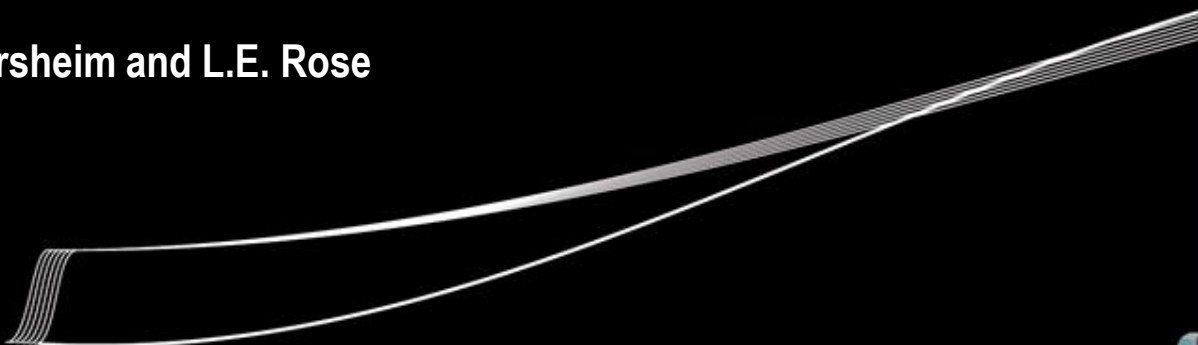
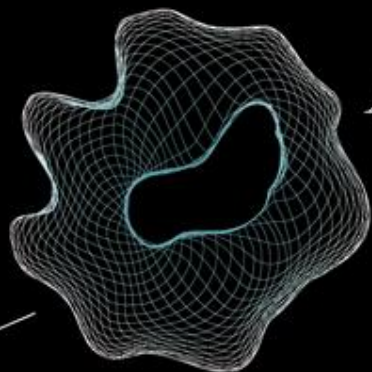


Size and local democracy: The final word on the matter ?

