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Master`s Thesis in Public Administration

Ideas Versus Interests

**A Case Study of the Facilitation of Membership Participation in
NFU and NFSU**

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PREFACE

Unfortunately, two wonderful years at UiB has come to an end. Therefore, it is necessary to show gratitude towards the knowledge gathered and the people I have met along the way.

It was a transition to start at the Department of Government without any prior knowledge of institutionalism or governance. But I thought: Let's Gov! and I have not regretted the choice due to the interesting and intellectual courses and seminars the last two years. I have learned a lot which I will take with me further when I start as a Trainee at HVL in August.

In the last year, writing the master's thesis has consumed most of my time. There are many people I need to thank for their help with this paper. First of all, I must thank my supervisor Arild Aurvåg Farsund for the support and help you have given me throughout this process. Your knowledge on the subject and critical comments has been vital and helpful. I also appreciate that you made sure that my focus was only on the master's thesis and not on retaking exams. Furthermore, I must thank my research group Political Organization and Multilevel Governance. In our seminars I received helpful comments and constructive criticism from both my fellow students and professors. Additionally, the help of NFU and NFSU have been crucial for collecting information, documents, and interviews. I am very grateful for all your help.

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At the end of the day, selfishly enough, I want to thank myself. Whether I finished this master's degree or whether the thesis finished me along the way is uncertain, but I would do it all again if I could.

1st of June, 2023
Emma Holen

ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explores how interest organizations facilitate membership participation. Executed by understanding how NFU and NFSU form ideas and interests in the agricultural settlement in Norway. This involves researching the participation process in NFU and NFSU which takes place each year. In this process, ideas and interests are collected and assembled into a demand presented in the agricultural negotiations. Thus, the organizational behavior this thesis tries to understand is the facilitation of participation. Since NFU and NFSU are regarded as institutions, their behavior is understood through institutional theory. Particularly the normative and rational choice theory. In this sense, the facilitation is explained by the norms, values, and structure of the organizations. The facilitation of participation is measured through the four dimensions; *level*, *form*, *range*, and *degree*. To unravel how the participation is facilitated eight semi-structured interviews and 25 documents are collected. Moreover, the thesis is concentrated on the period from 2020 to 2023.

This thesis found that normative and rational characteristics of NFU and NFSU are part of explaining the participation facilitated in forming ideas and interests. The normative characteristics in NFU are democratic responsibility, common interest, and compromises. While the rational features display a democratic structure restricted by the number of members. The normative characteristics of NFSU display democratic responsibility, grassroots, and principled. The rational features also display a democratic structure but are affected by active members. The participation structure in both NFU and NFSU displays democratic structures with high dimensions of level, form, range, and degree. Differences are observed in that NFU has more of a specific and summarized process guiding the members. The process at NFSU is more influenced by many actors and big questions, with more power to the members. The different values evident in NFU and NFSU reflect the interests advanced. In this sense, the interests advanced by NFU are concerned with external interests and thus often end in agreement. The interests advanced by NFSU are concerned with the internal interests of the organizations, and thus more often end in a breach. Hence, how NFU and NFSU facilitate participation is influenced by the institutional characteristics. In this sense, NFU does facilitate participation concerning democratic responsibility and is guided by external interests. NFSU facilitates participation concerning democratic responsibility and is guided by internal interests.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Every year Norwegian Farmers Union (NFU), Norwegian Farmers and Smallholders Union (NFSU)¹, and the Norwegian government join forces to negotiate the economic terms of the agricultural industry in Norway. This is executed through negotiations where NFU and NFSU present their demand on behalf of *the agriculture* in Norway, and the government presents their offer on behalf of the state (Government, 2020). NFU and NFSU are interest organizations, defined as organizations representing the interest of their members (Wollebæk, 2008, p. 357). They are both concerned with facilitating a democratic process where the members are part of constructing the demands of NFU (n.d.) and NFSU (n.d.-a). These demands are supposed to represent the interests of the members and the collective agricultural field. NFU and NFSU are part of the same structure through the agricultural settlement, and both are concerned with the interests of the agricultural field. The organizations are still two independent organizations representing their separate demands in the negotiations influenced by the traditions and interests of the organization. With these differences in mind, how is membership participation facilitated within NFU and NFSU when forming the demand? And what organizational characteristics may explain why the organizations facilitate membership participation in this manner?

