

## **The Norwegian Progress Party: A Bridge-Builder over old Cleavages.**

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## **The Norwegian Progress Party: A Bridge-Builder over old Cleavages.**

The characteristics of the 13 rather small Norwegian municipalities where the Progress Party gained the mayoral position after the 2003 local elections are interpreted. The picture is mixed. The party has settled in the heartland of the Norwegian counter-cultures, as well as in municipalities where the counter-cultures have left no footprints. The Progress Party appears as a bridge-builder over an old cultural-religious cleavage. Not in the role as a mediator who give concessions to both sides, but rather in the role of an illustrator that makes evident that an old cleavage is outdated, or is not salient anymore.

The Progress Party has lost ground in its old stronghold of Oslo. But the election result was not dramatically bad, it ended up with being just below the nation-wide result. Oslo is a political, social and ethnically segregated town. The division was formed by the industrial society, the working-class settled in east the middle-class in west.

From the 1970s up to recent time the number of non-western immigrants have increased from an insignificant level to 16.4 per cent. The immigrants have settled in some parts of the eastern districts in Oslo. Again a border appears between east and west. However, the Progress Party has a foot in both camps, in both east and west. A fairly good result can be noted in upper-middle class districts with few immigrants and a weak support for the leftist or earlier socialistic parties. The party's best result are in some suburbs where the leftist parties are rather strong and the immigrants many. The result are, however, less impressive in old working-class areas with many immigrants, a district where the leftist parties still have their strongest foothold.

Consequently, the Progress Party is not only a bridge-builder over a cultural-religious conflict from the pre-industrial society, but also bridge-builder over the class-conflict from the industrial society. A bridge-builder not in a sense that the party is driven by a conscious political programme. Rather, the party during its presence reflect that something new has happened. Old cleavages that used to form voting patterns have been reversed.

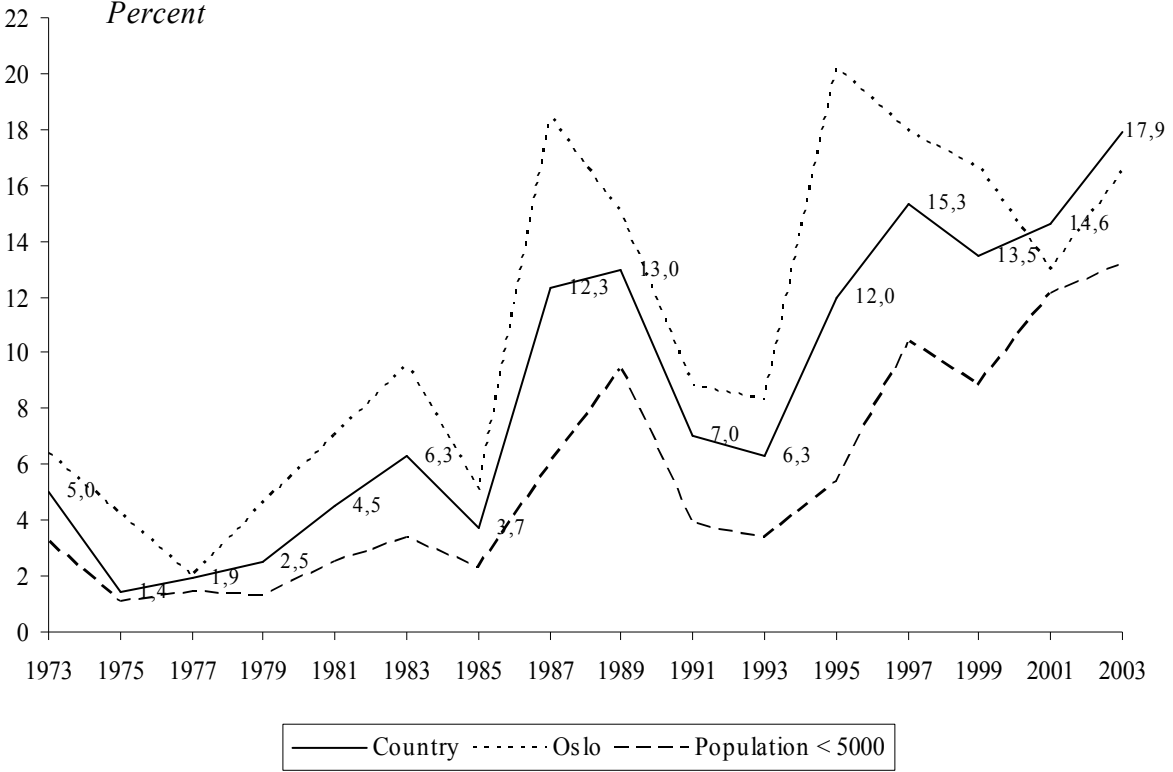
### *Breakthrough on the local level*

The Norwegian Progress Party celebrated its 30th anniversary with better local election results than ever before. In fact it was a breakthrough for the Progress Party as a political player in Norwegian municipalities. The results were striking. In 30 municipalities (of 434) the party gained more votes than any other party; in 13 municipalities the Progress Party succeeded with seizing the position as mayor of the municipality. The party leadership complained that the election result should have resulted in more mayors. The past as a pariah among the political parties was not completely buried. The party remained controversial in many parts of the country.