Bas Denters

70th Birthday Seminar for H. Baldersheim and L.E. Rose

22 May 2014

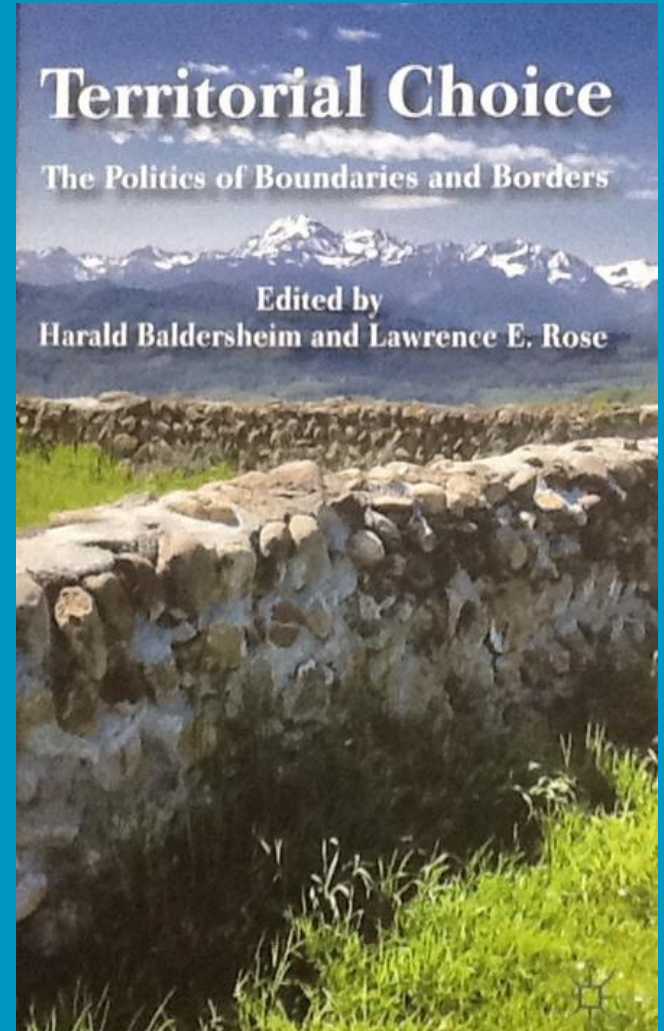


Boundaries and borders 1



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Across borders

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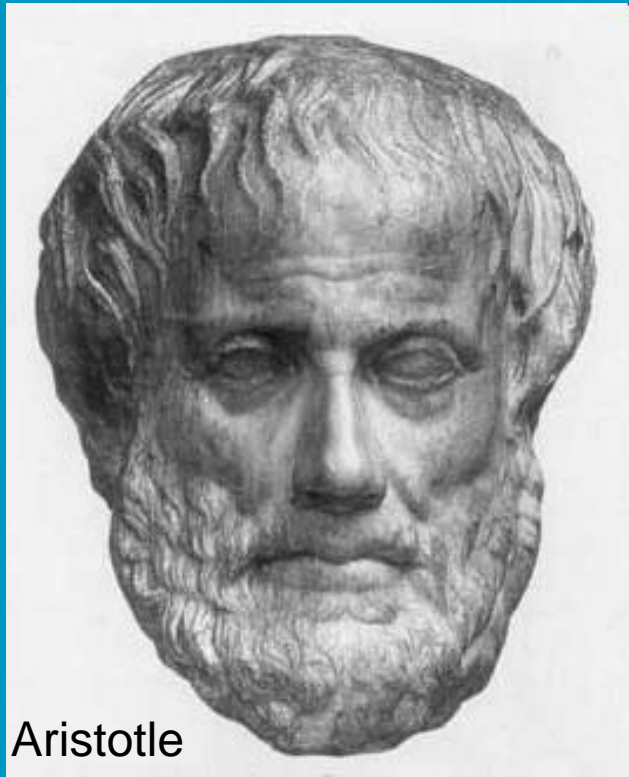
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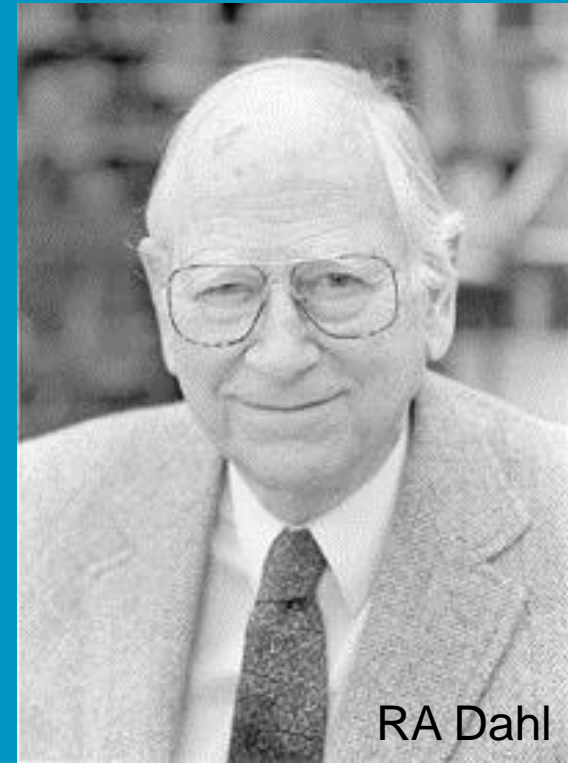
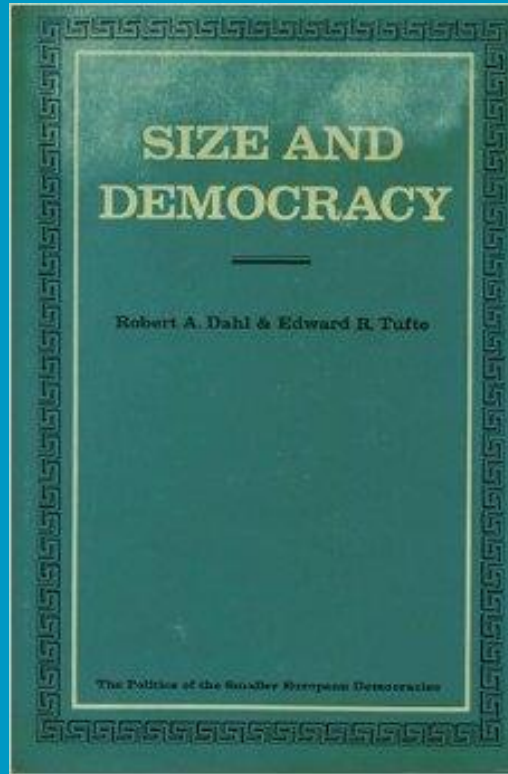
A recurrent theme in democratic theory