Moreover, this thesis focuses on how ideas and interests are formed within this participation process. *Ideas* are understood as the beliefs of the individual actors since ideas are individual and depend on the interpretation of the individual actor (Béland & Cox, 2010, p. 3). *Interests* are understood as something common rather than something individual. Interests are constructions established throughout history and social and political influences (p. 10). Thus, this thesis is trying to understand how ideas and interests of internal and external actors are formed throughout the participation process into the interests NFU and NFSU presents in their demand. The forming of ideas and interests is understood through facilitating participation, where the process is at the center rather than the results and outcome.

¹ Norwegian Farmers Union is the translation of the Norwegian name Norges Bondelag, and the Norwegian name of Norwegian Farmers and Smallholders Union is Norsk Bonde- og Småbrukarlag. The English names will be used forward in this thesis.

This process and how it is facilitated is a product of the choices made within NFU and NFSU and thus also displays the behavior of the organization. Facilitation is therefore understood as a behavior that takes place at the meso-level and not at the individual level. Therefore, institutionalism is the theoretical lens utilized to understand this behavior of organizations. More specifically, the normative and rational choice perspective. In this sense, the institutional characteristic of the organizations may be part of explaining the facilitation of membership participation. Moreover, how these institutional characteristics influence the forming of ideas and interests. Therefore, these characteristics of the organization are part of understanding and explaining the research question of this thesis:

How do NFU and NFSU facilitate membership participation in forming ideas and interests in the agricultural settlement?

From this research question, some sub-questions are included:

1. What are the characteristics of NFU and NFSU regarding structure, norms, and values?
2. How do NFU and NFSU facilitate member participation regarding level, form, range, and degree?
3. To what extent do different values contribute to NFU and NFSU advancing different interests?

The first sub-question is asked to identify the institutional characteristics of the two organizations in the agricultural settlement. The theoretical framework of new institutionalism is utilized to understand the behavior of institutions, mainly through the understanding of Guy Peters (2019). The two perspectives, normative and rational choice approaches, are central to explaining the behavior of an institution. The second sub-question looks at the facilitation of membership participation, which is the organizational behavior this thesis tries to explain. This process is understood through a theoretical framework that defines participation through four dimensions, *level*, *form range*, and *degree*. Hence, discovering the facilitation transpiring and measure the participation (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2005). The third sub-question discusses the relation between the foundation of values and the interests advanced by NFU and NFSU in the agricultural settlement. Thus, commenting on the external role of NFU and NFSU in the negotiations. This is important since when viewing institutions and participation, an vital aspects is their influence in society at large (Wollebæk & Strømsnes, 2008).

The selected cases of this research are NFU and NFSU, the two central organizations regarding the representation of farmers in Norway. The first case, NFU, was established in 1896 and has since been the largest interest organization representing farmers in Norway. They have over 60.000 members separated into 13 county chapters and 500 local chapters (NFU, n.d.). Since NFU is the largest farmer organization, it reflects a great capacity, resources, and bureaucratic structure. The other case is NFSU, the other central interest organization regarding agricultural politics in Norway. The organization was established in 1913 as an alternative to NFU, focusing on the interests of smallholders (Gravdahl, 1998, p. 7). NFSU is a considerably smaller organization with 6.500 members, 18 county chapters and 150 local chapters (NFSU, n.d.-a). In addition to fewer members, NFSU has fewer resources and less of a bureaucratic structure than NFU.

