt only as the number of outlets increases.

Table 2.1. Impact of Media Presence on Decisional and Democratic Performance

	Decisional Performance	Democratic Performance
Local media presence (none versus at least one outlet)	.014 (adj. R ² : -.001)	.041 (adj. R ² : .027)
Number of media outlets (zero to eight or more outlets)	.028 (adj. R ² : .00)	.102** (adj. R ² : .031)

* p<.05 ** p<.01

N=2,022

Entries are beta coefficients from linear regression. Population size and country are controlled for.

Sources: Local Government Survey, ILDGP 2001.

The fact that the coefficient is positive and significant supports the first hypothesis in the case of democratic performance. The significance pattern holds everywhere⁵⁰ except in Romania, where media presence is also weakest (more than half of Romania localities have no local outlets).

⁵⁰ In Hungary and Poland, significance levels are below 0.01. In Poland, the relationship is weaker, significant at the 0.1 level.

5.2 Diversity of Ownership, Coverage and Audience Size

Next, I want to know if aspects of the local media other than the number of outlets are associated with greater decisional and democratic performance. Therefore, the focus is on localities where at least one media outlet is available. According to Hypothesis 2.2, the presence of different types of local media sponsors should enhance performance, notably democratic performance.⁵¹ Hypotheses 2.3 and 2.4 predict that more coverage of town hall politics and larger audiences would also positively influence performance, again more on the democratic than the decisional side. Along with these characteristics of media, the number of outlets was retained in the equation (recoded to account for a maximum of five, the highest number of outlets for which information is available regarding ownership, coverage and audience size).

The results partly confirm expectations. Coverage of local politics and a diverse ownership structure of local media are positively associated with democratic performance. Decisional performance fails to be significantly affected by any of the four features of media. These results demonstrate that democratic performance responds to the shape of the local media scene. The four characteristics of local media systems taken together, along with population size and country dummies, explain slightly over 5% of the total variance observed in democratic performance. Among the four media features, coverage of local public affairs plays the largest role in influencing democratic performance: whether the media cover local government affairs or not is what matters most. More media outlets with diverse ownership also spells good news for democratic performance.

⁵¹ The coefficient of a variable measuring whether the media scene was entirely controlled by the local government was not significant when included in the equation instead of the ownership diversity variable.

Table 2.2. Impact of Media Features on Decisional and Democratic Performance

	Decisional performance	Democratic performance
Population size (logged)	-.041	.094*
Number of media outlets	.024	.058
Diversity of ownership	.008	.111**
Coverage of local politics	-.034	.155**
Audience size	.066	-.048
Poland	.028	-.158**
Romania	.044	.003
Latvia	.009	-.095*
	Adj. R ² : .00	Adj. R ² : .053

* p<.05 ** p<.01

N=1,119

Entries are beta coefficients from linear regression.

Constants not shown. Source: Local Government Survey, ILDGP 2001.

Conducting the same analysis for each country separately is informative. The positive link between coverage and decisional performance already described emerges in all four countries.⁵² The case of ownership diversity and number of media is particular to each country: obviously, the two are related to some degree (a partial correlation controlling for population size in the pooled data set yields a coefficient of .39). In fact, diversity of ownership structure plays a major role in Poland, while in Hungary and Latvia it is the number of media in town that makes a difference,⁵³ with diversity not being significant. Table A1.1 in Appendix II displays the fact that Polish municipalities enjoy a much higher rate of diversity than their counterparts in other countries. It could well be that a certain diversity threshold has to be reached before it can play a major role and relegate to backstage the impact of the number of available media outlets. In other words, a certain degree of competition, not reached except in

⁵² The significance level of the coverage's coefficients in Latvia and Romania are 0.07 and 0.06 respectively.

Poland, could be required before the effects of a diverse ownership structure on performance can be registered. This hypothesis cannot be tested until more municipalities displaying greater media competition, from a larger range of countries, can be included in a sample.

Interestingly, Romania is the only country where neither diversity nor the number of media are associated with democratic performance. As mentioned above, it is the country where local media outlets are least present, where they are consumed on average by fewer people, and show less propensity to cover local public affairs.⁵⁴ This could explain why media features make little difference for performance.

Table 2.2 also shows that when only media factors are considered (with controls for country), bigger localities generally experience greater democratic performance. This is not surprising, given that the sheer presence of more citizens provides more opportunities for their inclusion in the decision-making process, as well as (plausibly) greater grassroots pressure for such opportunities to be made available by local authorities. On the other hand, in the case of decisional performance, greater size of locality is associated, albeit not significantly, with less efficiency.

5.3 Other Factors Explaining Local Government Performance

Testing the strength of the variables already observed requires the consideration of other factors potentially accounting for local government performance. Table 2.3 includes the presence of local civic organizations and political parties in the locality; unemployment, as a measure of how the community is doing economically; the percentage of local government staff members with higher education, which controls

⁵³ In Hungary, the significance level of the number of media outlets variable is 0.01; in Latvia, 0.05.

⁵⁴ However, we need to keep in mind the results of the Public Opinion Barometer surveys cited in section 1.1, according to which readership of Romanian local papers is far from negligible (at least between

for the institutional capacity of local authorities; and, lastly, community heterogeneity or cleavages palpable enough to cause a certain degree of tension among local inhabitants (1 indicating “low” and 7 “high” tension).

1995 and 1997, when the surveys were carried out; the author could not find more recent data pertaining to local media audience).

Table 2.3. The Impact of Media Features, Civic Organizations, Political Parties, Citizens' Initiatives, Unemployment, Education of Local Government Staff and Population Cleavages on Performance

	Decisional Performance	Democratic Performance
Population size (logged)	-.091	-.031
Number of media	-.007	.028
Diversity of ownership	.010	.105**
Coverage of local politics	-.026	.161**
Audience size	.080*	-.043
Number of NGOs	.034	.122**
Number of political parties	.031	.004
Citizens' initiatives (dummy)	.071*	.092**
Unemployment	.043	.063
Staff education	-.026	.100**
Community heterogeneity	.146**	.021
Poland	.076	-.070**
Romania	.075	.021
Latvia	.048	-.114
	Adj. R ² : .026	Adj. R ² : .078

* p<.05 ** p<.01

N=1,061

Entries are beta coefficients obtained from linear regressions.

Source: Local Government Survey, ILDGP 2001.

As expected, the presence of a larger number of civic organizations in the municipality is linked to the more democratic character of decision-making. Whether citizens had engaged in public life⁵⁵ was significantly related to both types of performance. The relationship goes in the anticipated direction and is stronger where democratic practices are concerned: localities that witnessed citizens taking initiatives such as signing a petition, demonstrating or demanding to meet their local

representatives boast a higher democratic performance. However, those localities also experienced *fewer* delays and postponements, and thus a higher decisional performance. The relative rarity of citizens' initiatives (more than half of localities witnessed no initiative at all and the number of localities where more than one single initiative took place is very small) calls for a cautious interpretation of these findings.

As anticipated, more staff members with higher education working for local authorities yielded a significantly better democratic performance. But this did not bear significantly upon decisional performance. The latter finding may be explained by the fact that staff members have little, if any, opportunity to affect such things as quorum, budget promptness or the number of extraordinary sessions held in a locality. Elected representatives are in large part responsible for decisional performance as measured in this study. Staff members, on the other hand, are more likely to impact on the inclusive character of decision making through direct and regular contacts with community members and local civic groups.

Contrary to expectations, a more politicized environment did not correspond to less efficiency in the decision-making process.⁵⁵ The high number of independent councilors, notably in Hungary and in Poland, the frequent occurrence of candidates with multiple party labels, as well as the likelihood of consensus rule in local governments, especially small ones, could help explain why party politics does not appear to matter for performance in a direct way.

Another result not in line with expectations is that communities divided along a higher number of cleavages witness a significantly smoother decision-making process. It may be that tensions and the heightened awareness of potential disputes that is likely

⁵⁵ Localities were separated into two categories: those that witnessed no such initiatives (a little more than half of the sample) and those where at least one activity took place.

⁵⁶ The coefficient for the number of factions included in the ruling coalition of the local assembly was not significant when included with or used instead of the number of parties.

to accompany them impose constraints that ultimately prove beneficial to decisional performance. Where the balance between interests is more delicate, it may be that local authorities cannot afford to be bogged down by procedural delays and obstacles, or that differently-minded participants will act as checks upon each other. I not only initially posited that cleavages, as a measure of the diversity of preferences among citizens, would diminish efficiency but also that they would create an opportunity to boost democratic performance. However, the number and depth of social, economic and other local fault lines as gauged by survey data do not have a visible impact on local governments' participatory practices.⁵⁷ It could be that, as speculated earlier, the divergent interests rooted in local cleavages are channeled through civil society.

The unemployment coefficients fail to achieve significance in both equations. Furthermore, their positive sign is not coherent with the initial hypothesis that the two types of performance should be hampered by a higher unemployment rate. It could be that unemployment figures given by CAOs do not constitute an adequate proxy for the general financial state of the community. In addition, I cannot be entirely sure that economic adversity has the usually assumed negative impact on participation⁵⁸ at the local level. For example, walking to the councilor's office in a small town typically takes less time than visiting a parliamentary representative, whose office is likely to be located in the county's largest city. A preliminary investigation of aggregate voting behavior at the local level in Hungary shows that poorer localities experience higher turnout than wealthier cities (Gosselin 2003a). A potential reason for this finding could be the not negligible welfare benefits handed out by local governments in a number of CEE countries.

⁵⁷ Equations including each type of cleavage separately did not yield significant coefficients.

⁵⁸ One of the reasons frequently given to explain lower civic involvement is lack of resources (see Brady, Verba and Schlozmann 1995).

The adjusted R-squared values of the full model remain relatively modest, indicating that factors other than those tested here are responsible for most of the variation in performance observed between localities (2.6% of the observed variation is accounted for in the case of decisional performance, almost 8% in the case of democratic performance). More interesting for the present purpose is that the two features of media systems highlighted in Table 2.2 - coverage and diversity of the ownership structure - retain a significant and positive relationship with democratic performance even when alternative explanations are controlled for. Moreover, the strength of the relationships between these media characteristics and democratic performance remains largely unaffected by the inclusion of additional factors in the equation.

Lastly, the coefficient of audience size is significant for decisional performance once other factors are taken into consideration. In the absence of other elements that could point to a pattern, the interpretation of this result is not straightforward. In any case, the impact of the variable is limited since audience size coefficients were not significant in the first, media features-only, equation (Table 2.2). It could be that a measure of penetration based on CAOs' estimates does not adequately reflect real audience size. Of the four media characteristics asked about in the LGS, audience is probably the most difficult for CAOs to assess with accuracy (more difficult than the number of outlets or the nature of their coverage).⁵⁹

Separate country analyses confirm the importance of coverage of local politics' impact on democratic performance, statistically significant in all settings.⁶⁰ Diversity of ownership structure again plays a major role only in Poland. This time, the coefficient for the number of media achieves significance in Latvia (where $p < 0.1$) but not in

Hungary. This weakens the case for speculation about the prime role of the number of available media outlets until ownership structure in the local media market becomes sufficiently competitive, without dismissing it entirely until the hypothesis can be tested in a larger number of settings.

5.4 Investigating Mechanisms of Media Influence on Democratic Performance

As highlighted in the theoretical discussion in the second part of this chapter, media effects are complex and difficult to circumscribe. Two hypotheses presented in Part 3 proposed to explore the possibility that the impact of media on democratic performance of local authorities differs depending on characteristics of the local civil society and the level of political activity of citizens. Once the impact of media features is controlled for, a positive interaction term would suggest that the influence of the selected local media attribute on democratic performance is greater in localities where (for example) I find more civic associations. The analyses of interaction effects focus on democratic performance, because only this aspect of local government performance turned out to be significantly linked to local media features in a manner fitting theoretical considerations.

All four media systems' characteristics are interacted separately with indicators of the presence and dynamism of local civil society: first with the number of civic associations, then with citizens' initiatives (measured by a dummy variable). Earlier I hypothesized that the presence of local civic organizations provides favorable ground for the diffusion of political information. In addition, if information goes hand in hand with mobilization, I also expect a stronger link between media and performance where the local citizenry has proved more active. The analyses for the two types of

⁵⁹ Unlike the question about ownership, the one about audience size did not include the "don't know"

interactions (one with NGO presence, the other with citizens' initiatives) are conducted separately to avoid multiple collinearity problems; indeed, should many variables behave in a very similar way, it would become impossible to distinguish their respective impact.

The method used here follows the one suggested by Jaccard and Turrisi (2003) to capture interaction effects in multivariate regressions. First, the two predicting variables assumed to interact with one another are centered around their mean (a constant equivalent to the variable average is subtracted from each locality's score). The product of the two mean-centered variables constitutes a distinct, third variable. The democratic performance index is then regressed onto the two mean-centered variables, as well as the product term. A significant coefficient for the product term variable indicates that the "moderating" factor - the number of civic associations or local citizens' initiatives - influences the impact of media features on democratic performance.

The first set of analyses of interaction effects takes the number of local civic organizations as a moderating factor. Namely, the impact of media characteristics on democratic performance is expected to vary according to the number of NGOs present in town. A pooled data set analysis shows a positive and significant interaction effect between the number of associations⁶¹ and coverage, as well as between NGO presence and the number of local media.

option among the possible answers.

⁶⁰ In Hungary, Poland and Romania, $p < .01$. In Latvia, $p = .07$.

⁶¹ The number of organizations ranges from none (35% of localities) to 98 or more. In analyses involving interaction terms, the variable was recoded so that localities with 10 local associations or more are part of one category. Approximately 85% of localities count between 0 and 9 NGOs.

Separate country analyses reveal that the interaction between NGO presence⁶² and coverage plays a statistically significant role in Romania. The second interaction effect, involving NGO presence and the number of media outlets, is significant in Romania as well as in Hungary. NGO presence did not combine with either diversity of media systems' ownership structure nor audience size to produce a differential impact on democratic performance.

Citizens' initiatives are the second aspect of local environment allowed to interact with the four media characteristics. Due to the skewed nature of the distribution of citizens' initiatives (more than 50% of localities did not witness any type of action in 2000), the variable was transformed into a dummy (coded "1" for cities where at least one type of action was used, and "0" where none took place). Avowedly crude, this measure of citizens' involvement in local public affairs nonetheless interplays with the local political coverage of local media to yield better democratic performance where inhabitants engaged at least once in petitioning, requesting meetings with local officials, demonstrating or challenging a local government decision. The coefficient of the interaction term is significant for the pooled data set. At the country level, Hungary's and Romania's coefficients are significant at the 0.1 level. Citizens' initiatives also significantly and positively moderate the relationship between the number of media outlets and democratic performance in Hungary, but not in the pooled data set nor in any other country.

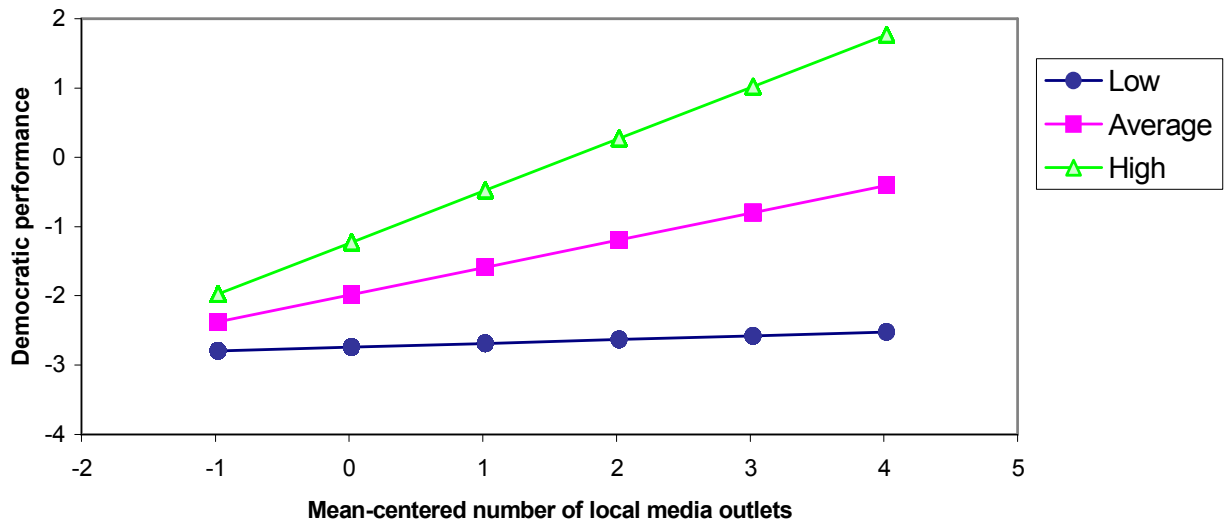
Figure 1 below illustrates graphically how NGO presence affects the impact of the number of local media outlets on democratic performance in Hungary. The figure shows that the effect of the number of available outlets on democratic performance

⁶² In Hungary, Poland and Romania, the variable accounting for the number of local organizations has been recoded so that approximately 15% of localities with the largest NGO presence are grouped into one category (in Romania, the scale runs from 0 to 10; in Hungary, from 0 to 15; in Poland, from 0 to

depends on the presence of civic associations, yielding a better performance score where both elements are present in higher numbers. When the number of NGOs in town is “low” (one standard deviation below average), the slope of democratic performance on the number of media outlets differs from when NGO presence stands at average (i.e., approximately five organizations) or one standard deviation above average (approximately ten organizations). If there were no interaction effect, the three lines in the graph would be parallel. This is clearly not the case in Figure 1.

20). In Latvia, no recoding was used as the distribution of NGO presence covered a narrower range, with 35 as the maximum number of associations reported.

Figure 1. Regression lines predicting democratic performance from the number of local media outlets in Hungary



It appears that aspects of the local environment, namely NGO presence and citizens' activities in the public sphere, generally matter more for media effects in Hungary and Romania. Media presence is less frequent in Hungarian and particularly in Romanian localities, and local outlets available in the latter provide comparatively limited coverage of local politics (see Table 1.3 in Chapter One). It could be that outlets present in environments where media are not such a common feature, as well as those outlets standing out due to their markedly more political content (without implying that party labels are necessarily involved), resonate more within civil society, even if the latter is not overly developed - at least not by the yardstick of number of associations, which is lower in Romania than in the three other countries. Altogether, the analysis of interaction effects provides us with as many insights as it raises new, intriguing questions.

6. Conclusion

This chapter explored the linkages between local media and the performance of local governments in Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Romania. Two aspects of performance were considered: decisional performance, i.e., how efficiently local government officials and representatives arrive at decisions, and democratic performance, i.e., how open to citizens' input the rules and practices of decision-making are.

The ILDGP surveys generated original data pertaining to local government operations, local media, political parties and civil society in a large number of localities in Central and Eastern European countries. The survey data shed light on various aspects of local media scenes: the number of outlets available on the local market; whether local governments or commercial interests are behind local media; how much local outlets report about local public affairs, notably local government issues; and the extent to which citizens attend to local media.

Statistical analysis was used to put to the test the hypothesis that these four attributes of local media enhance the performance of local authorities where they are present, especially democratic performance. The analysis mainly concerns a pooled data set including more than 2,000 municipalities from the four countries considered in this chapter, but also addresses country differences. Hypotheses and findings are summarized in the two sections below.

6.1 The Direct Impact of Media Characteristics on Performance

Hypotheses 2.1 to 2.4 respectively submit that localities endowed with more media outlets, where the ownership structure of those outlets is more diverse, where the quality of coverage is higher and where more citizens consume local media, are

expected to display better performance, notably better democratic performance. The first stage of the analysis shows that more abundant coverage of local public affairs, greater availability of media outlets and greater diversity in the ownership structure are linked with higher democratic performance scores, but register no impact on decisional performance. The average reach of local outlets was associated with neither of the two performance measures. A closer look at country patterns revealed that coverage of local politics has a positive and significant impact in all settings. On the other hand, the positive impact of diversity of ownership structure on the democratic aspect of local authorities' performance emerges only in Poland. In Hungary and Latvia, it is rather the number of media outlets that accounts for higher democratic performance, while neither the size of local media scenes nor ownership diversity matter for democratic performance in Romania. These mixed findings could be explained by a potential threshold effect. The number of media appears to have an effect on performance only above a certain threshold; in turn, once a local media system's ownership structure is diverse enough, it may "take over" the positive impact of the number of local outlets. The ownership structure of local media is not equally diverse in the four countries considered in this research. Polish localities often count many outlets, owned or controlled by different actors. There are also much fewer local media in Hungary and Romania. In further research, localities from a larger number of countries need to be examined to test a threshold hypothesis and fully disentangle effects due to country settings and those attributed to media features.

A second multivariate analysis showed that the impact of media features previously identified, notably the positive effect of coverage on democratic performance, is quite robust. The strength of the coefficients remains largely unaltered once local political and civic activities (number of political parties and of NGOs, and

citizens' activities connected to public affairs), the communities' characteristics such as size, unemployment and community heterogeneity, as well as the level of education of local government staff, are all controlled for. In a few words, these findings support Hypothesis 2.3 in all the country settings examined in this chapter. Hypotheses 1 is confirmed only in Latvia and Hungary (to a lesser extent in the latter country), while Hypothesis 2.2 holds up in Poland. The data does yield support for Hypothesis 4.

6.2 Channeling Media Influence

The linkages between media and government performance run through a number of potential channels. Media can influence performance because citizens with access to more abundant and better information about local public affairs are more likely to hold their representatives accountable. Those citizens are also more likely to better articulate their interests and concerns, and to voice them when issues relevant to their daily lives, from welfare and primary school education to garbage collection, are at stake. The second stage of the analysis set out to explore three potential channels of media effects on democratic performance. Decisional performance was not considered in this part of the analysis since media features did not exhibit a statistically significant link with this aspect of performance.

The study investigated how the presence and dynamism of civil society affect the impact of media on democratic performance. Hypotheses 2.5 and 2.6 stated respectively that the number of NGOs in town and citizens' public issues-oriented activities (requesting meetings with local authorities' representatives, taking part in demonstrations, signing petitions or challenging a local government decision in front of courts) should enhance the impact of media features on democratic performance. Findings partly support Hypotheses 2.5 and 2.6 in Hungary and Romania. In both

cases, a stronger NGO presence was associated with a greater impact of media attributes (of coverage of local political matters in Romania; of the number of outlets in Hungary and Romania) on democratic performance. The enhancing effect of citizens' active involvement is similar but weaker. Citizens' initiatives corresponded with a stronger impact of coverage in Romania and Hungary; it was also linked to larger effects of the number of outlets, but only in Hungary.

Overall, the media features examined in this study account for over 5% of variation observed in democratic performance between localities. This is not negligible, given that media effects are by nature difficult to circumscribe and thus to quantify. The difficulties of the endeavour are increased by the paucity of available information about local media in general, which received scant attention in transition studies compared to their national counterpart. These findings tell us that media do matter for how local governments run municipal public affairs. This is not a trivial conclusion, since assumptions about the positive influence of plurality and independence of the media on local democracy have so far had more currency than quantitative assessments of the influence of local media on local authorities' practices. Still, the results of this research cannot tell the whole story of how local media matter for local government performance.

Focusing on the locality as the unit of observation, as the available survey data is well suited for, has increased explanatory leverage with regards to the impact of media features. However, the differences between media systems, as well as between local government systems at the country level, compounded by the lack of information about local media, pose a thought-provoking challenge. More information and further research is required to better understand local media, formulate more precise hypotheses about their effects and interpret findings with greater accuracy. This chapter

sought to identify direct and indirect (through interactions) linear effects of media systems' characteristics on local government performance. As hypothesized in the case of diversity of ownership structure, an influence might be detectable only after a certain threshold is reached. Media may also affect performance following a more complex pattern of combinations between media features and characteristics of local environments than has been examined in these pages.

This chapter merely opens the investigation of this so far neglected topic. The next chapters pursue it, turning their attention to citizens' political behaviour and bringing into closer focus the functions of media outlined in the Introduction.

Chapter Three

The Effects of Local Media on Turnout A Comparison of the Instrumental and Expressive Approaches to Citizens' Participation in Local Elections

1. Introduction

Low and declining political participation in many industrialized countries (Blais 2000) has raised fundamental concerns about the legitimacy of governments and citizens' equality (Lijphart 1997; Hajnal and Trounstein 2005). In a number of Western European countries, turnout has declined more markedly in local than in national elections (Frandsen 2002). The "second-order elections" model (Reif and Schmitt 1980), arguing that citizens largely take cues from national politics to cast their vote in non-national elections, left little room for the study of local contexts and their impact on political involvement. However, national factors do not explain the variance observed in turnout between municipalities (Van der Kolk 2000; Heath et al. 1999; Thomsen 1998). Furthermore, the perceived importance of local governments cannot fully account for the varying size of turnout gaps observed between levels of governments in different countries. Lesser politicization has been put forth as an explanatory factor for the relatively modest involvement in local elections (Morlan 1984, 463) but we know little about the reasons why mobilization works - or not - on the local political scene (see Blais 2000, 36-9).

This chapter investigates the role of local media, along with that of other local factors, in participation in local elections. It proposes a comprehensive model of local turnout. The model evaluates the impact of three groups of factors likely to influence individuals' decision to participate in local elections, and thus turnout: firstly, the

information available to citizens, gauged by the attributes of local media and density of the network of local associations. Secondly, it considers party competition, measured by the number of contenders and the closeness of results. Lastly, the chapter assesses the influence of local authorities' social assistance spending, shaping the stakes of local elections notably for disadvantaged segments of the population. According to the instrumental view of voting advocated by the rational choice approach, the probability of casting the decisive vote is a key determinant of the decision to take part in elections, while information imparted by local media affects the costs of voting. If, however, voters follow an expressive logic, local media's role may well be as much about information than contribute to the excitement of the race and the psychological benefits associated with expressing a preference for one or another candidate in local electoral contests. The chapter explores the implications of both models with respect to the three aspects of local environments – media, local party competition, and local welfare spending - using data pertaining to local elections in Hungary and Poland. These two countries are selected because of the availability of detailed local electoral results, statistics, and information about local government expenditures since the mid-1990s.

The second section below exposes the main competing explanations of turnout and the empirical results they generated, with a special attention to studies focused on local political participation. The third part of the chapter details the hypotheses to be tested, and the fourth section presents the results. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the impact of local media on turnout, and what findings suggest about the motivations behind participation in elections.

2. Explanations of Turnout

2.1 The Rational Choice Approach

In the last fifty years, political scientists have increasingly borrowed from the field of economics to explain political behavior, assuming that citizens maximize their utility and act in a goal-oriented, instrumental manner. In the field of voting behavior, these accounts have enjoyed more success in explaining vote choice than why people vote at all (Schuessler 2000b, ix). Originally developed by Downs (1957), the rational choice model posits that citizens evaluate and compare the expected costs and benefits of voting before deciding whether to vote or stay at home. No matter how much one cares about a candidate winning rather than losing, the decision ultimately hinges on the chance of casting the decisive vote. A rational voter will only take the time to go and vote if she is not certain that her candidate will win or lose, and if she believes that her vote will make a difference. A sure win or a sure loss renders voting irrelevant for the outcome. Since the probability that one vote decides an election is extremely small in typical electorates, the theory predicts that no one should vote. In reality, many people cast a ballot in all types of elections, hence the well-known paradox of voting.

Consequently, recent empirical studies rarely devote more than a passing remark to rational choice theory (Green and Shapiro 1994, 71). “Taking seriously” the rational choice approach, Blais (2000) set out to test the main propositions of the theory using an impressive number of data sets. The exercise underscores the limits of the assumption that people always calculate the costs and benefits of voting when deciding whether to show up at the polling booth. Yet, Blais concludes that rational choice remains a useful framework – not least because it has forced scholars to take “irrationality” into account (*ibid.*, 140).

2.2 Alternatives to Rational Choice: Expressive Voting

In an attempt to rescue rational choice theory from the paradox, Riker and Ordeshook (1968) introduced consumption benefits in the model. These benefits are only indirectly linked with the outcome of the election such as the satisfaction of expressing a partisan preference. What they termed citizens' "sense of duty" encompasses benefits derived from the sentiment of having fulfilled one's obligation. Their work has led to much debate on the effects of social norms on voting (Ordeshook 1986). Such a broadening of the list of reasons why people vote opened the door to even larger-encompassing conceptions of what voter's utility consists of.⁶³

The extension of the benefits of voting to elements other than those related to electoral outcomes has been developed furthest by tenants of expressive voting. While definitions of expressive voting differ between authors, most accounts are centered on the concept of identification, and reject the necessity of a link between the act of voting and the strict goal of electing representatives required by rational choice theorists. Schuessler (2000a) conceives voting as a means of establishing or affirming a political identity or attachment. It is about "being" rather than "doing." For example, casting a ballot for a Democrat is not done with an eye on contributing to the victory of the Democratic candidate as much as to become a Democrat (*ibid.*, 90-1).

Brennan and Hamlin (1999) propose a somewhat different mechanism. In typical elections held to select representatives,⁶⁴ citizens vote for candidates whose characteristics they can identify with – from speaking skills, good looks and professionalism to policies they favor. In this sense, the vote is a "favourable comment"

⁶³ In fact, Riker and Ordeshook do not go as far as to say that utility can include just about any types of satisfaction derived from the act of voting, but this is what the introduction of consumption benefits in the model ultimately implies. I leave the readers to consult Blais's (2000, 1-11) and Mueller's reviews (1989, esp. 348-369) for more details about the various modifications and adjustments made to the rational choice model as well as the critiques it received.

⁶⁴ Referendums are a different case because policy options are then directly selected.

on a candidate, not necessarily motivated by a connection between the vote and the potential outcome of the election (ibid., 124). Brennan and Hamlin's account of expressive voting allows weaving in the oft-mentioned ignorance of the public about policies and candidates' positions, as well as the "horse race" character of media coverage of electoral campaigns focused on personal traits of the candidates, more popular with the public than coverage of substantial policy matters (Iyengar, Norpoth and Hahn 2004). Indeed, just like good looks, good policies – as so defined by each voter - generate enthusiasm about the candidates' personae and accrue to politicians' reputation, enhancing voter identification with candidates' characteristics. By the same token, the two authors reconcile instrumental and expressive motivations as complementary explanations of voting.

Franklin (2005) proposes yet a different definition of what he terms "expressive engagement", arguing that people vote because they wish to motivate those around them to go and support their favored political alternative. The goal is to ensure their membership in "potentially winning coalitions of voters who need the participation of all members of their group if their candidate is to win" (ibid., 6-7). He thus links the expressive approach with the mobilization one (described in the next section). Franklin is particularly interested in the behavior of younger voters who have not yet acquired the habit of (not) voting. He finds that members of younger cohorts vote at a higher rate when they have lived for many years in the same neighborhood, which makes them more responsive to the mobilizing efforts of others members of the social networks they are embedded in. Similarly, in the case of tighter electoral races, young voters are exposed to an enhanced mobilization effort exerted by members of their entourage

seeking the expressive benefit of being on the winning side, and eventually learn themselves to value such benefits.⁶⁵

Finally, Toka (2002) proposes to integrate all the benefits of voting, including the political rewards directly related to electoral outcomes, under the hedonistic umbrella of the entertainment value of elections and the satisfaction of accomplishing one's civic duty. He cite the example of a voter who derives considerable positive feelings out of realizing, as she reads or watches daily reports about the electoral campaign, that the party that she always supported promotes policies that are consistent with her preferences. Thus, in reality, an expressive voter behaves much like a Downsian one, except for "a surprisingly high tolerance for the costs of voting, information and decision-making" (ibid., 9).