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Aristotle

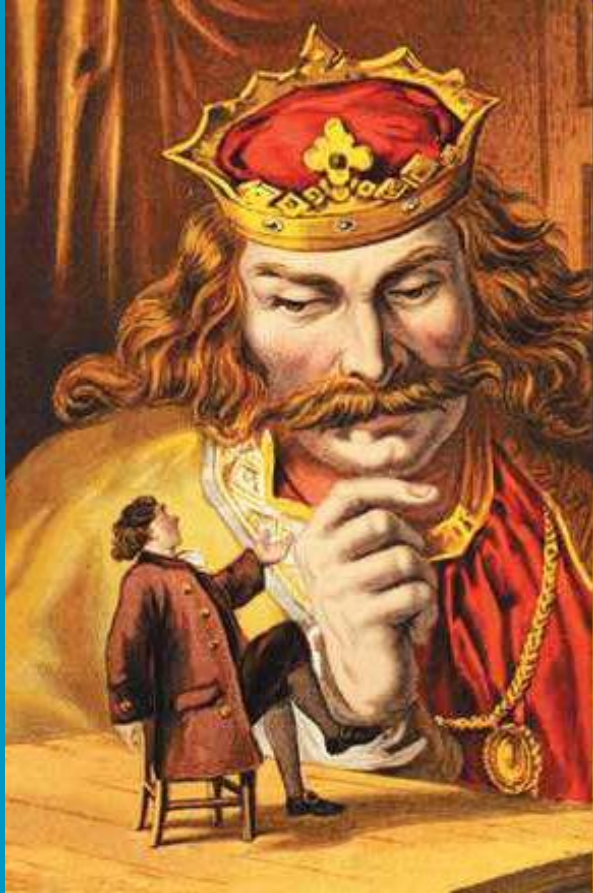


RA Dahl

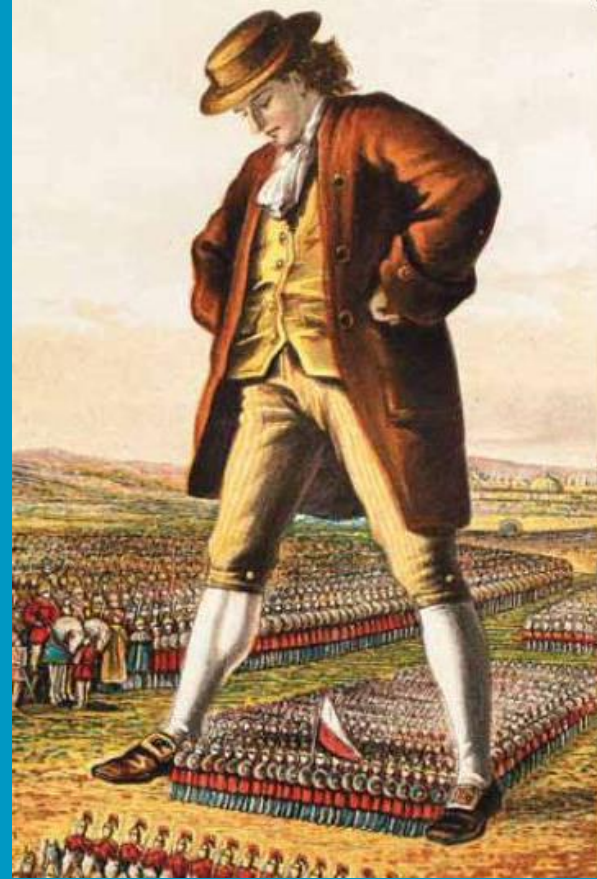
Two perspectives: Gulliver's Travels

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Brobdingnag

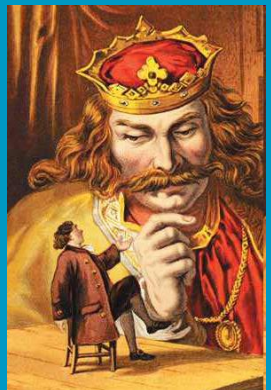
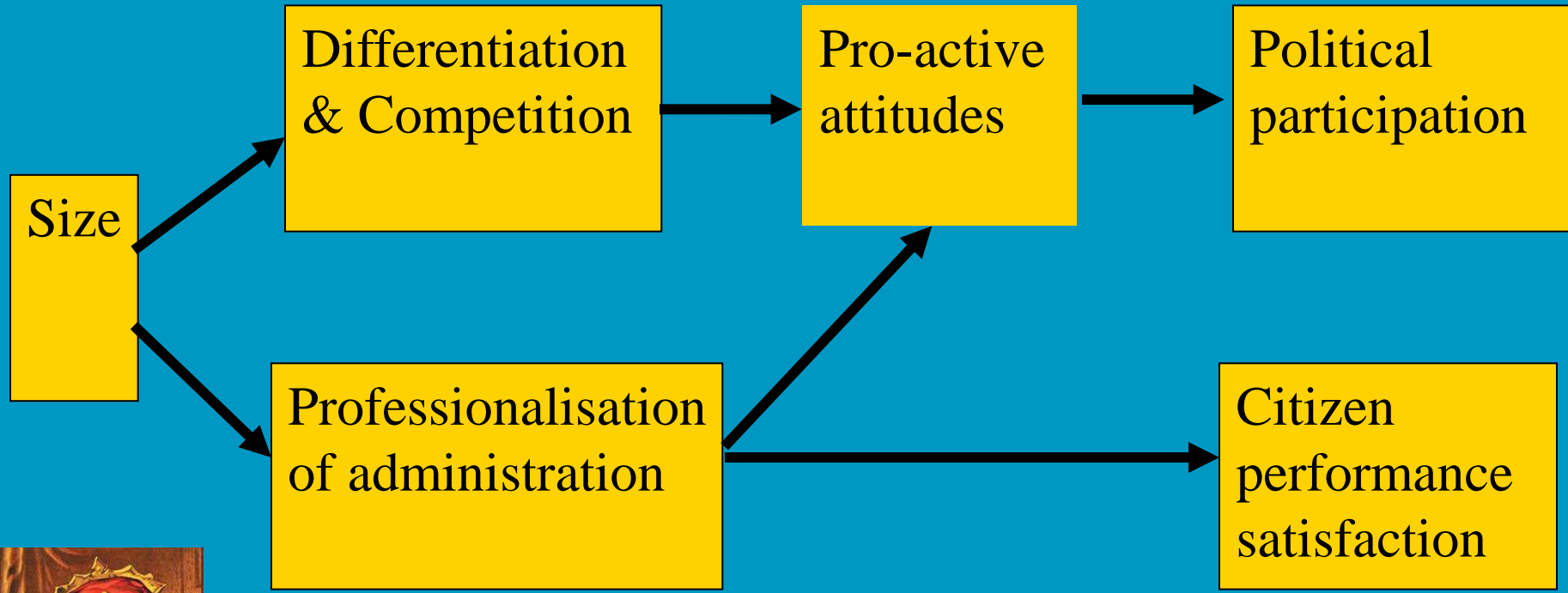