NFU and NFSU are interesting cases regarding facilitating membership participation for several reasons. As mentioned, they have a democratic responsibility in society through the agricultural settlement, and they are concerned with making a democratic process where the members are included. Even though both organizations are concerned with the interests of the farmers, the organizations have been perceived differently in the negotiations. There are noticeable differences between the organizations in terms of political orientation, willingness to negotiate and make compromises, and the capacity of the organizations (Gravdahl, 1998, p. 7). The political orientation differs between the two organizations in that NFSU is perceived by society as an organization mainly concerned with small-scale farmers. In contrast, NFU is perceived as more concerned with larger farms. This distinction between big and small farms is currently not as evident as it has been. However, traditionally in the agricultural settlement, NFSU focuses and criticizes how the structural and systematical issues mainly support the production of large quantities and not smaller food productions. Contradictory, NFU has a more pragmatic view on the use of these systems (p. 8). Regarding willingness to negotiate, NFSU has breached the negotiations a more significant number of times than NFU. NFSU has breached nine times since 2005, while NFU has solely breached three times (Government, 2022).

Based on these characteristics and traditions of the organizations, this thesis believes both processes to be considered democratic and centralized around the inputs from the members. Due to the differences addressed above, one might suspect that NFSU forms ideas and interests differently when the organizations facilitate the participation process. NFSU might represent more controversial interests, even though it would involve breaching the settlement. In contrast,

NFU has greater capacity and resources and is concerned with forming achievable and effective interests. Moreover, the process could include other external political and economic interests since their view is more pragmatic and generally in line with the state. This thesis will discuss whether these characteristics are visible in the facilitation of participation in forming ideas and interests.

To research and discuss these reflections, this thesis will proceed the following way. First, Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework, including institutional theory and organizational participation. Following, Chapter 3 continues with the methodology, where I present my qualitative case study. Chapter 4 introduces the context of the agricultural settlement, NFU and NFSU. Moreover, Chapter 5 presents the empirical findings through the different segments of the participation process. Chapter 6 analyzes the results presented based on the theoretical concepts. At last, Chapter 7 concludes, answers the research questions, and reflects on the theory and future research.

2 THEORY: INSTITUTION AND PARTICIPATION

This thesis will utilize new institutionalism as the theoretical lens and follow the belief that institutions are a significant variable in understanding politics (Lecours, 2005, p. 18). Thus, necessary when recognizing the politics of NFU and NFSU in the agricultural settlement and answering the research question, “How do NFU and NFSU facilitate membership participation in forming ideas and interests in the agricultural settlement?”. New institutionalism recognizes the forces that may affect the behavior of institutions since the main argument in new institutionalism is that institutions shape behavior (p. 8). Hence, institutionalism is utilized to recognize the forces and reasons behind the behavior of the institutions. Thus, the research question is connected to institutional theory since NFU and NFSU are regarded as institutions, and their behavior, facilitating participation, is what this thesis is trying to understand.

One reason for looking at the facilitation of member participation through the institutional lens is to understand how organizations connect the local communities to society at large (Strømsnes, 2002, pp. 17-18). Interest organizations are integrating the issues at local and national levels. This is part of strengthening the democracy in the nation, connecting the individual citizen to the state. Their role is thus to uphold their democratic responsibility and connect the local and national levels (p. 13). In this sense, the concept of participation is vital when understanding interest organizations through institutionalism. Because it reflects the role institutions play as representatives of the local to the national level. This is related to the agricultural settlement where NFU and NFSU are part of connecting the voice of farmers to the state. Thus, the facilitation of participation may be seen as a way of connecting local and national levels.

This chapter is divided into two sections based on the two main concepts. The first section identifies institutions and institutionalism with different perspectives and focuses on normative institutionalism and rational choice theory. The second section concentrates on *participation*, a core concept in this thesis. To unravel what factors may affect the facilitation, namely the behavior of the institutions, it is essential to understand different ways the participation may be facilitated. Thus, participation is defined, and a framework is introduced to measure and understand how participation is facilitated within the organizations.

