

QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON  
GEG6000 Independent Geographical Study

**Local Identity, Democracy and Power  
Relations: A Case from the Ringerike  
Region, Norway**

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## Abstract

Political processes of geographical restructuring are often highly contentious, since regions are linked with notions of identity and belonging (Zimmerbauer et al. 2012). Norway is currently in the final stages of a municipality reform, which was initiated by the Ministry of Local Governments and Modernisation in early 2014. The reform aims to create new and larger municipal units in order to improve welfare services, create financially robust municipalities and strengthen the local democracy (Ministry of Local Governments and Modernisation (2014). This study will focus on the Ringerike Region, which includes the three Norwegian municipalities Hole, Jevnaker and Ringerike, in order to explore the local merger process and the roles of local identities and citizen participation. The study consists of qualitative methods including nineteen interviews with both local and national politicians, in addition to an analysis of the reports made by the municipalities and the results of the referendums and surveys. The study aims to answer three research questions: How have methods of citizen participation been applied in the Ringerike Region merger?; What are the challenges with referendums in local governments?; What is the importance of local identity and the sense of belonging in a municipality merger? The study aims to put these findings in relation to current theory on citizen participation, local and regional identity, and political processes of change by Paasi (2011; 2013), Zimmerbauer et al. (2012), and Hug (2009), among others. The results show the importance of a local scale of study, and demonstrate how local factors, such as identity, need to be incorporated into municipality mergers in order to develop well-executed reforms.

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# 1 Introduction

Questions about regional governments, local democracy and effective welfare systems have been discussed in many European countries following the Second World War (De Vries, 1999). Municipality mergers have been the answer for many countries in response to social challenges and aging populations. There is extensive literature on municipality mergers in Europe and the Nordic countries (Hansen et al. 2014; Christoffersen and Larsen, 2007; Hug, 2009; Lupia and McCubbins, 1994; Bucek and Smith, 2000), with much of it focused on the economic outcomes of larger regions of power (Christoffersen and Larsen, 2007; Saarimaa and Tukiainen, 2015; Moisiu, 2013; Sørensen, 2006; Hansen et al. 2014). The idea that larger regions will benefit from economies of scale is contested in the literature. Authors such as Rougen (1995) and Hanes (2003) argue that there are only minor economic gains to be realised through municipality mergers, while Hansen et al. (2014) argue that there are economic gains to be made, but these will only be evident after four to five years. Despite the contested economic improvements resulting from municipality mergers, they have been discussed in several Nordic countries in the last decade (Harbo, 2015). Norway started a municipality reform in early 2014, and the municipality mergers are scheduled to be processed by the Parliament in the summer of 2017 (Regjeringen, 2016a). The Norwegian government's Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, led by the conservative Minister Jan Tore Sanner, believes such a process will lead to improved and more equal welfare services for all citizens, financially robust municipalities, and strengthened local democracy by merging existing municipalities, which will result in about 100 new and larger municipal units (Ministry of Local Governments and Modernisation, 2014). Norway currently consists of 428 municipalities in a country with a population of 5.2 million people, and more than half of the municipalities have less than 5000 inhabitants (Borge, 2010; Regjeringen, 2016c). The optimal municipality size has been estimated by the Ministry of Local Governments and Modernisation to be between 15,000-20,000 inhabitants (Regjeringen, 2016c). The country has a low population density with many rural regions far away from larger cities. The distance between municipalities in Norway could be seen as a challenge for mergers, but the Ministry argues issues should be discussed locally, rather than discussing them based on national guidelines for travel time and geographical distances (Regjeringen, 2016c). Since municipality mergers are contested and debated widely, many local politicians choose to engage the people in the decision-making. Issues regarding local democracy, economic gains and the possible loss of local identity are some of the key debates discussed in the Norwegian merger debates (Bucek and Smith, 1999; Sørensen, 2006; Brandtzæg, 2014). This Independent Geographical Study (IGS) will explore the ways in which referendums and citizen participation are utilised in merging processes and political changes, as there are strong arguments both for and against the use of it. The current wave of mergers has been met with much resistance from the people in Norway, and this IGS will study how practices of citizen participation have been applied in the process in order to develop an understanding of the ways in which local people and politicians interact and debate in a municipality merger. The literature discussed will focus on Nordic and European countries to understand why the mergers are considered necessary and the effects they have had on people, places and local democracies. The research will focus on the Ringerike Region, which is a geographical area in Norway that consists of the municipalities Hole,

Figure 1: Map showing the Ringerike Region and the municipalities Hole, Ringerike and Jevnaker.



Source: NHO (2016)

Ringerike and Jevnaker (see Figure 1). Hole and Jevnaker are the smallest municipalities with populations of 6,698 and 6,629 people in 2016, respectively (Hole Kommune, 2016a; Store Norske Leksikon, 2016a), while Ringerike had 29,801 inhabitants in 2016 (Ringerike Kommune, 2016). The municipalities requested reports which would predict the effects of a merger, and the conclusion was that a merger of the Ringerike Region would be beneficial. However, the smallest municipalities (Hole and Jevnaker) ultimately said ‘no’ to a merger while the large municipality Ringerike expressed that they were positive to a merger, after hosting consultative referendums and/or questionnaires (Form Din Framtid, 2016a). This IGS aims to explore the process leading up to the referendums and the final ‘no’ from the elected local politicians, by engaging with the literature and analysing comprehensive qualitative data including nineteen interviews with local and national politicians. The study will consist of an extensive literature review exploring relevant information on the topics, a methodology section that explores the qualitative techniques used, the analysis generated from the data, before a conclusion, which summarises the findings of the research.

## 2 Literature Review

In order to fully understand the processes in the Norwegian municipality mergers, relevant literature will be presented and explored. The literature review will cover three main topics: first, the use of citizen participation and referendums on both local and national scales; second, local identities and power relations; third, the economic theories related to cost and benefits of mergers. A significant portion of

the literature published on the topic is quantitative, focusing on economic models and analysis. There has been some qualitative research published, but it mostly consists of large-scale questionnaires. The literature review will cover the context of the merger, debates in geography, economics and politics, but will also identify gaps in the research where more work is needed.