Lilliput

1) Brobdingnag: Reform Theory

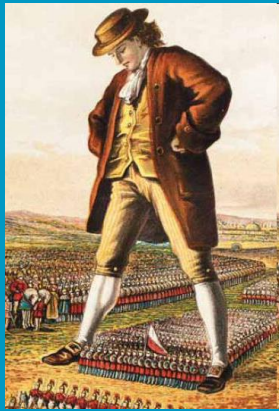
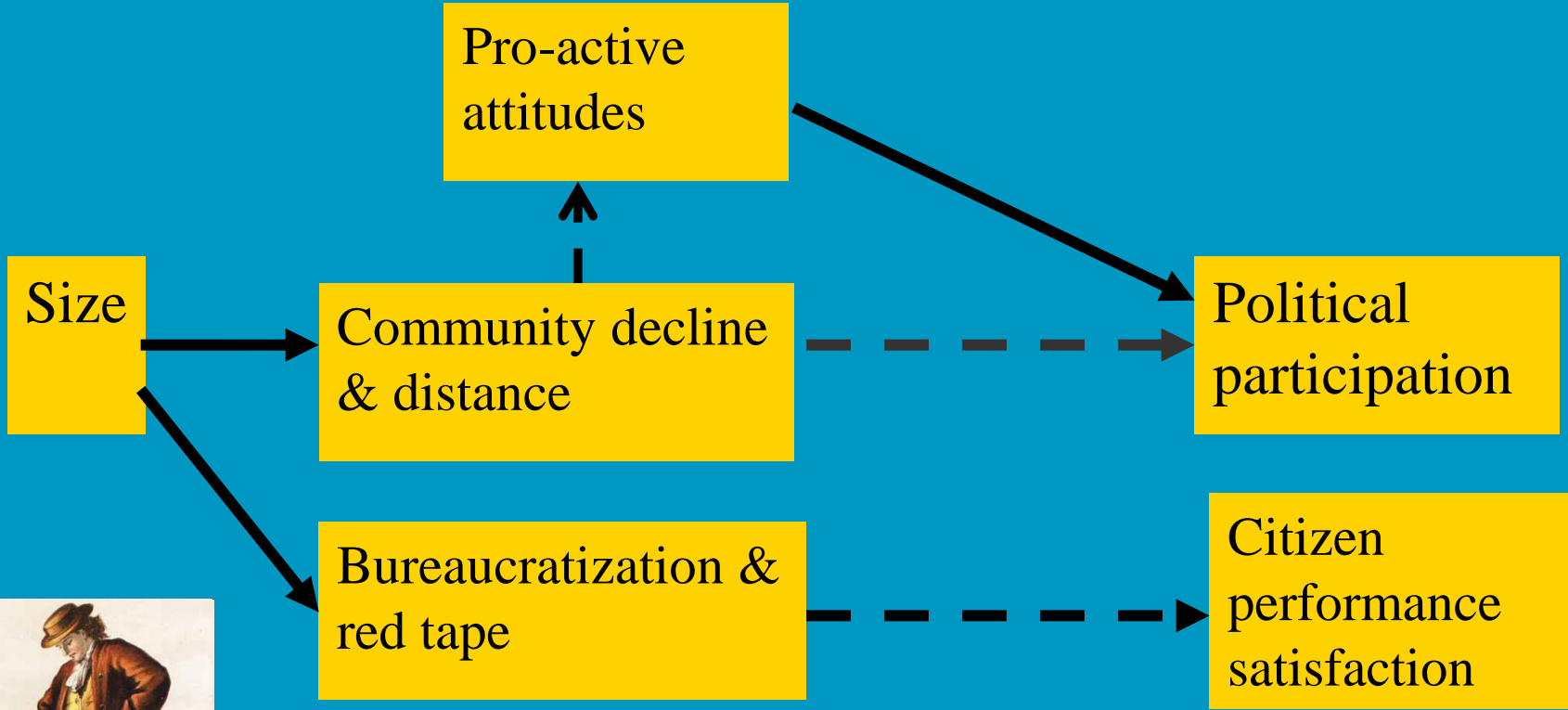
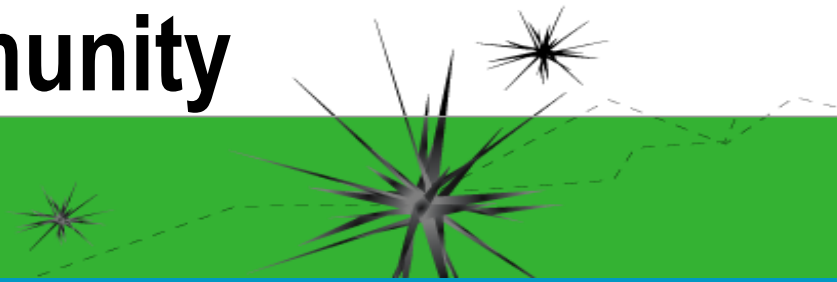
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+ effect: the higher X, the higher Y