2.1 Institutions and Institutionalism

To understand what it implies to identify NFU and NFSU as institutions, it is necessary to define institutions as a concept and recognize how it differs from an organization. While all institutions are organizations, not all organizations are institutions. Philip Selznick was one of the first central figures who connected the concepts of *institutions* to organizational theory. He viewed the distinction between organizations and institutions as a matter of process, where an organization may become an institution (Scott, 2013, p. 24). Further, Selznick introduced the known definition of institutions “‘To institutionalize’ is to *infuse with value* beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand” (Selznick, 1957, p. 17). The infusion of values creates a specific form and system within an organization, indicating that the organization is not as quickly transformed as before. This may be observable in an established organizational culture distinct to a specific organization. In that sense, a culture is not created overnight and thus not easily changed. Moreover, organizations want to preserve and maintain their organizational characteristics. The characteristics are meaningful to the organization, and they sustain these even though the preservation is challenging (Scott, 2013, p. 24). This is also accurate in the instance of NFU and NFSU, which have existed for a long time and established their own culture and organizational characteristics. The history and information about NFU and NFSU will be moreover addressed in chapter 4.

The ideas by Selznick can be identified as part of the old institutionalism and reflect the view of institutionalization as a process. It happens over time, and the process is influenced by several factors within and outside the organization. These factors include the history, hence the interests created throughout time and through the people the organization embodies. Other actors are connected to an adoption of the context and environment surrounding the institution (Selznick, 1957, p. 16). From these assumptions in old institutionalism evolved the new institutionalism, the movements are thus two separate incidents. New institutionalism was founded on the formerly idea of institutions as a reaction to the theories and discipline at the time (Scott, 2013, p. 38). The movement started with James G. March and Johan P. Olsen as the initial advocates through their article *The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life*. They named the movement through this article, criticized the current empirical political theory, and presented what they thought new institutionalism should be (Peters, 2019, p. 19). They wanted to merge institutional theory with the contemporary theories of politics (March & Olsen, 1984, p. 738).

One of these new directions within new institutionalism formed was that institutions are thought of with a more autonomous role. March and Olsen (1984, p. 738) viewed institutions as actors influenced by the context around them, but also as actors who affect the surrounding context. This reflects the view of institutions as decision-makers. “Institutions seem to be neither neutral reflections of exogenous environmental forces nor neutral arenas for the performances of individuals driven by exogenous preferences and expectations” (p. 742). In this sense, institutions may be viewed as independent actors like individuals. This is significant when considering NFU and NFSU, since both are institutions effecting and affected by the context and environment around them. Therefore, this research often refers to internal and external interests to acknowledge the relation between institutions and the context. Some interests influencing the behavior of NFU and NFSU are internal to the institution, and some are external from other actors and institutions. The interdependence between institutions and society is essential to remember and recognize (p. 742). Also related to NFU, NFSU and the context of the agricultural settlement. They are all interconnected and actively affecting each other throughout the process and results.

Even though new institutionalism is well known and utilized, there are some difficulties and unclarity about what this movement encompasses. This may result from not being one unified body of new institutionalism but rather encompassing several approaches (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 936). Before going deeper into the different approaches, it is necessary to establish some general claims about institutions. One of the most central aspects of an institution is that they exist with some kind of structure, either formal, informal, or a combination. Secondly is stability over time. The amount of stability may differ between institutions, but some stability is required. Third, it is necessary to influence the behavior of the individual, signifying that institutions are part of regulating the behavior of members. At least to some extent, there should be some shared values and meanings between the members (Peters, 2019, pp. 22-23).

With this understanding of institutions, NFU and NFSU are identified as institutions in this thesis. The characteristics of NFU and NFSU are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. However, it should be stated that structure, stability over time, and restricting membership behavior are all characteristics visible in NFU and NFSU. While other actors in the agricultural field may be identified as institutions based on the definition above, they are not the focus of this thesis. NFU and NFSU are the selected cases and the only institutions this thesis tries to understand the behavior of. Other institutions, such as the agricultural settlement or political

parties, are incorporated and identified as actors in the environment influencing the behavior of NFU and NFSU. Thus, NFU and NFSU is what is referred to when institutions are mentioned further in this thesis. The behavior of institutions is addressed in the section below, where different institutional approaches contribute to understanding and explaining the behavior of institutions.