## 2.1 Citizen Participation and Referendums

The use of referendums and direct democracy have been discussed for centuries; ideas that voting improves collective decision making was debated by Aristotle around 350 BC, by Condorcet in 1785 and was taken up again in the 1980s by political scientists and economists (Congleton, 2007). Since the seventeenth century, the democratic theories have been divided into two main schools of thought: participationist and representationist (Butler and Ranney, 1994). Participationist, or direct democracy, believes that the people should be involved in every decision to ensure a fully democratic society, while the representationists believe that representatives should be elected by the people and obtain power to make decisions on their behalf. In modern times, most theorists argue for a supplementation of referendums in a representative democracy, where the main benefits are maximized legitimacy and participation (Walsh, 1996). As Bucek and Smith state, “If representative democracy has advantages in reconciling differences, participatory democracy works better in revealing preferences” (2000, p. 4). In the last decades, it has been a rise in the use of referendums in Europe which explains the academic trend of researching the use of citizen participation (Hug, 2009). There are two theories that are commonly used for explaining the increased use of referendums in Europe: institutional theory and stakeholder theory. Institutional theory suggests that citizen participation is often used as a way of increasing legitimacy and trust between the local government and the people, but without incorporating the responses to make real policy transformations (Yetano et al. 2010). However, the stakeholder theory suggests that local governments are actively using citizen participation to enable the local politicians to develop policies which better satisfy the stakeholders, which in this case is the people (Yetano et al. 2010). One of the main arguments against referendums has always been that citizens are not sufficiently informed to make adequate decisions on single issues. However, Benz and Stutzer (2004) presented empirical evidence from the European Union and Switzerland which show that voters are better informed when they have a larger say in political decisions. Similarly, Lupia and McCubbins (1994) and Wittman (1995) found that voters obtain sufficient information from media, party labels and interest groups to make informed decisions. Authors such as Herbst (1993) and Weissberg (2002) argue against referendums and claim that representative democracy enable well-informed and fair decisions. Questions about voters’ knowledge are contested (Hug, 2009; Benz and Stutzer, 2004; Congleton, 2007; Paldam and Nannestad, 2000), but the evidence suggests that voters in areas with more direct democracy are more capable of making good and fair decisions. Butler and Ranney (1994) argue for the use of representative democracy and explain how decisions by elected politicians often involve a weighing of benefits and disadvantages of the issue, including how it will affect minorities. Bucek and Smith (2000) explored the ways in which different democratic practices are used in municipalities and local governments. They found that a referendum could give the people of a municipality the chance to mobilise against a proposed merger that is seen as

a threat to the local identity. By applying direct democracy practices in a municipality merger, they can be used as a protective measure by the people to ensure the continued independence of a municipality. It is evident in the literature that referendums and the use of direct democracy is widely researched on a national level (see Butler and Ranney, 1994; Benz and Stutzer, 2004; Congleton, 2007; Yetano et al. 2010), but there is little empirical research on a local level which explores the ways referendums are used in municipality mergers. Furthermore, studying the ways referendums are executed on a local level gives detailed insight into the conditions that have to be met in order to ensure fair and good decisions. The Norwegian municipality reform has been contested and resisted by the Norwegian population, and the next section aims to explore the roles of the local and regional identities in the process.

## 2.2 Local Identities and Power Relations

When municipalities merge, new geographical borders are constructed and places change names; several authors have highlighted the importance of local identities when creating new regions (Brandtzæg, 2014; Paasi, 2011; Zimmerbauer et al, 2012). The term ‘local identity’ is defined by Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff (1983) as “a sub-structure of a person’s self-identity, and consists of knowledge and feelings developed through everyday experiences of physical spaces”. Paasi (2011; 2013) argues that these identities must be taken into account when planning a municipality merger in order for it to be successful. He performed a comparative analysis of regions and identity, and explored how the mobility of citizens is related to their regional identity. He argues that notions of identity and mobility are contextual, and therefore comparative analysis would be beneficial to avoid empty generalisations and diffuse discourse. Geographical borders are socially constructed, but the meanings and values attached to them are linked with the place’s identity. As said by Zimmerbauer et al. (2012: 1066), “we do not claim that regions are fixed and borders are merely lines limiting spaces, but accept that they are processes and social constructions and as such related to categories of identity and citizenship in the past, present and future”. Frisvoll and Almås (2004) argue that the new and the emerging identities are equally important in a Norwegian municipality merger, and explain how a greater focus on a shared identity is key to ensuring successful municipality mergers. They argue there are three I’s which are related to the links between local identity and the move of geographical boundaries: Interaction, Identification and Institutionalisation (p. 5). Interactions are the shared identity emerging from collaboration and cooperation between the merging municipalities, Identification is the feeling of belonging and togetherness with the other merging municipality/municipalities, and Institutionalisation is how the new municipality is developed and accepted as a natural unity by the people. Frisvoll and Almås (2004) explain the importance of including the three I’s in the merging process in order to create a new and unified municipality. Several authors mentioned a difference in attitude towards a proposed municipality merger between rural and urban areas (Brandtzæg, 2014; Lundell, 2013; Paasi, 2011). Brandtzæg (2014: 8) explains how smaller and rural municipalities often fear a loss of jobs, increased centralization, decline in population numbers and decreased involvement in the local area by politicians. The urban municipalities had a more relaxed attitude, and were confident that their role as the centre of the municipality would not be changed. In Sørensen’s (2006) study, he found that politicians from small municipalities were more reluctant to

merge than politicians from large municipalities; in addition, he also found that efficiency gains were larger in municipalities with a smaller population. Sørensen mentioned the Coase Theorem as a part of the explanation, which will be discussed further in the literature review. Zimmerbauer and Paasi (2013) conducted a study of two Finnish municipalities, and explored the resistance towards the municipality merger in 2006 and 2007. Their results showed that the people opposing the Finnish merger often discussed fears of a decline in local democracy and a loss of rural services (2013: 36). Their research showed that local units of power are often connected to strong feelings of identity, as well as the services they offer to the population. Municipality mergers are therefore often highly contested by the people, despite the politicians' talk of efficiency and benefits of scale. Zimmerbauer and Paasi (2013: 39) argue that from an administrative view point, the regional identity should not be too strong or too weak, as the former can block necessary political changes and restructuring, while the latter can result in a sense of indifference and decreased citizen participation. Scholars have explored the issue of power relations and the consequences of changes in municipality sizes on local democracies (Lassen and Serritzlew, 2011; Dehoog et al. 1990). By increasing the size of municipalities, the national government aims to transfer more responsibility to local governments in order to reduce the bureaucracy and make welfare systems more effective (Ministry of Local Governments and Modernisation, 2014). The restructuring of political power has been widely debated in Norway, where some politicians argue that the restructuring will lead to an increased scope of power in the municipalities and more room for independent decisions, while others fear it will lead to increased centralisation and a concentration of power (Kommunesektorens Organisasjon, 2014). Authors have highlighted that there can be a loss of local knowledge among municipality officials when the municipalities increase in size (Brandtzæg, 2014; Paasi, 2011; Lassen and Serritzlew, 2011). The question of the ideal municipality size of has been debated in the Norwegian Parliament and the majority of its representatives believe that creating large municipalities is one of the solutions to problems Norway is predicted to encounter in the future.