The 2003 local elections turned out to be a watershed. A long history of few important positions in local politics had ended. Since 1975, the Progress Party has participated in local elections, and during these years the party has only gained the mayoral position twice.

Concomitant with the surge in local elections, the Progress Party has changed its geographical profile. The party has moved from the centre towards the periphery. From 1973 to the end of the last century the party had its stronghold in populous areas. The party had its strongest foothold in large cities and their surroundings areas. In the most recent election in 2003 local the Progress Party had its best results in middle-sized municipalities (population 10, – 59,999 inhabitants) (Table 1). However, the steepest per cent increase is in the scattered populated areas (Figure 1, Table 1).

*Figure 1 Support for the Progress Party in the country as a whole, in Oslo, and in municipalities with a population below 5000, 1973-2003. Percent*



According to some scholars the most fruitful soil for radical right parties are the periphery. Hans-Georg Betz (1998) argues that the parties are a reaction against societal changes; they appear in the transition between the industrial and the post-industrial society. The party’s appeal is strong among the losers of modernisation, and there is an expected concentration of losers in the periphery. Time is lagging behind in those region; the societal

problems multiply with unemployment and a decreasing number of inhabitants. In short, the periphery is a problem-area.

*Table 1. The support for the Progress Party in local elections 1987 to 2003 according to the size of the municipalities measured by inhabitants.*

Municipality size/ inhabitants	Progress Party				diff. 03- 87	(N)
	1987	1995	1999	2003		
- 2.499	5,0	4,5	7,7	10,9	+5,9	(120)
2.500 - 4.999	7,0	6,4	9,9	17,0	+10,0	(127)
5.000 - 9.999	8,6	8,1	11,1	15,9	+7,3	(90)
10.000 – 19.999	11,6	11,3	14,1	20,2	+8,6	(58)
20.000 – 59.999	13,1	13,0	14,1	20,5	+7,4	(33)
60.000+	15,7	13,7	14,9	16,6	+0,9	(6)
Oslo	18,4	20,2	16,6	16,5	-1,9	(1)
Election result	12,3	12,0	13,4	17,9	+5,6	

Source: Statistics Norway

At a more general level, a classical theory interprets right-wing extremism as a reaction of pre-industrial strata against the modernizing tendencies of industrial society, in particular the marginalization of the old middle class.<sup>1</sup> The fear of being socially degraded is a driving force for protest in the middle class.

Some political scientists have interpreted the Scandinavian Progress Parties in these terms. In the updated edition of Seymour Martin Lipset's *Political Man* (1981) Glistrup's Progress Party is discussed under the heading "Fascism and the Revolt against Modernity". The party is described as "a populist protest movement" and according to Lipset the Danish Progress Party was at that time over-represented in traditional parts of society, "in rural areas and provincial, by the less educated, the self-employed, and by farmers."<sup>2</sup> Related to this phenomenon was a reactionary populism with nostalgia for the past, a longing back to a pre-industrial society before the harmonious unity was destroyed by big capital and the working class.

A question can be raised if the Progress Party after 30 years is adapting to the expected voting pattern of the centre-periphery dimension. The newly concurred position in part of the periphery seems to fit with what some observers regard as the natural stronghold of the party. However, the Norwegian periphery has traditionally been given high political priority. A

<sup>1</sup> Hamilton (1982).

<sup>2</sup> Lipset (1989: 499).

powerless area with few economical resources is a false characteristic of the Norwegian periphery. The periphery has been supported by state intervention and economic transfers. The longstanding weak position for the Progress Party in the geographical outskirts had been explained by the fact that the party's neo-liberalist viewpoint is at odds with the political demands of the periphery. Free market forces are regarded as a threat to the scattered populated periphery.

### *Divisions in the periphery*

How can the new Progress Party support in the periphery be explained? By raising the question, we raise a new one: in which part of the periphery does the party gain most votes? Let us first simply define the periphery as municipalities with few inhabitants. Normally, scattered populated municipalities are situated in the outskirts. An important division between different parts of the periphery is related to culture. Some part of the Norwegian periphery has been characterised by the so-called "counter-cultures".<sup>3</sup> The three Norwegian counter-cultures have had their stronghold in the periphery in south and west.

Firstly, a rural language movement with a front against the capital and urban bourgeoisie and against the heritage from Danish language. The language they advocated, "nynorsk", was based on dialects from the countryside especially from the southern and western region.