2) Lilliput: Political Community



—————> + effect: the higher X, the higher Y
- - - - -> - effect: the higher X, the lower Y

3) Compositional effects

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- Small and big cities are “inhabited by different kinds of people”.
- In order to isolate the effects of size we must “separate out the effects of the socioeconomic characteristics of the individual living in the communities”.

(Verba et al. 1978:273)



The proof of the pudding ...

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Theory: three answers to
question about democratic
effects of municipal size

All three have a degree of
plausibility. Which answer is
correct?

Need for empirical evidence

(Proof of the pudding is in the eating!)



Size & Local Democracy in Europe

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Special issue: *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* vol. 20; 2002

Stage 1:
secondary
analysis of
existing data;
G&P issue 2002



B. Denters, M. Goldsmith, A. Ladner, P. Mouritzen, L. Rose:
Size and Local Democracy,
Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2014

Stage 2:
collection of
new data in four
countries:
CH, NO, DK &
NL

Three sets of criteria in SLDE

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Ten criteria based on citizens' orientations and involvement in local democracy

a) Inputs:
citizens' interest,
knowledge and
participation

b) Throughput:
citizens'
confidence in
politicians

c) Outputs:
citizens'
satisfaction with
performance

Three levels of analysis

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Level 1: Four countries

- Wide variation in average size
- Similar local government systems; but important differences remain (e.g. direct democracy)

Level 2: 50-60 municipalities per country

- *Selection: maximize variation in size*

Level 3: 30 respondents per municipality

- *Selection: random sampling*



MLA: stepwise analysis

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1) Bivariate correlation

Size

Party activism

2) Total effect (minus compositional effect, model 3)