### **2.3 Economic Theories**

Municipality mergers are often proposed as a way of cutting administration costs, making welfare systems more effective and boosting economic growth. Several authors focused on economic theories and the use of quantitative data when researching mergers (Christoffersen and Larsen, 2007; Hansen, 2012; Hansen et al. 2014; Moisio, 2013; Saarimaa and Tukiainen, 2015; Sørensen, 2006). One of the suggested benefits of municipality mergers is the principle of economies of scale, which means that cost per unit tends to decrease with an increased size of the institution. Scandinavian literature on scale effects and municipality mergers generally argue that economies of scale do not play a significant role (Rougen, 1995; Hanes, 2003). However, Christoffersen and Larsen (2007:82) argue for a more nuanced view, explaining how 'the studies ignore the trade-off between expenditure effects and quality effects and they find generally that economies of scale only play a minor role.' Christoffer and Larsen (2007) argue for increased national government involvement in order to achieve quality improvement of services, rather than economic efficiency gains, since smaller municipalities often depend more on national policy rather than locally developed policy, which is often preferred by larger municipalities. Hansen et al. (2014) argues that municipality mergers

improve economic steering capacities and fiscal outcomes. They also offer evidence explaining how citizen satisfaction with local services and local democracy decreases with increased population size (2014:385). Hansen et al. (2014) recognises economic benefits with municipality mergers, but argue these should not be exaggerated due to decreased satisfaction with key services. The economic benefits of larger municipalities are debated in the literature, and it has not been established that economies of scale are a major benefit resulting from municipality mergers in the Scandinavian countries. Sørensen (2006:92) explains how efficiency gains are larger in the small municipalities, but the small municipalities have the greatest opposition to the merger. He argues that the Coase theorem can partially explain this. After a merger, there will be a centralisation of power which will most likely be in the centre of the largest municipality. Property and assets from the former municipalities will belong to the new and larger one. This can explain how smaller municipalities might be reluctant of a merger if it gives them less power and influence in matters for the new and larger municipality. Economic theories present, in some cases, municipality mergers as an event happening at a singular time, while, in fact it is a long process where many economic, political and social factors come into play.

In the Scandinavian context, there has been mainly quantitative research focused on the economic outcomes of merging the municipalities (Hansen et al. 2014; Sørensen, 2006; Christoffer and Larsen, 2007), but insufficient research on the execution of mergers in local areas. A merger process is costly and long, which means that it has to be implemented as efficiently as possible. By conducting more qualitative research, it will be possible to create policies with regards to the specific needs and situations of the regions involved. There are gaps in the literature, and little focus on how the people have been included in the merging process. This research aims to fill the gaps in the literature by presenting qualitative research on a local scale to understand processes of political change and the use of citizen participation. Questions need to be asked, such as: *How have methods of citizen participation been applied in the Ringerike Region merger?; What are the challenges with referendums in local governments?; What is the importance of local identity and the sense of belonging in a municipality merger?* These are broad questions that need to be explored further through comprehensive research, which will lead to a better understanding of how people are involved in political processes of change.

### 3 Methodology

In order to answer the research questions stated in the previous section, I used a mixed-methods approach. Through a detailed analysis of the literature available on topics such as referendums and citizen participation, as well as local and regional identities, I have identified several gaps in the literature where this IGS can provide valuable knowledge. The Ringerike Region was chosen as the place for my research due to my strong connections to the three municipalities it consists of. I am from Hole, so it was uncomplicated to establish contact with local politicians. Additionally, I already had some knowledge of the municipalities and their history, and the Norwegian political system. Although I had some background knowledge before I undertook my research, I was cautious not to let my thoughts and personal opinions influence my study. Before I chose my research methods, I had to look at ontology and epistemology. Ontology is

knowledge - what we know and what is said to be true. Epistemology is the theory of knowing, and the idea that knowledge changes depending on time and place (Blaikie, 2000). The qualitative methods were chosen based on the knowledge I aimed to gather, which enabled me to answer the research questions. The data was gathered through qualitative research methods, specifically semi-structured interviews. Qualitative methods include interviews (semi-structured and unstructured), questionnaires, participant observation, focus groups and more (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). People's opinions and experiences are subjective, which make them difficult to measure through quantitative research. In addition to the interviews, reports resulting from questionnaires and referendums produced by the municipalities were used in the research in order to supplement the interviews and get a more detailed insight of the people's opinions. In this study, I conducted 19 interviews: two with the national politicians Jan Tore Sanner and Per Olaf Lundteigen, and 17 interviews with local politicians from the three municipalities in the Ringerike Region, including all three mayors. Minister Jan Tore Sanner is in charge of the municipality reform, which made his interview a vital part of my research. Additionally, Per Olaf Lundteigen is a part of the opposition to the merger, thus making his views important in order to obtain a balanced study with different viewpoints. The local politicians interviewed were almost evenly divided between the three municipalities, with six politicians from Hole, five politicians from Ringerike and six politicians from Jevnaker. In order to get opinions from both the pro-merger and against-merger side, I searched the local newspaper Ringerikes Blad (2016a) to establish the politicians' views through their debate articles and opinion pieces. Additionally, I aimed to interview an equal distribution of political parties, women and men, and older and younger politicians. The contact details for all local politicians were available on the municipalities' websites, which enabled me to reach them despite conducting the research during the summer vacation. In July 2016, the Ringerikes Blad newspaper published an article about my research which led to more responses to the emails I sent to the politicians (Ringerikes Blad, 2016b). I was still gathering research when the interview in Ringerikes Blad was published, so I did not state details of the data gathered so far in order to reduce bias in future interviews. After the interview was published, a man who knows Per Olaf Lundteigen contacted me, and he forwarded his contact details, which enabled me to reach him for an interview. National politicians are more difficult to secure interviews with, but I got the interview with Minister Sanner through common contacts in politics.