2.3 Other Turnout Models

As mentioned above, rational choice theory now rarely constitutes the starting point of empirical analyses of turnout. However, neither does the expressive voting account. Many recent studies refer to other models, among which the resource model. The best known account of the resource model of turnout is probably the one described by Verba, Shlozmann and Brady (1995), which they apply to voting and a range of other participatory activities. Citizens who have more time, money, education,

⁶⁵ Franklin adds that the impact of more competitive elections is however largely indirect, channelled through interest in elections, party identification, etc. (2005, 24-5). Franklin's argument is similar to that of Shuessler (2000b) and Ashworth, Geys and Heyndels (n.d.) in that people value being on the winning side. The latter authors put a ceiling on this value – when more than half of voters take to one side, the utility of expressing one's belonging to a well-defined group diminishes. This explains the interdependence effect between closeness and winning party size found by Shuessler as well as Ashworth et al. Toka (2002, 15) argues that making the urge to be on the winning side one of the trademarks of expressive voting overly narrows and distorts the psychological benefits derived from voting. He considers that "psychologically rational voters", who are entertained by or derive positive feelings from political involvement, behave much like politically instrumental voters would if they had high tolerance for the costs involved in the act of voting. The results is that "the political benefits of the vote, as well as the expected closeness of an election may simply be incorporated in [the] entertainment value of the vote, or increase [voters'] appreciation of the civic duty to vote (Toka 2002, 9).

information, and who are better connected within tighter personal networks are generally better equipped to take part in political activities. This explanation of voting largely focuses on the capacity to cast a ballot rather than on the substantive reasons to do so; in rational choice parlance, the resource model has little to say about the benefits of voting (Blais 2000). A context-based variant of the resource model holds that the setting in which people live – more or less affluent, of one or the other political color – interacts with individual characteristics such as income and education to lead to different participation behavior patterns (e.g. Krassa 1988; Huckfeldt 1979).

The mobilization model brings more systematically the influence of individuals' environment into an explanation of citizens' political behavior. According to this model, political parties, lobbies, but also informal groups like associations, friends, colleagues, and family members play an important role in making people vote. People at the center of complex webs of social networks, as well as those reached by parties' or interest groups' specifically targeting the groups they belong to are more likely to participate in elections. This partly connects with Franklin's (2005) conception of "expressive engagement" described in the previous section. Pimlot (1973) raised the possibility that the greater mobilization effort of political parties generated by marginality is behind the higher participation rates observed in marginal wards in English parliamentary elections (Denver and Hands 1974) rather than marginality itself. Hamilton (1974) observed that the non-partisan character of local elections in the United States yields very low turnout, notably by effectively removing not only party appeals, but much of the interest and drama associated with presidential elections. Non-partisan elections, asserts Hamilton, leave more room for socio-economic factors to influence voting.

Psychological explanations of turnout focus on how interested in politics people are. Similarly, accounts of local electoral turnout focusing on interest in community affairs, attachment to the locality (Davidson and Cotter 1989), or length of residence (Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass 1987) point to a link between a sense of community, or community embeddedness, and local political participation.⁶⁶ Just like the psychological approach and the mobilization model share the interest in politics variable, the sense of community factor is also related to a sociological approach of voting. According to Blais, the sociological model is the one that leaves the largest room for considerations other than self-interest to influence political behavior. People then vote due to peer pressure or out of concern for the community, to whom they feel they owe a modicum of participation.

As this short summary illustrates, different explanations of voting overlap to some extent. Current studies often explain their results with a mix of arguments drawing from the sociological, the resources, as well as the psychological models. For example, Oliver's (1999, 2000, 2001) recent work on local political participation in suburban American cities takes into account the social make-up of localities, citizens' social networks, as well as interest in politics. Some authors also link the significant impact of psychological and sociological factors to expressive – or other than instrumental - motives for political participation (e.g. Franklin 2005; Kaniovski and Mueller 2005, who associate community size and linguistic heterogeneity in Norwegian

⁶⁶ Community tenure has been found to impact on voting in other types of elections (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, 226), as well as other measures of community embeddedness (church attendance, home ownership, etc. - see Cox 1998, 7). Some researchers have focused on community heterogeneity and its effects on participation. Oliver (2001) finds that heterogeneity (racial heterogeneity in the United States) mirrors political competition, thus fostering turnout. Others however find that heterogeneity is associated with lower participation (Rose 2002, see Costa and Kahn's review (2003)) precisely because it is likely to diminish the sense of community – i.e. people prefer to interact with similar people, and conflicts are less likely to arise among people with similar characteristics, needs, and values (Kaniovski and Mueller 2005).

communities with a diminished sense of civic duty and a greater urge to express opinions on public issues).

The next section describes the expectations derived from the instrumental and expressive voting models with regards to local media characteristics, the presence of local associations, local party competition as well as local welfare spending. Short descriptions of recent developments pertaining to local competition and local welfare in Hungary and Poland are provided to set the hypotheses more firmly against their respective backgrounds. The empirical indicators used in the analyses are also briefly described along with the hypotheses.

3. Hypotheses

3.1 Local Media and Political Participation

From a rational choice perspective, media use is one means by which citizens can easily obtain information about local events and, during electoral campaigns, learn about the issues and candidates involved in the contest. By reducing the cost of the voting decision, media presence and coverage of local politics increase levels of participation. For example, Settle and Abrams (1976) and Matsusaka (1992) find that the periods during which television and radio were massively introduced in the United States also witnessed higher turnout.

There is also evidence that local media use may lower the costs of casting a ballot in local elections. A number of recent studies specifically concerned with the impact of local media in the American context found a significant link between local media use and participation in local public affairs (Jeffres, Atkin, and Neuendorf 2002; McLeod et al. 1996; McLeod, Scheufele and Moy 1999; Scheufele, Shanahan and Kim

2002; Shah, McLeod and Yoon 2001). Most of the positive findings pertain to the use of hard news content in local newspapers.⁶⁷

These studies by and large call on the information provider role of local media outlets to explain their positive influence on involvement in politics. Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996, 150) found that local newspapers consumption is associated with greater knowledge about local politics, and that the more knowledgeable are more likely to turn up at the polls (*ibid.*, 226; see also Dreyer Lassen 2004). There is also evidence that local media matter at the macro-level. Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996, 212-3) show that in cities where local media's coverage of local politics was meager, respondents' knowledge was adversely affected. Mondak (1995) also finds that media availability influences knowledge when he links a local newspaper strike in Pittsburgh to citizens' lower knowledge levels about state politics during an electoral campaign.

The media can also act as mobilizing agents. This mobilizing role can take shape because politicians and parties reach their constituents via media messages (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 29) but also because the media provide "mobilization information" (Lemert 1984, 1992 that "integrate political issues and conflicts into the context of the larger community and provides information on whom to contact, how to donate money, or where to voice one's opinion" (Eveland and Scheufele 2002, 220). Like the informational role of media, such an effect would reduce the costs of voting. At the same time, the appeals of parties transmitted by local outlets could exacerbate the desire of citizens to express their political identity, or simply make voting more fun than if there were no such coverage.

Another linkage between local media and participation may lie with the community ties identified by the Chicago sociologists and their followers. The study of

⁶⁷ But see McLeod et al. (1996) and Stamm, Emig and Hesse (1997) for a positive but weaker link

links between community ties and media use goes as far back as 1929 to Park's study of newspaper circulation in Chicago. Sociologists specialized in community and urban studies have found that individuals more deeply embedded in their communities, as witness their longer residence and involvement in neighborly activities, are more likely to attend to local media outlets (e.g. Janowitz 1952, Tichenor, Donohue and Olien 1970, Kasarda and Janowitz 1974). Recent works in communication studies (e.g. Jeffres, Atkin, and Neuendorf 2002) still display the "Chicago interest in media as agents of national and communal integration" (Katz 2001, 270). This view of the role of media can be related to Schussler's (2000a, 2000b) and Brennan and Hamlin's (1999) vision of voting as a means to express one's identity – in this case, as a citizen of a particular locality or a community. The Chicago School interpretation of local media effects also echoes the sense of duty evoked by Riker and Ordershook, as well as Blais's description of the sociological model of voting. If local media presence reflects and reinforces a sense of community, it could heighten citizens' sense of owing to their peers, inclining them to pull their weight rather than free ride on others' involvement.⁶⁸

Interpreted in the manner presented by Toka (2002), satisfying a sense of duty is part of the positive feelings derived from voting. This is one of the factors that render voting enjoyable, making it more likely that people will take the time to cast a ballot. Therefore, whether through the norms circulated, the construction of a sense of community belonging, or the presentation of local elections as races, along with photos and details about the personal lives of candidates susceptible to instill excitement into

between participation and local television news watching).

⁶⁸ Local media could also contribute to civic duty by directly communicating the norm of voting as a duty (Shah, McLeod and Yoon 2001). It is difficult to disentangle the parts played by norms, emotional (as opposed to information-based) party appeals, and excitement about elections generated by media content when content analysis is not available. Consequently, this chapter does not seek to distinguish further these potential effects.

prospective voters, local media content adds to what Toka dubs the “entertainment value” of voting.

To sum up, the view that local media contribute to foster political participation by their informational role can be linked to an instrumental conception of voting. On the other hand, other forms of media contribution connected with community identity and excitement fit well with the expressive approach of electoral participation. The mobilization function could be associated with both types of motivations.

The instrumental model can be summarized in the form of the familiar $U=P*B-C$ formula. According to the calculus of voting, the expected benefit of voting (U) equals the benefit of having one’s preferred candidate winning the election (B) multiplied by the probability of determining the outcome of the election (P), minus the costs incurred by voting (C). Alternatively, the expressive model proposes the equation $U=D+E-C$, where the utility of voting is a function of one’s sense of duty (D), added to the entertainment value of voting (E), minus the costs (C).

The models of turnout proposed below include the already familiar four indicators of local media features: the number of available local media outlets in each locality; local government monopoly on local media (denoted by a dummy variable); the extent to which public affairs are covered in local media (whether local outlets reports about assembly debates and decisions and publish or air interviews with local representatives); and audience size. From a rational choice point of view, a larger media scene covering extensively local politics is more apt at conveying a larger amount of information, and thus lower the costs of voting. With respect to information provision and dissemination, local government monopoly needs not be detrimental to an eventual cost-cutting role of local media. Assuming that local politicians wish to be re-elected, it is not implausible to imagine that local governments controlling local

media will ensure that the content is not overly critical of their activities, if not blatantly biased in their favor.⁶⁹ However, participation is not necessarily bound to suffer from local government monopoly on local media, especially in small towns where local government sponsored outlets are likely to be the only provider(s) of town hall news.⁷⁰ Audience size should positively impact on turnout as an indicator of greater reach of local media content. But as it was posited with respect to local government performance in the previous chapter, the “trickling down” effect of information via opinion leaders (Ansolebehere, Behr and Iyengar 1993, 132) may render audience size less relevant a factor.⁷¹

The expressive model holds very similar expectations with respect to the influence of media on local turnout, but for different reasons. Because local media contribute to make people feel part of the community and generate excitement about local elections, their presence and the extent to which they cover local affairs should be associated with higher turnout.⁷²

Hypothesis 3.1: Localities with a larger number of media outlets that provide more generous coverage of local political affairs to a larger number of people are expected to register higher local turnout – either because they lower the costs or augment the entertainment value of voting in local elections.

⁶⁹ See Preoteasa (2003) for a description of the situation in Romanian local media. See also Popescu and Toka (2002) for a description of such an occurrence in Hungary’s public television during the 1994 general election campaign

⁷⁰ The analysis also tested for ownership diversity (number of types of owners present in the locality) instead of local government monopoly. The results were not significant.

⁷¹ As mentioned in Chapter Two, the measure of audience size – CAO’s estimates of the proportion of citizens reached by each outlet - does not reveal whether the same or different people are reached by a locality’s outlets. Here the average audience of all outlets present in one locality has been selected as the measure of audience size.

⁷² As noted earlier, local media content can impact on behaviour via the norms they circulate as well as the excitement they convey about local events. Given the state of the data, it is not possible to identify with precision whether media contribution belongs to the D or to the E factor of the expressive model equation. For the sake of simplicity, I subsume all factors but costs under a wide understanding of the entertainment factor.

3.2 Local Associations

Civic associations offer opportunities for discussion and dissemination of political information (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995, 5). As mentioned in Chapter One, even groups without a political mission can contribute to this effect. Consequently, a denser local network of groups, clubs and various NGOs is likely to help citizens gather the information they need to decide for whom to vote in local elections. From a sociological point of view, by bringing citizens together, local associations can reflect and contribute to the deeper embeddedness of their members in the community. They can also present ample opportunity for people to mobilize their peers into voting “for the winner”, as Franklin’s view of expressive voting suggests. As in the case of local media, the empirical effects role of associations cannot reveal the motivation behind voting.

At the individual level, group membership has been found to translate into a positive effect on participation in CEE (Letki 2003; Duch 1998) and elsewhere (e.g. Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). However, the number of associations and their membership - and social capital in general - is considered to be relatively weak in post-communist societies (Mondak and Gearing 1998; Howard-Morje 2003). This chapter tests the proposition that a strong presence of civic organizations is associated with higher local turnout. In Hungary, the measure reflects the number of non-profit associations registered with the municipality (all types of associations) for the election year. Because the equivalent information is not available from Polish official statistics, the Polish analyses use an indicator of the number of NGOs taken from the ILDGP survey (chief administrative officers’ estimates of the numbers of civic organizations active in their locality in 2001). The indicators are expressed in number of NGOs per 1,000 inhabitants.

Hypothesis 3.2: A denser civil network will correspond with higher turnout.

3.3 Political Competition, Closeness and Presence of National Political Parties

Past research has shown that competitiveness and closeness matter for turnout (see Cox 1998 and Blais 2000 for reviews). The literature is replete with indicators referring to factors such as the effective number of parties, party size, or opposition dispersion. Such measures are difficult to apply at the local level in CEE. One reason lies with the large number of independent councilors and mayors. A study of European mayors conducted in 2003 estimates at 62% the proportion of mayors who are members of a political party in Hungary, while the figure is 40% in Poland (Swianiewicz and Mialczarek 2005). Compared to their Western European counterparts, CEE countries exhibit very low party membership rates, and their citizens readily express a general and deep distrust of politicians, notably in Poland (McManus-Czubinska et al. 2004). In the same country, local candidates have been known to cautiously run under committee names that do not give away political party belonging. When willing to disclose their membership, candidates can be keen to distance themselves from their party (Swianiewicz and Mialczek 2005, 32-3). Partisan affiliation has been increasing on the Polish local political scene in recent years, but only slowly. In some places, it probably still requires well-informed voters to know which parties stand behind which electoral committees.

The presence of national parties at the local level is partly related to the electoral system. Poland and Hungary both apply different electoral rules for bigger and smaller localities. In the first case, the cut-off point is 20,000 inhabitants; in the latter, 10,000 inhabitants. Larger municipalities elect their representatives using a proportional system (a mixed one in Hungary) that favors political labels. Smaller

municipalities use the majoritarian principle. Local assemblies in CEE exhibit considerably more fragmentation than in Western Europe (Swianiewicz and Mielczarek 2005), which can make it difficult for voters to attribute responsibilities, or even identify the opposition in smaller localities.

The analysis includes three measures of party competition: the number of political parties, the closeness of the race and, in the case of Poland, the share of assembly seats won by national parties. Previous studies of turnout have put forward the hypothesis that more parties yield higher turnout because a wider range of choice is offered to voters (Blais and Carty 1990), as well as the competing claim that more parties reduce turnout by making it more difficult to choose (Blais 2000). In Poland, the measure is simply the number of parties or other groups that fielded candidates in local elections. In the case of Hungary, the number of mayoral candidates⁷³ is used due to lack of detailed data about council candidates.

Where closeness is concerned, findings also point in different directions. In his comprehensive analysis, Blais (2000) finds that at the aggregate level, closeness is associated with lower turnout. When he reviews a long list of individual level studies of closeness (and perception of closeness), he concludes that it boosts turnout. He proposes a number of explanations for the latter finding: close races induce parties to spend more money and energy on mobilization (see notably Cox 1998 on this issue). The media might also play a role by covering more extensively close elections than contests with a predictable outcome (Blais 2000, 62).

Given the role of independent groups and candidates in Polish and Hungarian local politics as well as the small size of many communities, especially in Hungary, I expect that both the number of parties involved in the elections and closeness will yield

⁷³ Elections of councilors and mayors take place on the same day in Hungary and Poland.

higher turnout. However, too many parties might render the choice difficult, especially where information about candidates is scarce. This is more likely in Poland, given the observed propensity of candidates to avoid political party labels, combined to the relatively large size of constituencies.

The share of seats won by national parties in local elections in Poland is another measure that reflects competition, notably because parties have the resources to organize elaborate electoral campaigns than local non-party groups or independent candidates can rarely afford (Okraszewska and Kwiatkowski 2002, 253).

Hypothesis 3.3: Greater political competition should be associated with higher turnout.

3.4 Welfare Spending

In Hungary, after education and health, social spending represented the biggest share of local governments' expenditures at 16% in 1999 (OECD 2001a; Kalman and Soos 2002, 27). The list of welfare programs under local government administration includes allowance for the elderly (social assistance for those not entitled to old-age pension); regular social aid for the unemployed; income supplement benefit (for individuals who have exhausted unemployment benefit; this benefit has been phased out starting in 2000); child protection and welfare; housing maintenance aid (in kind and cash assistance); nursing/care benefits; and lastly temporary/occasional aid (in kind and cash assistance).

Local governments can issue local welfare regulations as well as decide which type of social benefits to provide for services jointly funded from central and local budgets. This flexibility, along with the strengthening of the role of means-tests in social aid from 1996 onward, contributed to the emergence of different social protection schemes among localities. A recent assessment describes "serious leakages in the self-government managed cash benefits", as well as discrimination and

stigmatizing taking place in the process, in a system where monitoring is patchy. “Currently the number of different social assistance schemes might equal the number of local governments”, write Tausz, Kremer and Sziklai (2002, 126). (Hungary counts over 3,100 local government units and 10 million inhabitants.)

Polish municipalities – *gminas* – are responsible for nurseries and kindergartens, services for the elderly and handicapped, special services for the homeless, families in crisis, as well as social housing (Kowalczyk 2000). Since the creation of *powiats* (370) and new vojvodships (16) in 1999, *gminas* share a number of welfare-related responsibilities with the two other levels of government. Among other tasks, *powiats* are responsible for educational and care facilities, social assistance centers serving a population extending beyond a single *gmina*’s boundaries, and foster families. Vojvodships are responsible mainly for training and coordination (OECD 2001b, 28). In 1999, social security and welfare represented almost 11% of localities’ expenditures (OECD 2001b).

For some social benefits, regulations set at the national level are strict and leave limited room for autonomous decisions by local authorities (Swianiewicz and Herbst 2002, 224-5). Social assistance and housing benefits are partly funded from specific grants received from the central government (OECD 2001b, 44).

From this brief description, we can expect that the larger role that Hungarian local governments play in welfare, both in terms of spending as a share of local governments’ budget and autonomy, could increase the stakes of local elections for the poorer constituents depending or more likely to depend on benefits decided upon and handed out by local authorities.⁷⁴ Following a similar line of argument, we can expect

⁷⁴ Another argument, not based on self-interest but empirically indistinguishable from it given the available data, proposes that regular dealings with local authorities agents among recipients of local welfare benefits shape their political attitudes and political participation (Soss 1999; Lawless and Fox 2001).

that the interests of senior citizens, a typically high turnout constituency, lie with pension and health expenditures rather than with social assistance.⁷⁵ Thus their participation level should be less important in local than in national elections. Recent work on the impact of policy on the political participation of retired citizens in the United States indicates that seniors receiving social security benefits are much more mobilized when social policy that they benefit from comes under threat (Campbell 2002, 2003).

While Romas do not constitute the majority of poor people in Hungary, they have a higher than average risk to be poor (Ferge, Tausz and Darvas 2002, 12).⁷⁶ A larger Roma minority is thus expected to be associated with higher social assistance spending.⁷⁷ Statistics are known to be a poor indicator of the real number of Romas in the population.⁷⁸ Therefore, to tap both Roma presence among the local population and its degree of mobilization (more likely to lead to influence on local council's decisions than only presence), a dummy variable indicates whether the locality has an elected Roma minority local self-government.⁷⁹ As noted by Huber and Stephen (2001, 49-50),

According to Leighley and his collaborators, a higher turnout is typically indicative of a higher participation of the poorer, less educated segments of the population (Hill and Leighley 1992; Hill, Leighley and Hinton-Andersson 1995). However, Ringquist, Hill, Leighley and Hinton-Andersson (1997) note in a correction to their 1995 article that the mechanism through which lower-class higher turnout actually translate into policies more in accordance with their interests remains unclear in these studies since they do not find that turnout interacts with the party in power nor party competition. Peterson and Rom (1989) offer some evidence that higher aggregate turnout is a predictor of higher welfare benefits in American states. Hicks and Swank (1992) come to a similar conclusion with respect to OECD countries..

⁷⁵ Pensioners in Central Europe do not figure among the population categories most likely to be victim of poverty (Klugman, Micklewright, and Redmond 2002).

⁷⁶ The ratio of poverty among the Roma (65%) is four times higher than in the population as a whole (14%) (Ferge, Tausz and Darvas 2002, 179).

⁷⁷ We cannot be sure that a poorer region, harder hit by unemployment, is not keeping or even attracting more Romas due to reduced land and house prices (Fazekas 1995, 14).

⁷⁸ An additional problem with these statistics is that they are based on primary school attendance rather than on local government units. I thank Gabor Kezdi for this information.

⁷⁹ The role of minority local self-government is consultative, except on minority issues. In this case the legislation stipulates that the opinion of the minority self-government should be taken into account by local authorities.

it can be difficult to distinguish a “need effect” from that of active support of welfare spending due to political mobilization.

The measure of local welfare spending in Hungary comprises expenditures (per capita) on regular social aid for the unemployed, income supplement benefit and temporary/occasional aid in 1998. Housing maintenance and child protection aid were added to the social benefits handled by local governments in 1999. In 2002, the income supplement program was terminated. In Poland, welfare spending is measured using total government expenditures on social assistance per capita, including handouts to centers and institutions providing social assistance services on the territory of the gmina.

Higher local welfare spending are expected to boost turnout, notably in Hungary. In Poland, the lack of autonomy combined to lower welfare spending as a share of local government expenditures might not make social assistance policy salient or mobilizing enough an issue at local election time. In addition, ongoing changes to the system may have made it more difficult for voters to identify which authorities are responsible for which benefits. Hungarian pensioners should display lower participation rates in local electoral contests. Indeed, pensioners in Central Europe do not figure among the population categories most likely to be victim of poverty (Klugman, Micklewright, and Redmond 2002). The Roma minority self-local government variable is expected to show a positive but only modest association with turnout. In addition to the fact that Roma self-government units are only a proxy for Roma presence, discrimination which Roma often suffer from, including unequal access to social benefits (Barany 1994; Schafft and Brown 2000), might make Romas less likely to receive social assistance.

Hypothesis 3.4: Higher local welfare spending will be associated with higher turnout in Hungary.

Hypothesis 3.5: The presence of larger groups of citizens most – Roma – and least likely – pensioners – to benefit from local welfare handouts is expected to be linked with higher and lower turnout respectively.

3.5 Other Contextual Variables

While the chapter focuses on the three aspects described above, taking local context into account involves controlling adequately for macro-level explanatory factors of turnout that vary across communities such local affluence, unemployment rate, the presence of local associations, as well as community size.⁸⁰ Each factor is briefly addressed below but expectations about their impact on participation are not formalized into hypotheses.

3.5.1 Wealth and unemployment

Measures of economic development are standard components of analyses of turnout, and clearly belong to the resources model. GDP per capita is probably the most frequent indicator used to compare electoral participation levels across countries. Median family income, property value, per capita municipal revenues and expenditures have been used to measure local economic development or local authorities' fiscal capacity (see Sharp and Moody 1991 for a review). Sharp and Moody (1991, 937) argue that the two last constitute the best measures since other indicators can reflect private wealth that is not necessarily tapped by local government tax systems. While the available data allows to follow this advice when Polish localities are concerned, it is not possible in Hungary. In Poland, locality affluence is gauged by the share of gminas' revenues coming from personal income tax (a share of personal income tax collected on the gmina's territory by the central government is returned to local authorities). In

Hungary, the local average of before tax personal income is the only measure available. Most studies find a positive correlation between economic development and turnout (but see Jackman 1987). A priori, there are little reasons to expect differently in the case of local elections.⁸¹

Elections might take place when the economy suffers a downturn, making temporary economic conditions particularly salient. Economic growth or changes in unemployment rate can tap such variations. Rosenstone (1982) found support for the “withdrawal” hypothesis (the less resources people have, the more they concentrate on daily survival rather than on political considerations and activities) at the individual and aggregate levels, as Americans voted less when they were undergoing personal economic hardship as well as when temporary unemployment was up. In Central and Eastern Europe, Pacek’s (1994) results suggest that the withdrawal thesis also applied, at least in the first years of the transition. Considering national elections in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, he observed that regions hardest hit by economic hardship experienced lower turnout. He pointed out that the withdrawal effect attributable to a difficult economic context was greater than the one observed by Radcliff (1992) for Western European countries.

This analysis includes the unemployment rate of the year when local elections were held (either in October or November). The only exception for same-year unemployment is Poland 1998, where data from 1997 replace the unavailable 1998

⁸⁰ For recent examples of cross-country contextual analyses of turnout pertaining to Central and Eastern Europe see Kostadinova (2003) and Fidmorc (2000).

⁸¹ Jesuit’s investigation (2003) uncovered a positive relationship between regional economic distress and higher rates of political participation in national and European Parliament elections in Western Europe. In addition, Van Deth (2000) finds that resources also act as to increase the range of alternative activities available to individuals and thus make political participation less important relative to other activities. Given the high correlation between education and wealth and political knowledge, this disengagement toward local politics might apply if citizens consider that insufficient decisional power is at stake.

figure.⁸² Unemployment might be better suited than the local income measures to test the pendant of the “withdrawal” thesis, that is the “mobilization” hypothesis. According to this view, economic adversity fosters participation because the less-well off have motives to be unhappy with the current state of economic affairs and will seek to change it by way of political involvement (Rosenstone 1982).⁸³

3.5.2 *Locality size*

Locality size is an ambiguous variable from the point of view of rational choice theory. It affects P, the probability to cast the decisive vote, but also the costs of information. Indeed, in smaller localities, one is more likely to know candidates personally, and to have direct experience with most events and issues of importance to the community. A regular empirical finding of comparative studies of turnout, both cross-country (e.g. Blais 2000) and cross-locality in design (e.g. Frandsen 2002), is that smaller units display higher turnout. A number of probably overlapping reasons such as conformity, greater communities ties, lower mobility, tighter social networks, direct knowledge of, and easier access to candidates and local representatives plausibly lie behind this state of affairs. Consequently, smaller localities should experience higher local turnout.

Unsurprisingly, community size is correlated with many other factors considered in the analysis. In addition, the range and distribution of the variable is quite different in the two countries considered in the empirical analysis below. One statistic

⁸² In the 2002 analyses, the coefficients of indicators of change in unemployment between 1998 and 2002 were not significant. Their addition in the model did not affect model fit. Thus only unemployment levels were retained.

⁸³ Unemployment may not be a perfect indicator of communities’ general economic situation (the correlation is only moderate between the two variables in both countries) because it is computed from the number of registered unemployed people. The long-term unemployed (usually more than 12 or 18 months, a widespread phenomenon in transition economies) typically fail to be included in such numbers.

summarizes the difference in community size between Hungary and Poland: 54% of Hungarian municipalities have less than 1,000 inhabitants, while no municipality in Poland counts so few inhabitants. To avoid confounding many factors together, I chose to use locality size as a control variable.

4. Data and Modeling Issues

This chapter draws on surveys carried out in the framework of the Indicators of Local Democratic Governance Project (ILDGP) in Poland and Hungary in 2001 (including 579 and 646 localities respectively).⁸⁴ The survey data is complemented with information from statistical databases, as well as local electoral data compiled by the author based on electoral commissions' websites and publications.⁸⁵

Focusing on sub-national units has the advantage of keeping political culture and other elements typically included in macro models of turnout such as bicameralism constant. However, other factors cannot be assumed to remain equally stable across localities. For example, competition for mayorship can be fierce in one city, while in another, neighboring locality the incumbent may sail to victory for lack of any challenger. Economic conditions can also widely differ between regions, as is the case in most Central and Eastern European countries (see Huber 2004), and even between cities.

The chapter considers two local elections in each country, held in the same years: 1998 and 2002. The observation of multiple elections allows to unearth more stable relationships between context and turnout, ruling out potential disturbances caused by ad hoc events (for example, a scandal at the national level discrediting one of the big

⁸⁴ Warsaw and Budapest are excluded from the analysis. Warsaw's districts and electoral system were modified three times during the period covered in this study, making it impossible to match districts and

political parties on the eve of a local election). Whenever possible, the same contextual indicators are used in both countries and across elections. However, data availability imposes a number of constraints. Variables constructed from the ILDGP surveys, such as the number of available media outlets, are the same in the two countries, but do not vary across elections since they are only available at one time point (2001). National statistics constitute a source of differences between measures used for Hungary and Poland. For example, unemployment is not available for Polish municipalities between 1998 and 2001. The Hungarian measure of local affluence consists in the average gross personal income in the locality, while the Polish closest equivalent is the share of the locality's revenues derived from personal income tax. In spite of these differences, the measures are similar enough to allow for meaningful comparisons. Readers are referred to Appendix III for more details about variables and their measurement.

The results are presented in tables by country and elections. Media features are added in separate models in Hungary (Table 3.1) since their inclusion considerably reduces the number of cases.⁸⁶ For both countries, a distinct model includes turnout at the most recent national election. In Hungary, turnout figures for the 1998 and 2002 parliamentary elections are used. In Poland, the national turnout indicator is alternately the *Sejm* (parliamentary) 2001 turnout, and the average turnout of the presidential election of 2000 and *Sejm* election held the following year. Bringing national turnout in the analysis allows to control for potential spill-over effects of participation in national elections on local level electoral contests, since it could be argued that differences in the composition of local population (characteristics of local populations that are not

statistical data. The database from which statistical data is taken in Hungary does not include data for Budapest districts.

⁸⁵ I thank Andrija Henjak for his help with data entering for the 1998 Polish local elections.

⁸⁶ Out of 641 Hungarian localities, nearly 300 do not count any media outlets; by comparison, only 12 Polish towns in the ILDGP sample are in the same situation. This is partly due to the differences in locality size already highlighted.

accounted for in this analysis such as church attendance) are driving local election turnout rather than the local contextual measures.⁸⁷ We can expect national turnout to be a significant predictor of turnout in local elections. A test for local variables lies in the resilience of their coefficients once national turnout is included in the equation.

The use of aggregate data renders the effects detected in this chapter vulnerable to the pitfalls of the ecological fallacy. Yet, the decision to cast a ballot in local elections is not a merely individual act. In the words of Franklin, Lyons and Marsh (2001, 6), turnout “is a feature of an electorate, not of a voter. And while it is true that electorates are made up of aggregations of voters, the process of aggregation is not simply a process of adding up the relevant features of the individuals who form part of it.” Consequently, it is not only desirable but also necessary to devote more attention to the wider context influencing participation levels in local elections.

5. Results

5.1 Local Media and Local Associations

The adjusted R-squared figures in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 reveal that media features do not add much to our understanding of local turnout. The number of outlets as well as audience size register some impact in Hungary. In Poland, only local government monopoly on local outlets shows a positive impact on turnout in 2002. This could be due to the extra coverage received by the reforms that brought about the first direct

⁸⁷ Arguably, the inclusion of turnout at the previous local election could be indicated to control for the impact of habitual voting. However, including a lagged dependent variable results in endogeneity problems that require specific attention (Kittel and Winner 2005). Tables 3.7 and 3.8 display impressive bivariate correlations between local turnout figures. The correlations between local and national turnouts are not nearly as high.

elections of mayors that year. Such coverage might have been more frequent in outlets – mostly newspapers – owned or sponsored by local authorities.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ There is also much more variance with respect to media ownership in Poland than in Hungary. Hungarian local authorities controls all the available outlets in half of the localities endowed with local media in the ILDGP sample.