2.2 New Institutionalism; Different Approaches

As stated, new institutionalism consists of a wide range of different approaches explaining the institutional concept. Guy Peters (2019, p. 22) identified six approaches currently in use. These approaches are part of the institutional field since they approach the idea of institutions in their research. These are normative institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, empirical institutionalist, discursive institutionalism, and social institutionalism (pp. 24-25). As stated in the introduction, this thesis will look at the behavior of institutions. Moreover, how normative and rational characteristics influence the facilitation of membership participation. Thus, the focus is on normative and rational choice institutionalism when looking at the different approaches of new institutionalism.

Similarly, Guy Peters recognizes these approaches as useful regarding interest organizations. Even though there are many similarities between interest organizations and other organizations, some distinctive differences are evident. One of these distinct differences is that the ambitions of interest organizations are centralized around shaping the political agenda and appeal to the public sector. Thus, the “market” to inhabit may be considered a competition of ideas, where the goals of the interest organizations are concerned with placing their idea on the political agenda. Considering this characteristic of interest organizations, Peters argues that a normative approach and rational choice perspective are relevant when understanding the behavior of institutions (Peters, 2019, pp. 182-183). This understanding of interest organizations is similar to the competition NFU and NFSU are part of in advancing their interests in the agricultural settlement. Moreover, relevant to this thesis which focuses on forming ideas and interests. Consequently, normative and rational institutionalism are the main institutional approaches of this thesis.

2.2.1 Normative Institutionalism

The term normative is connected to the emphasis on norms, and how norms and values may explain action and behavior. Normative institutionalism is related to the work of March and Olsen because of their centralization around norms (Peters, 2019, p. 24). In this approach are institutions understood as a collection of norms, values, rules, understandings, and routines rather than focusing on institutions as a formal structure (p. 35). This collection affects the behavior of members and the organization itself. Other institutional approaches view individuals as selfish actors who make choices based on maximizing personal benefit. Contradictory normative institutionalism concentrates on individuals behaving based on the shared values and norms established in the organization they are part of. Correspondingly, in this thesis are norms and values understood as normative systems which determine the goals and intentions of the individuals and how these goals are pursued (Scott, 2013, p. 64). Consequently, individuals are not separated actors who behave independently of other individuals. Instead, they are socialized in a complex and intertwined socialized environment where individuals interact with each other (p. 31).

A central concept in normative institutionalism is the *logic of appropriateness*; “if an institution is effective in influencing the behavior of its members, those members will think more about whether an action conforms to the norms of the organization than about what the consequences will be for themselves” (Peters, 2019, p. 35). In this manner, individuals make conscious choices based on if their behavior correlates with and strengthens the norms and values of the institutions rather than being concerned with the consequences of themselves as individuals. The logic of appropriateness is one way an institution may influence individuals. This logic defines what behavior is acceptable and not acceptable by the norms and values. Some institutions also utilize the logic of consequentiality, which may supplement the logic of appropriateness. With the logic of consequentiality, individuals may suffer consequences for their actions. An example is if an individual violates established norms, they may be suspended from certain areas (p. 44).

Core values and norms of an institution are necessary to interpret, and the individuals interpret what choices strengthen the norms and values on their own. Therefore, it might be essential to monitor and observe if the behavior and choices of the individuals strengthen or weaken the norms and values of an institution. Institution may reinforce evident values through the routines of the institution. These routines are part of an ordinary day and could include acts as meetings

every day or making sustainable choices. Even though routines and norms are vital to institutions, an openness to diversity is also vital to include. This ambiguity allows the members to be individuals while preserving the logic of appropriateness (Peters, 2019, p. 36).

Following and upholding the norms and values will unfold a specific culture in the institution (Scott & Davis, 2016, p. 260). In this sense, a culture occurs in the organization based on the collection of norms, values, rules, understandings, and routines. Regardless, even in institutions with a long history, solely one uniform behavior from the members is unlikely. One reason is that culture is perceived and understood differently by different identities (Peters, 2019, p. 37). Thus, different perceptions could indicate various cultures. The literature on organizational culture displays a similar pattern with identifying various cultures existing in an institution (p. 50).