Since my research was carried out in Norway with Norwegian politicians, the interviews were conducted in Norwegian. I chose to do this in order to make the study more approachable, especially for people with poorer English skills. The data and quotes used in this IGS were translated to English by myself, but I received help from my Norwegian friends in order to achieve a quality translation. Before the interviews were conducted, I prepared interview plans consisting of four themes: the population's opinions, local identity, regional identity and inter-municipal cooperation. The questions on the interview plans were slightly different between the three municipalities in order to gather local knowledge from the politicians. Additionally, the interview plans for the two national politicians were more general and consisted of questions about the merger as a whole, as it cannot be assumed that the national politicians have detailed insights regarding the three municipalities in question. Before the interview started, I explained the study in detail and provided a consent form to the interviewee, which included the key points of the

Table 1: Local and national politicians interviewed.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Municipality</b>
Jan Tore Sanner	Conservative Party	
Per Olaf Lundteigen	Centre Party	
Per Berger	Conservative Party	Hole
Frederik Skarstein	Conservative Party	Hole
Elisabeth Klever	Conservative Party	Hole
Sjur Tandberg	Conservative Party	Hole
Jørn-Inge Frøshaug	Labour Party	Hole
Svein Solheim	Labour Party	Hole
Kjell B. Hansen	Labour Party	Ringerike
Dag Henaug	Conservative Party	Ringerike
Tor-Stein Andersen	Conservative Party	Ringerike
Arnfinn Baksvær	Labour Party	Ringerike
Helge Stiksrud	Liberal Party	Ringerike
Lars Magnussen	Labour Party	Jevnaker
Morten Lafton	Labour Party	Jevnaker
Bård Brørby	Socialist Left Party	Jevnaker
Tommy Lafton	Socialist Left Party	Jevnaker
Geir Olsen	Conservative Party	Jevnaker
Ida Rasmussen	Conservative Party	Jevnaker

research, the contact details to my advisor and security and confidentiality matters (see Appendix). The consent form included an information sheet, and was printed in two copies which were both signed, so the interviewee and myself kept one copy each. The consent forms and information sheets are essential in ensuring the study's credibility and the participants' integrity. Informed consent require the participant to fully understand the aims of the study, a brief overview of the project and, if possible, all benefits and disadvantages of contributing to the research (Limb and Dwyer, 2001). All the local politicians were asked if they wanted to be anonymised in the study, but none of them wished to do so. All but one interview lasted between thirty minutes and one hour, and they were all recorded. One of the interviews was done via e-mail, since the politician was unable to meet me for an interview. I met with him briefly before the interview to explain the study and get the consent forms signed. All other interviews were held at either a coffee shop in the city Hønefoss or at the interviewee's work place. The interviews were coded using emic codes, which were based in reoccurring topics the politicians discussed. Emic codes are based on the interviewees' statements and opinions, and is a bottom up approach where emerging patterns and themes are used to determine the codes (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005). I transcribed the interviews from the recordings myself before printing them and using different coloured markers to highlight the different codes. My position as a researcher might affect people's opinions and the respondents might tell me

what they think I want to hear rather than their actual opinions. I aimed to reduce my personal bias by developing interview plans without leading questions and keeping my statements as neutral as possible. The results from the data gathered is presented in the next section, which provides a more thorough explanation of how the merging process was carried out in the region.

## 4 Analysis

The material presented is the result of seventeen interviews conducted with local politicians in Hole, Jevnaker and Ringerike, interviews with national politicians Jan Tore Sanner and Per Olaf Lundteigen and an analysis of the questionnaires and referendums used in the local merger process. The analysis contains three sections which explore different reoccurring themes emerging from the data: the execution of the merging process, the use of citizen participation, and the impact of local identity and resistance.

### 4.1 Execution of the Merger

The municipality merger in Norway started in early 2014, when Minister of Local Governments and Modernisation, Jan Tore Sanner, formed an expert commission consisting of six professors and politicians led by professor Signy Irene Vabo (Regjeringen, 2014). The commission presented their final report in December 2014, after almost a year of deliberation. Minister Jan Tore explained the need for a new municipality reform, since much has changed in Norway since the last reform in the mid-1960s:

*“It is more than 50 years since Norway last conducted a larger municipality reform. Then, we reduced the number of municipalities from 750 to about 450 municipalities. They did it so the municipalities would be better equipped to meet the challenges of the 60’s and 70’s. Since then, Norwegian municipalities have gained many new tasks, especially in the area of welfare. We have built down the state institutions and built up the welfare sector in the municipalities. The challenge today and in the coming decades is that many municipalities are too small for the tasks they are responsible for, vulnerable academic communities, both in areas such as mental health, child welfare, PPT, but also in more technical services.”*

Critique of the merger was expressed from the Parliament, and Centre Party politician, Per Olaf Lundteigen, expressed concern with the development and preparation of the merger process as a whole:

*“We need reforms, but all reforms must be based on defining the purpose of the reform and what issues the reform will resolve.”*

Per Olaf Lundteigen has been a vocal opponent to the merger, and explained how he believed the process would not solve challenges the municipalities will face in the future. He suggested that the issues in the municipalities were related to bad leadership, not small municipalities. Lundteigen received support from professors Jansen and Jensen who argue broadly that the reform has been rushed and poorly researched, with an emphasis on the short time used for research and deliberation by the Vabo expert commission (Jansen and Jensen, 2016). To compare, in the previous large municipality reform in Norway, the Schei

expert commission worked from 1946-1964, but this reform was more extensive and included specific suggestions for new municipal units (Regjeringen, 2015). In the summer 2014, the national merger process started and the municipalities started exploring possible mergers with neighbouring regions (Regjeringen, 2014). The local process of exploring a possible merger between the municipalities Jevnaker, Hole and Ringerike started in the autumn of 2014, where project groups were arranged in the following months in order to explore the different aspects of a merger (Form Din Framtid, 2016b). In February of 2015, Hole withdrew from the negotiations and looked to another neighbouring region to explore a possible merger with them. In December of 2015, Hole decided to re-open the discussions with Jevnaker and Ringerike after a report which explored a possible merger with the municipalities Bærum, Lier, Asker, Røyken and Hurum, showed that the majority people of Hole were negative to this merger and had closer ties with Jevnaker and Ringerike (Agenda Kaupang, 2015). As shown, a merging process is challenging and it is often not straightforward in its course. The deadline for the municipalities to make decisions about who to merge with, if any at all, was July 1, 2016. The government will propose amendments to the municipal structure for the Parliament in the spring of 2017 (Regjeringen, 2016c). Minister Sanner explained the importance of having a deadline in the reform process and argued that without one, the discussions would be postponed. Despite this, a recurring comment from the local politicians in all three municipalities was the lack of sufficient time in the merging process. In order to carry out thorough research and come to an adequate conclusion, many felt they needed more time. Mayor of Jevnaker, Lars Magnussen stated:

*“It has not been enough time due to the way it has been organised. It’s been too little time for the whole thing.”*

During the municipality reform in Norway, many municipalities conducted research to explore their options of whom they want to merge with. In the Ringerike Region, the three municipalities ordered a joint report from the municipality organisation KS, which recommended a merger (Form Din Framtid, 2016b). The report stated that the merger could lead to reduced spending on administrative and political work, larger professional environments that will ensure better services and less inter-municipal cooperation which will lead to closer political and administrative management of services. Additionally, project groups with politicians from the three municipalities were set up which created separate reports. All reports suggested larger benefits than disadvantages by merging the municipalities, but the reports have been questioned afterwards by several local politicians interviewed due to the short deadline and limited time for research. The Mayor of Ringerike, Kjell B. Hansen, questioned the reports, saying:

*“I have read the reports that are available and after reading them, I am not entirely convinced that it brought out the sides of the reform that are the most crucial. They are so-called technical reports, but there are a lot of assumptions in them.”*

The assumptions the politicians referred to were mainly the predictions of the future and how the municipalities would change following the development of the planned E-16 highway and railway. The new highway and railway are scheduled to be completed in 2024, and will shorten the travel time to Oslo from Ringerike considerably (Statens Vegvesen, 2016). The critique that the reports had many assumptions was clear in the debate that followed in the media, especially in the regional newspaper Ringerikes

Blad (Ringerikes Blad, 2016a), where many called for more information regarding the implications of the merger. Many wanted more facts and information, and believed this information was not provided to them in a clear manner. Several local politicians responded to this claim by explaining that the facts are there, but questioned the engagement from the people in the debate and whether they actually read the reports. As said by Jørn-Inge Frøshaug:

*“When you read the reports it is evident that the municipalities should merge. But people have not read them.”*

The regional newspaper Ringerikes Blad, which covers all three municipalities, has been an important source of information in the discussions; articles and opinion pieces written by people and politicians have been published regularly. The articles written imply some confusion regarding the merger, where many requested more information and clear political guidance. It was also difficult to understand what the local politicians thought about the merger, as some were reluctant to state their opinions. Some said that they would give their opinion after getting the results from the surveys and/or referendums (Ringerikes Blad, 2016a). The call for more information did not only come from the people - local politicians also requested more information from the government regarding the merger. Svein Solheim suggested that the government and Jan Tore Sanner failed to fully explain which services the new and larger municipalities will provide and the economic consequences of remaining as a smaller municipality. This led to confusion in an already rushed process where many decisions had to be made. As said by Elisabeth Klever,

*“The process has not been good. I must admit I have been somewhat uncertain myself.”*

It was evident that many wanted clearer guidelines and stronger national leadership in order to improve the process. The local politician Tommy Lafton suggested a structured process, where the state decided how many municipalities they wanted in a region, and left it up to the municipalities to explore their options. The current process gives the municipalities the power to consider if there should be a merger at all, although the need for mergers has been stated by the Minister to be of great importance for Norway’s future. Lafton argued how this would lead to less resistance and a different mindset where people were looking for the positive aspects of the existing municipalities, not the inadequacies. On the contrary, other local politicians wanted a more flexible merger and argued that the merger needed to be rooted in the people in order to be successful. Mayor of Jevnaker, Lars Magnussen, explained how the people needed to get used to the idea of a merger before it could be executed in order to attain a successful result. To achieve this, they believed more time was essential. Several of the local politicians were positive to a merger, but believed the way it was executed could have been done differently. Mayor of Ringerike, Kjell B. Hansen, explained how there needs to be an implementation mindset, which allows people to get used to the changes by giving them enough time. Mayor of Hole Per Berger expressed a similar sentiment, stating that,

*“It’s difficult to create a new municipality by just saying, ‘We are going to create a new municipality’. And to do it in half a year, that is very difficult. It is almost impossible because*

*there are so many considerations you have to take and so many clarifications you have to go through.”*

After a long and costly merger process, Hole and Jevnaker said no to a merger while Ringerike’s official decision stated that they are positive to a future merger. Minister Jan Tore Sanner has advocated that there is a need for change in the municipality structure, and although the municipalities discussed here did not merge, the minister has not ruled out forced mergers. When asked if he thought forced mergers might be necessary in the future, Sanner answered,

*“I don’t know, but I believe strongly that the best results come when a merger is wanted locally.”*

Forced mergers are often controversial and are met with much resistance, while they at the same time can be used to accomplish challenging political tasks. The three municipalities explored in this study chose to include the people in the merger process in order to reach the best conclusions. The next section will explore the use of citizen participation, including referendums and citizen surveys, in order to obtain a detailed analysis of the merger process.

## **4.2 Citizen Participation: Citizen Surveys and Referendums**

In order to establish the citizens’ opinions, all three municipalities chose to include citizen participation methods. Jevnaker and Ringerike conducted citizen surveys with a sample of 400 and 800 adults, respectively, in addition to consulting referendums. Hole had two citizen surveys - one when exploring a merger with a neighbouring region (370 people sampled) and one when exploring a merger with Jevnaker and Ringerike (2604 people sampled). The results from the surveys and referendums varied between the municipalities, but it was evident that the smaller municipalities, Hole and Jevnaker, were against a merger while the larger municipality, Ringerike, was in favour of a merger. The findings correspond with Sørensen’s (2006) argument of how people from smaller municipalities are commonly more reluctant to merge compared to larger municipalities. Table 2 shows the results from the referendums in Jevnaker and Ringerike, and there are two elements that are noteworthy. First, it is apparent that the population in Jevnaker is strongly against the merger, while the people of Ringerike are split between yes/no. Secondly, the voter turnout in Ringerike is exceptionally low compared to the turnout in Jevnaker. Dag Henaug argued that the turnout in Ringerike was low since there was a low interest by the people in the municipality merger and that most people wanted the politicians to make the decision. Arnfinn Baksvær claimed that a possible explanation for the low turnout was that people from Hole and Jevnaker expressed quite strongly in the media that they were against the merger, and therefore people felt there was no point in voting. Additionally, shortly after the vote, the newspaper Ringerikes Blad published several comments and opinion pieces written by the population where many expressed that they were unaware of the vote and complained about little information regarding the date and place for the vote.