Size

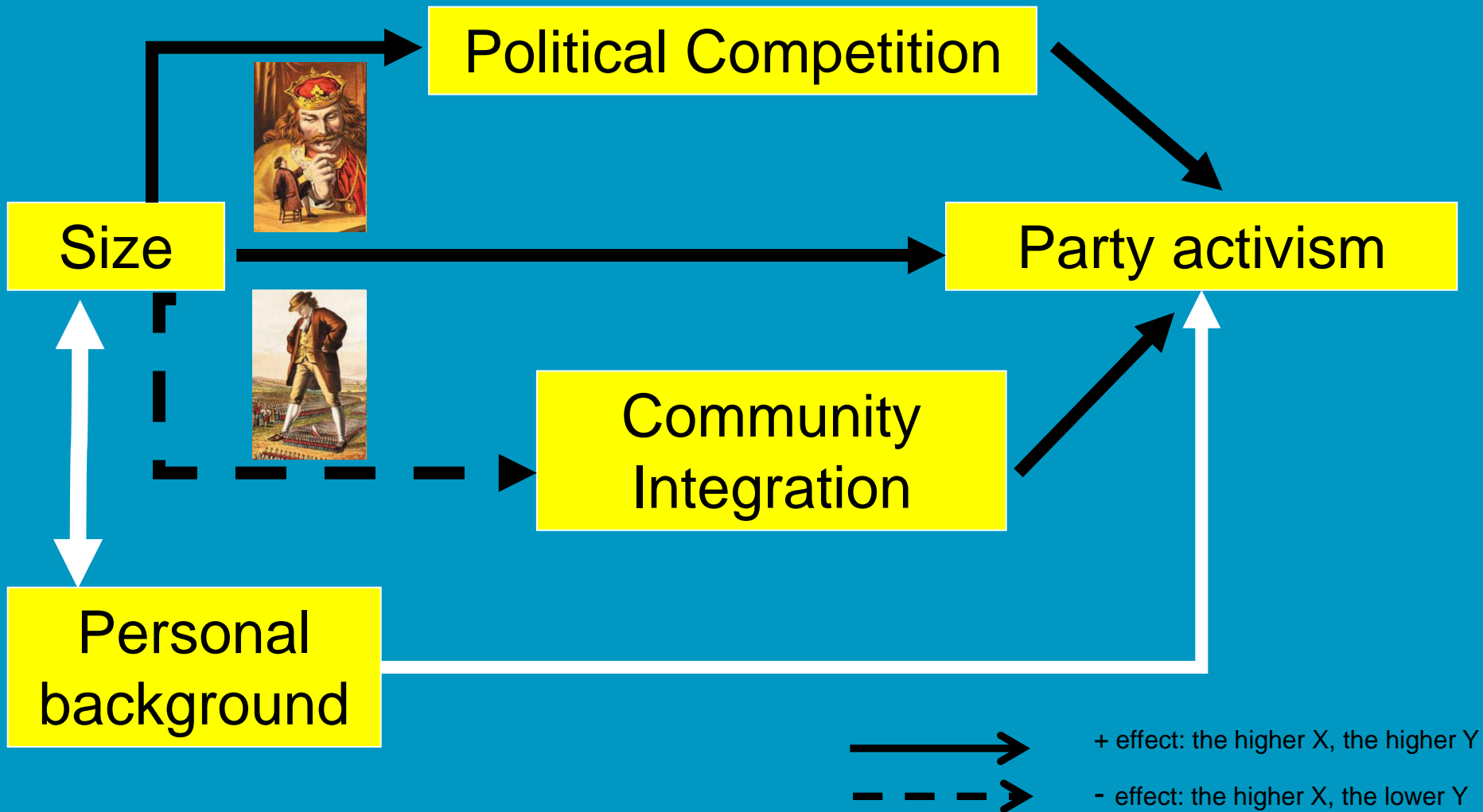
Party activism

Backgrounds

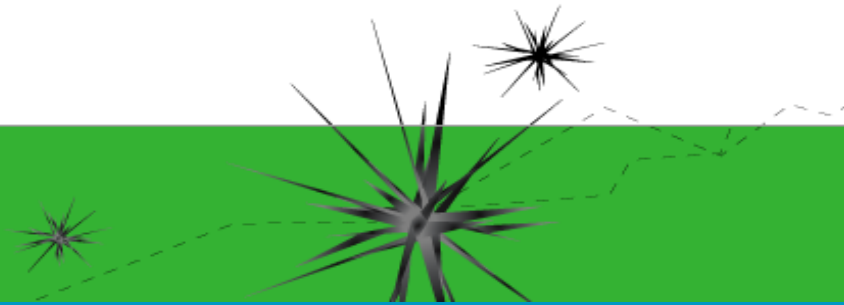
3) Total Effect = Direct + Indirect

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Findings: size effects



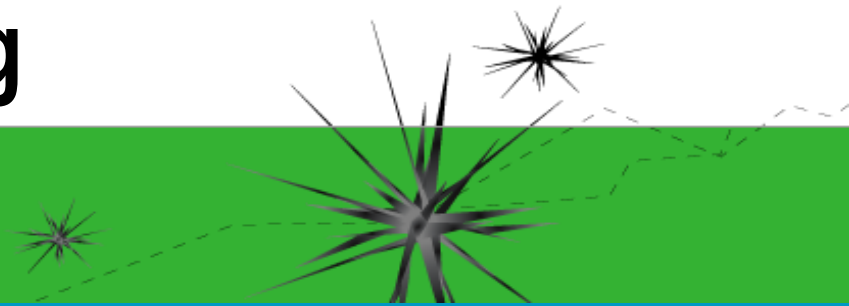
Negative size effect in three or four countries

- Personal political competence
- Party activism
- **Local contacting**
- **Satisfaction with local government**