Secondly, a religious layman movement which defended Lutheran orthodoxy and pietistic fundamentalism. In spite being mostly a part of the state church, the layman movement was often in conflict with the leadership of the church.

Thirdly, we have the temperance and prohibition movement, the most vivid people's movement in the beginning of the twentieth century. The temperance movement and the religious layman movement were intertwined and had their stronghold in the southern and western periphery. The peak of their power was perhaps in the 1919 prohibition referendum when over 60 per cent of the voters supported banning alcoholic beverages containing more than 12 per cent alcohol by volume.

The counter-cultures offered a barrier against class politics, and consequently also a barrier against electoral success for Labour and the Conservatives. In the stronghold of the counterculture, the centre-parties, i.e. the first political party in Norway, the Liberals and its

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<sup>3</sup> Rokkan (1967).

offspring the Christian People's Party and the Farmers party (later Centre Party) received massive support.

The dispute about prohibition was a centre-periphery conflict just as the struggle about Norwegian membership in the European Union was. On the one side, a geographical and social centre who supported access to alcohol and membership in the European Union, on the other side a geographical and social periphery in opposition. In three of the four referendums that have been held in Norway (1919, 1972, 1994) the periphery came in majority and won over the centre: prohibition was approved in 1919 and Norwegian membership in the European Union was rejected twice. The results from the two prohibition referendums and the two European Union referendums can be used to illustrate the "degree of periphery" in various municipalities. As a measure of the centre-periphery position we have taken the mean of the four referendums, more specifically the per cent voting for prohibition (1919 and 1926) plus the per cent voting against Norwegian membership in the European Union (1972 and 1994). The index varies between 22 and 89 per cent, the higher the value the more typical is the peripheral position.

#### *Bridge-builder over an old cultural-religious cleavage*

The question is in which part of the periphery the Progress Party has had its electoral success. In table 2 the 13 municipalities with Progress Party mayor are listed. The periphery index and the per cent of the pupils learning "nynorsk" tells us something about the cultural position of the municipality. The Progress Party has settled its roots in two quite different part of the periphery. On the one side, in the heartland of the counterculture with 100 per cent "nynorsk" and around 80 per cent as the mean value in four referendums. The region is situated along the western coast, Sunnmøre, also called the Bible belt.

On the other side the party has gained mayoral positions in small municipalities in the county Vestfold, a region without "nynorsk" in schools and with a tradition for having anti-prohibition attitudes, as well as clearly being supportive of Norwegian membership in the European Union. The same characteristic can be applied for the municipality Ullensaker in the eastern county Akershus.

The strength of the counter cultures is usually accompanied by a strong showing for the centre parties. During 50 years, from 1953 to 2003, the centre parties have substantially declined in the municipalities in the western periphery where the Progress Part has made considerable inroads. The surge of the Progress Party in the heartland of the counter-

Table 2. Social, political and cultural characteristics of the 13 municipalities with mayor from the Progress Party.

	PP 2003	Inhabit ants	Periphe ry index (1919- 1994)	Centre- parties 1953	Centre- parties 2003	% Nynors k in ground school	mean income (NKR)	Social index*	% non- western immigr. (2003)	Unem- ploy- ment rate (2003)
Vestfold										
Nøtterøy	33.8	19.927	27.3	11.3	7.3	0	257.500	6.1	3.7	3.4
Tjøme	33.2	4.541	26.0	13.5	6.4	0	244.100	7.1	2.2	4.1
Tønsberg	30.9	35.656	34.4	11.3	4.3	0	247.200	7.0	3.3	3.8
Hordaland										
Os	45.7	14.328	55.2	49.2	15.8	99.8	246.000	4.6	2.3	2.8
Austevoll	33.2	4.439	66.9	58.6	22.4	100.0	277.400	2.7	1.5	3.1
Møre og R.										
Sula	38.5	7.304	72.4	44.5	18.7	99.8	222.900	4.4	2.1	5.8
Stranda	36.2	4.705	78.2	72.3	31.6	100.0	225.700	1.7	3.4	1.4
Skodje	29.1	3.590	80.9	70.3	31.3	99.8	222.000	4.4	2.1	4.2
Ørsta	24.9	10.269	85.4	65.3	33.1	100.0	211.500	5.3	2.8	3.7
Vestnes	24.8	6.442	79.8	56.9	27.4	100.0	214.900	4.6	0.9	3.3
Fræna	24.5	8.937	85.0	67.1	35.5	73.9	221.000	6.3	1.3	3.9
Akershus										
Ullensaker	26.5	22.931	38.3	33.2	12.4	0	271.000	3.2	4.7	3.3
Troms										
Nordreisa	32.7	4.726	72.9	22.3	23.4	0	201.500	8.6	1.7	5.0
Country										
	16.4		52.9	29.5	18.6	15,0	218.048#	5.6#	5.2	4.2

\* The smaller the figure, the better are the social conditions.