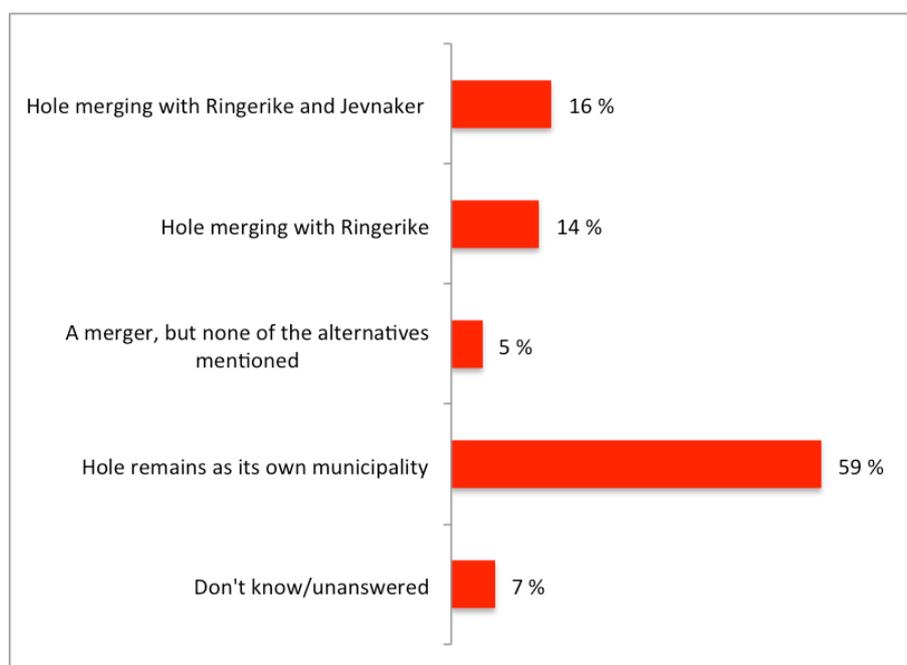
Figure 2 shows the result of the question, ‘Which of the following alternatives for future municipal structure in Hole do you prefer?’ and was asked to the population of Hole in the questionnaire distributed to all residents over the age of 18. There was a clear majority of the population who wanted Hole to

Table 2: Results from referendums in Jevnaker and Ringerike, May 2016.

	Ringerike	Jevnaker
Yes	52.4%	14.9%
No	46.3%	85.1%
Voter Turnout	14.5%	47.5%

Source: Distriktssenteret (2016)

Figure 2: Answer to the question: *Which of the following alternatives for future municipal structure in Hole do you prefer?*



Source: Hole Kommune (2016b)

remain as a municipality, while 35% wanted Hole to merge with either Ringerike, Jevnaker and Ringerike, or another region (Hole Kommune, 2016b). The use of consulting referendums and citizen surveys in the merger process was a recurring theme in the interviews with the local politicians. Some believed that the local politicians should decide after getting input from the people, without incorporating referendums and simple yes/no questions. Local politician Geir Olsen argued,

*“We are supposed to listen to those who have not received the information they need in order to have an objective view. This type of issue has nothing to do with a referendum.”*

It was not only politicians who believed that they should be the ones deciding on the matter; several members from the public also agreed with this statement. As said by Arnfinn Baksvær,

*“I have met several people who believe this is such an important and complex issue that it should be decided by those who are elected by us to make decisions.”*

On the other hand, some politicians believed referendums and active citizen involvement was crucial in order to make the best decision. Tommy Lafton explained the importance of knowing the citizens' opinions, especially in this case, where a merger could affect people's everyday lives for a long time. Several stated that although the surveys and referendums were consultative, the politicians would not go against the popular will even if they disagreed. This was evident in the final decision made by each of the three municipalities; in Hole, 23 out of 23 local politicians voted no to a merger, but in reality, several of them believed a merger would be in Hole's best interest. There were two main reasons for why the politicians in Hole who were pro-merger voted no. Firstly, 59% of the people voted to retain Hole as its own municipality. Secondly, the Conservative party, which has the most seats in the local council, promised in their political program in the last election that Hole would remain as its own municipality. As explained by Sjur Tandberg,

*“First, we put it in our election program that we want to remain as a separate municipality. Additionally, there's the citizen survey, and no one goes against both the election promise and the popular will.”*

In Ringerike, the voter turnout was lower and many politicians believed the result was not representative of the citizens' opinions. Therefore, some politicians believed the politicians should had gotten more power and influence over the decision and that other processes of citizen participation should have been chosen. As said by Dag Henaug, when asked if the local politicians should have taken more control over the process:

*“I think it would have been better. And it might have led to a greater involvement if the municipalities decided on the merger from rational guidelines and then put their proposal to a referendum. As politicians and mayors, you have the best conditions to make the decision compared to the average person.”*

Another argument for a different process was the cost of referendums and citizen surveys; the cost of citizen participation is not insignificant. The exact numbers are not available as of now, but expenses include consultants, polling agencies and reports. Additionally, volunteer local politicians spent many hours developing and reading reports, discussing the reform at public forums and travelling to different places in the municipalities to gather opinions and spread information. As said by Tommy Lafton,

*“The process has been insanely costly. For what? To determine that we will not do anything at all.”*

In the debates leading up to the referendums and citizen surveys, identity was widely discussed in several aspects of the merger. The next section aims to explore the roles local identity and resistance played in the merger.

### **4.3 Local Identity and Resistance**

The three municipalities discussed in the article are all located within a continuous geographical region, with Ringerike in the middle, bordering with both Jevnaker and Hole. The municipalities currently