Negative size effect in two countries

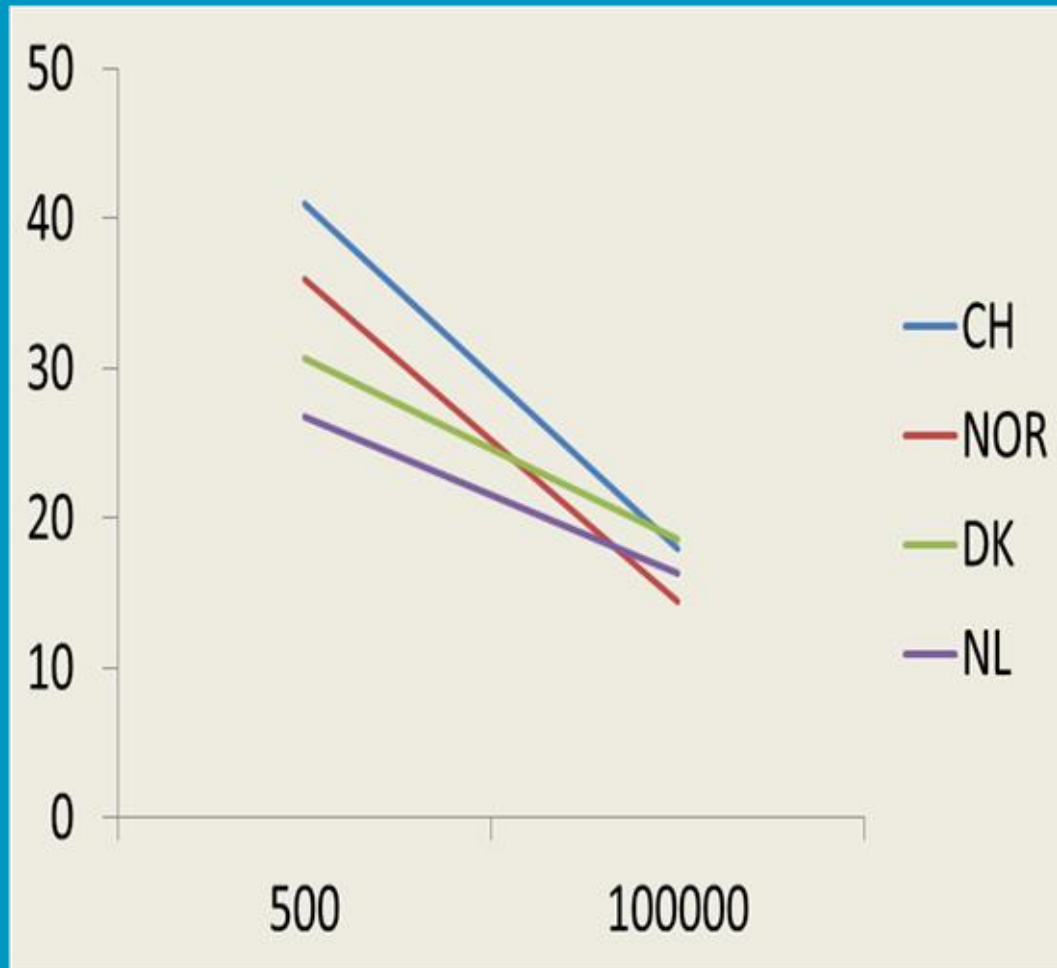
- Confidence in local politicians
- Distinctiveness of local voting

Size effect on contacting



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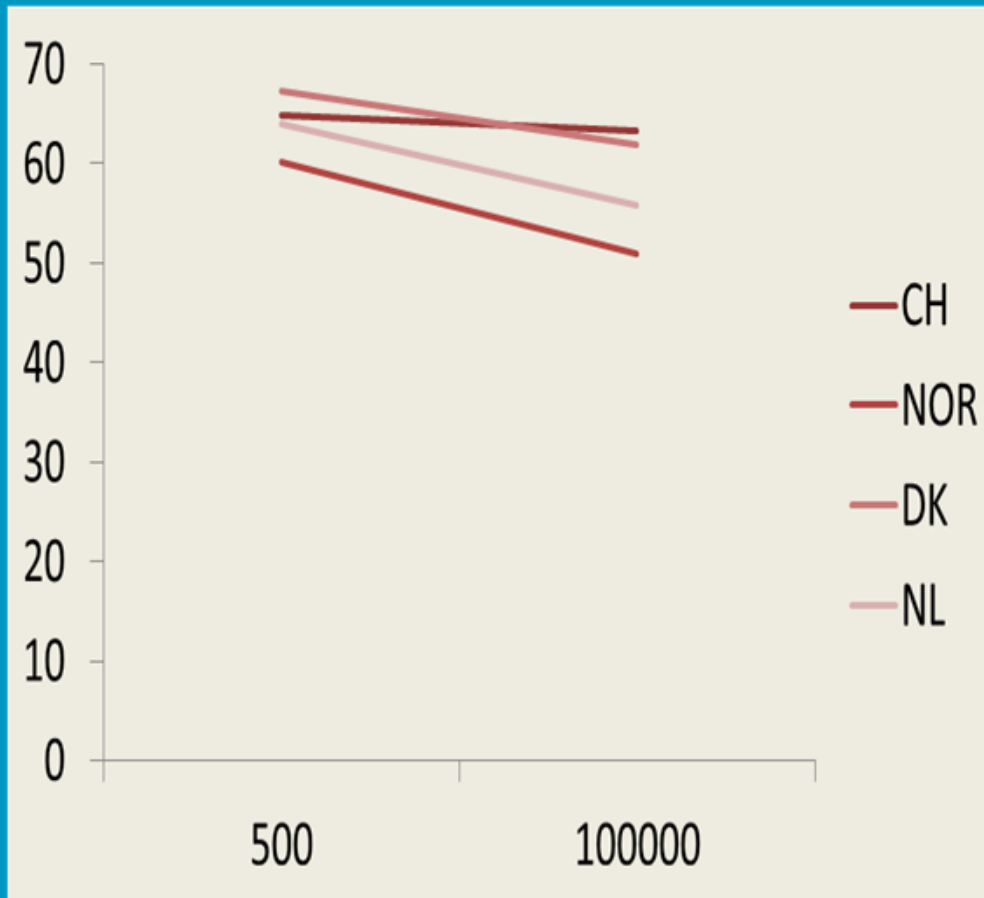
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Size effect on satisfaction

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Our final word on the matter!