# The mean in 435 municipalities.

Source: Statistics Norway

cultures is partly a result of the decline in the counter-cultures, specifically it is a consequence of the diminishing role of the cultural-religious dimension in politics. Alcohol, religion and language were earlier political issues of first order. In the inter-war period (1918-1940) several governments had to leave power as a result of dispute around such questions. The importance of the cultural-religious issues has declined as the emergence of the industrial society brought class-politics into focus. The Norwegian historian Jens Arup Seip wrote that teetotalism and the language question during the 1950s were in a process of fading away as distinguishing marks between the political parties.<sup>4</sup> From 1950s up to recent time this process has continued.

Undoubtedly, the Progress Party has from its first day strongly argued against high alcohol taxes and various forms of regulations in drinking and selling alcohol. However, this program has more or less been a part of general trend of liberalisation. The issue is no longer

as controversial, and the share of the population who do not drink alcohol has substantially declined (1969: 23 %, 2003: 11 %).

The language issue is no longer a burning political topic. One camp in the dispute, those who argued for an amalgamation of “nynorsk” and “bokmål”, has nearly disappeared. The fight for “samnorsk”, a combined language, is a lost cause. In the 1950s important politicians in Labour supported this alternative. To day two official languages are broadly accepted but those who defend “nynorsk” is a declining group. In primary school, around 15 per cent of the pupils had “nynorsk” as their main language in 2000. The share has steadily declined since the peak in 1944 with 34 per cent.<sup>5</sup>

In the manifesto the Progress Party has no statement about “nynorsk” except that the issue is touched upon in the discussion about the obligatory training in written “nynorsk”. The Progress Party argues for cancelling the obligatory test in written “nynorsk” in both the primary and the secondary school. This is a blow to the defenders of nynorsk.

To-day the Progress Party has a mayor in Ørsta, the municipality where the inventor of “nynorsk”, Ivar Aasen, was born. The dialects in the region around Ørsta do not deviate much from “nynorsk” and in this region “nynorsk” is the official language in school and administration. The newly elected mayor from the Progress Party stated in newspaper interview that he himself defended “nynorsk”; this language was an important part of the region’s identity.<sup>6</sup>

Ørsta has also strong tradition for the prohibition movement. In the 1919 referendum a part of Ørsta (Vartdal) voted 100 per cent for prohibition with a turnout as high as 98 per cent. Still, the teetotalism cause has many supporters in Ørsta and beer is not freely sold in the municipality. Instead they have a beer-monopoly, special shops where to buy beer. Indeed, a beer-monopoly is in contradiction with the Progress Party’s policy. In a newspaper interview the mayor admitted that the beer-monopoly ought to be cancelled, but it was not his first priority. The beer-monopoly had not at all been an issue during the election-campaign in Ørsta.<sup>7</sup>

Obviously, the Progress Party support for liberalisation in alcohol politics may appear as a dilemma for defenders of the counter-cultures. In addition, the Progress Party is definitely not a defender of “nynorsk”, but as the language question is not a salient issue the Progress Party does not appear as an enemy of “nynorsk”. For many the language question is

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<sup>4</sup> Seip (1980).

<sup>5</sup> Grepstad (1998).

<sup>6</sup> Aftenposten 26. October 2003.

a non-issue. For the religious layman movement the Progress Party seems to be an acceptable partner. On the plus side can be noted that the Progress Party more clearly than any other parties have defended Israel in the Middle-East crisis.

To sum up, the Progress Party has seized mayor positions in municipalities with the *highest* and the *lowest* score on the periphery index, or in the heartland of the counter-cultures and in region where the counter-cultures have no historical roots.<sup>8</sup> The party appears as a bridge-builder over an old cultural-religious cleavage, but not in the sense of being mediator who give concessions to both sides, but rather as an illustrator that makes evident that the old cleavages are outdated, or are not salient anymore.

From the outside the Progress Party may easily appear as an offence against the counter-cultures, but that does not seem to be the case as the party has settled in the heartland of the counter-culture, as well as in municipalities where the counter-cultures have left no footprints. In previous years, the political geography had its clear divisions. Fifty years ago the mayors from Sunnmøre were always recruited from the centre-parties and the mayors from the county Vestfold often from the Conservatives. To day the two regions are united in mayors from the same party, the Progress Party.

It is impossible to characterise the typical Progress Party municipality along the cultural dimension. In Table 2 we have also introduced several other variables. One is mean income in the municipality.

#### *Income and social indicator*

The mean income in the municipality can tell us something about its economic situation. If the Progress Party recruit modernisation losers one can expect a low income level in the districts the Progress Party succeeded. The 13 municipalities with a mayor from the Progress Party do not deviate from the grand mean with a *low* figure. Contrary to the expectation the figure is more often above than under the grand mean.