have much in common, such as a joint newspaper, shared secondary schools, intermunicipal services and common arenas for sports and arts. Additionally, the municipalities share a single urban centre, the city of Hønefoss, which is located in Ringerike but is frequently visited by people from all the surrounding municipalities. The municipalities are similar, but several local politicians explained how there are still differences between the local populations. Hole has a higher average income and level of education compared to the neighbouring municipalities. Jevnaker and Ringerike relied heavily on industry, manufacturing and forestry in the past with large establishments who employed a considerable part of the population, while Hole consists of a majority of commuters and farmers. The political leadership also differed between the three municipalities; the Conservative party leaders have mainly controlled Hole while Jevnaker and Ringerike had labour party leaders primarily. In addition to the current differences between the municipalities, historical matters were discussed. A key event that influenced the merger debates was the previous merger in 1964; Hole and four other municipalities formed the large municipality Ringerike through a state-led merger. In 1977, Hole left Ringerike and became its own municipality once again after much resistance to the merger from the people of Hole (Store Norske Leksikon, 2016b). Hole contributed with high revenues in the conglomerated municipality, but the people of Hole did not experience local government investments in their part of the municipality (Regjeringen, 2016b). The evidence from the previous merger is related to Sørensen's (2006) explanation, where the Coase theorem is used to understand how the properties and assets from the former municipality belong to the larger and new one, and how the largest former municipality often gains the most influence in matters for the new municipality. Some of the politicians argued that things have changed since then and the municipalities have additional and demanding responsibilities for its residents compared to before. It has been argued that the previous merger influenced the current one, particularly because the older generations still living in Hole experienced the emancipation from Ringerike. In the questionnaire in Hole with a sample of 370 people, 75 per cent of people over 80 years old were very negative to a merger, compared to 22 per cent of people under 20 years old (Trøndelag Forskning og Utvikling, 2016). Additionally, for people who had lived in the municipality for more than 30 years or more, 37 per cent were very negative to a merger, compared to 7 per cent of people who had lived there for less than five years (Trøndelag Forskning og Utvikling, 2016). It was clear that the older generations were the most interested and active in the merger debates. As said by Frederik Skarstein,

*“These questions have been important and followed the older generation for many years. Especially since Hole managed to gain independence in the 1970s after being a part of Ringerike for almost ten years. There are many of them who think back to that time. The sense of freedom.”*

The fear of being forgotten as a small part of a larger municipality was evident in both the 1964 and the 2016 merger discussions; politicians from both Jevnaker and Hole expressed fear that their municipality would not be prioritised when new developments and investments are discussed. As Sjur Tandberg stated,

*“I am afraid that we will get worse services for the public because it is not certain that the services we have in our municipality will remain in Hole.”*

In order to achieve the best result in a merger that affects the people of a municipality, it is important to include past events and experiences. Most politicians agreed with this statement, but as said by Elisabeth Klever,

*“It is important to have experience. It is important to remember the history. These things are important to include in major processes of change, but I do not know if they are the best to lead these processes.”*

The differences between the municipalities were discussed in the debates and *local identity* was one of the buzzwords in the merger debate, especially in the local newspaper Ringerikes Blad. It was evident from the articles and opinion pieces sent in to the newspaper by the people that many had a strong sense of identity with their municipality. Many expressed fear that a larger municipality would lead to more distance between the politicians and the people. Some feared that a large municipality would lead to a lower voter turnout in elections and make it harder to reach the politicians if they wanted to. In the questionnaire distributed in Hole, 58 per cent of people stated that they agreed fully or fairly agreed to the notion that Hole would lose its identity by merging with Ringerike and Jevnaker (Hole Kommune, 2016b). The questionnaires in Ringerike and Jevnaker did not cover identity. Additionally, there were discussions regarding development, where many believed that much of the resources from the new municipality would be spent on developing the city Hønefoss. The question of identity was widely debated, and several of the local politicians argued that the identity was tied to places within the municipality, not the municipality borders. Furthermore, many believed the local identity overpowered other aspects of the merger in the debates. As said by Tor-Stein Andersen,

*“I believe the debate has been more focused on what the heart says than what the brain says, because people care more they are from Ringerike, that they are from Hole and that they are from Jevnaker, rather than seeing the big picture.”*

Likewise, Arnfinn Baksvær believed identity got a large focus in the merger debate, and argued:

*“Local identity and belonging are concepts that largely have been used by the opponents of the merger, for all it’s worth in my opinion, which is evident from the referendums and citizen surveys. The three municipalities are already one region, which has been greatly under-communicated in the process, especially in the media.”*

Sjur Tandberg had a different view, explaining how identity is an important aspect in the merger debate:

*“I am one of those who believe that Hole should remain as its own municipality and that the local identity is one of the key issues.”*

The resistance by the people in the Ringerike Region is similar to the Finnish resistance in their 2006-2007 municipality reform (Zimmerbauer and Paasi, 2013). The fear of increased centralisation, loss of rural services and local democracy were discussed in both mergers. Local identity and sense of belonging to the current municipality was discussed by both the pro-merger and opposing sides of the debate, but the

two sides struggled to agree on the importance of identity in the merger. In Jevnaker, there was much citizen mobilisation and resistance leading up to the local referendum. Jevnaker is in a different county from Hole and Ringerike; Jevnaker is in Oppland while Hole and Ringerike are in Buskerud. Jevnaker is also part of the geographical grouping Hadeland, which does not involve Hole and Ringerike. Despite this, Jevnaker shares the local newspaper, inter-municipal cooperation and a joint labour market with Hole and Ringerike. In the questionnaire, 60 per cent of the people who were 70 years or older were strongly against a merger with Ringerike and Hole, compared 38 per cent for people who were under 30 years old (Sentio Research, 2016). The results are similar to the ones from Hole, which argues for a strong interest by the older populations to retain their municipalities. It was evident that the local patriotism is strong in Jevnaker; the people of Jevnaker were willing to go to great lengths in order to retain their municipality. As said by Tommy Lafton:

*“The citizen survey that was done before of the vote shows that we are willing to sacrifice a lot to remain as our own municipality. People are willing to pay more in taxes and people are willing to lower the quality of our services.”*

On the other hand, the pro-merger side in Jevnaker was not as vocal and visible compared the remain side. One possible explanation is the massive refusal to merge by the people, as shown in the referendum result, which makes it challenging for the politicians who disagree with their opinions. Geir Olsen was in favour of a merger, but as he explains:

*“The minority [pro-merger side] in Jevnaker felt that it was a waste of time to try and get through with our opinions because the feelings were so strong and we were just shut down.”*

In order to have a well-executed and thorough debate, it is crucial that all aspects of the merger are discussed. Several politicians believed people’s emotions and feelings played a larger role than the facts in the debates. There were also questions about information availability, but as Helge Stiksrud argued,

*“People ask for information and it has been available, in my opinion, more than enough. If people had read the information and at least focused on the hard facts, we could have gotten a different result. But you cannot inform about feelings or inform away from people’s feelings.”*

As shown, local identity is an important part of debates regarding geographical and political change. As argued by Zimmerbauer et al. (2012), geographical borders are social constructs, linked with identity and citizenship. Additionally, several politicians expressed sentiments of fear regarding the loss of local democracy when merging municipalities. Bård Brørby explained how a change in municipal structure and larger units could be a threat to local democracy where the power is centralised at the top. Furthermore, he argued that small municipalities enable the local politicians to acquire a greater knowledge of the local people and pressing issues in the area. Mayor of Hole Per Berger argued similarly, and expressed concerns that a larger municipality could divert the power away from the people and weaken the local democracy. To counter this argument, several politicians including Jørn-Inge Frøshaug explained how being a small municipality could impair the local democracy by the increased use of either intermunicipal companies,

which are not controlled by the politicians, or the use of intermunicipal agreements, which are usually controlled by the larger municipality. Lundell's (2013) claim that inclusion of local people in merging debates is crucial for making the merger successful is evident, but the ways in which the debates and the processes are structured are vital to ensure a fair and good decision.