Table 3.1. Determinants of Local Election Turnout in Hungary

	Local Elections 1998		Local Elections 2002	
	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)
Population	-10.3*** (.579)	-8.92 (.710)	-6.73*** (.590)	-8.58*** (.513)
% Senior	-3.98** (1.68)	-3.26 (2.50)	-4.20*** (1.49)	-3.17** (1.45)
Proportional electoral system	5.04* (2.91)	1.25 (1.77)	-1.12 (2.64)	6.13** (2.52)
Urban	2.76 (2.54)	-7.45 (1.70)	-986 (2.28)	2.53 (2.17)
# mayoral candidates	1.81*** (.3190)	-.235 (.406)	2.05*** (.285)	.301 (.349)
Vote share - Winning mayoral candidate 1998 -Diff. between 1 st & 2 nd cand. 2000	-.027** (.013)	-.207*** (.034)	-.028** (.012)	-.165*** (.013)
Roma self-government	.577 (1.11)	1.60 (1.20)	1.83* (1.00)	-1.27 (.862)
NGOs per 1,000 inhabitants (1999)	.225*** (.085)	.770*** (.172)	.059 (.077)	.265*** (.056)
Income	-.263 (1.60)	3.08 (2.30)	-3.46** (1.45)	1.23 (1.48)
Unemployment	-.865 (.847)	-3.07* (1.63)	.392 (.762)	-1.81** (.730)
Social assistance	2.38*** (.714)	3.83*** (1.06)	2.04*** (.637)	3.33*** (.504)
# local media	1.16* (.652)	1.17* (.631)	.303 (.585)	-2.30 (.558)
Coverage		3.19* (1.79)		2.58 (1.76)
LG media monopoly		-.279 (1.00)		.750 (.988)

(Continued on next page)

Table 3.1 Determinants of Local Election Turnout in Hungary (continued)

Audience size		.540*** (.188)			.479*** (.185)	
National turnout			.568*** (.045)			.622*** (.047)
Adj. R2	.613 N=643	.625 N=337	.692 N=643	.688 N=644	.591 N=338	.756 N=641

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

-Entries are coefficients obtained from linear regression; weighted results (except for the equations including media features other than the number of local outlets).
-Constant not shown; the regional dummy variables are included in the regressions but are omitted from the table.

Table 3.2. Determinants of Local Election Turnout in Poland

	Local Elections 1998			Local Elections 2002		
	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)
Population	-6.08*** (.628)	-6.10*** (.646)	-6.10*** (.562)	-7.78*** (.686)	-7.81*** (.701)	-7.73*** (.623)
% Senior	-4.10*** (1.43)	-4.53*** (1.47)	-5.03*** (1.28)	-0.77 (1.74)	-2.73 (1.78)	-1.17 (1.58)
Proportional electoral system	3.57 (2.50)	4.49* (2.69)	1.79 (2.24)	.811 (2.06)	1.08 (2.09)	.239 (1.86)
Urban	2.07** (1.03)	1.84* (1.05)	-.127 (.942)	-1.47 (1.05)	-1.76 (1.07)	-3.00*** (.966)
Number of electoral committees proposing candidates	.198*** (.059)	.206*** (.061)	.179*** (.052)	.206*** (.053)	.221*** (.054)	.211*** (.048)
Number of candidates per list	.102 (.315)	-.024 (.338)	.258 (.282)	.442* (.241)	.440* (.244)	.440** (.218)
Number of mayoral candidates	-	-	-	.788*** (.168)	.841 (.172)	.694*** (.153)
Vote share separating 1 st & 2 nd mayoral candidates	-	-	-	-.016 (.013)	-.016 (.013)	-.031*** (.012)
Share of seats won by national parties	-.002 (.011)	-.0003 (.012)	-.141 (.010)	-.037*** (.013)	-.037*** (.013)	-.049*** (.012)
NGOs per 1,000 inhabitants (2000-2001)	.065 (.176)	.059 (.178)	-.082 (.158)	.275 (.176)	.278 (.179)	.142 (.160)
Income	1.00 (1.26)	1.70 (1.32)	.942 (1.13)	-.023 (.818)	.021 (.837)	-1.13 (.747)
Unemployment (a)	3.36*** (.653)	3.37*** (.669)	2.93*** (.586)	4.77*** (.898)	4.60*** (.931)	5.30*** (.813)
Social assistance	-1.96** (.821)	-1.92** (.834)	-.172 (.749)	-2.74*** (1.01)	-2.65** (1.04)	-1.34 (.925)
Number of local media outlets	.161 (.144)	.223 (.156)	.113 (.129)	.031 (.191)	.113 (.216)	.017 (.173)

(Continued on next page)

Table 3.2. Determinants of Local Election Turnout in Poland (continued)

Coverage		-1.02 (1.16)				-461 (1.19)
LG media monopoly		.781 (1.02)				2.04** (1.02)
Audience size		.016 (.109)				.088 (.110)
National turnout (Sejm elections 2001 (b))				.479*** (.041)		.465*** (.042)
Adj. R2	.232 N=562	.231 N=543	.388 N=560	.478 N=560	.477 N=541	.574 N=559

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

-Entries are coefficients obtained from linear regression; weighted results.

-Constant not shown; the regional dummy variables are included in the regressions but are omitted from the table.

(a) In the tables of this chapter, the missing values of the unemployment variables were replaced with the Polish sample mean in order to maximize the number of cases.

(b) The results were the same whether the turnout in the 2000 presidential elections or an average of both presidential and Sejm elections was used. Information about turnout in the 1997 Sejm elections could not be obtained.

Table 3.1a. The Determinants of Local Turnout in Hungary – R-Squared Change by Blocks of Variables

	Local Turnout 1998		Local Turnout 2002	
	R Squared	R2 change & sig. F change	R Squared	R2 change & sig. F change
Socio-demographic variables (Population; urban; % seniors; Roma self-government (a); regional dummies; electoral system)	.563	.570***	.517	.525***
Economic variables (local wealth; unemployment; social assistance)	.570	.010***	.527	.011***
Party political variables (Party competition; closeness)	.607	.037***	.679	.149***
Local associations	.611	.005***	.689	.011***
Number of local media outlets	.613	.00**	.689	.00
Turnout at national elections	.692	.077***	.756	.065***
N	N=643		N=641	

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

(a) Roma minority self-governments classified here as a proxy for the size of local Roma population.

Table 3.2a The Determinants of Local Turnout in Poland – R-Squared Change by Blocks of Variables

	Local Turnout 1998		Local Turnout 2002	
	R Squared	R2 change & sig. F change	R Squared	R2 change & sig. F change
Socio-demographic variables (Population; electoral system; urban; % seniors; regional dummies)	.189	.204***	.376	.387***
Economic variables (local wealth; unemployment; social assistance)	.222	.037***	.415	.042***
Party political variables (Party competition; closeness)	.235	.016***	.479	.067***
Local associations	.233	.000	.481	.002
Number of local media outlets	.234	.002	.480	.000
Turnout at national elections	.387	.150***	.571	.089***
N	N=560		N=559	

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

The hypothesis that local associations and groups act as mobilizing agents, disseminate information or reflect a stronger local identity finds support in Hungary but not in Poland. This could be due to the aggregation of a number of localities in one local government unit, a phenomenon quite common in Poland but inexistent in Hungary. It also has to be noted that the strongly significant coefficients of population size indicate that, as expected, smaller communities are more involved in local elections. In Hungary, this effect is also visible on national election turnout (Table 3.3). In Poland however, larger community size appears to be positively linked to higher turnout in national level elections, again possibly because very small municipalities are a rare occurrence (Table 3.4).

5.2 Political Competition

The variables gauging party competition and closeness of local elections perform quite consistently. More parties or candidates competing for office in closer races tend to draw more people to the polling stations. In Poland, political competition indicators clearly have a positive impact on turnout. When more electoral committees fielded would-be councilors, turnout was also higher. While the direct elections of mayors in 2002 did not increase overall turnout in that local election (it was one of the goals of the introduction of direct election of mayor that year), the number of candidates eager to fill the position was nonetheless significantly associated with higher turnout. The growing presence of national political parties in Polish local politics between 1998 and 2002 described by Swianiewicz and Mialczek (2005) appears to have had negative consequences for participation. The negative but insignificant coefficients for the share of seats obtained by national parties on local political scenes in 1998 grew larger and significant in the 2002 local election.

In Hungary, political competition registers a positive impact, notably where closeness is concerned. In 2002, the number of mayoral candidate ceases to play the boosting effects it displayed in 1998.

5.3 Local Welfare Policy

The fourth and fifth hypotheses put forth in this chapter contends that decentralization systems featuring a combination of relatively large social assistance outlays with decisional autonomy may raise the stakes in local elections, especially for groups of constituents most and least likely to receive local social benefits - the poor and the pensioners respectively. In line with this expectation, more generous social assistance spending is found to be significantly associated with higher turnout in Hungary. At the same time, we observe that local average taxable personal income is not associated with higher turnout in most of the equations. When it is, the relationship is negative. In Poland, the few positive coefficients observed in 1998 fall short of reaching significance levels. This finding stands *a contrario* to one of the most common conclusion of political participation studies.

Unlike in Hungary, social assistance expenditures per capita in Poland are not linked with levels of participation in local elections. This result was expected, given the comparatively less generous and autonomous nature of the local welfare system in Poland, as well as the redistribution of tasks between three subnational levels of government (*gminas*, *powiats* and provinces) between the 1998 and 2002 local elections. In fact, the indicator acts more like a measure of resources, or rather the lack thereof, exhibiting an influence similar to that observed in most studies of voting.

These results do not rule out an alternative explanation. Based on descriptions of its local welfare system, Hungary appears to be equipped with a sufficiently tight

social security that could successfully dampen the impact of economic adversity on participation (e.g. Radcliff 1992), something that its Polish counterpart would not be in a position to achieve. Should that be the case, we would expect turnout to bear the brunt of economic adversity in poorer localities, notably those experiencing higher unemployment. As already noted, the sign of the local wealth coefficient points to a negative and generally not significant relationship with turnout. While joblessness appears to depress turnout in Hungary, especially in 2002, the higher levels of participation associated with more widespread unemployment are striking in Poland. In this case, unemployment is not the vehicle of economic adversity purported by Rosenstone's (1982) "withdrawal" hypothesis. This could be due to the large number of people involved in agriculture in rural Poland. Farmers do not figure among those likely to receive social assistance even if they were nonetheless hard hit by unemployment, many emerging as "losers" of the transition. The Polish Peasant Party, which appeals to the farming constituency, did quite well in the 1998 and 2002 local elections, garnering 11% of the vote in 2002 in spite of the success of Self-Defense, a new party competing for the rural-agrarian vote (Szczerbiak 2002).⁸⁹

⁸⁹ The Peasant Party supporters are "relatively more negative about the economy and their own financial situation, and said that the government should prevent unemployment from emerging (rather than accepting it as an inevitable consequence of reform)", write Bell (2001, 169). Jasiewicz (2003, 12) concedes that support for the Peasant Party - "arguably the only truly class-based party in Poland" - is probably rooted (at least partly) in economic considerations.

Table 3.3 Determinants of Voting in Local and Parliamentary Elections in Hungary

	Local 1998		Parliamentary 1998		Local 2002		Parliamentary 2002	
	B (S.E)		B (S.E)		B (S.E)		B (S.E)	
Population	-10.2*** (.578)		-6.54*** (.455)		-8.48*** (.514)		-3.93*** (.378)	
% Seniors	-3.75** (1.67)		.493 (1.31)		-2.91** (1.45)		-6.75 (1.08)	
Urban	5.35*** (2.05)		12.9*** (1.64)		5.68*** (1.75)		7.19*** (1.30)	
Number of candidates/vote share (a)	1.82*** (.319)		.191*** (.037)		.310 (.350)		.084* (.051)	
Difference in vote shares (b)	-.027** (.013)		-.059** (.026)		-.166*** (.013)		.026 (.031)	
Roma minority local self-government	.780 (1.11)		-1.84** (.891)		-1.10 (.863)		-1.15* (.633)	
NGOs per 1,000 inhabitants (1999)	.227*** (.085)		.335*** (.068)		.270*** (.057)		.258*** (.049)	
Local income	-.318 (1.61)		6.86*** (1.32)		1.28 (1.49)		8.90*** (1.11)	
Unemployment	-.969*** (.847)		-.116 (.809)		-1.91*** (.732)		-1.16* (.660)	
Local social assistance spending	2.48*** (.713)		-.692 (.583)		3.50*** (.501)		.990*** (.349)	
Number of local media (c)	1.39** (.638)		1.78*** (.510)		.045 (.549)		1.65*** (.404)	
Adj. R2	.611		.462		.686		.435	
N	N=643		N=644		N=644		N=643	

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

-Entries are coefficients obtained from linear regression.

-Constant not shown; the regional dummy variables are included in the regressions but are omitted from the table.

(a) For local elections, the number of mayoral candidates; for parliamentary elections, the largest share of votes earned by a party candidate in single-member districts.

(b) The difference in vote share variable for the 1998 local elections is in fact the share of votes obtained by the winning mayor; for the 2002 local elections, the difference between the first- and second-placed candidates; for parliamentary elections, it is the difference between the shares of votes earned by the “old” left (MSZP and Munkaspart) and right-wing (Fidesz) party blocks. (c) To maximize the number of cases, only the number of media outlets is kept in the model.

Table 3.4 Determinants of Voting in Local and Parliamentary Elections in Poland

	Local 1998	Local 2002	Sejm 2001	Average 2000 & 2001
	B (S.E)	B (S.E)	B (S.E)	B (S.E)
Population	-4.80*** (.488)	-6.32*** (.527)	.510 (.463)	.483 (.440)
% Seniors	-3.69*** (1.43)	-.424 (1.75)	1.43 (1.60)	.163 (1.52)
Urban	2.46** (1.02)	-.773 (1.08)	.138 (.507)	.603 (.482)
Number of electoral committees/candidates (a)	.130** (.056)	.170*** (.044)	.104*** (.033)	.098*** (.032)
Vote share (b)	-	-.046*** (.012)	3.61*** (.981)	3.70*** (.933)
NGOs per 1,000 inhabitants (1999)	.121 (.176)	.245 (.181)	.290* (.162)	.263* (.154)
Local income	1.46 (1.26)	.671 (.833)	1.54 (1.01)	3.35*** (.965)
Unemployment	3.23*** (.652)	4.76*** (.909)	-1.37* (.823)	-.193 (.783)
Local social assistance spending	-1.48* (.812)	-2.02* (1.03)	-3.25*** (.910)	-2.80*** (.866)
Number of local media	.189 (.188)	.047 (.196)	.049 (.173)	.066 (.165)
Adj. R2	.220	.442	.203	.241
N	N=562	N=560	N=560	N=560

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

-Entries are coefficients obtained from linear regression; weighted results.

-Constant not shown; the regional dummy variables are included in the regressions but are omitted from the table.

(a) For local elections, the number of electoral committees which proposed a candidate; for the Sejm elections and average turnout columns, the number of candidates who gained more than ten percent of the ballots cast.

(b) For local elections held in 2002, the difference between the vote shares obtained by the winning and second mayoral candidates; for the Sejm 2001 elections and the average turnout of the Sejm 2001 and 2000 presidential elections, the percentage of ballots cast for the candidate who obtained the most votes in the 2001 Sejm elections (no city-level data was available for the presidential elections).

Further insights may be gained by inspecting how variables behave when national elections turnout replaces the local figure as the factor to be explained. Tables 3.3 and 3.4 present side by side models of turnout in local and national elections in 1998 and 2002. In Hungary, national turnout figures are those of same-year parliamentary elections. For Poland, turnout registered at the 2001 parliamentary elections figures on the top of the third column of Table 3.4, and average turnout in that election and the 2000 presidential election is the dependent variable in the last column. Measures of competition were also included in national turnout equations. In Hungary, the share of votes obtained by the most successful party candidate in single-member districts, and the difference between the vote shares won by the candidates of the “old left” block (the Socialists and the Workers’ Party) and the “new right” (Fidesz). In Poland, the first measure of competition is the number of candidates that garnered more than 10% of the local vote in the 2001 *Sejm* elections. The second is the largest share of votes won by one of the candidates in the same election.

The particularly interesting features of Tables 3.3 and 3.4 are the differentiated effects of the proportion of older citizens and local wealth measures depending on the type of election. In Hungary, a stronger presence of senior inhabitants is associated with lower levels of participation only in local election. Locality affluence plays a prominent role in national elections, but not in local ones. Signs of a similar, but more subdued pattern are visible in Table 3.4 concerning Poland.

Table 3.3 also shows that local government welfare spending clearly matter for turnout in the two local elections in Hungary, as it was already apparent from Table 3.1. If social assistance specifically influences the stakes of local elections, then it should not be associated with national level turnout. Indeed, this is what we observe in 1998. However, in 2002, the social assistance coefficient is positive and significant in both

analyses of local and national turnout. This positive impact of higher local welfare expenditures on participation to national elections could be interpreted as the benefits' effectiveness in alleviating at least some of the economic adversity that typically reduces participation in national elections. Indeed, even if the positive and very significant coefficient of the income indicator does not readily lend support to such an explanation, we do not know what this coefficient would have been (potentially higher) in the absence of generous local social assistance benefits. An alternative account could highlight the possibility of a positive spill-over from the local democratic experience to other levels of government as time goes by (Vetter 2002; Hiskey and Bowler 2005), possibly as a result of interactions with local government agents (Lawless and Fox 2001).

Table 3.3 also highlights the differentiated impact of the presence of local media in the two types of elections in Hungary. The influence of media presence already observable in Table 3.1 is also visible in the comparative table. However, the same local media outlets register a larger impact on participation in national elections than in local ones. Coming back to the instrumental and expressive approaches of voting, this result could be interpreted as offering support for the latter because of the greater entertainment value of media coverage of national electoral races, a coverage that is echoed in all types of media. Local media in Hungary, especially in larger cities, cover national elections and present local would-be deputies. Yet, it is difficult to explain why local media, often sponsored by local governments, would carry more information about national than local electoral issues and candidates solely based on an informational, cost-cutting conception of media use.

As pointed out by Grofman (1993), aggregate data are not the best-suited when seeking to uncover the motivations of voting that are, according to rational choice

theory, based solely in individual-level decision. It is nonetheless interesting to reproduce, with the available data, the test effectuated by Blais to evaluate the explanatory power of the calculus of voting logic. As noted by Toka (2002, 2), while the difference between the logics of the instrumental and expressive accounts lie in the reasons' why people deal with information - rarely directly observable -, the empirical difference between the two types of behaviour might be very difficult to spot. The crux of the instrumental model lies on the probability of casting the decisive vote. Using individual survey data, Blais (2000) found little sign of the crucial role of P when measured either by perception of closeness or of chances of affecting the electoral outcome.

Tables 3.5 and 3.6 shows the results of similar comparisons between the explanatory power $P*B$ on the one hand, and P and B on the other. In Hungary, I combine the measures of competition and closeness with two indicators of the stakes of local elections, namely local welfare spending and the presence of older citizens who have less at stakes in local elections. Given the results of Tables 3.1 and 3.2, the fact that both factors emerge as positive influences is not surprising. Tables 3.5 and 3.6 displays the coefficients of interaction terms both when included alone in the equation (as Blais does), as well as with the two constituent terms (in bold characters below the first coefficient). Brambor, Clark and Golder (2006) demonstrate how the omission of constituent terms in interaction models lead to systematic bias. I therefore rely on the bolded coefficients to evaluate the true effect of $P*B$. With only one $P*B$ term coming out significant and positive in Poland, the two tables provide next to no support for the calculus of voting. However, an interpretation of voters sensitive to more exciting races but also taking into account the stakes of the electoral contest at hand is coherent with the findings. In the case of local elections in Hungary at least, the expressive and

instrumental motivations behind voting appear more complementary than mutually exclusive.

Table 3.5 The Impact of P and B on Local Turnout in Hungary

	$P^1 * B^1$	$P^2 * B^1$	$P^1 * B^2$	$P^2 * B^2$	P^1	P^2	B^1	B^2	C^1	C^2
P^1 (# candidates) * B^1 (local welfare)	.229***								.065*	.057**
1998	-.085									
2002	.324***								-.012	.092***
P^1 and B^1	.035				.204***		.142***		.064*	.065**
1998					.289***		.191***		.013	.093***
2002									.079**	.061**
P^2 (vote share (a)) * B^2 (% seniors)				.266**						
1998				.067						
2002				.258***					-.024	.084***
				-.175***					.068*	.068***
P^2 and B^2									-.016	.107***
1998										
2002									.075**	.044*
B^1 (local welfare) * P^2 (vote share)		297***								
1998		-.113*								
2002		.339***							-.046	.104***
		-.138***							.066*	.063**
B^1 and P^2										
1998										
2002									-.018	.107***
B^2 (% seniors) * P^1 (# candidates)										
1998									.067*	.070***
2002					.219***					
					.066					
					.219***					
					-.098				-.006	.086***
B^2 and P^1										
1998										
2002					.204***				.066*	.069***
					.283***				.015	.094***

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

-Entries are standardized beta coefficients obtained from linear regressions; constant terms not shown.

-All regressions include population size, local unemployment rate, local wealth, electoral system (dummy), region (dummies), and urban/rural character of the locality (dummy). For the description of B^1 , B^2 , P^1 and P^2 , please see below Table 3.6 on next page.

(a) For the 1998 local elections, P^2 is the share of votes obtained by the winning mayoral candidates; in 2002, the vote share separating the 1st and 2nd mayoral candidates.

Table 3.6. The Impact of P and B on Local Turnout in Poland

	P*B ¹	P*B ²	P ¹	B ¹	B ²	C ¹	C ²
P (# committees) * B ¹ (welfare)	.110***					.051	.020
1998	.046						
2002	.147***					.022	.045
	-.653						
P and B ¹			.134***	-.101**		.047	.009
1998							
2002			.160***	-.092**		.022	.045
P (# committees) * B ² (seniors)		.121***				.036	.019
1998		.210**					
2002		.146***				-.003	.050
		.085					
P and B ²			.123***		-.138**	.037	.013
1998							
2002			.167***		-.011	.013	.045

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

-Entries are standardized beta coefficients obtained from linear regression; constant terms not shown.

-All regressions include population size, local unemployment rate, local wealth, electoral system (dummy), regions (dummies), and urban/rural character of the locality (dummy).

P is the number of electoral committees that proposed a candidate for a councilor position in local elections;

B¹ is the per capita amount spent by the local government on welfare;

B² is the share of older citizens in the local population (scale reversed before interacted with P)

C¹ is the number of local media outlets;

C² is the number of local NGOs per thousand inhabitants.

For Table 3.5 on previous page:

P¹ is the number of mayoral candidates

P² is the share of votes obtained by the winning mayoral candidates in 1998; in 2002, the vote share separating the 1st and 2nd mayoral candidates;

B¹ is the per capita amount spent by the local government on welfare;

B² is the share of older citizens in the local population (scale reversed before interacted with P);

C¹ is the number of local media outlets;

C² is the number of local NGOs per thousand inhabitants.

Table 3.7. Hungary – Bivariate Correlations Between Local and National Turnout

	Local 1998	Local 2000	Parliamentary 1998
Local 1998			
Local 2000	.78		
Parliamentary 1998	.52	.50	
Parliamentary 2002	.37	.43	.83

N=640

Table 3.8. Poland – Bivariate Correlations Between Local and National Turnout

	Local 1998	Local 2002	Average Pres. 2000 & Sejm 2001)
Local 1998			
Local 2000	.76		
Presidential 2000	.11	-.19	
<i>Sejm</i> 2001	.22	-.01	.83

N=567

Table 3.9. Turnout in Hungary and Poland 1990-2002

	Hungary	Poland
National Elections (1 st round)	75% (1990)	62% (1989 – <i>Sejm</i>)
	69% (1994)	43% (1991 – <i>Sejm</i>)
	57% (1998)	52% (1993 – <i>Sejm</i>)
	71% (2002)	65% (1995 – presidential)
		48% (1997 – <i>Sejm</i>)
		60% (2000 – presidential)
		46% (2001 – <i>Sejm</i>)
Local Elections	40% (1990)	42% (1990)
	43% (1994)	32% (1994)
	46% (1998)	46% (1998)
	51% (2002)	44% (2002)

Sources: International IDEA (2000), Swianiewicz (2001), and national electoral commissions' websites and publications

6. Conclusion

The chapter examined the impact of four local media features on voting: the number of outlets, the extent to which they report about local public affairs, their ownership structure, and audience size. Among them, the number and reach of outlets displayed a positive impact on local turnout in Hungary. In Poland, local government sponsorship was associated with higher turnout in only one of the two local elections. Given the complexity of media effects and the aggregate nature of the data used in this study, such results are perhaps not surprising. Local media effects are probably easier to identify with individual level data (see Chapters Four and Five). Furthermore, even when equipped with measures tapping individual media consumption, Zaller (2002) shows that research designs using survey samples counting less than 2,000 respondents often lack the statistical power to detect most media exposure effects. This should warn us against discounting too quickly the potential influence of local media on participation and politics in general in Central and Eastern Europe, especially as we know very little about local media content.

As Blais (2000) noted, we still lack a good explanation of turnout in local elections, and why it differs from national participation rates differently across countries. This chapter argued that we can increase our understanding of local turnout by paying closer attention to the local context: local media, of course, but also party competition and closeness, as well as the role of local governments, especially in the domain of welfare policy. Contrasting with the modest effects of local media, local party competition and the closeness of local electoral contests clearly mobilize Hungarian and Polish citizens in going to the polls. These findings resonate with the results of studies focusing on participation in national elections.

The chapter also found a measure of support for the hypothesis that the role and autonomy of local governments in the sphere of social assistance policy influence voters' stakes in local elections. However, until more research is carried out, the interpretation of the results remain more indicative than conclusive. In Hungary, comparatively higher social assistance expenditures (as a share of total local government expenditures) administered more autonomously by local authorities were found to be associated with higher turnout. In line with the argument developed in the previous pages, no such effect was detected in Poland. Indications that the mechanism at work may be linked to the interests of groups standing to benefit most and least from local government welfare policy can be found in the non-positive and non-significant coefficients of local wealth variables. In addition, pensioners, a demographic group that stands to be little affected by local policies in Central Europe, appears to be less likely to vote in local than in national election. However, it has to be noted that the presence of an elected Roma minority local self-government, used here as a proxy for the presence and size of the Roma population in Hungarian localities, did not register an impact on turnout.

This chapter sheds some light on sources of variation in turnout across Hungarian and Polish localities. More tentatively, it also offers some insights on the reasons why local turnout might be higher in one country than in another - local turnout has been growing steadily in Hungary since 1990 (see Table 3.9).

Explaining the media effects on local and national electoral turnout observed in this chapter allowed to bring the logic of information connected with the instrumental and expressive approaches of voting into the analytical framework. These logics can be linked with the media functions described earlier. A view of media as providers of information fits neatly with the rational choice account of miserly voters seeking to

reduce the costs of information related local issues and candidates. The expressive conception stands closer to a function of local media connected with identity. The differentiated behaviour of the media variable in the analyses of local and national turnout in Hungary seems to indicate that the entertainment value of the vote featured in accounts of expressive voting is more prominent in times of national elections than during local ones. However, in the absence of information about local media content, we are left with little to speculate about the reasons of the quasi-absent influence of local media in Poland on both types of turnout.

The hypotheses pertaining to the role of local welfare policy call for a larger research design involving more countries and more local elections in Central and Eastern Europe. The findings with respect to local media effects on political participation need to be examined more closely with individual level data. Such a study may also shed more light on the role of media functions and the motivations behind voting. This is what the next two chapters propose to do.

Chapter Four

Local Media Use, Knowledge and Involvement in Local Elections

1. Introduction

Previous chapters explored the impact of local media on government performance and citizens' participation in local elections. The analyses, conducted using aggregate data, proposed three main mechanisms through which media influence might be felt on these two aspects of local politics: by imparting citizens with knowledge about local public affairs, acting as mobilizing agents, and creating or reinforcing a sense of community. Chapters Four and Chapter Five test these propositions using individual-level survey data. This chapter explores whether local media use is associated with knowledge about politics, and political participation in local elections. The next chapter concentrates on the links between local media, opinionation, and participation

Works on political knowledge and its effects are replete with rational choice arguments, when they are not directly anchored in the theory. According to rational choice theory, the fact that one has virtually no chance of casting a decisive ballot extends the irrationality of voting to all related activities, including the gathering of information about candidates and electoral issues (Downs 1957). Early studies of electoral behavior and attitudes underlined that citizens are quite ignorant of politics (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, McPhee 1954; Campbell et al. 1960). Converse (1964, 1970) famously concluded that survey respondents' political opinions amounted to "non-attitudes."

Challenging this conclusion, a number of studies using aggregate data find links between real world economic conditions and opinions results as well as support for political leaders (e.g. Page and Shapiro 1992). In spite of the lack of knowledge of individual American voters, a public opinion remains identifiable. One way to square unaware voters with a coherent public opinion and responsive politicians has been to argue that survey response contains a significant amount of measurement error, and that these errors cancel out as a result of aggregation (Page and Shapiro 1992). Another line of argument, focused on individual voters' behavior, contends that limited knowledge does not prevent citizens to take sensible political decisions (Popkin 1991; Lupia 1994; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991). Proponents of this view find that cues rooted in partisanship, candidate traits, candidate viability, endorsements, and incumbency supply information shortcuts that voters can use while investing minimum time and effort in monitoring their political environment.

However, other studies show that political knowledge remains an essential ingredient in candidate evaluations, the decision to cast a ballot, and vote choice. People who know more are more likely to participate (Verba et al. 1995; Palfrey and Poole 1987). Knowledgeable citizens are better able to make use of partisanship and endorsement cues (Bowler and Donovan 1998). They are also more likely to arrive at correct decisions - that is, decisions more in line with their interests (Lau and Redlawsk 2001). In fact, the use of appearance cues such as gender or race can introduce stereotyped perceptions in candidate evaluations and lead to biased vote choice and electoral outcomes (McDermott 1997, 1998).

This chapter examines the contribution of local media to political knowledge, and whether it translates into a more active citizenry at local elections time. The remainder of the chapter is divided in four sections. The first reviews previous works

linking media use, political knowledge and political participation. The next section details the hypotheses to be tested. The fourth section describes the measures and methodology, and the results are presented in the fourth section. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the findings.

2. Knowledge

2.1 Media Functions

Let me recall the mechanisms through which local media may influence individuals' political thinking and behavior, directly and indirectly. Local media use or attention to local news contribute to knowledge about local issues (Sheufele 2002; Sheufele, Shanahan and Kim 2002). Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996, 150) found that newspaper use is associated with greater knowledge about local politics, which in turn facilitates participation in elections (*ibid.*, 226)⁹⁰. In a European setting, Dreyer Lassen (2004) found that residents in Copenhagen districts who were more informed about a decentralization project were also more likely to vote in a city referendum.

The media can also directly impact on the decision to go to vote or to get involved when they act as mobilizing agents. This mobilizing role can be triggered because the media are one of the means by which politicians and parties reach their constituents (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 29). Lemert (1984, 1992) claims that the media provide "mobilization information", that is content that goes beyond facts about political systems, actors or events to "integrate political issues and conflicts into the context of the larger community and provides information on whom to contact, how to donate money, or where to voice one's opinion" (Eveland and Scheufele 2000, 220).

⁹⁰ In this second analysis Delli Carpini and Keeter use a measure of general political information rather than a more specific measure of local knowledge.

The work of the Chicago School sociologists and their followers suggests that people who are deeply embedded in their communities - as measured by home ownership, length of residence, entertaining neighbors at home, etc. - are more likely to consume local media. In turn, local media consumption increases a sense of place (Neuwirth, Salmon and Neff 1989).⁹¹ Length of residence (e.g. Franklin 2005), persuasion effort by family, friends and acquaintances (Hillygus 2005)⁹² and a sense of community have been linked to political participation (Davidson and Cotter 1989). Similarly, Conover (1984) finds that people who identify strongly with a group tend to perceive political issues in terms of group rather than individual interests. Considering communities rather than individuals, Eagles and Erfle (1989) find that greater social cohesion is conducive to higher turnout (but see Oliver 1999 for different findings pertaining to American suburban cities).

Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) propose a view of local media as agents of social control (Jeffres, Cutietta, Sekerka and Lee 2000) that actively shape citizens' perceptions of local social cohesion. They posit that local media, through the elites who control them, work to minimize tensions and conflicts in smaller and more homogeneous communities. In such communities, conflict is unlikely to emerge in the open since quarrels are more likely to be settled during informal meetings between aggrieved individual citizens and local representatives. Problems solved via such informal channels prevent disruptive conflicts, and leave local outlets to report about seemingly consensual decisions. In larger and more socially diverse communities, local media act as a channel for various groups to express differences unlikely to be solved

⁹¹ The relationship appears to be reciprocal - see Stamm, Emig and Hesse 1997 for a short review, and Kang and Kwak (2003) for a study of interaction effects between media use and communities ties on participation.