Related to the paragraphs above, mechanisms where institutions influence the behavior of individuals are addressed. However, individuals influencing institutions is also a vital mechanism (Peters, 2019, p. 43). This mechanism strengthened or weakened the connection between institutions and individuals through the recruitment of individuals to institution. This is a slower process, changing slowly and gradually. But by steadily recruiting a specific type of actors and individuals over time, the institution is reproducing itself since the recruitment is strengthening the profile of norms and values (pp. 46-47). The norms and values will be recognized outside the organizations after some time. Thus, members are more likely to join if they agree with the anticipated norms and values of the institution. In this sense, the difference in behavior and culture between the members may become less inconsistent. Individuals becoming members already have an idea of what it signifies to be part of this institution. Thus, the norms and values of an institution are further strengthened (pp. 47-48).

Even though the normative perspective contributes to an understanding of the behavior of institutions, this perspective also has some limits. Firstly, human behavior is not elaborated on or explained in normative institutionalism. This perspective is mainly located at the macro-level, hence limiting the attention and inclusion of micro-level (Peters, 2019, p. 48). Hence, individual decision-making is not included as a crucial factor, the autonomy of the individuals in an institution is something that is not considered. Consequently, this limitation is insignificant to this thesis since the focus is not on the individual level. A second criticism is that the normative perspective is not falsifiable. As with the logic of appropriateness, it is

vaguely defined. Additionally, it is difficult to disprove since members acting according to their beliefs, which are established norms and values, can often be justified in some way (p. 49). To counterpart for these limitations is the rational choice approach included, hence the two perspectives can supplement each other. Both normative and rational characteristics are considered when understanding the behavior of institutions. Therefore, the research is more solid with utilizing two contradictory theoretical approaches. These concerns are discussed further in section 3.6. By including both approaches, this thesis hopes to achieve a more complete understanding of the facilitation of participation in NFU and NFSU. Thus, it is necessary to introduce the other perspective below.

2.2.2 Rational Choice Institutionalism

The rational choice approach in the institutional theory may function as a counterpart to normative institutionalism. While the normative perspective is concerned with how the behavior of an institution is based on norms and values, Scharpf (1997) argues that one cannot assume that all actors will follow the culture, norms, and values of an organization. This is reflected on the concept of policy which is defined as “intentional action by actors who are most interested in achieving specific outcomes” (p. 36). This implies that the behavior of actors in policy and politics is influenced by factors other than norms and values. Thus, rational choice is included in this thesis to recognize actor-centered institutionalism and that the goals and interests of individuals are not constant across actors or time. Actors respond differently to situations because of their individual preferences and perspectives and because the institutional setting shapes the actors present (p. 37). Therefore, both perspectives are considered vital in this thesis to understand the behavior of institutions.

Like the normative approach, the rational choice approach understands that political life mainly occurs within institutions. Thus, to uncover and comprehend political life, one needs to identify and understand the political institutions within this sphere (Peters, 2019, p. 53). Rational choice theory is comprised of several perspectives that focus on different aspects of institutions (p. 57). Due to limited space, this thesis will focus on the central similarities within the perspectives. The first step is to define institutions, which are defined variously by the different perspectives in the rational choice theory. However, one definition by Kiser and Ostrom (1982) is selected because of the connection to the research question. This thesis is

concerned with the facilitation of participation and how this process is structured, correspondingly this is how institutions in this thesis are defined;

Rules used by individuals for determining who and what are included in decision situations, how information is structured, what actions can be taken and in what sequence, and how individual actions will be aggregated into collective decisions. . .all of which exist in a language shared by some community of individuals rather than as physical parts of some external environment. (Peters, 2019, p. 67)