## 5 Conclusion

Restructuring of political systems has been a trend in modern Scandinavia (De Vries, 1999), where they aim to reduce the bureaucracy and create better and more efficient welfare systems in the countries. The increased use of mergers has led to an academic trend of researching them in order to explore the processes of citizen participation, identity and political restructuring (Frisvold and Almås, 2004; Harbo, 2015; Hug, 2009; Lundell, 2013; Paasi, 2011; Yetano, 2010). The Norwegian Ministry of Local Governments and Modernisation, led by Jan Tore Sanner, started the Norwegian municipality reform in 2014, where all municipalities were asked to explore possible merges with neighbouring municipalities (Ministry of Local Governments and Modernisation, 2014). This IGS has focused on the Ringerike Region, which consists of the municipalities Hole, Jevnaker and Ringerike, in order to analyse the merger discussions and the citizen involvement in the process. The municipalities included methods of citizen participation and the local politicians discussed their value and effectiveness, or lack thereof. Referendums can be used as a way of leaving the decision-making up to the people in a political process where the politicians are divided between yes and no to a merger. The people complained about little information available, a rushed time frame for the debates and much confusion. Therefore, the referendums were argued by some politicians to be mostly based on personal preferences and feelings of identity. In order to conduct successful referendums and citizen participation in complex political processes, it is vital to ensure that criteria of information availability and time are met, in addition to creating interest by the people concerning the issue. A municipality merger is often met with resistance from the people (Zimmerbauer and Paasi, 2012), so it is evident that a better structured process could result in an outcome where people and local politicians feel satisfied that all aspects of a merger are explored and given a broadly accepted result. This is not to say that a 'no' to a merger is an unsuccessful result, but it was evident that many people and local politicians in the Ringerike Area were somewhat positive to a merger and its benefits, but the short time frame did not allow for these benefits to be fully explored or for the new and larger municipality to be accepted by the people. Questions of local identity and resistance were widely discussed, where some felt identity was too overpowering while others believed identity was the backbone of their municipality and its future. Municipalities in the Norwegian context are often tied not only with the services they offer, but also the feelings and sense of identity attached to them. Zimmerbauer and Paasi's (2013) argument that regional identity should not be too weak or too strong correlates to the results seen in this merger. The smaller municipalities expressed their strong local identity and used the identity as an argument against the merger, while the large municipality had less local involvement and a lower turnout in the referendum. Identity is evidently important in a geographical restructuring process where borders move and political leadership change, and as argued

by Frisvold and Almås (2004), it is important to recognise the current identities while also working to create a common identity for the new region. The ways in which the municipality merger process was structured led to debates where mostly the differences between the three municipalities were discussed, rather than finding common ground and developing the already successful collaborations between the municipalities. A major challenge for politicians involved in geographical processes of restructuring is therefore to identify the local identities and their importance in an area. Local identities and feelings of belonging to a municipality are difficult to pinpoint; they are subjective and unquantifiable (Frisvold and Almås, 2004). This study is not comprehensive enough to shed light on tools and measures which can be used by politicians to describe these identities, but proves the importance of including and recognising these identities in the merger debates. The increasing municipality merger trend in Scandinavia and parts of Europe should result in more research into the merger processes, which would be beneficial in order to ensure efficient and meaningful debates and practices. Due to the limited time frame for this IGS, it was not possible to compare the Ringerike Region to another region which considered a merger, but this would make for an interesting study. Additionally, studies on local rather than national level reveal the complex and intricate processes of local identities and political leadership evident in Norwegian municipality mergers.

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## Information sheet

### Norway's Municipality Merger: information for participants

I would like to invite you to be part of a research project, if you would like to. You should only agree to take part if you want to, it is entirely up to you. If you choose not to take part there won't be any disadvantages for you and you will hear no more about it.

Please read the following information carefully before you decide to take part; this will tell you why the research is being done and what you will be asked to do if you take part. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign the attached form to say that you agree.

You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

#### *Details of the study*

This research will be used for my undergraduate geography dissertation, as a part of my degree. The study will take the form of an interview lasting no longer than 60 minutes and will be composed of 15-20 key questions relating to your experiences and opinions on proposed municipality merger. The interview will be conducted by me and will solely be used to help in the preparation of my dissertation.

I will first provide you with a brief introduction to the project. You will be asked to provide your consent for the interview to take place. You will also be asked for your consent for the interview to be recorded to aid the preparation of a transcript of the interview. The transcript will be placed on a secure server solely for use in the preparation of the dissertation. After the dissertation has been completed and marked, the transcript and recording will be destroyed.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.

If you have any questions or concerns about the manner in which the study was conducted, please, in the first instance, contact the student researcher responsible for the study. If this is unsuccessful, or not appropriate, please contact my advisor **Dr Konstantinos Melachroinos, School of Geography, Queen Mary University of London, Mile End Road, London, E1 4NS (telephone: +44 20 78825573; email: k.melachroinos@qmul.ac.uk)**

## Informed Consent Form

Thank you for taking part in this research for my undergraduate geography dissertation. I will explain the study to you before you agree to take part. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time. Please complete this form after you have read about or listened to an explanation about the research.

Please tick  
or initial

**I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the students involved and withdraw from it immediately without giving any reason.**

**I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be handled in accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.**

**I consent to my interview being recorded.**

**I consent to an interview transcript being deposited on our secure server.**

The information you have submitted will be used in my undergraduate geography dissertation.

### Participant's Statement:

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Researchers' Statement (to be completed by a student):

I \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and any foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the participant.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please ensure that two copies are signed – one copy should be retained by the researcher, one by the participant**

# GEG6000 Independent Geographical Study

## DECLARATION

This report entitled

**Local Identity, Democracy and Power Relations: A Case from the Ringerike Region, Norway**

was composed by me and is based on my own work. Where the work of others has been used, it is fully acknowledged in the text and in captions to tables and illustrations.

This report has not been submitted for any other qualification.

Signed: *Kristine Bull Sletholt*

Date: 05.01.17