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<sup>7</sup> Aftenposten 26. October 2003.

<sup>8</sup> In order illustrate let us single out two small municipalities (with just under 5.000 inhabitants), one – Tjøme – situated outside the counter-culture area, another – Stranda – in the heartland of the counter-cultures. In the 1919 prohibition referendum 20 per cent voted for prohibition in Tjøme compared to 95 per cent in Stranda. In the 1972 referendum about Norwegian membership in the European Union 38 per cent supported membership among the voters in Tjøme; the corresponding figure in Stranda was 71 per cent. The ordinary elections have traditionally also given quite different results in these two small communities. The Conservatives have had a stronghold in Tjøme and a weak position in Stranda. In the parliamentary elections in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s the Conservatives did sometimes gain sometimes a little more than half of the votes in Tjøme but they usually got around 45 per cent. In the same period the results in Stranda were always less than 10 per cent. A similar contrast can be seen in the support for the centre parties. During the first 25 years after the World War II the

In addition to income we have a measure of the more general level of living condition in the region. Statistics Norway has constructed a living standard index based on various indicators from the municipalities: the share living on social security, the share of disabled persons, crime and unemployment rates, mortality, the educational attainment and income. Some parts of the periphery in the north and special parts in some cities have the lowest score on living standard. In the 13 municipalities with Progress Party mayor the overall picture is a living standard more or less as a mirror of the whole country, or a little better. Two municipalities (Austevoll and Stranda) have a remarkable high position on the living standard index. However, the social indicators of the municipalities give no clear cut picture other than somewhat below the mean, and the communities with Progress Party mayor are definitely not hit by serious social problems.

Finally, we shall analyse two variables that have sometimes been linked to the electoral breakthrough of radical right parties: unemployment and the number of non-western immigrants.

#### *Unemployment and non-western immigrants*

The surge of voter-support for radical right parties in the second half of the 1980s was partly caused by the question of immigration. The issue was put on the political agenda as a consequence of a influx of refugees and asylum seekers. There was one movement from south to north, from the third world, and another from east to west followed by the collapse of communism.

The immigrant issue emerged more than ten years *after* the launching of the Progress Party. In the first years of the party's history the immigrant question was a *non-issue*. Except for the Sami people the Norwegian society has had a homogeneous population. In Figure 2 the share of non-western immigrants is marked from 1973 to 2003. From a rather insignificant number of immigrants the share has constantly increased and passed 5.0 per cent (5.2), or approximately 220.000 persons in 2003. In 1973 the share was 0.3 per cent and somewhat just 50.000 persons. Consequently, in the course of the lifetime of the Progress Party the number has been more than four times doubled. From a non-issue the immigrant question has been a more or less salient issue in every recent election campaign.

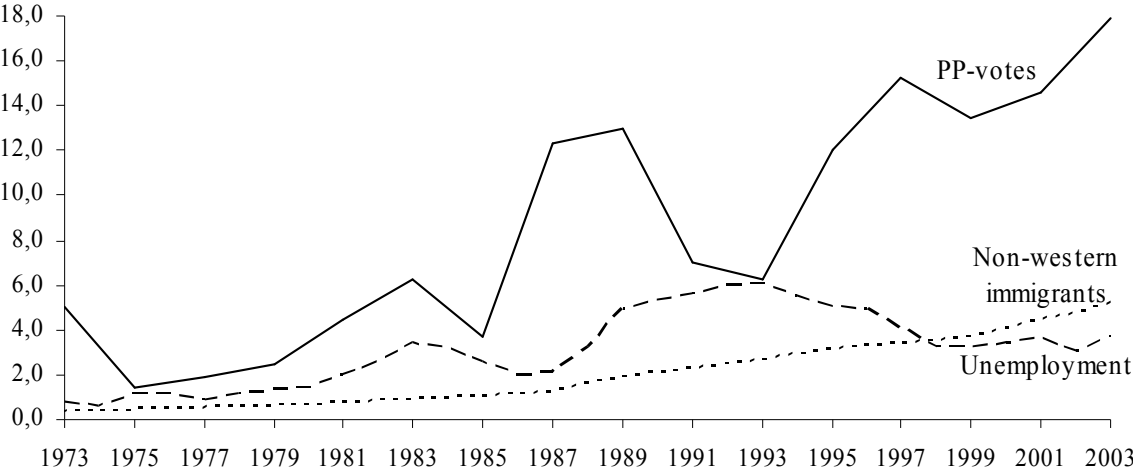
In contrast to the number of immigrants the support for the Progress Party has varied with ups and downs over the years. Its second breakthrough after the launching of the party in

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centre parties usually gained under 15 per cent support in Tjøme compared to between 58 and 74 per cent in Stranda.