⁹² The impact of length of residence and network mobilization efforts are found to be relevant for younger voters and those who initially did not intend to vote, respectively. Franklin (2005, 26) points out

through personal interactions. The role of local media in channeling complaints and contention reduces tensions, and even contributes to the cooptation of the protesting groups, thus turning conflict into a routine, well-managed matter (Olien, Donohue and Tichenor 1995). Local outlet reporting might challenge authorities, notably incumbents, but not the rules of the game (the “power relationships” they are part of, and that the news gathering process tends to maintain (ibid., 306). Therefore, citizens read, listen, and watch reports issued by outlets that directly or indirectly promote consensus, even if conflict is acknowledged as an operational mode in large and diverse cities (ibid., 316). Accordingly, local media use contributes to foster a sense of community. A “community function” of local media, like the mobilization function, should result in direct effects of local media use on participation.

2.2 Types of Media

Local media effects may also be related to the type of medium used. Previous research indicates that “the news media” do not constitute a homogeneous group with uniform effects. People have generally been found to learn more from reading the newspapers than watching televised news bulletins (see Sotirovic and McLeod 2004 for a comprehensive review). Similarly, studies show that print media use is more conducive to participation (Delli Carpini 2004, 418). Entertainment content on television has been blamed for the lack of political knowledge and the disengagement of Americans from politics, including in activities like volunteering in their communities (Putnam 2000, 230-238). However, the “superiority” of print media is contested (e.g. Norris 2000). Some entertainment shows can be used constructively by their viewers (Delli Carpini and Williams 1994). Watching social dramas that “depict

that this differentiated effects between groups of citizens is why former studies did not unearth strong

social reality in a lighthearted manner” can have a positive impact on involvement and trust (Shah 1998). Some have found television to act as a positive factor because of its ability to impress memories with the presentation of dramatic events and effectively attract people’s attention and interest (Neuman, Just and Crigler 1992). Television may be particularly conducive to motivating the less educated and knowledgeable (Kwak 1999) while the cognitively better equipped and educated learn more from newspapers presenting complex news (Kleinnijenhuis 1991). Mendelsohn and Cutler (2000) find that a referendum campaign in Canada reduced the knowledge gap between the well- and less well- informed citizens, those exhibiting average levels of information at the beginning of the campaign gaining the most. Similarly, Norris and Sanders (2003, 234) find that the information disseminated during the 2001 electoral campaign in Britain benefited most those citizens who started out as least informed. What matters, they conclude, is not the type of medium as much as the message. Many researchers concur, and have attempted to better circumscribe media effects by constructing categories of media use more apt at reflecting content, either by including direct measures of exposure to specific television programs (Aarts and Semetko 2003) or by refining media types categories (e.g. Schmitt-Beck 1998).

2.3 The Heterogeneous Effects of Mediated Information

The fact that media messages and political campaign information affect different people differently has been underlined by many investigators of public opinion (e.g. Zaller 1992, Bartels 1996; Miller and Krosnick 2000; see Fournier et al. 2005 for a review). Focusing on knowledge and political participation, Prior’s (2005) recent findings indicate that media access, used as a proxy for media use, interacts with

effects of length of residence on political participation (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995, 453).

political interest to yield different results on how much people know and how involved they are in politics. Prior's study shows that greater access to a widening range of media outlets in the United States has allowed people who prefer entertainment to politically-oriented content to nearly completely avoid news exposure. As a result, these citizens know less about politics and vote less.

In the following sections, I propose to use two surveys conducted shortly after the 1998 Polish local elections to test whether local media contribute to political knowledge. I also investigate the role played by knowledge of current affairs in citizens' engagement in local politics. The selection of Poland as a case study is warranted by data availability. Among the four countries considered in the dissertation, it is the only one where a number of surveys including a significant number of questions related to local elections are available.

3. Hypotheses

Before presenting the hypotheses linking local media use, political knowledge, voting and local electoral meeting attendance, it is useful to say a few words about the context they are set in. Until not so long ago, Poles were confined to two television channels, three radio stations, and newspapers offering limited content diversity and tightly controlled by the communist authorities.⁹³ Of course, the media picture has changed significantly since 1989 (see Appendix IV). The workings of Polish localities also underwent deep changes after the fall of the Berlin wall. Local institutions were redefined early in the 1990s as directly elected local government bodies were made responsible for a wide array of tasks. The new law on local elections, adopted in March

⁹³ It is worth noting that many Poles in the 1980s were also listening to foreign, officially banned radio stations such as Free Europe (Radio Wolna Europa). It is however impossible to estimate the number of listeners of these stations.

1990, established that municipal assemblies were to be elected according to different rules, following a majority principle in small towns and villages, and a proportional rule in larger cities. The relative novelty of these institutions and rules, combined with the ongoing territorial decentralization reforms (the last major change took place in 1999, and mayors were directly elected for the first time in 2002), has not made it easy for Polish citizens to keep up with the nuts and bolts of local politics.

Compounding these difficulties, independent (non-party) candidates play an important role in local electoral races, rendering political party cues less available than in national-level elections. In any event, the volatile political identification associated with post-communist political party scenes (Zielinski et al. 2003; Slomczynski and Shabad 1999) and the significant party turnover that characterized Polish politics in the last few years has made those cues generally less relevant than in longer-established political systems. All considered, Poles need all the information they can get if they are expected to get involved in a meaningful way in local public life.

3.1 Media and Knowledge

I first consider the relationship between media use and political knowledge. Political information is usually considered (and measured) as a one-dimensional phenomenon (Zaller 1992, 1986; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, esp. chap. four; Jerit et al. 2004). People who know a lot about one domain also tend to be well-informed about other issues; they are “generalists” rather than “specialists”. Delli Carpini and Keeter nonetheless point out that information can be domain-specific. In their study, local political knowledge appears to be one such domain.⁹⁴ I follow most authors in using

⁹⁴ Studies comparing the impact of specifically local with a more general type of political sophistication are scarce. Rose (2002) considers the impact of knowledge about local actors and institutions on local participation, as well as that of more general knowledge about substantive policy (which level of government deliver certain permits and licenses). The expectation that specifically local knowledge

first and foremost a measure of general political knowledge. The indicator taps political awareness by measuring how well respondents could answer three questions pertaining to current political affairs. I also employ a second indicator gauging local political knowledge, based on the capacity of respondents to name at least one element of the electoral program of one of the local parties that competed in the recent local elections (more details on measurement are provided in the Data section below).

In the first survey, the only specifically local media about which information is available are local dailies. Local dailies serve relatively large populations, covering one or more voivodships (see Appendix IV for a brief description of the Polish media structure and audience information). Local dailies are major players in their respective markets, where they can be equally or even more accessible than national dailies. Their focus is mainly on regional affairs, but they also provide coverage of national and international events. Local daily newspaper use is thus expected to impact positively on general knowledge. Its contribution may be even greater on the indicator of local political awareness, that is knowledge about local parties' electoral program.

Hypothesis 4.1a: Local media use should be associated with greater knowledge.

Hypothesis 4.1b: Local media use should be associated with greater awareness of local political parties' electoral programs.

Based on previous research examining the influence of media types, I also expect reliance on national press to boost knowledge levels. Public broadcast media use may also make a comparatively positive contribution, thanks to the quality of information and public affairs programs (e.g. Holtz-Bacha and Norris 2001). This expectation is probably more relevant for Polish public radio than television, given that the latter enjoys the largest audience share in the country and caters to a wide range of

should be more relevant for local political activity is not very well supported by the Danish and Norwegian survey data he uses. Differences that are difficult to explain also emerge between the impact of local and substantive political knowledge in the two countries.

interests.⁹⁵ On the other hand, the generous diet of sit-coms and popular music dispensed by private television and radio could well be associated with less knowledge⁹⁶, as Aarts and Semetko (2003) find it to be the case in the Netherlands. Because respondents could indicate more than one source of information, I can also examine whether reliance on a greater number of media sources positively impacts on knowledge and, later, on participation.

Hypothesis 4.1c: The use of national dailies and, to a lesser extent, public broadcasters, is expected to be linked with comparatively higher knowledge levels.

Hypothesis 4.1d: People who show little interest in politics and rely on private television or radio for information are likely to display lower levels of political knowledge.

Hypothesis 4.1e: Consulting a larger number of media outlets for information purposes will exert a positive influence on political knowledge.

3.2 Media and Participation

As discussed earlier, local media might influence political behavior via knowledge, by contributing to a sense of community, and by mobilizing citizens, all with the effect of increasing participation in local elections. Given the lack of information about the general information environment in which each respondent lives, I follow Zukin and Snyder's (1986) lead in using a geographical proxy for media content and select locality size to further shape my expectations with respect to media effects. Since the content of local dailies that target readers in large geographic areas should be more directly relevant to city public affairs than for other, smaller localities, I expect that local media influence on voting will be greater for those living in larger cities.⁹⁷ In addition, the mobilization effect is more likely to be felt as locality size increases as

⁹⁵ Polish public radio also largely escaped the attempts of political meddling that plagued public television administration and content (Millard 1998, 98).

⁹⁶ This description reflects the state of affairs in 1998 in Poland. Private television has been increasing the amount and quality of its public affairs offer in recent years (see Appendix 1).

readers are likely to receive information that speaks directly to local elections in their city and political parties should deploy more means to reach potential voters. In small villages, direct contacts and word of mouth may supply most of the mobilization information.

Hypothesis 4.2a: Local media use is expected to be significantly and positively associated with participation in local elections, and more notably so as city size increases.

Respondents could indicate that they obtain information by engaging in discussions with others. The frequency of discussions with neighbors and the size of personal networks have been used as a measure of community involvement, distinct yet related to institutionalized forms of participation such as voting. For example, McLeod, Scheufele and Moy (1999) find that discussions and voting are related, although less strongly than media use and voting.

Hypothesis 4.2b: Citizens who obtain their information by engaging in discussions with friends, family and neighbors are more likely to cast a ballot.

Finally, Prior's (2005) findings suggest that the combined effects of private television and radio use with low interest in politics could be stronger on political activity than knowledge.

Hypothesis 4.2c: Citizens displaying little or no interest in politics and using private radio or television for information are less likely to be active in local elections.

3.3 Knowledge and Participation

Knowledge constitutes an important resource for people to get involved in politics (e.g. Brady et al. 1995). To the best of my knowledge, no one has considered yet how measures of political sophistication perform as a predictor of voting in local

⁹⁷ Given that that the available measure of knowledge is one about general political affairs rather than specifically local, I did not expect the impact of local media reliance on knowledge to vary across locality size.

and national elections set side by side. Either only one type of participation is considered, or both are collapsed into a single index. Turnout in local elections is notoriously lower than in national ones, and a fully satisfactory explanation for this participation gap has yet to be provided (Blais 2000, 36-9). Given the large number of local groups or independent candidates are involved in Polish local electoral races, and that many candidates run under the banner of local electoral committees whose names do not reveal their party affiliation, it is plausible to expect that only the most politically sophisticated citizens will be sufficiently informed to decide whether and for whom to cast a ballot. Indeed, in such conditions, party and other cues that can otherwise provide useful shortcuts (Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Popkin 1991), especially to the poorly- informed, might simply not be available. Consequently, I expect knowledge to have a positive effect on local voting; furthermore, its effect should be stronger than on participation in national elections.

Alternatively, it is possible that even the well-informed may not possess enough information to form a preference, thus making political knowledge an irrelevant factor in the 1998 local Polish elections. Indeed, other considerations come into play when focusing on local electoral participation. For example, personal knowledge of the candidate(s) may be a more important resource than general political knowledge, notably in smaller localities. In addition, the second-order election model (Reif and Schmitt 1980), positing that people stay away from the polls when the stakes are small, would not disagree with the prediction that citizens most aware of local elections' low stakes will not bother to vote. Yet another perspective contends that voters are reticent to "waste" a vote on a candidate with little chances to be elected (Karp et al. 2002, 3). However, contests with limited stakes such as local elections free citizens of strategic constraints and allow them to vote sincerely, thus drawing to the polls the more

ideologically extreme and politically committed. In spite of the different possible scenarios, I nonetheless follow much of the previous research on turnout and expect a positive link between knowledge and local political participation.

Hypothesis 4.3: Knowledge is expected to enhance participation in elections, and to a greater extent in local than in national elections.

4. Data and Measures

The focus on Poland is guided by the availability of survey data including questions about local elections. No comparable surveys are available in Hungary, Latvia or Romania. The four Polish surveys used in this chapter are either entirely or largely preoccupied with local elections. They were not designed to test hypotheses about media and knowledge effects on local political participation; consequently, not all indicators are optimal. Yet, the surveys provide a unique opportunity to explore the role of local media use.

The chapter relies on two surveys conducted by two polling companies in the course of the month following the local elections held on 11 October 1998. They include 1,133 and 1,094 respondents respectively.⁹⁸ Between them, the two data sets combine different measures of local media use. The provenance of the variables is indicated in the short description below; “OBOP 1998” identifies the first survey and “CBOS 1998” denotes the second one, both named after the polling companies that conducted them. Only the main variables are described in this section. Readers are referred to Appendix V for more details about control variables and Appendix VI for the wording of survey questions.

⁹⁸ The two surveys’ respondents differ slightly in their composition, notably with respect to age; the first survey included respondents as young as 15 years-old, while the second survey retained only the 18 years-old and older. The 15-19 years-old respondents of the first survey did not differ from their older counterparts (20-29) where knowledge was concerned. Respondents who were not eligible to vote the time of the elections are not included in the analyses of political participation.

General political knowledge (OBOP 1998): This measure of political knowledge is composed of the answers to three questions. The first asked the name of the outgoing president of the Supreme Court, who had just been replaced at the time the survey was conducted. The respondents were also asked whether they had heard about the newly created Lustration Office. Those who did were prompted to further identify the function of that Office. The third question required respondents to name the three representative bodies elected in the recent local elections.⁹⁹ The three variables were standardized and summed to constitute a single knowledge scale (alpha = .58).¹⁰⁰ I am quite confident that the measure taps political awareness; Table A5.4 in Appendix V shows that the knowledge scale correlates with political interest and reliance on national daily newspaper (however, not with education; that may be due to the already identified heterogeneity in attentiveness to news and public affairs among the educated population (Price and Zaller 1993, 138)).

Local political knowledge (OBOP 1998): Voters were asked (non-voters were not) to indicate whether they could recall up to three elements of local parties' electoral programs, and to further specify whether the element pertained to roads, social services, local investments, or other categories. The variable is taken as a measure of local political knowledge, albeit an imperfect one as it applies only to the specific group of survey respondents who reported to have voting in local elections.¹⁰¹

Political participation: The first survey (OBOP 1998) provides information about voting, both in the 1998 local elections and the 1997 Sejm elections. In the second survey (CBOS 1998), respondents also indicated whether they had participated to a meeting during the local electoral campaign.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ In another setting, these questions would probably be characterized as pertaining to the "rules of the game" and knowledge about "people" (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, chapter 2) rather than current affairs. The objection might hold only where the first question about the outgoing Supreme Court president is concerned. Given that the Lustration Office was just being set up and that the 1998 local elections were the first in which people had to elect three (five in Warsaw) types of local assemblies (one was entirely new, one of the other two was directly elected for the first time and within different borders). Answering these two questions correctly might owe as much to knowledge of the rules of the game than following the news the very days the survey was taken. Also, I do not consider the question about the local representative bodies as a measure of specifically local knowledge since the answer is the same for all citizens no matter where they live.

¹⁰⁰ I am aware that the scale's reliability is not entirely satisfactory, yet no other questions in the survey can be used as knowledge items. The coding of the question about the function of the Lustration Office, which was made particularly difficult by including very similar answers among the list of options, reflects how close or far the respondents' answers were from the correct one. In the case of the local representative bodies, respondents who could name all three received the top mark, followed by those who named two and only one.

¹⁰¹ A further problem with the measure is that local electoral campaign differs across cities depending on the degree of "politicization" of the local party system. Many smaller cities are likely to count less organized parties or groups that contest each election, translating into less visible campaigns and less publicity for the electoral platforms of candidates. Consequently, the level of local knowledge of respondents is subject to a systematic source of bias. Gordon and Segura's (1997) study shows such an effect at work on the capacity of people to place parties on a 10-point ideological scale in different countries. They find that the mean and standard deviation of the knowledge measure were respectively lower and bigger where the party and electoral systems make the outcome of elections more uncertain and where links between parties and policies are not clear.

¹⁰² In the latter survey, the gap between reported and real turnout is not insignificant; roughly 15% in parliamentary elections and 10% in the case of the local elections. This is a common problem of turnout studies (see Dreyer Lassen 2004, 107). Correcting for the inclusion of a higher number of older citizens in the second survey did not reduce the gap between real and reported turnout. Given that the municipalities in which respondents live cannot be identified, municipal turnout cannot be used as a

Media use 1 - Media reliance for information (OBOP 1998): This survey asked respondents to identify where they generally obtain information from. They could name up to eight sources. Among these categories, “local dailies” are of particular interest. Other print options were weeklies and national daily newspapers. Broadcast media categories included public and private television channels (separately), as well as public and private radio stations. People proposed an average of 2.8 sources, most frequently mentioning public television and public radio. Local dailies came in third position, ahead of their national counterparts (see Table A5.1 in Appendix V). The media reliance measure is constructed as a dummy where all information sources constitute separate categories, except for the collapsing of private television and radio into one category: private broadcast outlets. The number of respondents relying on these two sources separately is very small and, according to my information about Polish media, their use should have similar effects.¹⁰³ The measure takes into account the first source of information mentioned by respondents, assuming that it is likely to bear most on knowledge and participation levels.

Media use 2- Media exposure (CBOS 1998): In the second survey, respondents indicated how often they are exposed to main television channels and radio stations, as well as read a daily newspaper. Their answers are aggregated into exposure to seven types of outlets: 1) public television channels; 2) public radio stations; 3) local branches of public radio stations; 4) commercial television channels (the three main channels available in 1998 were Polsat, TVN and Nasza Telewizja); 5) commercial radio stations, both nation-wide (Radio RMF and Radio Zet) and local¹⁰⁴; 6) Catholic radio stations, including Radio Maryja; 7) daily newspapers. The only specifically local media queried about were local public radio stations. (See Table A4.3 Appendix IV for audience information about these outlets in 1998.) As Price and Zaller (1993) point out, media exposure measures do not tell whether the audience has received the media messages, and the extent to which people are likely to learn as a result of media use. Furthermore, media reliance (used in OBOP 1998) and exposure measures are not perfect equivalents. They nonetheless provide a starting base on which to compare the results with those of previous research, which largely relies on exposure measures, often combined to attention to (local) political news.

Number of information sources (OBOP 1998 and CBOS 1998): The indicator reflects the number of types of media outlets that respondents reported to rely on for information or be exposed to during an average week.

Interactions between media use and political interest (OBOP 1998 and CBOS 1998): This set of interaction terms involves political interest and media variables. The political interest scale is reversed so that high values stand for lower interest, and mean-centered so that a value of zero stands for average interest. It is then multiplied with indicators of media reliance or media exposure, depending of the data set analyzed. A high value denotes both low political interest and the use of private broadcast media. I note that the coefficients of media use and political interest do not represent main effects once the product term is included in the equation, but rather the impact of the

means of adjustment. Since it cannot be assessed whether the difference is due to misreporting or to oversampling of people with characteristics underlying electoral participation, the data is used “as is”, using only the weight computed by polling companies mainly taking into account age, sex, and regional location of respondents.

¹⁰³ I owe thanks to Mikolaj Czesnik for answering numerous questions about Polish media and invaluable help with obtaining the survey data.

¹⁰⁴ Only a handful of respondents reported tuning in local commercial radio stations.

variable once the one with which it is interacted is equal to zero. (For more details on interpretation of interaction terms see and Jaccard and Turisi 2003 and Jaccard 2001.)

Interactions between media use and locality size (OBOP 1998 and CBOS 1998): The other set of interaction terms combines locality size and media reliance or exposure, depending on the survey. Like political interest, the scale of the size variable was modified so that 0 takes on a meaningful value (the category of 20,000-50,000 inhabitants).

Descriptive statistics for these and the control variables included in the regression analyses are provided in Tables A5.2 and A5.3 in Appendix V. While I briefly comment on the impact of some control variables in the discussion of the results, I do not make detailed predictions concerning them – they are mostly “usual suspects” (Jerit et al. 2004) that have been included in analyses of knowledge and participation.

In this chapter, I follow Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996), Rose (2002) and others in using simple recursive models locating media use, knowledge and opinionation as antecedents of participation. There is evidence of reciprocal effects rather than uni-directional links. Notably, Junn (1991) and Leighley (1991) found that participation is linked to knowledge, and Graber (1988) suggests a strong interdependence between the two. While it may not be impossible to tell precisely how much one influences the other, “at the end, however, common sense and everyday experience in other domains of life tell us that knowledge both stimulates and facilitates action” (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, 227).

5. Results

5.1 Media and Knowledge

The results presented in Table 4.1 show that citizens who rely on local dailies as their main source of information are more knowledgeable about current affairs than

those who count on public television (the reference category). However, they still rank behind readers of national dailies. Only the few people relying on discussions as their prime source of information were significantly less politically aware than public television viewers. The results point to a positive impact of print press use, with a premium for national dailies. Indeed, when national dailies are coded as the reference category, all other groups of media users score comparatively lower on the knowledge scale. The positive “print effect” does not however extend to weeklies, a mixed bunch of popular and news magazines.

Table 4.1. Determinants of General and Local Political Knowledge (OBOP 1998)

	General Political Knowledge		Local Pol. Knowledge
Political knowledge	-	-	.007 (.055)
Number of information sources	.089 (.056)	.087 (.056)	.191** (.097)
Political interest	1.13*** (.069)	0.95*** (.145)	-.039 (.256)
Age	-.030 (.036)	-.036 (.036)	.088 (.075)
Gender (women=1)	-.050 (.116)	-.043 (.116)	-.471** (.213)
Locality size	-.078* (.042)	-.083* (.042)	-.199** (.082)
Ideological extremism	-.012 (.061)	-.012 (.061)	.355*** (.114)
Church attendance	-.018 (.075)	-.023 (.075)	.194 (.138)
Egocentric economic evaluation	.010 (.075)	.014 (.075)	.180 (.157)
Education	.035 (.033)	.038 (.033)	.306*** (.060)
Married	-.058 (.119)	-.060 (.120)	.304 (.230)
Importance of local elections	-.300** (.153)	-.298* (.153)	.164 (.434)
Reliance on local dailies	.449** (.204)	.483** (.209)	-.575 (.365)
Reliance on National dailies	.877*** (.210)	.964*** (.216)	-.734* (.400)
Reliance on Weeklies	.395 (.255)	.414 (.259)	-.466 (.453)
Reliance on public radio	.272 (.177)	.324* (.184)	-.118 (.328)
Reliance on private broadcasters	-.295 (.286)	-.252 (.293)	-1.34** (.669)
Reliance on personal discussions	-1.28** (.565)	-1.59** (.773)	.700 (1.011)
Lack of political interest * Reliance local dailies		-.252 (.224)	.302 (.413)
Lack of political interest * Reliance national dailies		-.017 (.195)	-.002 (.362)
Lack of political interest * Reliance weeklies		-.540* (.288)	.172 (.541)
Lack of political interest * Reliance public radio		-.209 (.200)	.159 (.356)
Lack of political interest * Reliance priv. Broadcasters		-.120 (.406)	.400 (1.036)
Lack of political interest * Reliance discussions		.375 (.814)	-.730 (1.197)
Adjusted / Nalgelkerke R-squared	.291 N=1,116	.291 N=1,116	.162 N=1,116

* p<.10 , **p<.05, ***p<.01 (Media dummy reference category: reliance on public television.)

-Entries are linear regression coefficients for general knowledge, and logistic regression coefficients in the case of local knowledge (standard errors are indicated in parentheses). Constants not shown.

The expectation that a combination of reliance on private television or radio and low political interest would prove particularly deleterious to knowledge is not confirmed, even if the coefficients or the interaction terms signs are negative (second column of Table 4.1). Only readers of weeklies lacking interest for politics score significantly lower on the knowledge scale than equally non-interested citizens who monitor public television for information.¹⁰⁵ Finally, reliance on a greater number of different outlets does not influence knowledge in the expected manner. It is interesting to note that those who consider local elections important figure among the least knowledgeable. This may be a further indication that local voting may have little to do with information.

The third column of Table 4.1 displays the results of a logistic regression with the same set of explanatory variables but with local knowledge as the dependent variable. Respondents who reported having voted in the 1998 local elections were asked a set of questions about their experience, including whether they were aware of one or more elements of the political programs of local parties. Those who answered positively were invited to provide up to three elements from these programs, indicating to which domain they belonged (roads, education, housing, etc.). Barely 15% of the 576 respondents who reported voting could name at least one such element. This measure of specific knowledge is not correlated with the general knowledge scale used in the first analysis. Included in the regression equation of local party program knowledge, general political knowledge fails to register a significant impact. Considering awareness of local party programs as a proxy for local knowledge, albeit a tentative and incomplete one given that it applies only to voters, its determinants appear quite different from those of general knowledge. The characteristic gender gap

¹⁰⁵ The least politically-oriented readers of weeklies are more likely to consume popular rather than

reappears,¹⁰⁶ political interest exerts no influence but ideological extremism (based on left-right self-placement) has a positive and significant effect, along with education.¹⁰⁷ Contrary to expectations, reliance on local dailies did not contribute to make voters more aware of party programs, no more than national daily newspaper use. People counting on private broadcasting media for information were less likely to be aware of local party programs than those relying on public television. This last effect may owe to the fact that political parties are more likely to advertise on public television during the local campaign.¹⁰⁸

5.2 Media and Participation

Table 4.2 displays the same independent variables as Table 4.1 but replaces knowledge with voting as the variable to be explained. I defer the discussion of the relationship between knowledge and participation until the next section to focus first on the influence of media use on participation. Unlike initially posited, local daily reliance is not associated with voting in local elections (Table 4.2, first column). However, those who rely on local newspapers are slightly more likely to cast a ballot in national elections (Table 4.2, second column) than citizens who turn to public television for information. The impact of national daily newspaper use emerges clearly for voting in

opinion weeklies, two very different types of publications not distinguished by the data.

¹⁰⁶ Unlike the measure of general knowledge, the question about elements of local party programs left respondents “freer” to guess, an opportunity that men seize more often than women (Mondak and Canache 2004).

¹⁰⁷ These results suggest that the measure of local knowledge is related to partisanship and its determinants in Poland. The difference between the determinants of local and general knowledge probably owes less to their different local-general character than the specifically party political nature of the local knowledge construct.

¹⁰⁸ Television campaigning is not equally accessible to all contenders. Given that parties and candidates largely use their own funds to subsidize local electoral campaigns, non-party or local groups’ candidate can rarely afford TV ads or even leaflets, opting instead for the cheaper organization of meetings (Okraszewska and Kwiatkowski 2002, 253). Some evidence for the lack of visibility of local groups and candidates campaigns is available in the OBOP 1998 survey in which respondents were asked whose campaign was the most visible; 65% answered one of the national political parties’ campaign, and less than 2% indicated that of a local party or candidate. However, 30% of answers are not identified, hinting

the 1997 Sejm elections. Interpersonal discussions as a source of information do not boost voting in local elections, even if the sign of the coefficient is positive. However, those who rely on discussion are less likely to cast a vote in national elections. This finding does not support the hypothesis priming the importance of personal networks in local voting but is not inconsistent with it. The impact of church attendance on local voting, which is positive in both 1998 surveys, may well be an indirect witness of the role of networks and community embeddedness.

that many specific local party or group names mentioned by respondents were not coded as local. Even taking this into account, local parties' campaigns remain far behind in terms of visibility.

Table 4.2. Determinants of Voting in Local and Parliamentary Elections (OBOP 1998)

	Local (1998)	Parliamentary (1997)
Political knowledge	-.057 (.037)	.247*** (.040)
Number of information sources	.067 (.070)	-.047 (.076)
Political interest	.025 (.096)	.371*** (.101)
Age	.256*** (.047)	.034 (.047)
Gender (women=1)	-.425*** (.143)	-.168 (.150)
Locality size	-.207*** (.053)	.083 (.055)
Ideological extremism	.339*** (.075)	-.086 (.078)
Church attendance	.255*** (.094)	-.080 (.099)
Egocentric economic evaluation	.009 (.094)	-.011 (.097)
Education	.184*** (.043)	-.041 (.045)
Married	.086 (.145)	.191 (.154)
Importance of local elections	1.54*** (.205)	-.041 (.202)
Reliance on local dailies	-.200 (.252)	.479* (.261)
Reliance on national dailies	-.181 (.263)	.714** (.284)
Reliance on weeklies	-.168 (.317)	.290 (.343)
Reliance on public radio	-.338 (.217)	.151 (.218)
Reliance on private broadcasters	-.216 (.348)	-.372 (.352)
Reliance on personal discussions	.996 (.686)	-1.295* (.763)
Nagelkerke R-squared	.219	.193
N	1,045	1,028

*p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01

-Entries are logistic regression coefficients (standard errors indicated in parentheses).

-Note that the interaction terms with involving voting on the one hand and size and interest on the other were not significant (beside a very slight positive effect of reliance on public radio*locality size and reliance on public radio* political interest on local and national voting respectively) and thus are not included in the table to allow easier reading.

-Constants now shown.

The second survey offers the opportunity to evaluate media effects using exposure rather than reliance indicators. Table 4.3 displays the results of analyses of local voting, local electoral meeting attendance, and voting in parliamentary elections respectively. Local media use is now gauged by exposure to local public radio stations. Like the local daily reliance measure appearing in Table 4.1, local public radio programs exposure fails to register the expected positive impact on casting a ballot in local elections. Listening more frequently to such stations is even modestly associated with lower participation rates in local elections. On the other hand, exposure to nationwide public radio, whose first station devotes significant air time to information and public affairs programs, is positively and significantly linked to voting in both types of elections as well as local electoral meeting attendance. Public television viewing had a positive but weak impact on voting at both levels, but not on the likelihood of attending a local electoral meeting. The indicator of exposure to daily newspapers does not differentiate local and national dailies. Yet, as in Table 4.2, the use of dailies is associated with voting in national elections, but not in local ones. Readers of daily newspapers were also more likely to attend local electoral meetings.

As anticipated, those who lack interest in political matters and who listen more frequently to private radio stations were less likely to vote in local electoral contests, and even less likely to attend a meeting. The effect of the interaction term is also negative where national voting is concerned, but does not reach significance. Private television viewing had a direct, statistically significant negative effect only on voting in parliamentary elections and does not interact with political interest.

The influence of Catholic radio exposure is prominent in local elections but not in national ones. Radio Maryja, a national radio station established in 1993 that endorses conservative candidates and parties in both types of elections, is by far the

most influential player in a group that also comprises local and parish radio stations with a more limited audience. Together, these stations appear particularly successful at mobilizing a public that is also older, largely rural, and more conservative at local election time.