Accordingly, the understanding of institutions focuses on the behavior of members as influenced by rules, structure, and restrictions apparent in the institution. The collection of rules and restrictions restrains the behavior of the individuals. Individuals strive towards maximizing their utilities but are constrained by the laws and rules present in the institution (Peters, 2019, p. 54). This is connected to a central point in rational choice theory. The egocentric behavior is considered a central aspect of political behavior in institutions, and it is the task of the institution to restrict and control this behavior. Moreover, individuals still participate in institutions even though they are limited because members of institutions may achieve more together than alone (p. 55). In this sense, even though selfish actions influence the behavior of members, institutions may still emerge and function since the maximization of utilities is more beneficial within an institution (p. 24). In this manner, the behavior of individuals is restricted and formed when individuals become members of an institution, even if the membership is voluntary or forced (p. 55).

Since this thesis does not look at the individual level, the work of Fritz Scharpf on *composite actors* is incorporated. Scharpf stresses that in policy research, collective actors are the main attraction when researching political parties, labor unions, and international organizations. The research is less concerned with how individuals act on their own (Scharpf, 1997, p. 39). This is because when looking at interactions in policy research, it is nearly impossible to explain based solely on intentional actions by individuals. There would be too many distinctive choices and interactions to recognize, however many individuals have similar intentions. Thus, composite actors are introduced because individuals often act with the larger units they are part of (p. 12). These large units may therefore be analyzed as composite actors since “the notion of composite actors implies a capacity for intentional action at a level above the individuals involved” (p. 39). This is useful to this thesis since associations are categorized as collective actors. Scharpf

understands associations as an institution where “critical action resources are collectively held and choices are evaluated by reference to preferences defined at the level of the collective actor – and they may include a preference to influence and control behavior of members” (p. 56). This is connected to the cases NFU and NFSU, which are farmer associations. Similarly, associations are described by Scharpf as representing the preferences of members. In this sense, leaders of an association are directly and indirectly responsible to the members and the preferences of the institution. This represents a bottom-up approach in the associations (p. 56). This is a characteristic and approach similar to NFU and NFSU in the agricultural settlement, where they represent the interest of the farmers. Thus, the leaders are directly responsible to the members.

Several critiques of rational choice institutionalism exist, as the difficulty of falsifying. Secondly, there is a divide between the theoretical and practical understanding of institutions since how the approach describes institutions often differs from what the members recognize. This divide is a result of simplification, where the details of the reality of institutions are not considered (Peters, 2019, p. 79). This limitation will be recognized throughout the analysis, where the data may give more details than the theory. Further, this approach is included to display the importance of rules and structure in an institution, in addition to the normative perspective. Peters (2019, p. 79) states that the rational approach is useful when analyzing the individuals and the institutions they are connected to. Therefore, a rational approach is apparent in understanding participation and the analytical framework presented below.

2.3 Organizational Participation

As explained in the previous section, institutional characteristics form and influence the behavior of the institution and its members. Normative and rational features impact the behavior within and outside of the organization. The institutional forces are thus affecting how membership participation is facilitated. The facilitation of participation is the behavior of institutions this thesis is concerned with and tries to explain. Thus, while this thesis has a theoretical foundation in new institutionalism. The concept of participation is still essential to utilize a framework that can operationalize the behavior of the organizations in the process of forming ideas and interests. First, it is necessary to define participation and discover its theories and frameworks. Participation is a term understood and conceptualized in many ways. A fundamental way of understanding participation is to describe the concept as; “how people

interact with each other in an organizational context” (Heller et al., 1998, p. 6). While this definition indicates a basic and simple understanding of participation, it is broad and thus difficult to identify what is considered participation and what is not. Another definition will therefore be used in this thesis to identify what participation encompasses;

Participation is the totality of forms i.e. direct(personal) or indirect (through representatives or institutions) and of intensities, i.e. ranging from minimal to comprehensive, by which individuals, groups, collectives secure their interests or contribute to the choice process through self-determined choices among possible actions during the decision process (Heller et al., 1998, p. 42).