1973 was in the 1987 local elections. The party passed then the ten per cent threshold (13.4 per cent), and for the first time the immigrant question was on the agenda in an election campaign. The election thereby introduced a new phase in the party's history: that of anti-immigrant party. The reason was simple. During the 1987 election campaign the number of asylum seekers and refugees exploded. It multiplied from a low level but the growth in ratio was higher than in other Western European countries (see Table 3). This fact actualises the question about the presence of immigrants as an impetus for voting the Progress Party. Is there a connection between the number of immigrants and the support for the party? That is, not in the sense that immigrants vote for the Progress party, but rather that a high number of immigrants are a reminder of problems connected with the immigration, and then lead to support for an anti-immigration party.

*Figure 2 Support for the Progress Party, unemployment rates, and share of non-western immigrants, 1973-2003. Percent*



Some have regarded immigration and unemployment as intimately connected. One million immigrants in the labour force suggest that the immigrants have taken the jobs from one million unemployed native. Jean Marie Le Pen, the chairman of National Front, have made that argument. But on the other hand he makes the case that unemployed immigrants represent an economic burden for society. In this way, immigrants appear as scapegoats for both the employed and the unemployed.

The question here is what the impact is of unemployment on the electoral strength of the Progress Party. We are interested in the macro-level rather than the micro-level. On the

aggregate data-level the rate of unemployment is measured with reference to the municipality or the whole nation. Unemployment may also have consequences for the employed and groups outside the working force. The micro-level refers to the individual voter and ask if the Progress Party has a special appeal to the unemployed.

*Table 3 The number of asylum seekers and refugees in Western Europe in 1986 and 1987*

	1986	1987	ratio increase
<b>Norway</b>	<b>2,722</b>	<b>8,613</b>	<b>3.2</b>
Netherlands	5,865	13,460	2.3
Italy	6,478	11,032	1.7
Germany	4,250	6,342	1.5
Austria	8,639	11,406	1.3
Spain	2,819	3,714	1.3
Switzerland	8,546	10,913	1.3
Sweden	14,600	18,100	1.2
United Kingdom	4,811	5,160	1.1
France	26,196	27,568	1.1
Belgium	7,640	5,995	0.8
Greece	99,650	57,379	0.6
Denmark	9,300	2,750	0.3
Total	201,516	182,432	0.9

Source: OECD, taken from Betz (1994)

In Figure 2 we can follow the support for the Progress Party during the last 30 years combined with the level of unemployment in the same period. The ups and downs of the Progress Party have *no systematically* connection to the rate of unemployment. In relation to other European countries the unemployment rate in Norway has been rather modest in most of these years. But it has been regarded as a serious problem especially after it started to increase from 1987 and when it peaked in 1993. Thus, the successful 1987 election happened before the increase in unemployment. As previously mentioned the immigrant issue seems to be a plausible candidate for explanation.

In addition to information about the rate of unemployment on the nation-wide level we also have information about the rate of unemployment in the various municipalities. In the 1980s the municipalities in the outskirts were harder hit by unemployment than in the populous areas and in the cities. In the 1990s this pattern disappeared and the unemployment was equally spread along the urban-rural axis.

In contrast to the distribution of unemployed, the number of non-western immigrants differ less. The number of non-western immigrants constantly increase and more in Oslo than

anywhere else. More than 40 per cent of the immigrants live in Oslo.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the distribution of immigrants is very skew. In most municipalities the per cent level is below three, and during the last years Oslo's unequal status has become even clearer.

According to some of the literature about radical right parties, their support is dependent on unemployment and immigration.<sup>10</sup> The combination of both high unemployment and many immigrants is expected to give good conditions for electoral breakthroughs. This hypothesis can be tested. We have conducted a regression analysis with the share of non-western immigrants and unemployment rate in the various municipalities as independent variables and support for the Progress Party in the local elections from 1987 to 2003 as the dependent variable (Table 4).<sup>11</sup> In 2003 the share of non-western immigrants still gives a statistically significant coefficient but the figure has declined somewhat. The reason is the party's movement from centre to periphery, Oslo is no longer a stronghold for the Progress Party.

*Table 4 Regression analysis, with unstandardized beta, among those who voted in local elections 1987, 1995, 1997 and 2003 concerning the probability of voting the Progress Party as the dependent variable and the share of none-western immigrants and the unemployment rate in the various municipalities as the independent variables.*

	1987	1995	1997	2003
The share of non-western immigrants	1.20*	1.31*	1.18*	1.00*
Unemployment rate	-.56*	-.04	-.06	-.00
R <sup>2</sup>	19%	14%	11%	6%
(N)	(435)	(435)	(435)	(435)

Source: Statistics Norway

The unemployment rate has a statistical significant coefficient *only* in 1987, and then with a negative correlation, i.e. high unemployment goes together with low support for the Progress Party and vice versa. An hypothesis can be formulated which fits to this pattern: low unemployment contributes to the success of the radical right parties. The absence of a persistent unemployment gives room for experimenting and a chance to new party alternatives. Prosperous times open possibilities to test the previously untested. However, in

<sup>9</sup> Immigrants are defined as persons with parents born abroad. First generation immigrants are those who themselves immigrated; second generation immigrants are children from the first generation, i.e. they are born in Norway.