Table 4.3. Determinants of Local Voting, Local Electoral Meeting Attendance and National Voting (CBOS 1998)

	Local Voting		Meeting Attendance		Parliamentary voting	
Age	.070*** (.025)	.077*** (.026)	.074*** (.026)	-.055 (.044)	-.057 (.045)	-.108*** (.027)
Age (squared)	.001** (.000)	-.001*** (.000)	-.001** (.000)	.001 (.000)	.001 (.000)	-.001*** (.000)
Gender (women=1)	-.271* (.145)	-.253* (.148)	-.245* (.148)	-.452* (.241)	-.455* (.257)	-.404** (.161)
Locality size	-.174*** (.045)	-.177*** (.048)	-.176*** (.048)	-.096 (.071)	-.127 (.079)	-.048 (.049)
Married	-.173 (.173)	-.279 (.178)	-.262 (.179)	.308 (.304)	.262 (.326)	.261 (.182)
Church attendance	.275*** (.068)	.276*** (.070)	.273*** (.070)	.070 (.117)	.027 (.124)	.235*** (.073)
Education	.104*** (.037)	.095*** (.038)	.099*** (.038)	.124** (.055)	.120** (.058)	.144*** (.043)
Egocentric economic evaluation	.092 (.067)	.080 (.069)	.082 (.069)	-.010 (.113)	-.068 (.117)	.190*** (.073)
Political interest	.261*** (.080)	.161* (.084)	-.037 (.220)	.415*** (.132)	.176 (.370)	.314*** (.236)
Ideological extremism	.284*** (.054)	.248*** (.056)	.257*** (.056)	-.080 (.092)	-.097 (.097)	.204*** (.059)
Exposure to daily newspaper	-.007 (.052)	-.037 (.054)	-.034 (.054)	.291*** (.089)	.281*** (.093)	.113** (.057)
Exposure to public television	.160* (.090)	.091 (.093)	.096 (.094)	.149 (.214)	-.062 (.212)	.152* (.092)
Exposure to private television	.000 (.069)	-.020 (.071)	-.019 (.081)	.115 (.112)	.071 (.117)	-.157* (.090)
Exposure to private radio	-.073 (.059)	-.095 (.061)	-.049 (.067)	-.021 (.096)	-.094 (.103)	-.087 (.064)
Exposure to public radio	.147** (.071)	.180** (.074)	.179** (.074)	.214* (.111)	.317*** (.116)	.171** (.078)
Exposure to local public radio	-.057 (.044)	-.080* (.046)	-.084* (.046)	.014 (.070)	-.013 (.074)	-.058 (.049)
Exposure to Catholic radio	.246** (.121)	.272** (.125)	.275** (.126)	.157 (.171)	.168 (.183)	.120 (.133)

(Continued on next page)

Table 4.3. Determinants of Local Voting, Local Electoral Meeting Attendance and National Voting (CBOS 1998) (continued)

Exposure to campaign: Mail	.376** (.175)	.366** (.176)	.901** (.397)	.915** (.398)	
Exposure to campaign: Contact	.598*** (.207)	.598*** (.208)	.590** (.274)	.579** (.279)	
Exposure to campaign: Party programs	.334*** (.120)	.340*** (.121)	.229 (.189)	.198 (.191)	
Learned as result of campaign exposure	.233*** (.066)	.230*** (.067)	.406*** (.112)	.450*** (.115)	
Exposure priv. radio *		-.094* (.054)		-.281*** (.090)	-.094 (.059)
Lack of political interest		.002 (.066)		.154 (.110)	.016 (.070)
Exposure private tv *					
Lack of political interest					
Nagelkerke R-square	.215 N=1,087	.260 N=1,088	.145 N=1,087	.220 N=1,085	.269 N=1,087
N					.272 (N=1,087)

p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01

-Entries are logistic regression coefficients (standard errors indicated in parentheses).

-Interaction terms combining political interest and campaign information (mail, program and contact) only yielded a very slight significant and positive effects in the case of political interest*television program on local voting.

-Constants not shown.

5.3 Knowledge, Campaign Information and Participation

The most striking finding in Table 4.2 is probably the lack of effect of knowledge on local election voting, especially as it clearly constitutes a positive factor for participation in the Sejm election held just one year before. The lack of significance of political interest in the local voting analysis is also surprising since interest in politics exhibits the strongest correlation with knowledge (see Table A5.4 in Appendix V), and that the effect is clearly positive and significant in Table 4.3 (whose results are based on the second survey).

Unlike the OBOP 1998 survey, the CBOS 1998 survey does not include questions that could be used to construct a measure of political knowledge. Yet, it makes available data about political information of another sort, information imparted in the course of electoral campaigns (see Nadeau et al. 2001 for a view of electoral campaigns as information campaigns). Distributing leaflets, airing ads or canvassing constituents are frequent means by which candidates disseminate information about themselves, their positions about salient local issues and their promises. Direct contacts by parties or candidates provide “subsidized information”, supplying citizens at no cost with the information they need to form a preference about candidates (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993).

In Table 4.3, four variables tapping exposure to campaign information are added to the basic regression equations of local voting and meeting attendance: having received mail, having watched party programs on television, having received the visit of a candidate, as well as a self-evaluation of how much one learned in the course of the campaign. These elements make a significant contribution to the variance explained by the models of local voting and local electoral meeting attendance; their coefficients are all significant, except for party program exposure in the case of electoral meeting

participation. Thus directly available, “subsidized” information about local candidates and issues, and the feeling of acquiring knowledge about actors and stakes of local politics, constitute powerful motivators. Campaign information may well contribute to even out, at least partially, the differences between voters and non-voters that cause some authors to worry (Lijphard 1997; see Sekhon (2004), Andersen, Heath and Tilley (2005) and Fournier et al. (2004) about campaign effects on closing the gap in correct voting among citizens in the United States, in Britain and Canada respectively). I note that the inclusion of campaign information indicators in the equations does not diminish the already observed impact of media exposure. The effects of public radio, daily newspapers in the case of national voting and meeting attendance, and Catholic radio exposure for local voting are either maintained or strengthened. Only the weak impact of public television exposure on local voting disappears when campaign factors are taken into consideration.

So far, analyses show that local media (probably more regional than local in content and area coverage) do not exert any significance influence on local political activity. Private television and radio, especially televised entertainment programs, stand accused of demobilizing citizens. The results show some evidence for such a direct effect but only on parliamentary elections voting. The evidence also suggests that tuning in private radio stations is associated with greater political passivity for citizens who already have little interest for politics.

The fact that local daily newspapers use contributes to increasing levels of awareness about current political events - and maybe so would local public radio programs if a separate indicator were available in the first survey - raises the prospect of an indirect effect of media on participation via political knowledge. This is however doubtful in the light of the lack of influence of political knowledge on local voting.

6. Conclusion

Considering the media landscape depicted in Chapter One, most Polish citizens have access to a variety of outlets providing information about political actors and processes to elect their representatives and hold them accountable. However, local elections in Poland constitute a low-information context, where changes in the local government system and party politics have provided few stable anchors on which to base evaluations and choices. Local electoral campaigns do not have the visibility of national ones. Information shortcuts such as partisanship may not be overly useful due to relatively low party identification, nor available where many independent candidates compete for local office or run under banners that do not reveal which political parties endorse them. In this setting, local media could be a precious source of otherwise scarce information.

This chapter used survey data gathered in the months preceding or following local elections in Poland since 1994 to assess the influence of local media - local daily newspapers, local programs of public radio and television - on how much people know about politics, and whether media use and political knowledge foster active involvement in local elections.

Hypothesis 4.1a expected local media use to impact positively on political knowledge. The expectation was supported by the data to the extent that reading local dailies makes citizens more knowledgeable than watching public television, all other things being equal. This finding is likely to follow from the fact that Polish local daily newspapers are more regional than local in scope; they cover not only regional but also national and international events in their pages. As a consequence, they constitute an alternative to nation-wide titles. An indication that the positive effect of local daily use on political knowledge is not rooted in the specifically local or regional character of

these outlets is provided by the larger positive influence that reliance on national dailies registers on knowledge. This finding lends partial support to Hypothesis 4.1b, which posited that reliance on national dailies and public broadcasters would be associated with higher knowledge levels. The expected impact of public television and radio use, based on considerations about the comparative quality of information and public affairs programming of public and private broadcasters, failed to materialize.

Local media use, print or broadcast, did not appear to foster participation in local elections (Hypotheses 4.2a and 4.2d). The absence of effect is observable across cities of various sizes. Only a weak positive effect of local dailies emerges on voting in national elections. The coverage of local dailies and the content of the news bulletins of local branches of Polish public radio and television may be too regional in focus to fulfill the mobilization or community functions observed by studies of local media effects elsewhere, mostly in the United States. It is possible that different results would emerge from survey data distinguishing between the use of regional media and that of more “truly local” media outlets such as city, local government, or parish papers. Such data would be better suited to test whether local media act as mobilizing and community building agents. Unfortunately, I am not aware of Polish survey data including information about such media use categories. The very plurality of “truly local” media outlets in Poland poses a challenge to the systematic measurement of their use and effects in typical surveys.

Hypotheses 4.2c and 4.2e posited that heavier use of private broadcast media combined to the lack of interest in politics would result in lower levels of knowledge and political involvement. Evidence shows that private radio use and lack of interest interact to yield significantly lower levels of political activity. The effect is consistent across the forms of participation observed here: local voting, local electoral meeting

attendance, as well as voting in the 1997 parliamentary elections (where the coefficient only barely misses the significant threshold). Hypothesis 4.2b anticipated a positive impact of relying on interpersonal discussions as a regular source of information. The hypothesis is not supported by the data. Rather, reliance on discussions even constituted a liability where voting in the parliamentary election of 1997 was concerned. Overall, the analyses suggest that local media have no direct influence on local political participation.

The positive influence of local media use on knowledge suggested a possible impact of local media on participation via knowledge. The state of flux that characterized the Polish local electoral and administrative systems throughout the 1990s, combined with a political competition context in which vote choice cues were not widely available, led to anticipate that political sophistication would be a precious resource in deciding whether and how to vote (Hypothesis 4.3). The findings contradict this expectation. Political knowledge, measured by how well respondents could answer three questions about current affairs, exerted no statistically significant influence on participation in local elections. However, it registered a very tangible and positive impact on voting in national elections. An imperfect measure of local knowledge, based on awareness of local parties' electoral programs, had no impact on local voting either.

The information that matters for local elections appears to be the one that speaks directly to candidates and issues involved in the local electoral race, and is mostly directly delivered to citizens during the course of the electoral campaign in the forms of party leaflets dropped in mailboxes, ads about party programs and leaders on television, and direct contacts with the candidates. Exposure to direct local campaign information made citizens more susceptible to vote and attend electoral meetings (the exception is watching party programs, which registered no impact on meeting

attendance). Such information displays significant mobilization power that more remote sources like regional media outlets do not seem to achieve in Poland.

However, before concluding that local media use has no indirect effect on individual political participation in local elections in Poland, another factor likely to be shaped by local media use needs to be examined more closely: opinionation. The next chapter explores how local media use influences the opinion that citizens hold about their locality and the way that local authorities conduct local public affairs. Then, it considers how opinionation impacts on political engagement.

Chapter Five

Local Media Use, Opinionation and Voting in Local Elections

1. Introduction

This chapter continues the exploration of individual local media effects begun in Chapter Four. Starting from the same three media functions - imparting citizens with knowledge about local public affairs, acting as mobilizing agents, and creating or reinforcing a sense of community, the analyses consider whether local media use is associated with having an opinion about one's locality and the way it is run. It then explores potential direct effects on local media use on political participation in local elections, and indirect influences via opinionation.

The study of heuristics and political psychology have explored the role of emotions in voting behavior (e.g. Brody and Sniderman 1985; Conover and Feldman 1986; Lodge, McGraw and Stroh (1989)).¹⁰⁹ With "symbolic politics", Sears and his colleagues (Sears 1993; Sears, Hensler and Speer 1979; Sears et al. 1980) had already questioned the self-interested and rational nature of political attitudes and behavior, explaining them instead with childhood socialization reanimated by the use of symbols on the contemporary political scene.

Marcus, Neuman and McKuen's work (2000) figures among recent attempts to reconcile reason and emotion in the realm of politics. They claim that under normal circumstances, emotions rather than cognition guide citizens in forming opinions,

¹⁰⁹ As noted by Kuklinski (2002, 5-6), the view of a rational, strategic voter in political psychology is met with more skepticism than in other branches of political science. Brody and Sniderman's (1985) "likability heuristics" is used to locate electoral candidates' position on various issues; Conover and Feldman (1986) show that emotional reactions to the state of the economy influence evaluations of candidates' economic performance; Lodge, McGraw and Stroh's (1989) "online" model emphasizes the importance of affect and the limits of long-term memory. Taber and Lodge (1996) find that the process

attitudes, and even into taking political action. If a threat or a new development draw the attention of citizens, the latter become anxious and concerned. Beyond a certain anxiety threshold, reason steps in, triggering a process of information collection - for example, paying attention to the media coverage of an electoral campaign. Opinions and actions are then adjusted to the new situation. While this “affective intelligence” remains rational in that it minimizes the costs of information, the argument contends that feelings rather than calculus dominate political behavior. Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen’s argument that opinions are often rooted in emotions is of particular relevance for this chapter. Knowledge need not, and typically would not, be antecedent to political opinionation. I rely on their argument as well as on studies of heuristics to treat knowledge and opinionation as related, yet distinct phenomena that may have different effects on local voting.

The chapter opens with a review of the relevant literature. The second section presents the hypotheses, and the third part provides details about survey data and measures of opinionation. The fourth section describes the analysis and its results, and the last one concludes.

2. Information, Emotions and Opinions

While opinions are not “not necessarily grounded in factual information”, Iyengar, Luskin and Fishkin (2004, 13) note that they remain an essential element of evaluations of political candidates. Thus, knowledge and opinionation are often presented as close cousins. As Zaller (1992, 6) puts it, “opinion is a marriage of information and predisposition.”

by which initial facts are forgotten but residual judgments remembered and compiled in a running tally applied to candidate evaluations is particularly relevant for the least informed citizens.

Illustrations of this parentage abound notably in the field of economic voting, where perceptions about the economy are found to respond to fluctuations in inflation and unemployment rates, but not only so. Variations in individual perceptions of the state of the economy, and how these perceptions are brought to bear on vote choice, have also been attributed to differences in political sophistication, media usage and content, and partisanship (see Duch and Palmer 2004 for a review).

For the reasoning citizen, possessing information about a candidate or a political issue is certainly useful to form an opinion. Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996, 230) find that political knowledge is a strong predictor of having an opinion as opposed to answering “don’t know” to survey questions. Krosnick and Milburn (1990) and Althaus (2003, 546) observe similar results. Unsurprisingly, the relationship is even stronger where domain-specific information is concerned (Faulkenberry and Mason 1978). At the same time, the highly educated, presumably the most knowledgeable, are also more likely to admit their ignorance when an obscure issue is concerned (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, 231).

From the vantage point of the affective intelligence theory put forward by Marcus and his colleagues, the direction of the link between cognition and opinion runs the opposite way. An opinion is often unconsciously formed on the basis of feelings. When such feelings generate substantial anxiety, they incite citizens to seek information, setting in motion a reasoned process through which opinions and behavior are adjusted to the situation or event responsible for the initial upsurge of anxiety.¹¹⁰ According to Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen (2000, 76-7), a negative assessment of the economic situation is likely to generate anxiety towards incumbent political leaders.

¹¹⁰ Discussing the impact of campaigns preceding referendums, Bowler and Donovan (1994, 432) note that when voters learn enough to form an opinion about an issue, this opinion is likely to be stable. This supposes a cognition-to-opinion directional causality that Marcus et al. (2000) say is not applicable to many cases of opinionation. With the latter authors’ view in mind, opinions need not be so stable.

Examining presidential elections in the United States, they find that such anxious people are more attentive to the media, more likely to place parties correctly on a number of issues, tend to learn more from campaigns, and to get involved in politics beyond voting (ibid., 87-94).¹¹¹

Local elections typically constitute low-information contexts, notably in comparison with the large amount of information disseminated during national election campaigns.¹¹² Banducci et al. (2003) find that candidate appearance plays a key role in community boards elections, low-saliency and non-partisan elections conducted in 2001 in the United Kingdom. Rahn (2000) finds that affect, measured by how positive or negative people generally feel toward their country, plays a greater role in shaping the opinions of the ill-informed. Generally, the political reasoning of less aware citizens is driven to a greater extent by affect (Sniderman et al. 1991). Consequently, affect may well play a prominent role in local opinionation and, by the same token, on the decision to go to vote in Polish local elections.

Do people have an opinion about their locality and the way that the local council manages it? The question is not trivial given the major changes that affected the Polish local government system in recent years, as well as the potential difficulties involved in attributing responsibility for local policies in the light of the large proportion of independent candidates and the size and nature of the coalitions that their presence implies. In a survey conducted in 1994, 63% of respondents offered

¹¹¹ Unfortunately, the authors did not use voting as the dependent variable in any of their analyses, concentrating on an index collapsing the following activities: try to convince others about the vote; display a bumper sticker or a button; donate money; attend a meeting; or work for the campaign (Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000, 89).

¹¹² Zaller (1989) relates the flow of information available to campaign intensity; in the United States, coverage of Senate and House elections is less intense than coverage of presidential campaigns. The second-order elections model (Reif and Schmitt 1980), a popular explanation first applied to low turnout in European elections and later extended to local elections and (some) referendums, fits well with the flow of information character of different types of campaigns. Some authors have looked at campaign spending to evaluate intensity and, by the same token, the amount of information available to citizens.

substantive answers to five questions about their locality, while less than 5% could not offer any or only one answer. Eight years later, in 2002, nearly half of another survey's respondents offered an opinion on all four questions about the locality and council, while 17% could offer only one opinion or none at all. The downward trend might be explained by the timing of the decentralization reforms, already debated in 1994 but completed by the time the 2002 survey was conducted.¹¹³

Is local media use linked with expressing opinions about the locality? If and when people have opinions about the place where they live, does it matter for local voting? The only study connecting local media, political participation and opinionation I was able to find relies on a relatively small sample of 468 respondents from a single county in the United States. Scheufele, Shanahan and Kim (2002) find that both local newspaper use and factual knowledge about politics increased respondents' awareness about a proposed commercial development project in their local area. Opinionation, measured as the strength of support either for or against the development project, was related to local newspaper use and discussions with neighbors, but not to political knowledge.

This chapter does not and cannot attempt to identify and disentangle all the sources of local opinionation. As in previous chapters, the main object of interest remains local media influence.

Unfortunately no local campaign spending information is available from Polish political parties (Walecki 2003).

¹¹³ More prosaically, the stronger wording of some of the questions asked in 1994 may have made it more likely that respondents offer an opinion. For example, one of the question asked whether the respondent agreed or not with the statement that "the local council is incompetent and cannot do anything".

3. Hypotheses

3.1 Determinants of Opinionation

Media influence on opinionation about the municipality can stem from the coverage of local issues, as well as generally framing stories in local terms - for example, presenting a nation-wide health reform with a focus on the consequences for services available at the local health center. This informational role of the media closely connects knowledge with opinionation about the locality. Similarly, the use of larger number of information sources should have a positive effect on opinionation.

Hypothesis 5.1: Local media use will be positively linked with opinionation, especially in small municipalities.

Hypothesis 5.2: The use of more media outlets as sources of information about local elections will be associated with opinionation.

Some authors propose that media discourse is central to building an image of the community and producing a local identity (Friedland 2001; Kaniss 1991).¹¹⁴ According to Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) this outcome arises from local media reports that purposefully minimize tensions and conflicts in smaller and more homogeneous communities, while they focus on conflicts and their resolution in larger and more diverse cities.¹¹⁵ Information and knowledge merely figure here as unintended by-products of local media use. Regardless of whether local media effects are engineered from above, as Tichenor et al. present them, or result from the need for identity-formation of media users (McQuail 2000, 387), an understanding of local

¹¹⁴ This may enhance conformity to group norms as a motivation to vote (Knack 1992). The community building effect of media discourse is empirically undistinguishable from local media directly communicating the norm of voting as a duty (Shah, McLeod and Yoon 2001).

¹¹⁵ Functional sociologists hold similar views but frame the goals of media in larger social terms, e.g. local media serve the needs of the society or the community rather than those of the elite who controls them (McQuail 2000, 387). The functionalist and "local media as agents of social control" views are not inconsistent with the often reported politicization of local outlets in Central and Eastern Europe, notably local newspapers or newsletters controlled by local governments. Examining media content from the point of view of ideology rather than politicization, a study finds that liberal local newspapers in the

media connected to what can be dubbed a “community function” would predict local media use to shape public opinion in a positive way.¹¹⁶

It is harder to spell out a hypothesis with respect to negative local opinionation. Following Marcus et al.’s (2000) line of argument, normal or habitual use of local media would have no specific influence on opinionation. However, a citizen who regularly consults local media may become alerted about a new happening in the locality. Marcus and his colleagues claim that it is precisely such new developments that induce anxious people to search for further information. In this framework, habitual use of local media cannot be distinguished from picking up the local paper or watching the local news bulletin as a consequence of anxiety. Therefore, I make no prediction with respect to local media effect on negative opinionation. I return to the affective intelligence framework in the next subsection to propose a hypothesis relating negative opinionation and political participation.

Hypothesis 5.3: Local media use is expected to be linked with positive opinionation, more particularly in smaller, more homogeneous localities.

3.2 Opinionation and Voting in Local Elections

From the perspective of a rational citizen, opinions are based on information and can act as substitutes for it. For example, a positive or negative opinion about the state of roads may be sufficient to decide to vote for or against the incumbent mayor, without possessing any knowledge about the challenger’s program or the record of the sitting local authorities. According to this view, opinion holding facilitates voting.

United States are more likely to cover protest events than their conservative counterparts (Oliver and Myers 1999).

¹¹⁶ Given the limits of the survey data at my disposition, I am unable to disentangle situations in which the media, for whatever reasons, do not act as a “burglar alarm” (Zaller 2003) by failing to call citizens’ attention to various wrongdoings or inaction on the part of the local authorities from those where the city leadership performs well and enjoys high levels of support.

Conversely, Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen (2000) assert that facts or cognitive processes need not lie behind opinionation. A negative feeling may suffice to generate an equally negative opinion. When mounting into anxiety towards the incumbent, negative feelings can push citizens to take action. Using a negative view of the locality and its council as a proxy for anxiety, I expect negative opinionation to increase the likelihood of voting in local elections should the affective intelligence framework apply.

On the other hand, if a strong local identity is a major factor in leading people to the polling booths (Davidson and Cotter 1989), a positive opinion about the locality and the way it is run is more likely to result in citizens casting a ballot. This expectation is congruent with expressive voting's implicit assumption that voters are hedonistic, getting "involved when the political world is a source of positive feelings for them, where they can express positive commitments to causes, parties, the institutions of democracy, and so forth" (Toka 2002, 17).

Hypothesis 5.4: Opinionation will be linked with local voting – opinions of all colors if they are used as cues to vote decisions, a negative opinion if anxious citizens are more likely to participate, and a positive opinion if a sense of community is what matters most.

4. Data and Measures

The two surveys conducted after the 1998 Polish local elections used in Chapter Four do not include any questions pertaining to opinions or evaluations about the locality and its political leaders. Therefore, I make use of two other surveys, one conducted before the 1994 local elections and the other before the 2002 local elections held in Poland. Only the theoretically relevant variables are described in this section.

The last two tables in Appendix V provide information about the control variables included in the analyses.

Opinionation (OBOP 1994 and CBOS 2002): The two pre-electoral surveys include questions gauging mainly citizens' evaluation of the work of local authorities and, in 1994, whether they thought their gmina (Polish locality) had changed for better or worse in the course of the last electoral cycle. Answer options included either "I don't know" (only for the gmina change question available in 1994) or "hard to say." I interpret both answer options as a lack of opinion about the topic.¹¹⁷ The sets of questions about gmina council evaluation are used to construct measures tapping three different aspects of opinionation. The first is neutral opinionation, that is expressing an opinion on all topics raised by the questions, only offering one or two or, at the other extreme, answering "hard to say" or "don't know" to all opinionation questions. The second is having a negative opinion, distinguishing those holding a very negative opinion, a merely negative view, and all the others. The third aspect is positive opinionation, differentiating people who have a very positive opinion, a positive one, and all the others. In all cases, the indicators (five in 1994, four in 2002) were standardized before they were summed up into the six indices, rescaled to fall between 0 and 1.¹¹⁸ The Cronbach alpha values of the indices were equal or greater to .7.

Political party knowledge (OBOP 1994): Another set of questions queried respondents about their support for 20 different parties. Although not related to current affairs or political facts, these questions allow to evaluate respondents' knowledge with respect to party politics. The party knowledge scale standardizes and sums up the number of "hard to say" and "I never heard of that party" answers to the 20 questions. Some of the parties present in the list were competing for the first and last time, and the rate of "I have not heard of that party" climbs above 40% for the most obscure parties. This shows that the measure is not so polluted by personality traits as to render it meaningless.¹¹⁹ Almost 30% of respondents were willing to express a measure of

¹¹⁷ To assess the extent to which respondents who selected "hard to say" and "don't know" differ from one another, I used a set of questions pertaining to respondents' support for 20 different political parties from the 1994 survey. When answering this set of questions, respondents could indicate their level of support, or select either "It is hard to say" or "I have never heard of that party". The results of multinomial regression analyses show rather small differences between the two groups. I take this result as an indication that both answer options reflect a similar lack of opinion rather than, in the case of "hard to say", the ambivalence between two nearly equally applicable answer options (or finding all options equally inapplicable).

¹¹⁸ Neutral opinionation was also coded as a binary variable, separating the group of respondent who expressed an opinion as an answer to all questions, and the others who said "hard to say" or "don't know" at least once. The results of the logistic regressions performed using this coding are very similar to the ones displayed in Tables 4 to 9.

¹¹⁹ The issue of personality traits as determinants of opinionation has been closely examined by Mondak (1999, 2001; Mondak and Canache 2004; Mondak and Davis 2001). He expresses serious concerns about the potentially polluting effects of guessing in survey measures of political knowledge, going as far as to advocate the removal of the traditional "don't know" answer option to elicit responses from those respondents who hesitate to provide an answer for the "wrong" reasons (that is, for other reasons than a lack of knowledge). However, other works (Sturgis et al. 2005; Luskin and Bullock 2005) retort that the selection of "don't know" does not occur on a large scale in surveys, and that it typically does not hide partial knowledge. One more concern is related to the sensitivity of the opinion sought from respondents. However, the topic of locality or local authorities' evaluation is unlikely to be subject to the same social acceptability problems as are views on racial policies and redistribution in the United States (Berinsky 2002).

support for all 20 parties, thus scoring the highest on the party awareness scale, and 14% for five or less parties.

Local media use (OBOP 1994): The 1994 questionnaire asked respondents to indicate which type of media they favor to obtain information specifically about local elections. Among the 11 answer options figure local daily newspapers, public television local programs, talking to family members and friends, as well as church sources (see the full list in the second part of Appendix IV). Nearly 30% of respondents reported local dailies as a source of information.¹²⁰ Unfortunately, the survey conducted on the eve of the 2002 local elections did not query respondents about their media consumption or information habits.

Number of information sources (OBOP 1994): Respondents could indicate consulting more than one source of information about local electoral affairs; the resulting variable sums up the number of sources mentioned.

All the other variables are similar to the ones used in the previous chapter dealing with media influence on knowledge. Readers are referred to Appendix V and IV for descriptive statistics of variables and question wording.

5. Results

5.1 Local Media and Opinionation

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 present the results for OLS regressions pertaining to the three measures of opinionation: reporting any opinion; expressing a negative view; and reporting a positive opinion about the locality and its political leaders. The three aspects of opinionation are constructed from the same sets of survey questions and are consequently statistically related, most notably positive and negative opinionation. Before considering local media effects, I first briefly discuss the results regarding other

¹²⁰ By insisting on sources of information *about local elections* rather than media sources usually consulted for information, the wording of the question might have invited some conscientious citizens to select an obviously “correct” answer – local dailies. Luckily, these suspicions appear to be largely unfounded. The less than 30% of respondents who indicated that they use local daily newspapers as a source of local electoral information is comparable to previous surveys’ results (OBOP 1998, first survey in Chapter Four), in which 18.6% and 8.2% of respondents indicated that they use local dailies as their first and second sources of general information respectively (see Table B1 in Appendix II). Similarly, in the 1999 Polish General Social Survey (GSS), which did not include specific questions about locality or local voting behavior, over 50% of respondents reported reading a regional newspaper at least once a week (see Appendix I). Consequently, the 29% figure obtained from the 1994 survey does not appear to be inflated by question wording.

variables included in the analyses. The coefficients displayed in Table 5.2 allow to compare the effects of similar variables on voting in the two elections held eight years apart. However, since no media use nor knowledge measures are available in the 2002 survey, these important aspects of the 1994 analyses could not be replicated in the 2002 data.

Table 5.1. Determinants of Opinionation (OBOP 1994)

	Opinionation	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion
	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)
Political knowledge	.172*** (.026)	.063** (.031)	.038 (.030)
Interest local election info	-.009 (.009)	-.022* (.011)	.014 (.011)
Don't care election outcome	-.033 (.021)	-.006 (.025)	-.055** (.024)
Number of info sources	.253** (.007)	.014* (.008)	.0001 (.008)
Daily newspaper use	.172 (.005)	.004 (.006)	-.005 (.006)
Local daily use	-.009 (.019)	-.086*** (.022)	.072*** (.022)
Discussions	-.033 (.017)	-.027 (.020)	.0267 (.020)
Local public television use	.010 (.020)	.012 (.023)	-.008 (.023)
Age	.002* (.002)	.004* (.003)	-.001 (.003)
Age (squared)	-.007** (.000)	-.00004. (.000)	-.000002 (.000)
Gender (women=1)	-.024 (.015)	.004 (.018)	-.018 (.018)
Ideological extremism	.011*** (.008)	.002** (.010)	-.006 (.010)
Education	-.003*** (.005)	-.003 (.006)	-.010* (.006)
Egocentric economic eval.	-.00005 (.009)	-.061*** (.011)	.064*** (.011)
Church attendance	-.001 (.010)	-.020* (.012)	.018 (.012)
Locality size	-.029** (.004)	.004 (.004)	-.003 (.004)
Adjusted R ²	.099	.061	.069
N	N=1,047	N=1,047	N=1,047

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

-Entries are linear regression coefficients (standard errors indicated in parentheses).

Table 5.2. Determinants of Opinionation (CBOS 2002)

	Opinionation	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion
	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)
Political interest	.061*** (.009)	.042*** (.009)	.008 (.009)
Importance of local elections	.003 (.003)	-.006** (.003)	.006** (.003)
Don't care about election outcome	-.030** (.012)	.075*** (.013)	-.087*** (.012)
Age	.003 (.003)	.003 (.003)	-.004 (.003)
Age ²	-.00005** (.000)	-.00004 (.000)	.00001 (.000)
Gender (woman=1)	.004 (.017)	.025 (.017)	-.028 (.017)
Ideological extremism	.022*** (.006)	.006 (.007)	.014** (.006)
Education	-.003 (.004)	.004 (.004)	-.005 (.004)
Egocentric economic eval.	-.006 (.007)	-.042*** (.007)	.034*** (.007)
Church attendance	.002 (.007)	-.018** (.007)	.013* (.007)
Locality size	-.013*** (.004)	.004 (.005)	-.015*** (.004)
Married	.000 (.018)	-.026 (.019)	.024*** (.019)
Adjusted R ²	.115	.098	.119
N	N=1,226	N=1,226	N=1,226

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

-Constant terms not shown.

-Entries are linear regression coefficients (standard errors indicated in parentheses).

The first finding is the positive link between neutral and negative opinionation on the one side, and the measure of party knowledge on the other. In the case of positive opinionation, the coefficient, also positive, is not significant. While this result is in line with that of other studies, it is important to keep in mind the specificity of the measure of knowledge used here, which focuses on awareness about political parties. The indicator is akin to opinionation itself in that it is built from support measures for various political parties rather than correct answers to questions about current political affairs. It is also presumably more closely related to left-right ideology than a measure of factual knowledge would be. The ideological extremism variable also exhibits a positive and significant effect on neutral and negative opinionation, but not on positive opinionation.¹²¹

The measure of political interest in Table 5.1 refers to respondents' specific interest in information about local elections rather than interest in politics in general. Those who report an interest in receiving such information are slightly less likely to harbor a negative opinion about their locality, but are not more prone to express an opinion. In 2002, those interested in politics in general are more opinionated and tend to hold a more negative opinion, indicating that the two questions tap different types of political interest.

¹²¹ Left-right ideology may well have been a useful cue to form an opinion about the performance of the local authorities on the eve of the 1994 local elections. Solidarity candidates, running under the banner of Civic Committees (*Komitety Obywatelskie*), had won most of the seats in the first free local elections held in 1990. This way, large numbers of people without links to the former Communist Party came into local administrations (see the appendix to Gosselin and Czesnik 2005). As a result, sympathizers of the old system and those particularly discontented by the tough economic reforms might have had both reasons and cues to turn negative towards the new local authorities four years later. In the 2002 data, ideological extremism registers a positive impact on opinionation, a smaller but still significant influence on positive opinion holding, but none on negative opinionation. The "old-new regime" logic is more difficult to apply given the more politically mixed make-up of local assemblies that followed the 1998 local elections, as well as the increasing success of non-party candidates. More generally, the lack of detailed information about the political color of the local assembly of the municipality in which each respondent lives, as well as the divide between supporters of communist successor parties and those of parties with roots in the Solidarity movement render the role of partisanship cues difficult to evaluate.