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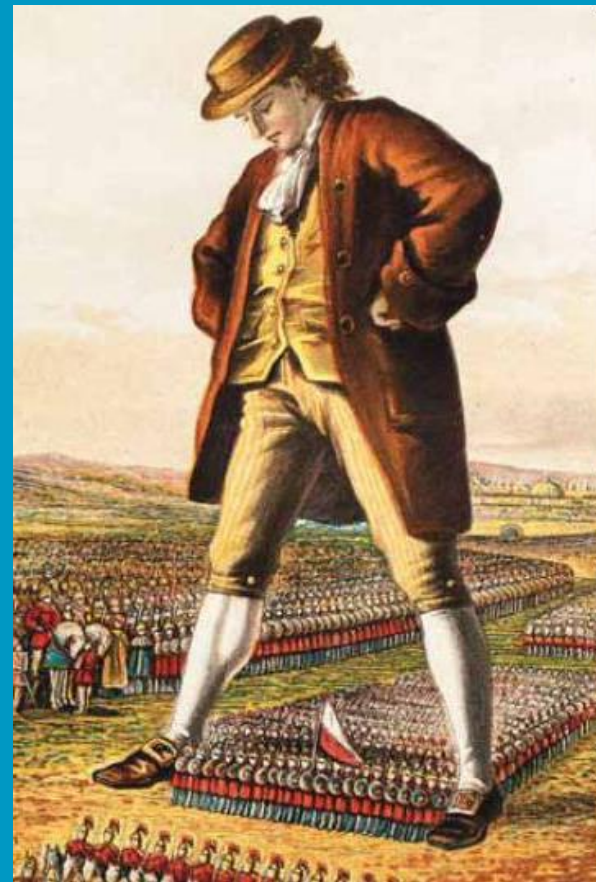
No evidence for **compositional effects**

Weak corroboration for **Lilliput thesis**

- 6 (more or less) consistent significant negative effects
- Effects may be rather weak
- Size Matters A little bit!

Strong refutation of **Brobdingnag thesis**

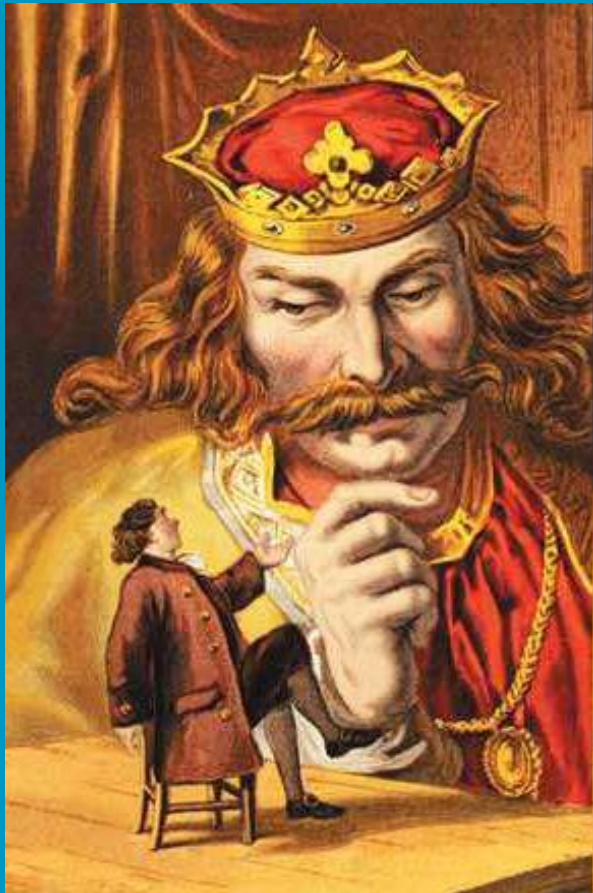
- 0 (more or less) consistent positive effects



Reformers: “Brobdingnag not that ugly !”

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- Scale increases not so disadvantageous as often claimed!
- More professionalism & specialisation and more legal quality; performance gains
- Other research: no conclusive evidence for systematic positive scale
- Amalgamation reforms are costly: direct costs and opportunity costs
- Our research: if there are advantages, citizens are not appreciative of these