*Non-western* immigrants are originally from Asia, Africa, Latin-America, Ex-Yugoslavia, Turkey and republics from the earlier Soviet-Union; western immigrants: with except for Israel the rest of the countries.

<sup>10</sup> See for example Betz (1994).

<sup>11</sup> The analysis is based on the county elections in 1987, 1995, 2003 and the 1997 parliamentary elections.

1995, 1997 and 2003 there is no significantly negative correlation between unemployment and support for the Progress Party, and the results in these elections were overall better than that in 1987. The connection between unemployment and the support for the Progress Party has moved to a zero correlation. However, on the micro-level it is documented that the Progress Party recruit somewhat better among the unemployed than the employed.<sup>12</sup>

The explained variance for support for the Progress party, based on share of non-western immigrants and unemployment rate in the various municipalities, has declined substantially from the 1987 to the 2003 local elections (from 19 to 6 percent). However, still the number of non-western immigrants has a significant support for the Progress Party. In addition, the steadily increasing number of non-western immigrants (Figure 2) has contributed putting the immigration question on the political agenda.

Since the second half of the 1980s the Progress Party has had issue-ownership to the opposition to the official immigrant policy. The position as a critical voice towards the official immigration policy has been strengthened in the last few years. Evidence in this regard can be provided from election studies of 1997, 2001 and 2003. The question “which party do you regard as the best performer on immigration policy” was posed. In 1997 and 2001 one third were most trustful towards the Progress Party, in 2003 the share had increased to 39 per cent (see Table 5). Among those who had confidence in Progress Party’s immigration policy about 1/3 voted for the Progress Party in 1993, while about half did so in 2003.

*Table 5 The share with confidence in the Progress Party concerning immigration policy and the party vote among those with confidence in the party.*

Immigration policy	1997	2001	2003
Confidence in Progress Party	34 % (1477)	33 % (3079)	39 % (482)
Party preference among those with confidence PP%			
Socialist Left	2	6	7
Labour	30	11	18
Centre Parties	20	12	11
Conservatives	14	22	16
<b>Progress party</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>47</b>
Other	2	5	2
	100 (508)	100 (1020)	101 (186)

Source: Norwegian Electoral Programme 1997, MMI Exit Poll 2001, Research International Exit Poll 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Bjørklund and Goul Andersen (2002).

In spite of this development the number of non-western immigrants in the 13 municipalities with mayor from the Progress party is rather low and definitely under the national average. In Oslo the party has lost ground. Oslo is in a special situation when it comes to its immigrant population. As much as 16.4 per cent of the inhabitants in this city were non-western immigrants in 2003. In addition, Oslo is an ethnically segregated city. The number of immigrants varies sharply from one district to another.

At first, immigrants settled in old working class areas downtown. Gradually, they moved to suburbs. As the prices downtown increased the apartments in the suburbs seem to appear more favourable.

According to the 2003 population statistics around one third of the inhabitants in some suburbs north-eastern and south-eastern in Oslo are non-western immigrants. On the other extreme, some parts of Oslo has only three or four per cents of immigrants.

The question is how the support for the Progress Party vary according to the number of immigrants in Oslo (see table 6). The party has a relatively strong foothold in the suburbs with many immigrants. However, in Old Oslo, the old working class area downtown, the support is clearly under the mean in spite of the fact that the number of immigrants are among the highest. On the other hand, in the parts of Oslo with the lowest share of immigrants the election results for the Progress Party is more or less the same as the overall results in the capital.

*Table 6. Different districts in Oslo ranked after the number of non-western immigrants and the support for the Progress Party and the leftist parties (Labour, Socialist Left, Red Electoral Alliance) in the districts.*

	non-western immigrants %	Progress Party % 2003	Leftist parties % 2003
Søndre Nordstrand	34.7	19.2	55.9
Stovner	33.6	26.1	55.6
Romsås	33.6	21.4	59.7
Old Oslo	31.6	10.9	66.1
Ullern	5.5	17.2	26.7
Grefsen-Kjelsås	4.7	14.0	47.1
Nordstrand	3.9	19.1	36.1
Vinderen	3.4	14.4	26.0
Oslo	16.4	16.5	48.6

Søndre Nordstrand: Klemetsrud skole, Prinsdal skole, Hallagerbakken skole, Rosenholm skole, Mortensrud skole, Bjørndal skole, Toppåsen skole.