The two surveys permit to measure indifference towards the composition of the local assembly. In 1994, the elections of either incumbents, challengers or councilors from the communist era made no difference to 15% of respondents. In 2002, an even larger proportion of respondents said that the identity of those who sits on the council is of little (20%) or no importance (9%). Those who expressed indifference were not particularly negative in their assessment in 1994 but much more so in 2002, the change potentially capturing growing political cynicism among Poles. Conversely, those assigning greater importance to local elections in 2002 were more likely to be sympathetic to local authorities and their work, as well as less prone to express dissatisfaction. To summarize, the politically aware and interested, as well as those who tend to view politics in left-right terms are more opinionated and generally tend to be more critical of their local government's performance, while the perceived importance of local elections is associated with satisfaction towards the locality.

Coming now to local media use effects on opinionation, let me recall the two hypotheses. The first contends that local media, as a provider of information about the locality, will contribute to opinionation regardless of the opinion's orientation. This part of the hypothesis is not supported by the results shown in Table 5.1. Reliance on local dailies exerts no significant influence on neutral opinionation. However, an interaction between locality size and local paper shows a conditional impact of local media, which turns moderately positive in the smallest places (results now shown). More in line with expectations – and unlike the absence of effect noted in Chapter Four where knowledge was concerned -, reliance on a greater number of sources of information about local elections increases the probability of reporting an opinion, as well as that opinion being negative.

The third hypothesis posits that local media use is associated with satisfaction with the locality. Positive opinionation may happen as result of local council-friendly media content, and because of a sense of community that feeds local media consumption and is reinforced by it. The hypothesis is borne out by the results. Those who rely on local newspapers are more likely to express a positive opinion and are significantly less critical of local authorities than those who do not use these outlets. The strength of this effect is second only to that of egocentric economic evaluation. However, an indicator of the potential role of local media as agents of social control in the form of a significant interaction between local daily newspaper reliance and locality size failed to materialize, although the coefficient's sign is in the expected direction (the coding of locality size was reversed so that a higher value would denote a smaller community).¹²²

Finally, reliance on other local sources of information, either on local programs of Polish public television or discussions with friends and neighbors, has no impact on opinionation. The same can be said of the frequency of buying a daily newspaper, national and local outlets confounded.¹²³

5.2 Opinionation and Local Participation in Local Elections

I now turn to voting in local elections. The general thrust of Hypothesis 5.3 is that opinionation will impact positively on local electoral participation. Yet, competing claims about the main source of opinions yield different expectations with respect to the effects of the three aspects of opinionation on voting. If opinionation arises from information and a conscious evaluation process, it should impact positively on voting.

¹²² The columns including the interaction terms were not included in Table 4 to avoid overloading the table with coefficients.

¹²³ Replacing this measure with reliance on national dailies for information about local elections did not register any effect on the three aspects of opinionation when included in the regression equations.

This is precisely what we find for local voting in both 1994 and 2002 (Tables 5.3 and 5.4). However, this effect of neutral opinionation does not extend to the other forms of participation, contacting local representatives and campaigning for local candidates (Tables 5.5 and 5.6), where selective incentives play a larger role.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ An analysis similar to the one described here but that also included occupation showed that being an entrepreneur had a positive and significant impact on contacting local representatives.

Table 5.3. The Determinants of Local Voting (OBOB 1994)

	1. Opinionation: Neutral	2. Opinionation: Negative	3. Opinionation: Positive
	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)
Knowledge	-.077 (.257)	.078 (.251)	.027 (.254)
Opinionation	.765*** (.297)	-.223 (.251)	1.018*** (.255)
Interest in local election info	.497*** (.090)	.481*** (.089)	.480*** (.090)
Don't care about election outcome	-.710*** (.216)	-.720*** (.215)	-.684*** (.218)
Number of info sources	-.032 (.063)	-.020 (.063)	-.020 (.063)
Frequency of buying daily	-.097** (.049)	-.093* (.049)	-.092* (.049)
Rely on local daily	.239 (.173)	.216 (.173)	.159 (.175)
Rely on discussions	.238 (.158)	.249 (.158)	.223 (.159)
Rely on local public tv	.087 (.187)	.104 (.187)	.107 (.188)
Age	.063*** (.024)	.067*** (.024)	.068*** (.024)
Age ²	-.001** (.000)	-.001** (.000)	-.001** (.000)
Gender (woman=1)	-.226 (.145)	-.228 (.145)	-.209 (.146)
Ideological extremism	.216*** (.077)	.241*** (.077)	.247*** (.077)
Education	.108** (.048)	.096** (.048)	.106** (.048)
Egocentric economic eval.	.184** (.089)	.180** (.090)	.128 (.091)
Church attendance	.012 (.098)	.023 (.097)	.009 (.098)
Locality size	-.119*** (.035)	-.125*** (.035)	-.124*** (.035)
-2 LL	1215.47	1221.39	1206.00
Nagelkerke R ²	0.196	0.186	0.203
N	N=1,077	N=1,077	N=1,077

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

-Constant terms not shown.

-Entries are linear regression coefficients (standard errors indicated in parentheses).

Table 5.4. The Determinants of Local Voting (CBOS 2002)

	1. Opinionation: Neutral	2. Opinionation: Negative	3. Opinionation: Positive
	B S.E.	B S.E.	B S.E.
Opinionation	1.15*** (.256)	-.208 (.243)	.966*** (.248)
Political interest	.367*** (.082)	.437*** (.081)	.426*** (.081)
Importance of local elections	.123*** (.024)	.123*** (.024)	.119*** (.024)
Don't care about election outcome	-.565*** (.113)	-.579*** (.114)	-.509*** (.115)
Age	.079*** (.024)	.081*** (.023)	.085*** (.023)
Age ²	-.001*** (.000)	-.001*** (.000)	-.001*** (.000)
Gender (woman=1)	-.211 (.149)	-.200 (.148)	-.177 (.148)
Ideological extremism	.259*** (.056)	.288*** (.055)	.271*** (.055)
Education	.080** (.035)	.075** (.034)	.078** (.035)
Egocentric economic eval.	.012 (.064)	-.010 (.064)	-.033 (.064)
Church attendance	.118* (.061)	.117* (.061)	.105* (.061)
Locality size	-.185*** (.040)	-.196*** (.039)	-.181*** (.040)
Married	.302* (.162)	.298* (.161)	.280* (.162)
-2 LL	1372.45	1392.35	1377.75
Nagelkerke R ²	0.315	0.295	0.308
N	N=1,225	N=1,225	N=1,225

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

-Constant terms not shown.

-Entries are linear regression coefficients (standard errors indicated in parentheses).

Table 5.5. The Determinants of Local Representatives Contacting (OBOP 1994)

	1. Opinionation: Neutral	2. Opinionation: Negative	3. Opinionation: Positive
	B (S.E.)	B S.E.	B S.E.
Political knowledge	-.265 (.371)	-.178 (.365)	-.180 (.367)
Opinionation	.676 (.469)	.383 (.371)	.508 (.372)
Interest for local election info	.113 (.131)	.110 (.131)	.110 (.130)
Don't care about election outcome	.112 (.301)	.097 (.301)	.112 (.301)
Number of info sources	.138 (.090)	.142 (.090)	.147 (.090)
Frequency of buying daily	-.026 (.074)	-.028 (.074)	-.022 (.074)
Rely on local daily	-.248 (.268)	-.211 (.271)	-.290 (.270)
Rely on discussions	-.051 (.237)	-.024 (.238)	-.059 (.238)
Rely on local public tv	-.228 (.299)	-.228 (.300)	-.211 (.299)
Age	.113*** (.040)	.115*** (.040)	.115*** (.040)
Age ²	-.001** (.000)	-.001*** (.000)	-.001*** (.000)
Gender (woman=1)	-.049 (.221)	-.056 (.221)	-.041 (.221)
Ideological extremism	-.047 (.118)	-.036 (.118)	-.030 (.118)
Education	-.006 (.077)	-.015 (.077)	-.007 (.077)
Egocentric economic eval.	-.113 (.131)	-.090 (.132)	-.141 (.133)
Church attendance	-.105 (.150)	-.084 (.151)	-.109 (.150)
Locality size	-.239*** (.057)	-.248*** (.057)	-.244*** (.057)
-2 LL	648.39	649.48	648.67
Nagelkerke R ²	0.093	0.091	0.092
N	N=1,043	N=1,043	N=1,043

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

-Constant terms not shown.

-Entries are linear regression coefficients (standard errors indicated in parentheses).

Table 5.6. The Determinants of Local Campaign Involvement (CBOS 2002)

	1. Opinionation: Neutral	2. Opinionation: Negative	3. Opinionation: Positive
	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)
Opinionation	.268 (.632)	.911* (.547)	-.288 (.528)
Political interest	.946*** (.197)	.911*** (.198)	.951*** (.196)
Importance of local elections	-.028 (.056)	-.024 (.055)	-.024 (.055)
Don't care about election outcome	-.981** (.411)	-1.02** (.407)	-1.027** (.410)
Age	-.011 (.064)	-.013 (.063)	-.011 (.063)
Age ²	.000 (.001)	.000 (.001)	.000 (.001)
Gender (woman=1)	-.323 (.343)	-.348 (.343)	-.330 (.343)
Ideological extremism	.195 (.131)	.191 (.130)	.201 (.130)
Education	.178** (.074)	.173** (.074)	.173** (.074)
Egocentric economic eval.	-.076 (.138)	-.030 (.142)	-.064 (.140)
Church attendance	-.187 (.135)	-.162 (.136)	-.177 (.136)
Locality size	-.182** (.090)	-.185** (.091)	-.185** (.090)
Married	-.058 (.380)	-.026 (.383)	-.065 (.379)
-2 LL	368.47	365.83	368.35
Nagelkerke R ²	.233	.239	.233
N	N=1,225	N=1,225	N=1,225

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

-Constant terms not shown.

-Entries are linear regression coefficients (standard errors indicated in parentheses).

On the other hand, the impact of having a negative view about the locality is not significant on any form of participation. Marcus et al.'s (2000) thesis appears not to be supported by the data. Of course, this conclusion remains vulnerable to the criticism that what is measured are negative evaluations about municipalities rather than anxiety about local incumbent political leaders. Yet, the authors of *Affective Intelligence* themselves designate economic bad times as an important source of anxiety about incumbent leaders. The local evaluation indicators I use are set in general rather than economic terms. Yet, the strongest determinant of negative opinionation is a glum evaluation of one's economic situation. This strong link between the two should have resulted in negative local opinions triggering a measure of concern, at least for some inhabitants, and thus increase participation levels if Marcus and his colleagues were correct.¹²⁵

The hypothesis that a positive opinion tends to lead citizens to the ballot boxes is borne out by the data, but does not apply to other forms of involvement. Those who hold a positive opinion about the locality have even more chances to show up at the polls than the merely opinionated, a larger effect that is observable in both elections. To illustrate the effect, the predicted probability of an average citizen (in terms of age,

¹²⁵ Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen (2000) specify that anxiety towards the incumbent generated by personal or general economic distress has a stronger impact on incumbent's partisans than on its opponents, who expect bad results anyway. In the context of the Polish 1994 local elections, that would have left communism-leaning citizens, even if a minority, extremely anxious in the wake of the deep recession that followed the economic reforms. Introducing a dummy variable identifying left-leaning people (people scoring 1 or 2 on a 1 to 6-point left-right scale) most likely to identify supporters of the communist successor party did not yield significant results for negative opinion holding or voting. An interaction term between the left-leaning dummy and economic self-evaluation did not either. One way to rescue the argument would be to say that everybody, no matter which side they supported, expected the tough times that followed the transition and that no major bouts of anxiety occurred as a result. Overall, such an argument is not terribly convincing. Yet another way to explain the lack of impact of anxiety is that even downbeat citizens did not associate their economic situation nor their negative stance towards the turn of events in the locality with the local government's doing itself, but rather with the more general economic situation surrounding the transition, or central government's policy. A different explanation proposes that the cost of participation is higher for those who have less economic resources at their disposal. Rosenstone (1982) finds that "punishers" do not show up at the polls in equally high numbers as voters in a better financial situation.

church attendance, locality size, education, etc.) of voting in local elections increases from .4 to .6 as her opinion of the locality becomes increasingly positive (moving from .2 to .9 on the positive opinionation scale). The strong effects of positive and (somewhat less strong) neutral opinionation hold in the presence of control variables that capture the importance of local elections and their outcome in respondents' eyes. The two latter variables are solid predictors of voting, with perceived importance of local elections showing the strongest effect. The indicator is not without recalling the notion of voting as a civic duty described and tentatively measured by Blais (2000).¹²⁶

As shown in Table 5.3, party knowledge registers no impact on voting, very much in contrast with the strong effects of ideological extremism and education. This indicates that while similar to both opinionation and ideological extremism in the manner discussed above, the measure of party knowledge remains nonetheless distinct. Its lack of influence on local voting in 1994 echoes the results obtained with the more general measure of awareness about current political affairs based on the 1998 survey data.

Similarly to the results presented in Chapter Four, I find that local media use does not contribute directly to participation. Table 5.3 shows the impact of a variable measuring the frequency of buying a daily newspaper. The indicator is modestly and negatively associated with local voting. The negative finding associated with the daily buying frequency measure may have to do with the mainly national nature of the dailies most frequently subscribed to. When the variable is replaced with reliance on national daily newspapers, the coefficient becomes insignificant, similarly to the result observed for local voting in 1998.

¹²⁶ The perception of local elections importance correlates very well with the importance assigned to regional and national elections, thus supporting the idea that it acts as a measure of an underlying, more general sense of duty.

In addition to opinionation and media effects, a number of other variables' behavior can be compared with that observed in the previous chapter. While age exerts its usual positive influence on turnout, the familiar gender gap in voting, observed in Tables 4.2 and 4.3, appears to close once opinion is entered in the analysis, although the signs of coefficients remain negative (Tables 5.3 and 5.4).¹²⁷ This is consistent with the lack of a significant influence of gender on opinionation in both 1994 and 1996. Economic self-evaluations play a moderately positive role in local voting in 1994, the better off being more likely to cast a ballot in two of the three models displayed in Table 5.3. The effect vanishes by 1998 and does not reappear in 2002. It might be due to the particularly disempowering impact of the financial distress brought about by the first years of transition. However, this interpretation does not explain why the economically better off were more likely to vote in parliamentary elections in 1998.

Church attendance shows a positive influence on local voting only in elections that took place after 1994. While the church of Poland is officially not involved in politics since 1993 - that is, it theoretically does not go beyond urging people to go to vote -, in practice its engagement has increased, notably via Radio Maryja. The station, founded by a priest, began to broadcast nationally in 1993 and vocally endorses conservative candidates (Millard 1998, 98-9; see also Szczerbiak 1999, 2001, 2004 for discussions about the Church's involvement and its impact on Polish politics).

A short, final word should be said about the effect of locality size, although I provide here no discussion about this much debated factor (e.g. Dalh and Tufte's classic *Size and Democracy* (1973); see Soos 2005 for a review of size effects in the context of Hungarian local elections). I nonetheless note that dwellers of larger cities are less likely to voice an opinion; when they did so in 2002, it was less likely to be

¹²⁷ A gender effect might be partly picked up by the indifference towards the elections' outcome variable.

positive. The influence of size is constant across elections and political participation activities: the smaller the community, the greater the level of participation (the exception is local electoral meeting attendance as shown in Chapter Four). This largely concurs with the results of most other studies of turnout, including local turnout. Keeping in mind that two different local electoral systems are in use in Poland, I reran the equations after replacing locality size with a dummy for proportional electoral rule.¹²⁸ The results are similar to that of size. The proportionality electoral system, often associated with higher turnout figures, does not “compensate” for the negative effect of locality size and is not associated with a greater individual probability of voting.

6. Conclusion

This chapter used survey data gathered in the months preceding local elections in Poland in 1994 and 2002 to assess whether local media - local daily newspapers and local programs of public television – contribute to citizens holding an opinion about their municipality and its local council, and getting involved in local elections.

As the previous chapters, Chapter Five drew on the concept of local media roles to shape its expectations. Local media use may influence political thinking and behavior by fulfilling three different, but not mutually exclusive functions. Firstly, local media use contributes to citizens’ political awareness via local affairs coverage, or by framing events and issues in local terms. Analogously, media use also plays a role in shaping citizens’ opinion about the locality and the performance of its political leaders.

¹²⁸ The dummy cannot be included in analyses at the same time as the size indicator due to very high correlation. In addition, there are problems with identification of electoral system in 1994 since the cutoff point, then at 40,000 inhabitants, falls in the middle of one of the categories (21,000-50,000 inhabitants) employed to measure locality size in the survey. Thus all towns counting between 40,000 and 50,000 dwellers had to be classified as using the majoritarian principle even if that was not the case.

Secondly, local media can directly impact on participation by mobilizing citizens. Local political parties' and candidates' appeals in local outlets, as well as information pertaining to when and where to vote or attend an electoral meeting may not add to individuals' stock of political knowledge but nonetheless facilitate political engagement. Thirdly, local media use is connected to a sense of belonging to the community. People who feel greater ties and attachment to their locality pick up the local paper and follow local news bulletins, which in turn reinforces a sense of community. According to the community function of local media, information and cognitive processes in general need not underlie local media use effects on opinionation, local voting and other forms of involvement.

Chapter Five tested a number of propositions related to opinionation derived from these three functions of local media. While the evidence provided in Chapter Four supported the first function of local outlets, this chapter's findings buttress the third function of local media. I find that local media use is associated with having a positive opinion about the locality and the work of local authorities (Hypothesis 5.3). However, it has no impact on the likelihood of expressing an opinion per se (Hypothesis 5.1). Respondents who reported using a larger number of different media outlets to inform themselves about local elections expressed an opinion more readily, and were also more critical toward the work of the council and in their general assessment of their municipality (Hypothesis 5.2).

The analysis of opinionation suggests that local media act as a sort of glue for local communities. Of course, a process of self-selection cannot be excluded.¹²⁹ Yet, a sense of community may well result from the priming of regional issues, as these

¹²⁹ Local branches of public television and radio as well as regional dailies are likely to flourish in the very markets where regional identity is a relevant factor. Defining regional identity as contra living in the capital city or its immediate satellite localities (although Warsaw also has a major local daily in addition

outlets more frequently cover happenings taking place outside the capital, and from the framing of general stories from a local angle. This could contribute to make local politics a salient topic for local media users. That said, it appears highly improbable that popular regional media outlets, many of which are owned by large, profit-oriented companies playing a major role on the Polish and international media scenes, are actively engaged in social peace engineering as suggested by Tichenor et al. (1980). The theory of local media as agents of social control, at least where regional outlets in Poland are concerned, can be safely put aside.

Finally, opinionation, both neutral and positive, emerged as a significant determinant of local voting, but not of other forms of participation, save for a small effect on campaigning activities (Hypothesis 5.4). On the whole, this supports the thesis of indirect effects of local media, as both political knowledge and local media influence on local voting are mediated by opinionation about the locality and local authorities' performance.

Given the specific focus of the dissertation on local media, I do not discuss in details the findings pertaining to other, non-media variables included in the analyses of knowledge, opinionation and participation. Nonetheless, the results of Chapters 4 and 5 point to a specificity of local political engagement that the large majority of studies of participation fails to take into account. Factors directly associated with voting in national elections such as political sophistication and print media use or, among socio-economic characteristics, income, do not figure as prominently when local voting is the dependent variable.

The findings suggest some commonality but also important differences in media and information effects across types of political activities depending on the level of

to other smaller district papers), it may be that local media use plays no part in local positive

government under scrutiny. Researchers interested in media effects and political participation would do well not to collapse different forms and levels of political participation, and consider media types and levels separately.

The data at my disposal does not allow conducting as thorough a test of the differentiated impact of knowledge, opinionation, and media use on participation as I would have wished. Inevitably, the analyses raise some questions that the data cannot answer. Yet, media influence in general appears to be limited in the context of local elections, while it is more prominent in national electoral contests. A notable exception to this pattern is public radio programs use, a significant factor for all the aspects of participation considered in this chapter and the previous one. The analyses hint that print media influence on other, less frequent and more demanding forms of local political activity such as meeting attendance share some traits with the effects observed on national voting. This raises the interesting question of why a relatively easy, frequently undertaken action such as voting in national-level elections and another, much more infrequent behavior like going to a local electoral meeting, are associated with similar media influences. I propose that the answer lies with media coverage of electoral politics. Local election coverage in local outlets is apt at fostering a community identity, thus making identity expression and civic duty especially relevant for voting in local elections. This coincides with the low intensity of local electoral campaigns, which generate little horse-racing and drama for the local media to depict. On the other hand, national media provide ample coverage of party politics, its actors vying for political power with an intensity that is matched at the local level only in the capital and a few major cities. Such coverage attracts politically aware citizens and fosters excitement about elections, as witnesses the impact of media use on voting in

opinionation, rather tapping a regional identity that produces a positive effect on opinionation.

parliamentary elections. This explanation also fits with accounts of turnout that emphasize expressive voting, interpreting involvement in electoral politics as something that people value not only for its outcome – electing representative -, but also for its own sake (Brennan and Hamlin 1999; Guttman, Hilger and Shachmurove 1994; Schuessler 2000b; Toka 2002). The same appetite for party politics, whetted and further reinforced by national press coverage, drives the most politically interested to attend local electoral meetings.

Further integration of the study of local engagement as a distinct element of political participation, reflected in survey queries about domain-specific local knowledge, questions pertaining to “truly” local media use and other measures related to the sense of community, would greatly contribute to confirm or refute the thesis outlined above about a differentiated role of media in various public spheres. The examination of individual media effects in Poland certainly shows that it can contribute to our understanding of media effects.

Conclusion

This dissertation had two major goals. Firstly, it sought to map the contours of local media scenes in Hungary, Poland, Latvia and Romania. Secondly, it aimed at furthering our understanding of the effects of local media on various aspects of local democracy in these countries.

The dissertation considered four key characteristics of local media: their presence and number, the extent to which they cover local politics, their ownership structure, and the size of their audience. The research made use of original survey data gathered in 2001 to draw an original portrait of local media. Far from being everywhere the same, the size and shape of local media scenes vary between countries and cities. Local media are a common element of the local public sphere in Poland and Latvia, where nearly every locality counts at least one outlet. Poland enjoys the most diverse of the four local media markets, comprising widely circulating regional dailies, city and parish papers, as well as a significant number of local broadcast media outlets. Half of Hungarian towns boast at least one outlet, more often than not a local newspaper owned or sponsored by the local authorities, that reserves a large space to the coverage of town hall politics. Local media are least common in Romania. Yet, Romanian local outlets often exhibit an interesting relationship with other elements of their local environment. Notably, the impact of local media presence and coverage of local political affairs on citizens' involvement in the local decision making process is particularly prominent in cities that also count a larger number of local associations.

These results contrast with the monolithic views often heard about local media, in the East and the West: "Local media outlets spreads propaganda favourable to the local authorities", or "Local media are an essential element for the development of a healthy local democracy." The picture that emerges is diverse and nuanced, effectively

debunking a number of ideas about local media characteristics most conducive to citizens' engagement and the consolidation of local democracy in general. Market forces might not play as important a role as the simple presence of a source of information about town hall politics that can be factored in when evaluating the work of local leaders and participating in local elections. Above all, the same source acts as a reminder of citizens' belonging to a specific community.

The dissertation built on the concept of local media systems to better take into account the wider context in which the media operate. Early research in media studies defined media systems according to the characteristics of the political regimes they operated in. The appearance of the concept of media systems in the 1950s is thus linked to a Manichean, Cold War view of the world. Yet, an analysis of the determinants of local media characteristics shows that the concept remains useful once ridden of its deterministic overtones and made more sensitive to heterogeneity between and within media systems. Of course, many factors such as country size and history underlie the diversity of local media depicted in the first part of Chapter One. Nonetheless, the analysis of more immediate, potential antecedents of the general aspect of local media scenes revealed an interesting pattern. In spite of a generalized lack of ownership or financial sponsorship ties linking local media to political parties and local associations, the latter's presence is associated with significantly larger media scenes. In spite of the organizational weakness of parties and citizens' groups in post-communist settings, these organizations contribute to shape local media scenes to a greater extent than socio-economic factors.

After years of neglect, political science has relatively recently returned to the study of media effects on political behaviour. As they became the main source of political information of millions of citizens, omnipresent media came to be considered

not so much as a reflection of the political regime but as a factor susceptible of significant influence on political actors, institutions, and citizens. This prompted a flurry of investigations of the role of media and their consequences on democratic societies. The second and following chapters drew on the results of these studies to assess local media effects.

Media studies, political science, as well as early sociological work dealing with community studies considered a number of media roles. This dissertation proposed to examine more closely three functions of local media. The first is based on the information carried by local media. Because local outlets provide information about local political actors, local events and issues, they foster greater awareness among the citizenry, who is then better equipped to hold its representatives accountable and get actively involved in public affairs. The second role considered in this dissertation is the mobilization function. Different conceptions of this role can be found in the literature. One suggests that media content mobilizes citizens thanks to contextual and specific information on how, where, when and why to get involved in local politics. Another view contends that mobilization mainly follows from the appeals of political parties vying for local political influence. Media presence and use have also been connected to a sense of community. Belonging to a particular place may well foster local media use, which in turns reinforces a local identity. A community identity has been found to be a significant source of interest for, and involvement in local politics.

Against this background, Chapter Two explored the impact of local media on the performance of local governments in Hungary, Poland, Latvia and Romania. The general thrust of the hypotheses was that a larger media scene, with a diverse ownership structure, providing ample coverage of local politics and reaching many citizens should result in local authorities taking decisions in a more efficient and timely

manner, and adopting procedures that facilitate citizens' input. The analysis revealed no impact of local media impact on the first, decisional aspect of performance. Among the four features of local media, the extent of coverage of local public affairs was associated with better democratic performance in the four countries. In addition, greater availability also mattered in a positive way in Hungary and Latvia, while greater diversity of the ownership structure registered a positive effect on the inclusive character of local decision making in Poland. None of the four local media attributes considered in the study showed an influence on the performance of local governments in Romania. Findings also suggest that local media's impact in Romania and Hungary depends on the vigour of local civil society. Notably, the amount of local politics coverage and, to a lesser extent, the number of outlets, had a larger positive impact when more local associations were active and citizens more willing to sign petitions and take part in demonstrations.

Chapter Three used city-level data to explore the impact of local media, political competition and local welfare spending on local turnout in Hungary and Poland. The hypothesis that local media contribute to local turnout received moderate support, with a stronger showing in Hungary. In addition, the impact of Hungarian local outlets is stronger on turnout in national than in local elections. Another hypothesis contended that the presence of local associations could also foster turnout, notably as a mechanism facilitating information dissemination and mobilization. The expectation turned out to be confirmed only in Hungary.

Competition and closeness clearly emerge as important determinants of local participation in both countries. Local welfare spending, as expected, contributed to heighten the stakes of local election in Hungary. Relatively larger social benefits handouts are decided upon more autonomously by Hungarian local authorities than by

their Polish counterparts. However, the assumption that the presence of a larger Roma population, more likely to need and benefit from poverty alleviation measures, would be associated with higher turnout was not supported by the data. On the other hand, senior citizens, who typically display high electoral participation rates, were less likely to take part in local electoral contests, most obviously so in Hungary. Polish localities counting a larger number of seniors also exhibited lower turnout in the 1998 local elections. This points to a lesser interest of senior citizens with local policies in general. Not only is pension and health care competence largely concentrated in the hands of the central administration, but senior citizens do not send children to primary schools and kindergartens funded and managed by local authorities.

The focus on turnout of Chapter Three allowed interpreting the analyses' results with respect to two different explanation of voting. Following the instrumental approach, according to which people evaluate the chances of influencing an election's outcome before casting a ballot, information gathering constitutes a means to lower the cost of voting. According to the expressive conception of voting, citizens vote without connecting their action with the outcome of the election. Rather, they cast a ballot because it satisfies their sense of duty towards the community, allows them to express an identity, or simply because it is entertaining. All these motivations can be fuelled by local media use. The instrumental view is linked to a purely informational role of the media, while the expressive conception can be associated with a community identity building function. The analyses conducted in Chapter Three suggests that media functions and motivations for voting vary with election type. The fact that the number of local media outlets in Hungary was found to impact more strongly on national than on local turnout indicates that media's addition to the entertainment value of the vote is greater during national electoral campaigns. Rather than a calculus of voting resting on

the chances of making a difference for the outcome, the findings support a more general, less demanding instrumental local voting rationale that takes into account electoral stakes independently from the probability of casting the decisive ballot.

Chapters Four and Five exploited the availability of individual survey data pertaining to local elections held in Poland between 1994 and 2002 to investigate media roles and the information logic at work in local elections. Chapter Four put to the test the informational role of local media use. The assumption that local media use contributes to political knowledge received mitigated support. Specifically local media exerted no influence on voting or other forms of political participation. Media influence on political participation did not operate either through political knowledge, as the latter factor was not associated with local voting. The use of public affairs-oriented public radio boosted engagement all forms of participation observed in the chapter, including voting in local elections. National dailies were the prime media influence on national voting, as well as attendance of local electoral meetings.

The last chapter pursued further the investigation begun in Chapter Four. Chapter Five explored the impact of local media use on opinionation - holding an opinion about the locality and the way local authorities manage public affairs -, as well as how local media use colors the opinions held by citizens. The analyses revealed a positive impact of local media use on both opinionation and positive opinion holding. In turn, the same two factors were linked with a greater likelihood of casting a ballot in local elections. Thus, local media effects appear to be largely mediated through opinionation, and more particularly through positive opinionation.

Furthermore, the results of the two last chapters lend support to earlier speculations that voting in national elections is more largely motivated by the entertainment value of this vote than is the case in local electoral contests. Information and community identity

appear more likely to stand behind the observed local media effects. Overall, the results of the dissertation show that local media constitute one of the stepping stones towards citizens' political engagement in the local public sphere.

While analyzing media effects on various aspects of local democracy, it clearly appeared that the study of local democracy reveals many interesting insights about the media. Indeed, the dissertation shows the benefits of scholarly inquiries directed at local politics, institutions and actors in new democracies. Largely neglected local level data can be used to test theories and ideas developed in different disciplines, applied in other countries and contexts, and with the national rather than local level of government as the main object of their interest. A greater circulation of theories and data is a particularly relevant aspect of research in societies where multilevel governance is becoming an everyday reality.

The dissertation's results spell relatively good news about the state of local media and local democracy in many post-communist societies. Local media use, even in apparently unfavourable contexts such as local government monopoly, contribute to inform citizens about the state of the locality, and help them form an opinion about the conduct of local public affairs. In turn, opinionated citizens are more likely to show up at local polling booths. More often than not, a generous coverage of local politics and, in certain contexts, stronger media presence and deeper reach into local homes make the voice of citizens more likely to be heard in the town hall.

Obviously, the dissertation could not consider all possible mechanisms of influence of local media, nor delve fully and comprehensively into explanations of political participation and, more particularly, of local government performance. Not all potentially relevant interactions between media and other elements of the local environment could be examined. Rather, I have focused on the most important ones, as

suggested by both the data and previous research in the fields of media studies, voting behaviour, and political communication. I believe that the endeavour has proved fruitful although, as usual, much remains to be done. The dissertation is a reminder that the topic is certainly worth more scholarly attention. Local media constitute an important safeguard against potential misconduct on the part of elected representatives, an ingredient in opinionation and the development of a local identity conducive to a more inclusive local democratic life. All considered, local media may well contribute, modestly yet importantly, to counter the cynicism and disaffection with democratic institutions and values often associated with post-communist transitions.

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Appendix I

LGS Questionnaire – Local Media Section

The Local Media section of the codebook of the Indicators of Local Democratic Governance Project- Local Government Survey 2001, 2002-2003 (available at www.t-rc.hu) is pasted below. Note that other countries were added to the project in the 2002-2003 wave; Hungary and Poland were also included in the second wave. Questions only pertaining to countries not covered in the dissertation are not included in this except.