Stovner: Stig, Høybråten, Vestli, Stovner videregående skole, Stovner skole.

Romsås: Tiurleiken skole, Nordtvet, Ammerud, Rødtvet.

Gamle Oslo: Hersleb, Kampen, Vålerenga, Gamlebyen

Ullern: Smestad, Lysejordet, Øreaker, Bestum, Ullern videregående skole.

Grefsen-Kjelsås: Kjelsås, Grefsen, Skeidhuset, Korsvoll, Tåsen, Sogn videregående skole, Ullevål skole.

Nordstrand: Ekeberg skole, Bekkelaget skole, Nedre Bekkelaget, Nordseter, Nordstrand, Munkerud, Ljan, Lambertseter skole, Lambertseter videregående skole.

Vinderen: Vinderen, Slemdal, Hovseter, Midtstuen, Voksen, Huseby.

A division between those parts of the city with high and those with low share of immigrants is in effect a division between east and west, the old border between working-class area in east and middle class area in west. The division was formed by the industrial society. According to one version the smoke from the factory chimneys blow mostly to the east. Consequently, the bourgeois settled in the western region. Accompanied by a social segregation was a political segregation: the socialist parties had their stronghold in east and the bourgeois parties in west. The number of immigrants partly follow the border east-west with their stronghold in the east.

The Progress Party cut across the old division between east and west. The party's strongest areas are the suburbs in east where the "new" working class live, but the weakest results are in the old working class area downtown. In a middle position is the up-scale residential areas in the west where the upper-middle class lives. Consequently, the Progress Party represents a break of the old division between east and west; a pattern formed by the industrial society.

Again, the Progress Party is a bridge-builder over an old cleavage, this time the class conflict from the industrial society. The party has a foot in both camps. A fairly good result in upper-middle class districts with few immigrants and a weak support for the leftist or earlier socialistic parties (see table 6). The party's best results are in some suburbs where the leftist parties are rather strong and the immigrants many. The results are, however, bad in old working-class areas where the leftist parties still have their strongest foothold. In these districts the Socialist Left has during the last election been the largest party, larger than Labour, the party which had a dominant position in these quarters in the last century up to the 1960s. One explanation may be that a part of the new radical middle class has moved into the old working class area, and they have no affinity to the Progress Party.

### *Bridge-builder over two old cleavages*

To sum up, the Progress Party is a bridge-builder over two old cleavages: the cultural-religious from the pre-industrial society and the class-conflict from the industrial society. The party is a bridge-builder not in a sense that it is driven by a conscious political programme.

Rather, the party during its presence reflect that something new has happened. Old cleavages that used to shape voting patterns have been reversed. But what are the new cleavages?

Unemployment seems not to be a dividing line. In the 13 municipalities with Progress Party mayor the unemployment rate varies both below and above the natural average. During the last years the unemployment rate has been rather low in Norway and it does not vary in any systematic way by the size of the municipality.<sup>13</sup>

Nor can the Progress Party's new success in part of the periphery be connected to a periphery in powerlessness with social problems multiplying. Consequently, the theory of a party attracted by modernisation losers – or a party emerging as a protest from the marginalized old middle class – do not receive any support.

The strength of the Progress party in different regions and districts reflects the decline of traditional cleavage politics. According to Hans-Georg Betz (1994) the forces behind this trend are individualisation and fragmentation following the transition to post-industrial capitalism. The decreasing importance of old cleavages have various consequences. A room is left for *issue-voting*.

A new significant issue is that of immigration which clearly has had an impact on the party's success. We have documented that the share who has confidence in the Progress Party's immigration policy has increased during the last years. In addition, among those with confidence in the Progress party an increasing share point at the Progress Party as the preferred electoral alternative. But the Progress Party is not a single-issue party.

The start in 1973 was a tax-revolt, then gradually the Progress Party advocated pro-market solutions and in the 1970s it became a forerunner for neo-liberalism which step by step has spread from the right to the left on the political party spectrum. From the second half of the 1980s immigration surfaced as a salient issue.

The critique of the lavish welfare-state from the 1970s has disappeared. The Progress Party appears as a defender of welfare-issues, i.e. welfare to “our own” inhabitants (“welfare-chauvinism”). More money to the health sector and better care for the elderly are their new slogans. At the same time the Progress Party wants to cut taxes, but less forcefully so than in the 1970s. Normally this calculation does not add up; the old adage that you cannot increase public spending and cut taxes at the same time. But with the Norwegian oil-fund resources available, what is ordinary considered impossible may now appears possible. The Progress

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<sup>13</sup> As already mentioned that was the case in the 1980s and in 1987 the support for the Progress Party was related to low rate of unemployment. In the municipalities with high unemployment, situated in the periphery, the Progress Party gained few votes.

Party is at the moment the clearest spokesman for the alternative: spending rather than saving the oil-money.

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