* * *

Local Media

1. Variable name: **Media1**

Year: 2001, 2002-2003

Countries: HU, LV, PL, RO, Ee

“Is there any newspaper, radio or television station that, from time to time, gives some coverage of public affairs in your municipality? If yes, how many?”

Answers: (0) none

(1) one

(2) two

(3) three

(4) four

(5) five

(6) six

(7) seven

(8) eight or more*

(-9) missing value

*In Estonia they disregarded this answer possibility.

[Estonia as a very small country with micro municipalities does not have a lot of local media (especially electronic ones). Therefore we did ask only about 2 newspapers and 2 radio/TV station. As pilot study revealed, other options were left empty by respondents. Thus, variables media5a, media6a, media5b, media6b, media3c, media4c, media3d, media4d, and media2e to media14e were not included in the questionnaire.]

2. Variable names: **Media2a, media2b, media2c, media2d, media2e**

Year: 2001, 2002-2003

Countries: HU, LV, PL, RO, Ee, Sk, Bg

"Please name this (these) media [newspapers, radio and television stations]. Please name the five that give the most extensive coverage of public affairs in your municipality. What is the type of these media?"

Answers: (1) newspaper
(2) radio station
(3) Television station
(-9) Missing value

3. Variable names: Media3a, media3b, media3c, media3d, media3e

Year: 2001, 2002-2003
Countries: HU, LV, PL, RO, Ee, Sk, Bg

(Only about newspapers!) "How frequently does it (each of these papers) appear:"

Answers: (1) daily
(2) from 2 to 5 times a week
(3) weekly
(4) one to three times a month, or
(5) less frequently
(-9) Missing value

4. Variable names: Media4a, media4b, media4c, media4d, media4e

Year: 2001, 2002-2003
Countries: HU, LV, PL, RO, Ee, Sk, Bg

(Only about newspapers!) "I would like to know how this (these) paper(s) cover public affairs in your municipality. In an average issue, approximately how many pages concern such topics (in each of these papers)?"

Answers: (0) Less than a full page**
(1) one page
(2) two pages
(3) three pages
(4) four pages
(5) five pages
(6) six pages
(7) seven pages
(8) eight or more pages*
(-9) Missing value

*In Estonia they disregarded this answer possibility.

**In Slovakia they disregarded this answer possibility, and there are half, quarter, etc. pages indicated.

5. Variable names: Media5a, media5b, media5c, media5d, media5e

Year: 2001, 2002-2003

Countries: HU, LV, PL, RO, Ee, Sk, Bg

(Only about radio and TV stations!) "I would like to know how this (these) station(s) cover(s) public affairs in your municipality. How often does the station (each station) deal with such topics:"

Answers: (1) a few times a year,
(2) about once a month,
(3) 2-3 times a month,
(4) up to half an hour every week,
(5) between half an hour and an hour every week, or (6) even more
(-9) Missing value

6. Variable names: Media6a, media6b, media6c, media6d, media6e

Year: 2001, 2002-2003

Countries: HU, LV, PL, RO, Ee, Sk, Bg

(Only about radio and TV stations!) "Does this station (Which of these stations) regularly report about the sessions of the local assembly or broadcast direct transmission of the sessions?"

Answers: (1) Yes, this media does
(2) No, this media does not
(-9) Missing value

7. Variable names: Media7a, media7b, media7c, media7d, media7e

Year: 2001, 2002-2003

Countries: HU, LV, PL, RO, Ee, Sk, Bg

"Which of these papers and stations report, from time to time, about the decisions of the local government?"

Answers: (1) Yes, this media does
(2) No, this media does not
(-9) Missing value

8. Variable names: Media8a, media8b, media8c, media8d, media8e

Year: 2001, 2002-2003

Countries: HU, LV, PL, RO, Ee, Sk, Bg

"Which of these papers and stations do, from time to time, inform about proposals before they are debated in the local assembly?"

Answers: (1) Yes, this media does
(2) No, this media does not
(-9) Missing value

9. Variable names: Media9a, media9b, media9c, media9d, media9e

Year: 2001, 2002-2003
Countries: HU, LV, PL, RO, Ee, Sk, Bg

"Which of these papers and stations inform, from time to time, about arguments and counter-arguments that are discussed in the local assembly?"

Answers: (1) Yes, this media does
(2) No, this media does not
(-9) Missing value

10. Variable names: Media10a, media10b, media10c, media10d, media10e

Year: 2001, 2002-2003
Countries: HU, LV, PL, RO, Ee, Sk, Bg

"Which of these papers and stations publish or air, from time to time, interviews with local government leaders or councilors?"

Answers: (1) Yes, this media does
(2) No, this media does not
(-9) Missing value

11. Variable names: Media11a, media11b, media11c, media11d, media11e

Year: 2001, 2002-2003
Countries: HU, LV, PL, RO, Ee, Sk, Bg

"What do you think, how many of every ten citizens in the municipality regularly read (watch, listen to) ... [NAME OF MEDIA]?"

Answers: (0) less than one in ten
(1) one
(2) two
(3) three
(4) four
(5) five
(6) six
(7) seven

- (8) eight
- (9) nine
- (10) practically everyone
- (-9) Missing value

12. Variable names: Media12a, media12b, media12c, media12d, media12e

Year: 2001, 2002-2003

Countries: HU, LV, PL, RO, Ee, Sk, Bg

"Is the ... [NAME OF 1ST MEDIA] only distributed (broadcast):"

- Answers: (1) in this municipality,
 (2) or in a broader area, or
 (3) in the whole country?

13. Variable names: Media13a, media13b, media13c, media13d, media13e

Year: 2001, 2002-2003

Countries: HU, LV, PL, RO, Ee, Sk, Bg

(Ask if previous question was not 3!) "To your best knowledge, who is the dominant owner of ... [NAME OF MEDIA]?"

- Answers: (1) The local government or a company owned by the local government
 (2) Another local government, or a regional government, or the central government, or a company owned by any of these
 (3) A local public institution
 (4) A political party
 (5) One or more non-profit organizations
 (6) One or more business enterprises
 (7) Private citizens
 (8) Others
 (9) DK
 (-9) Missing value, DK

14. Variable names: Media14a, media14b, media14c, media14d, media14e

Year: 2001, 2002-2003

Countries: HU, LV, PL, RO, Ee, Sk, Bg

"Does [NAME OF MEDIA] receive any money from the local government either as a subsidy or for advertisements paid by the local government?"

- Answers:(1) No
 If yes, is all this money paid by the local government
 (2) just an insignificant part of the newspaper's total income

- (3) a significant part of the newspaper's income but not absolutely essential for its survival
- (4) absolutely necessary for the survival of the newspaper?
- (5) DK

Appendix II

Ownership Structure and Determinants of Size of Local Media Country Data

The first table below displays the distribution of the structure of local media ownership in the LGS sample by country and number of types of owners. The four following tables show the distribution of local outlets by types of ownership for each country.

Table A1.1 Diversity of Ownership Structure, by Country

Number of types of media ownership available	Hungary (% localities)	Latvia (% localities)	Poland (% localities)	Romania (% localities)
1	70	48	45	85
2	28	50	40	15
3	3	2	12	1
4	0	0	3	0
Total	N=351	N=214	N=499	N=206

Note: percentage figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted data.

Source: Own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

Table A1.2 Hungary - Localities per Number of Media Outlets and Types of Owners

	Local Govt. (% localities)	Other Govt. (% localities)	Local Institution (% localities)	Political party (% localities)	NGO (% localities)	Business (% localities)	Private citizen (% localities)	Other (% localities)	Don't know (% localities)
0	22	96	98	100	93	81	77	98	96
1	64	4	2	0	5	13	17	2	3
2	14		0		1	3	4		0
3	0				1	2	2		0
4						1			
5						0			

N=353

Percentage figures are rounded up.

Table A1.3 Latvia - Localities per Number of Media Outlets and Types of Owners

	Local Govt. (% localities)	Other Govt. (% localities)	Local Institution (% localities)	Political party (% localities)	NGO (% localities)	Business (% localities)	Private citizen (% localities)	Other (% localities)	Don't know (% localities)
0	37	88	99	100	98	38	97	100	83
1	61	10	1		1	40	3		9
2	2	2			1	12	0		5
3						6	0		2
4						3			1
5						2			

N=233

Percentage figures are rounded up.

Table A1.4 Poland - Localities per Number of Media Outlets and Types of Owners

	Local Govt.	Other Govt.	Local Institution	Political party	NGO	Business	Private citizen	Other	Don't know
Outlets	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)
0	7	85	82	94	94	75	50	84	64
1	22	8	11	5	4	10	21	10	11
2	4	3	4	1	1	9	15	4	10
3	0	2	2		0	3	10	1	8
4	1	1	2		0	2	4	0	4
5	0	0	0			1	1	1	3

N=567

Percentage figures are rounded up.

Table A1.5 Romania - Localities per Number of Media Outlets and Types of Owners

	Local Govt.	Other Govt.	Local Institution	Political party	NGO	Business	Private citizen	Other	Don't know
Outlets	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)	(% localities)
0	90	94	96	99	99	64	75	99	62
1	9	3	3	1	1	13	9	1	13
2	1	3	0	0	0	9	5		7
3		0				5	4		7
4						4	4		2
5						5	3		4

N=272

Percentage figures are rounded up

Table A1.6 Determinants of the Number of Local Media – Country Regression Analyses

	Hungary	Latvia	Poland	Romania
	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)
(Constant)	.323*** (.087)	1.40*** (.346)	2.40*** (.373)	.311 (.206)
Number of NGOs	.081*** (.007)	.031 (.040)	.077*** (.017)	.095*** (.029)
Number of parties	.037 (.025)	-.042 (.126)	.092 (.057)	.078** (.031)
Population size	.001*** (.000)	.001*** (.000)	.001* (.000)	.001*** (.000)
% Commuters	-.001 (.001)	-.002 (.006)	.000 (.004)	.005 (.005)
Unemployment	-.005* (.002)	.004 (.009)	-.034* (.016)	.000 (.003)
Cause tensions: income differences	.008 (.014)	.067 (.062)	-.010 (.049)	-.018 (.040)
Cause tensions: religious beliefs	-.027 (.030)	.224 (.141)	.067 (.081)	.156* (.082)
Cause tensions: different political views	.007 (.023)	.047 (.088)	.043 (.061)	-.089 (.051)
Cause tensions: different ethnic origins	-.021 (.015)	.055 (.132)	.305 (.160)	.078 (.069)
Cause tensions: different parts of the municipality	.009 (.023)	.123 (.074)	.094 (.058)	.101 (.069)
Cause tensions: always lived here vs new arrived	-.015 (.017)	-.031 (.077)	.092 (.082)	-.064 (.090)
Adjusted R sq	.591	.103	.112	.201
N	564	239	518	418

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

-Entries are coefficients obtained from linear regressions.

Appendix III

Description of Variables (Chapters One, Two & Three)

The variables used in this chapter are listed and described below. Names of variables referring to the Local Government and Local Representative Surveys' codebooks are in parentheses and italicized.

A3.1 Variables in Chapters One and Two

Media System Variables

Number of Media [*media1*]. Coded from 0 to “8 or more” for the first analysis in Chapter One; recoded from 0 to 5 in subsequent analyses.

Political News Coverage [*media7a* to *media7e*, *media8a* to *media8e*, *media9a* to *media9e*, *media10a* to *media10e*]. Initial variables were recoded 0 = “no” and 1 = “yes” to indicate whether the outlet includes the four indicators of quality coverage (reports about the local assembly’s decisions; reports about proposals debated in the assembly; reports about arguments and counterarguments discussed at local assemblies; and lastly, interviews with local government leaders or councilors) in its regular coverage. Mean scores for each of the four indicators were computed for local media in each city. Those coverage indicators were standardized (i.e., “z-scored,” a process that centers the variable’s distribution around 0) and then added up to obtain a measure of “quality” of coverage in each locality. Cases that had missing values for more than one of the four indicators (and localities with no media outlets) were not included in the index (625 cases were excluded).

Diversity of Ownership Structure [*media13a*, *media13b*, *media13c*, *media13d*, *media13e*]. The numbers of different types of ownership present in a locality were added up. Cases for which no information (either missing or “don’t know”) about ownership was available, as well as localities without media outlets, were not included. However, to maximize the number of cases that could be included in the analysis, localities for which no ownership information was available but where only one outlet was reported received a score of 1 (752 cases were excluded.)

Audience [*media11a*, *media11b*, *media11c*, *media11d*, *media11e*]. The original variables are coded in such a way that the coding scheme does not fully distinguish between the absence of outlet or a score of 0 (i.e. no audience). To illustrate this point: In a number of localities with one or two outlets, the penetration score assigned to (non-existent) third, fourth and fifth outlets was “0” instead of an indication of missing outlets. To correct for this as much as possible, I recoded as missing all outlets that were not reported when asked for the total number of local media (*media1a*, up to five). For example, were three outlets reported, the fourth and fifth columns were treated as missing instead of “0” so as not to underestimate the audience of local media. The audience scores of all outlets in town were meaned. Localities without outlets or for

which no audience information was available were left out and treated as missing (624 cases were excluded).

Local Civil Society Variables

Number of NGOs [*civil07*]. The number of civic organizations in the locality.

Number of Political Parties [*parties*]. The number of political parties active in the locality.

Citizens' Initiatives [*actio01a*] (demonstrations), [*actio02a*] (petitions), [*actio03a*] (requests for meetings), [*actio04a*] (challenges to local government decisions in court). The localities that witnessed no initiatives were coded 0; those where at least one of the four activities took place were coded 1.

Other Variables

Unemployment [*unemp*]. The percentage of unemployed people in the locality.

Community Heterogeneity [*socio04a*] (differences in income), [*socio04b*] (differences in religious beliefs), [*socio04f*] (different parts of the municipality), [*socio04c*] (differences in political views), [*socio04e*] (differences of ethnicity), [*socio04g*] (differences between newcomers and long-established inhabitants). Chief administrative officers' evaluation of the degree of tension caused by these various divides in the locality – rated from 1 for “low tension” to 7 for “high tension.” Community heterogeneity is measured by taking the mean of the tension score of all cleavages.

Staff Level of Education [*staffedu*]. The percentage of local government staff with higher education.

Performance Indices

Decisional Performance Index. The index is composed of four indicators: budget promptness (computed using the month and year of adoption of the 2000 budget), lack of quorum [*decis03*], frequency of postponed decisions [*decis04*] and number of extraordinary sessions [*decis02*]. Extraordinary sessions are recoded into eight categories: the numbers of extraordinary sessions from 0 to 6 make up the first seven categories, and “7 or more sessions” form the last one. The ordering is reversed so that a higher score reflects a lower number of sessions, and thus greater efficiency in decision-making. Budget promptness is coded in a similar fashion – lack of promptness receives a score of 1 while localities that managed to respect the legal deadline for passing the budget are coded 2.

To capture a maximum of within-country variance in performance, the index is calculated differently depending on the country where the municipality is located. As explained in the chapter, the laws regulating the functioning of local governments differ

and a direct comparison of Latvian cities with Polish ones with respect to budget promptness would tell us more about the legal framework than about performance itself. Therefore, the mean and standard deviation of the four components of the index were calculated on the basis of country samples. Missing values were replaced with country-sample means. Z-scores (the variable value minus the sample mean, divided by the standard deviation) are then computed for each of the four variables. The Z-scores of the four components are summed up in a Decisional Performance Index.

Democratic Performance Index. The index is composed of five indicators: the number of public hearings and forums held [*info03*], whether there was a public forum about the draft budget [*decis06b*], whether the draft budget was published [*decis06c*], whether the local authorities discussed the draft budget with local civic organizations [*decis06a*] and how many such organizations, if any, were included in the preparations of local governments' decisions [*civil01a*].

The number of public hearings and forums was recoded into eight categories (zero, one, two, three and four, five to seven, eight to ten, 11 or more). The initial response options did not include "no forums were held." Following the contributors to the first volume using the LGS data set (e.g., Kalman and Soos 2002; Pop 2002, in *The State of Local Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*), missing values were treated as an indication of a lack of hearings held in 2000.

Variables for the public forum about the budget and draft budget publication were recoded so that better performance translates into a higher score (1="no," 2="yes"). The two last indicators (discussions of draft budget with civic associations and number of associations included in decision preparations) imply the presence of civic associations in the municipality. To evaluate the democratic performance of localities with respect to their inclusion in decision preparations meaningfully, localities that count civic associations but do not include them in those preparations were assigned a score of 0. Localities without associations were given a score of 1. Localities where such organizations are present and included in the decision-making process received a score of 2. The variable indicating whether local authorities discussed the draft budget with civic organizations was coded in a similar fashion. Missing values (in cases of localities where civic organizations were reported) of the two indicators were replaced by the mean of only those cities in the sample endowed with associations.

As for decisional performance, the means as well as the standard deviations used to calculate the Z-scores of the five indicators are calculated on the basis of country samples. Similarly, Z-score are added to yield a positive democratic performance index, i.e., a higher value indicates better performance.

Scalability analyses reveal rather low Cronbach's alpha values : .30 and .35 for the decisional and democratic performance indices respectively. The indicators of each index remain nonetheless theoretically linked and relevant to examine the performance of local governments. The decisional and democratic performance indices are not significantly correlated. Thus, one does not materialize at the expenses of the other (a common assumption in studies of local governance). However, democratic performance is moderately correlated to locality size (logged population size) ($r = .165$). For the pooled data set and for each country, the distributions of both types of performance have been divided into five categories. Although the categories are

roughly of equal size within countries, there are observable differences between countries' distributions, thus allowing a comparison of how the indices "perform" in the different settings considered in this study.

Table A3.1 Localities per Decisional Performance

Decisional Performance (highest quintile = best performance)	Pooled Data (% localities)	Hungary (% localities)	Latvia (% localities)	Poland (% localities)	Romania (% localities)
1 st quintile	20	26	26	16	15
2 nd quintile	20	16	17	23	21
3 rd quintile	21	19	14	12	33
4 th quintile	20	12	13	38	13
5 th quintile	20	27	30	11	18
	N= 2023	N=646	N=241	N=579	N=557

Note: percentage figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted data.

Source: own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

Table A3.2 Localities per Democratic Performance

Democratic Performance (highest quintile = best performance)	Pooled Data (% localities)	Hungary (% localities)	Latvia (% localities)	Poland (% localities)	Romania (% localities)
1 st quintile	20	27	22	19	13
2 nd quintile	20	17	20	18	24
3 rd quintile	20	21	16	19	23
4 th quintile	20	15	21	20	25
5 th quintile	20	21	20	25	15
	N= 2023	N=646	N=241	N=579	N=557

Note: percentage figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted data.

Source: own calculations based on the Local Government Survey of the ILDGP, 2001.

A3.2 Variables in Chapter Three

Media system variables

Number of Local Media: Number of available local outlets in town, coded from 0 to “8 or more”. Source: ILDGP 2003.

Coverage: Initial variables were coded 0 = “no” or 1 = “yes” to indicate whether an outlet includes the four indicators of quality coverage (reports about the local assembly’s decisions; reports about proposals debated in the assembly; reports about arguments and counterarguments discussed at local assemblies; and lastly, interviews with local government leaders or councilors) in its regular coverage. Mean scores for each of the four indicators were computed for all outlets. (Localities with no media were excluded). Source: ILDGP 2003.

Local Government Monopoly: A dummy variable indicating control of media outlets by local authorities. To maximize the number of cases included in the analysis, outlets for which no ownership information was available (either missing or “don’t know”) were assumed not to be owned or financed by local authorities (since it is unlikely that

such sponsoring would take place without the chief administrative officer's knowledge). Source: ILDGP 2003.

Audience Size: The original variables are coded in such a way that the coding scheme does not fully distinguish between the absence of outlet or a score of 0 (i.e. no audience). The audience scores of all outlets in town were meaned. Localities without outlets or for which no audience information was available were left out of the analysis. Source: ILDGP 2003.

Political Parties and Competition

Parties: Number of political parties in the locality (only in analyses with national turnout as dependent variable). Source: ILDGP 2003.

Mayoral Candidates: Number of mayoral candidates. (Available for 2002 only in Poland.) Source: Data published by the Polish and Hungarian Electoral Commissions.

Vote Difference 1st and 2nd Mayoral Candidates: Difference between the share of votes of winning and second-placed mayoral candidates (used only in 2002). Source: Compiled by the author from reports of local elections published by the Polish and Hungarian Electoral Commissions.

In Hungary only:

Share Vote Mayor: Share of vote of the winning mayoral candidate, logged. Used only in 1998. Source: Compiled by the author from reports of local elections published by the Hungarian Electoral Commission.

Number of Parties: Number of parties that fielded candidates in mayoral election. Source: Compiled by the author from reports of local elections published by the Hungarian Electoral Commission.

In Poland only:

Number of Electoral Committees: Number of electoral committees that fielded council candidate(s). Source: Data published by the Polish Electoral Commission.

Candidates per List: Average number of candidates per list in the whole locality. Source: Data published by the Polish Electoral Commission.

Share of Seats National Parties: Share of council seats won by national political parties (as opposed to citizens or other local groups). Source: Data published by the Polish Electoral Commission.

Welfare Spending

Social Assistance: In Hungary: Total social assistance expenditures per capita for election year, logged (including regular social aid, unemployment assistance, need-

based aid, temporary aid, housing aid and children protection aid). Source: T-Star database, Hungarian Statistical Office. In Poland: Total social assistance expenditures per capita for election year, logged (including handouts to social assistance centers and institutions in the gmina) per capita. Source: Polish Statistical Office.

Other Contextual Variables

NGOs: Number of civic organizations in the locality per 1,000 inhabitants. Source: for Poland ILDGP 2003 (data for 2000-1); for Hungary, T-Star database, Hungarian Statistical Office (data for 1999 and 2002).

Unemployed: Percentage of registered unemployed in the local population, logged (in Poland, only for 1997 and 2002; in Hungary, election year data, or previous years when national turnout is used as dependent variable). Source: T-Star database, Hungarian Statistical Office; Polish Statistical Office.

Income: In Hungary: Average personal income tax base for local election year, logged. Source: T-Star database, Hungarian Statistical Office. In Poland: Gmina revenues from personal income tax per capita for local election year, logged. Source: Polish Statistical Office

Population: Local population, logged. Source: T-Star database, Hungarian Statistical Office; Polish Statistical Office

% Senior: In Hungary: Percentage of the population aged 60 years-old and over in election year, logged. Source: T-Star database, Hungarian Statistical Office. In Poland: "Post-working age" share of the local population for election year, logged. Source: Polish Statistical Office.

Urban: Dummy denoting an urban locality. Hungary Source: T-Star database, Hungarian Statistical Office; Poland Source: Polish Statistical Office.

Region: Dummy variables (six) indicating which of the seven regions the locality belongs to.

Roma (in Hungary only): Dummy variable indicating whether a Roma minority local self-government was elected in the locality. Source: Compiled by the author from reports of local elections published by the Hungarian Electoral Commission.

Appendix IV

Media in Poland

A4.1 The Press

The structure of the Polish press reflects to a large extent the internal territorial divisions (Chorawski 2001). Regional newspapers (included in our local dailies category) are distributed in at least one voivodship, the largest territorial subunit of the country. Their circulation can reach millions, and their revenues largely come from advertisement. Two more levels of local media exist as a reflection of the three-tier territorial organization: “local” papers cover less than a voivodship but at least one powiat (the second largest territorial entity), and the “sublocal” media encompasses all other local publications, i.e., municipal, town, or parish papers. Foreign ownership predominates in the regional markets, while domestic owners are present at the local level. A significant proportion of the “sublocal” press is published by local governments, as well as parishes. Together with the national press, the regional and local press ensured political diversity in the print media by 1997 (Millard 1998, 92).

The 1999 Polish General Social Survey shows that almost 54% of the 1,143 respondents read a regional newspaper at least once a week, while 27% stated they never read such newspapers (the data reveal little difference between readership of regional and national papers. A little more than 51% of respondents read national papers at least once a week, while nearly 32% claimed never to read them).¹³⁰ In our sample, 18% of respondents say they look for information in the local dailies first. While these numbers pertain to 1998 and 1999 only, and provide information mostly

¹³⁰ Available at www.iss.uw.edu.pl/osrodki/obs/pgss/en/index.html. The machine readable data file 1992-1999 of the Polish General Social Surveys is produced and distributed by the Institute for Social Studies,

about regional newspapers, they show that consumption of local media in Poland is far from negligible. It is also reasonable to assume that exposure of local media – or any other type of media - is a relatively stable behavior.

Table A4.1. The Press in Poland

National Dailies (excluding sports daily)	Total Circulation (000s)	Adult Readership (000s)
Regional Dailies (13)	1,646	5,462
Political Weeklies (2)	824	4,470
	660	2,071

Source: Zenith Media 2000.

A4.2 Television and Radio

The formerly state-owned Polish Radio and Television (PRT) was converted into a public shareholder company consisting of 19 corporations - one national television, one national radio, and 17 local radio organizations (Votmer 1999) and 16 local branches of public TVP. These channels broadcast the same program as the first channel for most of the day but a few hours are devoted to regional issues, including news or educational programs in Belarusian in Bialystok, in Eastern Poland. These regional programs are produced locally. The Polish Public Radio network is composed of three channels. PR 1 focuses on information and “serious” content (e.g. radio dramas). PR 2 broadcasts classical music as well as cultural programs. Of all three channels, it is the one with the smallest audience.) PR 3’s programs provide both largely contemporary music and news; its listeners tend to be younger than those of PR1 and PR2. The two biggest private stations, RMF (Radio Muzyka i Fakty) and Radio Zet are mainly focused on music but also broadcast regular news bulletins (the speed at which the news is read on private stations is markedly faster than on public

University of Warsaw (2002). Investigators are Bogdan Cichomski (principal investigator), Tomasz Jerzyński and Marcin Zielinski.

radio stations). Private radio stations joined the market in 1990 (RMF started emitting in January 1990 as Radio Malopolska), and the first private television channel, Polsat, became available in 1994. By now 39% households subscribe to cable and 19% have satellite television (AGB Polska 2004). Needless to say, the media picture has changed drastically in the course of the last year. It applies not only to the range of channels on offer but to program content as well. As of now, the two major private terrestrial television channels, TVN (which has a 24-hours news sister channel, TVN-24) and Polsat both offer quality public affairs programs; however, when the surveys were conducted in October and November 1998, the two channels' supply of news and public affairs was notably weaker.

Table A4.2. Television in Poland

Channel	Technical penetration (%)	Viewing Share (%)	Peak Audience 7:45-10pm (adults, 000s)
<i>State-owned</i>			
TVP1	99.5	24.9	12,997
TVP2	99.3	21.8	8,624
TVP Regional	-	6.8	1,853
<i>Commercial</i>			
Polsat	91.6	20.5	9,938
TVN	49	9.3	3,314
RTL7	40.1	5.3	1,883
Polsat2	39.2	4.1	1,260
Nasza Telewizja	29.6	4.1	1,278
Canal+	32.5	1.7	295

Source: Zenith Media 2000.

Table A4.3. Radio in Poland

Station	Peak Audience 7-9am (adults, in thousands)
<i>National – State-owned</i>	
PR1	2,835
PR2	250
PR3	1,714
PR Bis	360
<i>National –Commercial</i>	
Radio RMF	1,380
Radio Zet	1,161
<i>Main Regional (10)*</i>	
PR (State-owned, 8)	1,120
Commercial (2)	200

*The peak periods of regional stations varies in period as well as in length.

Source: Zenith Media. 2000. Central and Eastern European Market and Media Facts (Poland). London.

Appendix V

Descriptive Statistics (Chapters Four and Five)

Table A5.1. Sources of Information – Media Reliance (OBOP 1998)

	1 st source mentioned (%)	2 nd source mentioned (%)*
Local daily newspapers	18.6	8.2
National daily newspapers	23.5	-
Weeklies	7.5	4.9
Public television	21.3	35.4
Private television	0.2	4.6
Public radio	23.2	18.8
Private radio	4.5	5.9
Discussion	0.9	2.8
		*19% only mentioned one source

Table A5.2. Descriptive Statistics (OBOP 1998)

	Observations	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D.
Knowledge	1,133	-3.48	4.57	-.018	2.21
Age	1,130	1	6	3.66	1.65
No. of media sources	1,130	1	8	2.65	1.32
Interest in politics	1,128	1	4	2.13	.858
Ideological extremism	1,133	1	4	1.99	.953
Church attendance	1,125	1	4	3.40	.780
Egocentric economic evaluation	1,133	1	5	2.80	.794
Importance of local elections	1,133	1	2	1.83	.373
Education	1,133	1	7	2.88	1.87
Gender (women=1)	1,133	0	1	.520	.499
Married	1,133	0	1	.583	.493
Voted local elections 1998	1,048	0	1	.546	.498

-A weight computed by the polling company is applied to compensate for oversampling of women and older citizens.

-51% of survey's respondents have reported voting in the 1998 local elections: turnout was 46%. 62% of survey's respondents said they voted in the previous year's parliamentary elections, for which turnout was only 47.%

Table A5.3. Descriptive Statistics (CBOS 1998)

	Observations	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D.
Age	1,094	18	92	45.0	17.5
Interest in politics	1,094	1	6	3.47	1.01
Ideological extremism	1,093	0	4	1.84	1.39
Church attendance	1,093	1	5	3.33	1.09
Egocentric economic evaluation	1,094	1	5	2.93	1.09
Locality size	1,094	1	6	3.02	1.88
Education	1,094	1	9	4.12	2.25
Gender (women=1)	1,094	0	1	.526	.499
Married	1,094	0	1	.670	.470
Exposure to daily newspapers	1,094	1	5	2.87	1.52
Exposure to public television	1,094	1	5	4.59	.836
Exposure to private television	1,094	1	5	3.01	1.17
Exposure to private radio	1,093	1	5	2.20	1.40
Exposure to public radio	1,094	1	5	2.01	1.04
Exposure to local public television	1,092	1	5	2.12	1.60
Exposure to catholic radio	1,093	1	5	1.28	.650
Campaign info: mail	1,094	0	1	.715	.451
Campaign info: party program on TV	1,093	1	3	1.66	.675
Campaign info: contact	1,094	0	1	.160	.367
Voted in local election 1998	1,094	0	1	.590	.492
Voted in parliamentary elections 1997	1,094	0	1	.689	.463
Learning due to local campaign (self-eval.)	1,091	1	5	2.40	1.15
Meeting attendance	1,094	0	1	.089	.284

-A weight computed by the polling company is applied to compensate for oversampling of women and older citizens.

-Respondents reported voting in the 1998 local elections and 1997 parliamentary elections with proportions of 59% and 69% respectively.

Table A5.4. Bivariate Correlations - Knowledge, Media Reliance and Other Indicators

Knowledge	Interest politics	Education	Economic eval.	Voting local election	Voting parl. election	Know local party prog.*	Rely nat'l daily	Rely public radio	Rely local paper	Rely public TV	Rely private broadcaster	Rely weekly	Rely discussion
Low	-.370 (.000)	-.001 (.978)	-.025 (.401)	.040 (.19)	-.257 (.000)	-.026 (.530)	-.184 (.000)	.025 (.396)	-.045 (.126)	.151 (.000)	.059 (.049)	-.012 (.680)	.123 (.000)
Rather low	-.118 (.000)	-.003 (.921)	.013 (.673)	-.007 (.826)	-.085 (.006)	-.007 (.871)	-.046 (.119)	-.033 (.267)	.011 (.723)	.033 (.275)	.081 (.007)	.010 (.744)	-.034 (.253)
Rather high	.072 (.015)	.010 (.737)	.027 (.365)	.002 (.949)	.100 (.001)	.013 (.752)	.029 (.332)	.048 (.109)	-.046 (.121)	-.004 (.881)	-.049 (.102)	.005 (.866)	-.036 (.230)
High	.423 (.000)	-.006 (.842)	-.010 (.734)	-.039 (.212)	.242 (.000)	.022 (.602)	.207 (.000)	-.043 (.152)	.082 (.006)	-.184 (.000)	-.086 (.004)	.000 (.991)	-.066 (.027)

*The question about elements of the programs of local political parties was submitted only to respondents who reported having voted in local elections - 564 respondents.

Table A5.5. Descriptive Statistics (OBOP 1994)

	Observations	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D.
Party Knowledge	1,076	0	1	.725	.313
Opinionation	1,078	.006	.682	.497	.249
Negative opinion	1,078	.141	.996	.499	.283
Positive opinion	1,078	.129	.995	.499	.283
Age	1,079	16	93	42.5	17.1
Interest in politics	1,071	1	4	2.01	.876
Care about election outcome	1,076	0	1	.152	.359
Ideological extremism	1,077	0	3	.901	.965
Church attendance	1,079	1	4	3.44	.758
Egocentric economic evaluation	1,079	1	5	2.60	.831
Education	1,078	1	7	2.66	1.72
Gender (women=1)	1,076	0	1	.523	.499
Number of information sources	1,079	0	12	2.51	1.62
Frequency buying daily paper	1,070	1	5	3.15	1.42
Local daily reliance	1,077	0	1	.294	.456
Discussion reliance	1,079	0	1	.370	.483
Local public television reliance	1,079	0	1	.220	.414
Locality size	1,079	1	7	3.49	2.30
Local Voting	1,026	0	1	.454	.498
Contacting	1,079	0	1	.104	.306

Table A5.6. Descriptive Statistics (CBOS 2002)

	Observations	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D.
Opinionation	1,231	.020	.761	.506	.270
Negative opinion	1,231	.135	.986	.502	.282
Positive opinion	1,231	.199	.998	.505	.280
Interest in politics	1,231	1	6	3.66	.993
Importance of local elections	1,230	1	10	7.06	2.94
Care about election outcome	1,231	0	2	.393	.651
Age	1,231	18	90	44.4	17.3
Age (squared)	1,231	324	8,100	2,273	1,672
Gender (woman=1)	1,231	0	1	.334	.472
Ideological extremism	1,230	0	4	1.55	1.35
Education	1,231	1	9	4.43	2.26
Egocentric economic evaluation	1,231	1	5	2.76	1.11
Church attendance	1,226	1	5	3.25	1.10
Locality size	1,231	1	6	2.97	1.87
Married	1,231	0	1	.628	.483
Local Voting	1,231	0	1	.493	.500
Campaigning	1,231	0	1.00	.046	.210

Appendix VI

Polish Electoral Survey Questionnaires

A6.1 Survey Questions Chapter 4, Part 1

A6.1.1 OBOP 1998

Local voting

A czy wziął(ęła) Pan(i) udział w ostatnich wyborach samorządowych, które odbyły się 11 października 1998 r.?

1. tak
2. nie
3. byłem(a)m wtedy za młody(a)
4. odmowa odpowiedzi

Did you participate to the last local elections held 11 October 1998?

1. Yes
2. No
3. I was too young
4. Refuse to answer

National (Sejm) voting

Czy Pan(i) głosował(a) w ostatnich wyborach parlamentarnych 21 września 1997 r.?

1. tak
2. nie, nie głosowałem(am)
3. w dniu wyborów nie byłem(am) pełnoletni
4. odmowa odpowiedzi

Did you vote in the last parliamentary elections held 21 September 1997?

1. Yes
2. No
3. I was not eligible
4. Refuse to answer

Local political knowledge

Czy zna Pan(i) postulaty programowe ugrupowania / koalicji/ kandydata, na którą / którego głosował(a) Pan(i) w tych wyborach samorządowych.

-do rady gminy

1. tak, jakie
2. nie, nie pamiętam

Do you know an element of the electoral program of the group, coalition or candidate for the local assembly for whom you voted for in the local elections?

1. Yes [respondents were invited to name up to three elements with two similar questions]

2. No, I do not remember

General political knowledge (three questions)

A. 11 października br. odbyły się wybory samorządowe. Czy orientuje się Pan(i), do jakich urzędów, instytucji byli w nich wybierani kandydaci?

1. tak (jakich)
2. nie wiem, nie pamiętam

A. Local elections were held on 11 October. Do you know to which institutions candidates were being elected to?

1. Yes [answers written by interviewer].
2. Don't know, I do not remember.

B. A czym - jak Pan(i) sądzi - instytucja ta - Rzecznika Interesu Publicznego - będzie się zajmować? (Można wybrać tylko jedną odpowiedź)

1. dbaniem, by publicznym majątkiem właściwie gospodarowano
2. lustracją pracowników niektórych sektorów państwowych, np. wojska, policji, szkolnictwa, przemysłu zbrojeniowego
3. lustracją wszystkich pracowników zatrudnionych w państwowych zakładach pracy
4. czuwaniem nad prawidłowym przebiegiem prywatyzacji i reprivatyzacji w Polsce
5. sprawdzaniem prawdziwości oświadczeń lustracyjnych składanych przez osoby na wysokich stanowiskach państwowych, a także sędziów, prokuratorów, adwokatów
6. pilnowaniem, by każdy obywatel mógł skorzystać z prawa wglądu do swoich teczek, akt zgromadzonych w archiwach służb bezpieczeństwa
7. czuwaniem nad tym, by najwyższe urzędy w Polsce nie naruszały interesu publicznego
8. reprezentowaniem interesów każdego pokrzywdzonego obywatela, który się o taką pomoc zwróci
9. trudno powiedzieć, nie wiem

B. Do you know what is the role of the Office for Lustration? (You can only select one option)

1. Ensuring that the public property is administered in a proper way
2. Lustrating employees of selected public sectors, e.g. the army, the police, arms and education sectors
3. Lustrating all workers employed in state-owned enterprises
4. Controlling the process of privatization and reprivatization in Poland
5. Checking the validity of lustration declarations issued by high-rank state officials, as well as judges, prosecutors and attorneys
6. Ensuring each citizen access to own file collected by the communist security service
7. Ensuring that the highest state institutions do not act against the public interest
8. Representing the interests of each citizen victim of injustice and who ask for representation
9. Hard to say, do not know

C. Czy wie Pan(i), kto do tej pory pełnił tę funkcję? [Pierwszego Prezesa Sądu Najwyższego]

1. tak, kto (proszę wpisać imię i nazwisko)
2. nie, nie wiem, nie pamiętam

C. Do you know who was the president of the Supreme Court?

1. Yes (please write name and surname)
2. No, I do not know, I do not remember

Political interest

Czy i w jakim stopniu interesuje się Pan(i) polityką?

1. polityką zupełnie się nie interesuję, mam inne zainteresowania
2. polityka mnie raczej nie interesuje, zwracam uwagę tylko na niektóre wyjątkowo ważne wydarzenia, jak np. wybory, zmiana rządu
3. raczej się interesuję polityką, staram się, żeby być mniej więcej zorientowany(a) co się w kraju dzieje
4. bardzo się interesuję polityką, regularnie staram się śledzić wszystko co się dzieje w życiu politycznym
5. trudno powiedzieć

To which degree are you interested in politics?

1. Not interested at all
2. Rather not interested
3. Rather interested
4. Very interested
5. Hard to say

Media reliance & Number of information sources information

Skąd przede wszystkim czerpie Pan(i) informacje o wydarzeniach w kraju? (Można wybrać wszystkie właściwe odpowiedzi)

1. z codziennych gazet centralnych
2. z codziennych gazet lokalnych
3. z tygodników
4. z programu Polskiego Radia
5. z prywatnych rozgłośni radiowych
6. z programów Telewizji Polskiej
7. z prywatnych stacji telewizyjnych
8. z rozmów z ludźmi
9. z innych źródeł

Where do you get your information about home affairs from in the end? (You can select more than one options).

1. National daily newspapers
2. Local daily newspapers
3. Weeklies
4. Polish public radio programs
5. Private radio stations
6. Polish public television programs
7. Private television channels
8. Discussions with people
9. Other sources

Ideological extremism

Określił(a)by Pan(i) swoje poglądy polityczne, czy są one:

1. zdecydowanie lewicowe
2. lewicowe
3. centrolewicowe
4. centroprawicowe
5. prawicowe
6. zdecydowanie prawicowe
7. trudno powiedzieć

Do you consider your political orientation to be:

1. Definitely left
2. Left
3. Center-Left
4. Center-right
5. Right
6. Definitely right
7. Hard to say

Education

Jakie jest Pana(i) wykształcenie? (podstawowe lub niepełne podstawowe)

1. zasadnicze zawodowe
2. niepełne średnie
3. średnie
4. pomaturalne
5. niepełne wyższe
6. wyższe

Which level of education did you complete? (Indicate the highest diploma obtained)

1. Primary school
2. Unfinished high school
3. Secondary school
4. Post-secondary school (one- or two-year college programs)
5. Unfinished university
6. University

Importance of local elections

Czy Pana(i) zdaniem te wybory samorządowe były dla Polaków sprawą ważną?

1. bardzo ważną
2. raczej ważną
3. raczej nieważną
4. zupełnie nieważną
5. trudno mi powiedzieć

How would you qualify the importance of these local elections for Poles?

1. Very important
2. Rather important
3. Rather not important
4. No important
5. Hard to say

Church attendance

A jaki jest Pana(i) stosunek do wiary?

1. wierzący(a) i regularnie praktykujący(a)
2. wierzący(a) i nieregularnie praktykujący(a)
3. wierzący(a) lecz niepraktykujący(a)
4. niewierzący(a)

What is your attitude towards religion?

1. I am a believer and go to church regularly
2. I am a believer and go to church irregularly
3. I am a believe but I do not go to church
4. I am not a believer

Egocentric economic evaluation

Jak Pan(i) ocenia własną (swojej rodziny) sytuację materialną?

1. powodzi mi się bardzo dobrze
2. powodzi mi się raczej dobrze
3. powodzi mi się znośnie, średnio
4. powodzi mi się raczej źle
5. powodzi mi się bardzo źle, jestem w ciężkiej sytuacji materialnej

How do you evaluate the material (financial?) situation of your family?

1. Very good
2. Rather good
3. Average
4. Rather bad
5. Very bad, I am in a difficult financial situation

Size of locality [information provided by the polling company]

1. Rural settlements
2. Less than 20 000 inhabitants
3. 20,000-100,000 inhabitants
4. 100,000-500,000 inhabitants
5. 500,000 and plus inhabitants

A6.1.2 CBOS 1998

Local voting

Rozmawiając z ludźmi dowiadujemy się, że z różnych powodów wielu z nich nie wzięło udział w ostatnich wyborach samorządowych. A czy Pan(i) brał (a) udział w wyborach samorządowych 11 października ?

1. Tak
2. Nie

Did you participate to the last local elections held on 11 September 1998?

1. Yes
2. No

Local electoral meeting attendance

A czy brał(a) Pan(i) udział w takim spotkaniu [spotkania z osobami kandydującymi w tych wyborach]?

1. Tak
2. Nie

Have you taken part to a meeting (a meeting held by a candidate running in this election)

1. Yes
2. No

National (Sejm) voting

Czy brał (a) Pan(i) udział w ostatnich wyborach do Sejmu i Senatu 21 IX 1997 roku?

1. tak
2. nie
3. nie pamiętam
4. odmowa odpowiedzi

Did you vote in the last elections to the Sejm and the Senate in 21 September 1997?

1. Yes
2. No
3. I don't remember
4. Refuse to answer

Political interest

Jak określił (a)by Pan(i) swoje zainteresowanie polityką?

Uważam, że moje zainteresowanie polityką jest:

1. bardzo duże - uważnie (szczegółowo) śledzę prawie wszystko, co się dzieje w polityce
2. duże - dość uważnie śledzę to, co się dzieje w polityce
3. średnie - śledzę jedynie główne wydarzenia
4. nikłe, niewielkie - często umykają mojej uwadze nawet wazne wydarzenia
5. żadne - praktycznie mnie to nie interesuje
6. określił(a)bym to inaczej (jak?)

How would you evaluate your interest in politics: In general, my interest for politics is:

1. High
2. Rather high
3. Average
4. Rather low
5. Low
6. I would put it differently (how?)

Media Exposure – Number of information sources information

Frequency reading daily newspaper

Czy czyta Pan(i) jakąś gazetę CODZIENNE?

1. Tak, codziennie lub prawie codziennie, tzn. co 4 razy w tygodniu
2. Tak, 2, 3 razy w tygodniu
3. Tak, ale tylko wydania sobotnio-niedzielne
4. Tak, ale rzadko, okazjonalnie
5. W ogóle nie czytam gazet codziennych

Do you read a daily newspaper?

1. Yes, at least four time a week
2. Yes, 2 or three times a week
3. Yes, but only the weekend edition
4. Yes, but only occasionally
5. I do not read daily newspapers

Radio and television exposure (2 questions)

A jakich rozgłośni, stacji radiowych w ogóle Pan(i) słucha?

1. Program I Polskiego Radia
2. Program II PR
3. Program III
4. Radio Zet
5. Radio RMF
6. Radio Maryja
7. rozgłównia lokalna PR
8. Lokalne radio prywatne
9. Lokalna (diecezjalna) rozgłównia katolicka

Programy jakich stacji telewizyjnych Pan(i) ogląda?

1. Program I TVP
2. Program II TVP
3. Polsat
4. TVN
5. Nasza Telewizja

Codziennie lub prawie codziennie - Daily

Kilka razy w tygodniu – A few times a week

Kilka razy w miesicu – A few times a month

Jeszcze rzadziej – Rarely

Nie słucham/oglądam w ogóle – I do not listen to this station/watch this channel

In general, how frequently to you listen to these radio stations?

1. First station of the Polish Public Radio
2. Second station of the Polish Public Radio
3. Third station of the Polish Public Radio
4. Radio Zet
5. Radio RMF

6. Radio Maryja
7. Local stations of the Polish Public Radio
8. Private local radio stations
9. *Catholic local stations*

Which channels do you watch?

1. Channel I of the Polish Public Television
2. Channel II of the Polish Public Television
3. Polsat
4. TVN
5. Nasza Telewizja

Ideological extremism

Na tej linii zaznaczono punktami różne poglądy polityczne, od lewicowych do prawicowych. Proszę wskazać, który z tych punktów najlepiej odpowiada Pana(i) poglądom politycznym.

1 (lewicowe) – 7 (prawicowe)
trudno powiedzieć

On this line going from 1 for left to 7 for right, could you please select the point that best reflects your political orientation?

1 (left) - 7 (right)
Hard to say

Education

Jakie ma Pan(i) wykształcenie? [Nie odczytywać kategorii odpowiedzi]

1. Niepełne podstawowe
2. Podstawowe
3. Zasadnicze zawodowe
4. Niepełne średnie
5. średnie ogólnokształcące
6. średnie zawodowe
7. Pomaturalne
8. Niepełne wyższe
9. Wyższe

Which level of education do you have? (Indicate the highest diploma obtained)

1. Unfinished primary school
2. Primary school
3. Vocational school
4. Unfinished high school
5. Secondary school
6. Secondary school - technical program
7. Post-secondary (one- or two-year college programs)
8. Unfinished university
9. *University*

Church attendance

Czy bierze Pan(i) udział w praktykach religijnych, takich jak: msze, nabożeństwa lub spotkania religijne?

1. Tak, zazwyczaj kilka razy w tygodniu
2. Tak, raz w tygodniu
3. Tak, przeciętnie jeden lub dwa razy w miesiącu
4. Tak, kilka razy w roku
5. czy też w ogóle Pan(i) w nich nie uczestniczy

Do you practice your religion and if so, how often to do you go to church?

1. Yes, I go a few times a week
2. Yes, once a week
3. Yes, once or twice per month
4. Yes, a few time during the year
5. I am not practicing

Egocentric economic evaluation

Jak Pan(i) ocenia obecne warunki materialne swojego gospodarstwa domowego? Czy są one:

1. źle
2. raczej źle
3. ani dobre, ani źle
4. raczej dobre
5. dobre

How do you evaluate the material [financial? Economic situation?] situation of your household?

1. Bad
2. Rather bad
3. Nor good nor bad
4. Rather good
5. Good

Size of locality

Czy miejscowość, w której Pan(i) mieszka na stałe, jest

1. wieś
2. miastem: poniżej 20 tys. mieszkańców
3. od 20 do 50 tys. mieszkańców
4. od 50 do 100 tys. mieszkańców
5. od 100 do 500 tys. mieszkańców
6. powyżej 500 tys. mieszkańców

The locality in which you live is

1. A village
2. A settlement with less than 20,000 inhabitants
3. A locality counting between 20,000 and 50,000 inhabitants
4. A locality counting between 50,000 and 100,000 inhabitants
5. A locality counting between 100,000 and 500,000 inhabitants
6. A locality counting more than 500,000 inhabitants

Contacted by parties or candidates

A czy kandydat lub kandydaci startujący w wyborach odwiedził/odwiedzili Pana(ia) osobiście w domu czy też nie?

1. Tak
2. Nie
3. Nie wiem

Did a candidate visit you in your home during the campaign?

1. Yes
2. No
3. I don't know

Received mail

Czy w trakcie kampanii wyborczej do wyborów samorządowych otrzymał(a) Pan(i) pocztą lub przyniesiono Panu(i) do domu ulotki, odezwy lub inne materiały prezentujące programy i kandydatów jakichś partii politycznych lub innych komitetów wyborczych ?

1. Tak
2. Nie

During the campaign, have you received by mail information about electoral programs of the candidates from political parties or electoral committees?

1. Yes
2. No

Watching party programs on television

W trakcie kampanii przed wyborami samorządowymi telewizja nadawała audycje wyborcze prezentujące poszczególne komitety wyborcze i ich kandydatów. Czy oglądał Pan(i) te programy?

1. Tak, większość
2. Tak, niektóre
3. Nie, nie oglądał(a)m

During the campaign before the local elections, electoral committees and candidate receive free air time on television to present their programs. Have you watched such programs?

1. Yes, many
2. Yes, a few
3. No, I did not watch them

Learning from the campaign

A czy w sumie ogólnie rzecz biorąc podczas kampanii wyborczej dowiedział się Pan(i) o kandydatach startujących w Pana(i) okręgu wyborczym:

1. bardzo dużo
2. raczej dużo
3. raczej mało
4. bardzo mało

5. w ogóle niczego się nie dowiedziałem
6. trudno powiedzieć

Since the beginning of the campaign, would you say that you have learned about the candidate in your local electoral district:

1. A lot
2. Rather a lot,
3. Rather little
4. Really little
5. I did not learn anything
6. Hard to say

A6.2 Part 2

A6.2.1 OBOP 1994

Local voting

Już za kilka dni odbędą się nowe wybory samorządu lokalnego (radnych w Pana(i) mieście, gminie). Czy zamierza Pan(i) wziąć udział w tych wyborach?

1. zdecydowanie tak
2. raczej tak
3. raczej nie
4. zdecydowanie nie
5. jeszcze nie wiem
6. w momencie wyborów nie będę jeszcze pełnoletni(a)

In a few days a new local elections will take place. Do you plan to vote in that election?

1. Yes, certainly
2. Rather yes
3. Rather no
4. I will not vote for sure
5. Don't know yet
6. I am not eligible at the moment

Contact a local government representative

Czy w ciągu ostatnich czterech lat, w czasie kończącej się kadencji rady w Pana(i) mieście/ gminie, zwrócił(a) się Pan(i) do radnego o załatwienie jakiejś sprawy?

1. tak
2. nie
3. nie pamiętam

During the last four years, have you contacted a local representative?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't remember

Makes a difference who is a member of the local council

Jakich ludzi poparł(a)by Pan(i) przede wszystkim w wyborach 19 czerwca: takich, którzy pełnili już funkcje we władzach Pana(i) miasta/gminy, czy nowych?

1. takich, którzy pełnili funkcje we władzach miasta/gminy w latach 1990-1994
2. takich, którzy pełnili takie funkcje wcześniej, w latach osiemdziesiątych lub siedemdziesiątych
3. ludzi nowych, którzy dotąd nie pełnili żadnych funkcji we władzach
4. jest mi to obojętne
5. trudno powiedzieć

Who will you support in the 19 June elections: people who have held a local function before, or new people?

1. People who were leading the locality between 1990 and 1994
2. People who were leading the locality during the 1970s or the 1980s
3. New people who have not been involved with the local authorities so far
4. I am indifferent
5. Hard to say

Evaluation of gmina and local council (five questions)

A. Czy w latach 1990-1994, w czasie pracy obecnych władz samorządowych (miasta, gminy) zauważył(a) Pan(i) zmiany w pana(i) mieście, gminie

1. tak, na lepsze
2. tak, na gorsze
3. nie zauważyłem(am) zmian
4. jeszcze nie wiem

In the period 1990-1994, did the situation of the local government change, and how?

1. Yes, for the better
2. Yes, for the worse
3. It did not change
4. I don't know

*B. Czy władze Pana(i) miasta, gminy realizują potrzeby mieszkańców?
Is the council fulfilling the needs of the municipality?*

*C. Czy władze Pana(i) miasta, gminy dotrzymują przyjętych przez siebie zobowiązań
Is the council fulfilling its obligations?*

*D. Czy władze Pana(i) miasta, gminy dbają głównie o swoje interesy
Is the council working for its own interests rather than for the gmina's interests?*

*E. Czy władze Pana(i) miasta, gminy są niekompetentne i nie potrafią nic załatwić
Is the council incompetent and good for nothing?*

1. zdecydowanie tak
2. raczej tak
3. raczej nie
4. zdecydowanie nie
5. trudno powiedzieć

1. Definitely yes
2. Rather yes
3. Rather no
4. Definitely no
5. Hard to say

Interest in local elections information

Czy interesuje się Pan(i) informacjami o programach partii i organizacji, które wystawiają kandydatów w wyborach samorządowych?

1. tak, specjalnie szukam takich informacji
2. interesuję się, ale specjalnie nie szukam takich informacji
3. niezbyt się tym interesuję
4. w ogóle się tym nie interesuję
5. trudno powiedzieć

Are you interested about information pertaining to the programs of local parties and organizations who will put forward candidates in the next local elections?

1. Yes, I am looking for such information
2. I am interested but I am not especially looking for it
3. I am not very interested
4. I am not interested in that at all
5. Hard to say

Media as sources of information about local elections & Number of information sources

Skąd przede wszystkim czerpie Pan(i) informacje o zbliżających się wyborach samorządowych? Proszę wskazać wszystkie właściwe odpowiedzi.

1. z codziennych gazet centralnych
2. z codziennych gazet lokalnych
3. z tygodników
4. z programów Polskiego Radia
5. z polskich prywatnych rozgłośni radiowych
6. z programu centralnego Telewizji Polskiej (I i II program)
7. z programów lokalnych Telewizji Polskiej
8. z polskich prywatnych stacji telewizyjnych
9. z rozmów z innymi ludźmi (rodziną, znajomymi)
10. z polskojęzycznych programów nadawanych z zagranicy
11. ze źródeł kościelnych
12. jeszcze z innych źródeł
13. trudno powiedzieć

Which source of information do you consult when it comes to local elections? [please select your main source?]

1. National daily newspapers
2. Local daily newspapers
3. Weeklies
4. Polish public radio programs
5. Private radio stations

6. Polish public television programs (channels I and II)
7. Local public television channels
8. Private television channels
9. Discussions with people (family, acquaintances)
10. Programs in Polish broadcasted for audiences abroad
11. Church sources
12. Other sources
13. Hard to say

Frequency buying daily newspaper

Jak często kupowane są w Pana(i) domu gazety codzienne?

1. codziennie lub prawie codziennie (5-6 razy w tygodniu)
2. kilka razy w tygodniu
3. raz lub dwa razy w tygodniu
4. rzadziej niż raz w tygodniu
5. w ogóle się nie kupuje
6. trudno powiedzieć

How frequently you or somebody in your household buys a daily newspaper?

1. Every day (5-6 times a week)
2. A few times a week
3. Once or twice a week
4. Less than once a week
5. I do not buy daily newspapers
6. Hard to say

Political party knowledge

1. Czy jest Pan(i) zwolennikiem, czy też nie, wymienionych partii i organizacji?
2. Socjaldemokracja RP (SdRP) (SDRP)
3. 2.Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PSL)
4. NSZZ „Solidarność”
5. Unia Wolności (UW)
6. Unia Pracy (UP)
7. Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe (ZChN)
8. Bezpartyjny Blok Wspierania Reform (BBWR)
9. Porozumienie Centrum (PC)
10. Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych (OPZZ)
11. 10 .Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej (KPN)
12. Unia Polityki Realnej (UPR)
13. NSZZ „Solidarność” Rolników Indywidualnych
14. Partia „X”
15. Ruch dla Rzeczypospolitej (RdR)
16. Polska Partia Socjalistyczna (PPS)
17. „Samoobrona”
18. NSZZ „Solidarność ‘80”
19. Porozumienie Ludowe (PSL-PL)
20. Polski Front Narodowy (PFN)
21. Przymierze dla Polski (PdP)

1. jestem zdecydowanym zwolennikiem
2. raczej jestem zwolennikiem
3. raczej nie jestem zwolennikiem
4. zdecydowanie nie jestem zwolennikiem
5. trudno powiedzieć
6. nie słyszałem(am) o niej

Do you support the following political parties and organizations?
[List]

1. Yes
2. Rather yes
3. Rather no
4. No
5. Hard to say
6. I have never heard of that party

Size of locality

Miejsce zamieszkania

1. wieś
2. miasto do 10 tys.
3. miasto 11-20 tys.
4. miasto 21-50 tys.
5. miasto 51-100 tys.
6. miasto 101-500 tys.
7. miasto liczące ponad 500 tys. mieszkańców

Size of locality

1. A village
2. A settlement with less than 10,000 inhabitants
3. A locality counting between 11,000 and 20,000 inhabitants
4. A locality counting between 21,000 and 50,000 inhabitants
5. A locality counting between 51,000 and 100,000 inhabitants
6. A locality counting between 101,000 and 500,000 inhabitants
7. A locality counting more than 500,000 inhabitants

Education

Jakie jest Pana(i) wykształcenie?

1. podstawowe lub niepełne podstawowe
2. zasadnicze zawodowe
3. niepełne średnie
4. średnie
5. pomaturalne
6. niepełne wyższe
7. wyższe

Which level of education did you complete? (Indicate the highest diploma obtained)

1. Primary school/Unfinished primary school
2. Vocational
3. Unfinished secondary school
4. Secondary school
5. Post-secondary school (one- or two-year college programs)
6. Unfinished university
7. University

Egocentric economic evaluation

Jak Pan(i) ocenia własną (swojej rodziny) sytuację materialną?

1. powodzi mi się bardzo dobrze
2. powodzi mi się raczej dobrze
3. powodzi mi się znośnie, średnio
4. powodzi mi się raczej źle
5. powodzi mi się bardzo źle, jestem w ciężkiej sytuacji materialnej

How do you evaluate the material situation of your family?

1. Very good
2. Rather good
3. Average
4. Rather bad
5. Very bad, I am in a difficult financial situation

Church attendance

A jaki jest Pana(i) stosunek do wiary?

1. wierzący i regularnie praktykujący
2. wierzący i nieregularnie praktykujący
3. wierzący lecz niepraktykujący
4. niewierzący

How often to do you go to church?

1. I am a believer and I go to church regularly
2. I am a believer and I go to church irregularly
3. I am a believer but I do not go to church
4. I am not a believer

Ideological extremism

Jak określił(a)by Pan(i) swoje poglądy polityczne, czy są one:

1. zdecydowanie lewicowe
2. lewicowe
3. centrolewicowe
4. centroprawicowe
5. prawicowe
6. zdecydowanie prawicowe
7. trudno powiedzieć

Do you consider your political orientation to be:

1. Definitely left
2. Left
3. Center-Left
4. Center-right
5. Right
6. Definitely right
7. Hard to say

A6.2.2 CBOS 2002

Local voting

Czy zamierza Pan(i) wziąć udział w tych wyborach?

- 1) Na pewno wezmę w nich udział
- 2) Raczej wezmę w nich udział
- 3) Jeszcze nie wiem
- 4) Raczej nie wezmę w nich udziału
- Na pewno nie wezmę w nich udziału

Do you intend to vote in the next local elections?

1. I will certainly vote
2. I will probably vote
3. I don't know yet
4. I am not certain that I will vote
5. I am certain not to vote

Voting in Sejm election

Czy brał(a) Pan(i) udział w wyborach do Sejmu i Senatu 23 IX 2001 roku?

1. Tak
2. Nie
3. Nie pamiętam
4. W dniu wyborów nie miałem ukończonych 18 lat

Did you vote in the Sejm and Senate elections held on 23 September 2001?

1. Yes
2. No
3. I don't remember
4. I was not 18 years-old at the time

Local council evaluation (4 questions)

A. Czy ogólnie rzecz biorąc uważa Pan(i), że tutejsza rada miasta/gminy pracowała:

1. Bardzo dobrze
1. Raczej dobrze
2. Raczej źle
3. Zdecydowanie źle
4. Trudno powiedzieć

What is your general evaluation of the work of the local council?

1. Very good
2. Rather good
3. Rather bad
4. Very bad
5. Hard to say

B. Czy, Pana(i) zdaniem, pieniądze, którymi dysponują władze tutejszej gminy/miasta są właściwie wydawane czy też nie?

1. Zdecydowanie właściwie
2. Raczej właściwie
3. Raczej niewłaściwie
4. Zdecydowanie niewłaściwie
5. Trudno powiedzieć

B. In your opinion, were the municipality's revenues well spent?

1. Definitely well
2. Rather well
3. Rather not well
4. Definitely not well
5. Hard to say

C. Czyje przede wszystkim potrzeby i interesy reprezentuje, Pana(i) zdaniem, większość radnych w Pana(i) mieście/gminie?

1. Interesy ludzi, którzy na nich głosowali
2. Interesy całego państwa
3. Interesy swojej partii lub ugrupowania politycznego
4. Interesy swoich znajomych, kolegów lub krewnych
5. Swoje wasne interesy
6. Interesy wszystkich mieszkańców miasta/gminy
7. Trudno powiedzieć

C. Whose interest would you say that the local council is representing?

1. The interests of people who voted for its members
2. The interests of the whole country
3. The interests of their own party and political group
4. The interests of their friends and colleagues
5. Their own interests
6. The interests of the gmina's inhabitants
7. Hard to say

D. Proszę teraz Pana(i) o ocenę działalności różnych instytucji i organizacji. Jak by Pan(i) ocenił (a) działalność Władz lokalnych w Pana(i)gminie, miejscowości:

1. Zdecydowanie dobrze
2. Raczej dobrze
3. Raczej źle
4. Zdecydowanie źle
5. Trudno powiedzieć

D. Please give us your evaluation of the following institutions. What is your evaluation of the work the local government of your gmina?

1. Definitely good
2. Rather good
3. Rather bad
4. Definitely bad
5. Hard to say

Importance of local elections

Jak Pan(i) ocenia, jakie znaczenie mają dla ludzi takich jak Pan(i) wybory do różnych władz - wybory parlamentarne, prezydenckie, samorządowe. Przy odpowiedzi proszę posłużyć się skalą, na której 1 oznacza, że dane wybory uważa Pan(i) za bardzo ważne, a 10 że praktycznie nie mają one znaczenia. Czy, Pana(i) zdaniem, dla ludzi takich jak Pan(i) są wybory samorządowe:

1 (Bardzo ważne) – 10 (Praktycznie nie mają znaczenia)
Trudno powiedzieć

How do the elections (parliamentary, presidential, local) matter to people like you?
Please use the scale from 1 –10 and indicate the importance of local elections.

1 (Very important) – 10 (Practically makes no difference)
Hard to say

Makes a difference who is a member of the local assembly

Jak Pan(i) ocenia, czy to jaki jest skład tutejszej rady gminy/miasta ma dla mieszkańców gminy znaczenie:

1. Bardzo duże
2. Duże
3. Niewielkie
4. Praktycznie nie ma żadnego znaczenia
5. Trudno powiedzieć

In your opinion, does it matter to the gmina's inhabitants who is a member of the gmina's council?

1. A lot
2. It rather matters
3. A little
4. Practically it does not make any difference
5. Hard to say

Political interest (same as CBOS 1998 question)

Education (same as CBOS 1998 question)

Locality size (same as CBOS 1998 question)

Egocentric economic evaluation (same as CBOS 1998 question)

Ideological extremism (same as CBOS 1998 question)

Church attendance (same as CBOS 1998 question)