This definition is utilized because it highlights several aspects of participation essential to the understanding and use of the concept in this thesis. Clarity and agreement on the definition and scope of organizational participation are vital. Since even though participation is a central concept in the academic field, there are ambiguities and uncertainties about the concept. Some of these ambiguities concern whether participation is part of the organizational ownership or decision-making (Child, 2021, p. 119). Further, other academics discuss if participation is a group process where a group of members is involved in a process with some type of leadership. Or some view participation as a process where individual identities freely make their own decisions. A third ambiguity is that some academics only view participation in formal institutions while others focus more on informal activities between the members and the leadership. At last, some understand participation as a process, and others view participation as a result (Heller et al., 1998, p. 15).

Concerning the definition identified above and the cases, this thesis understands participation first as a decision-making process since this process is part of defining a democratic structure. On the other hand, ownership regards financial benefits the members receive (Child, 2021, p. 120). This research focuses on participation in creating a demand, which is considered a decision-making process. Participation is secondly understood as a process of groups rather than individuals. This research is concerned with the facilitation of the participation of members as a group. Not what individual freedom and intentions of the members (Heller et al., 1998, p. 17). Moreover, participation is understood as a part of formal institutions considering the cases selected are also identified as formal institutions. However, informal and formal participation is difficult to separate since they are often intertwined. Hence, both are likely central when

viewing the facilitation of participation. Still, the facilitation of participation is the center of this thesis, and thus the understanding of participation is centered around the formal structures that the leadership construct. At last, participation is viewed as a process and not a result (p. 16). This is because the thesis is concerned with how participation is facilitated and the reason why. It is not about the result, neither in the demand of NFU and NFSU nor in the agricultural settlement.

Another uncertainty and ambiguity, as stated in the definition of participation, are relates to the different levels of participation. There are more degrees than either non or full participation, and the levels of participation indicate how fully the participation is. A minimum of participation is the access to information and the process. The second step encompasses involvement, and the next step is if the process leads to an agreement. The last step is autonomy and self-determination (Heller et al., 1998, p. 6). While some believe that participation should be as close to the final step as possible because it is most beneficial, there are some potential opposing sides to a high level of participation. This is especially interesting when looking at the effect participation has on the capacity of the organization. Since all organizations exist with the reality of scarcity, which thus also applies to participation. A difference is that while participation may consume energy by limiting the time and capacity of the members, participation also fosters energy by motivating members. Participants may partially explain how much energy is limited or heightened. Some participants are of more significant benefit, like members with specific experiences or training which may be helpful to the organization (p. 70).

2.3.1 Analytical Framework Participation; Level, Form, Range, and Degree

There exist various perspectives connected to participation in organizational decision-making. Since this thesis research how participation is facilitated in NFU and NFSU, it is necessary with to operationalize to measure the participation. This analytic framework displays the choices and structures selected in facilitating participation. Thus, this framework is connected to a rational rather than a normative approach, considering the focus is on formal structure and laws, not norms and values. The reason for choosing a rational analytic framework is that “This approach tends to provide a lucid analytic connection between individuals and their institutions through the capacity of institutions to shape the preferences of individuals and to manipulate the incentives available to members of the organization” (Peters, 2019, p. 79). This is connected to

the fact that formal structures are more easily observable and measurable than informal rules and structures. Therefore, a rational analytical framework of participation is utilized to illustrate facilitation in forming ideas and interests.

A framework focusing on the structure and laws would still need to include several elements to capture the multi-dimensionality of participation. A framework that consists of this is Bernstein (1976), who identified three dimensions; degree of control, the issues, and at which level (Child, 2021, p. 120). One more dimension was identified by Marchington and Wilkinson and added to the original three dimensions by Bernstein. Therefore, when understanding organizational participation, these four dimensions are utilized. These dimensions are *level*, *form*, *range*, and *degree* (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2005, p. 400).

The first dimension is *level*, which encompasses where participation takes place in the organization. This could be in a local chapter, the central office, or a specific department. *Form* is the form that participation takes. This can be indirect, where representatives are chosen to represent the members or direct with individuals representing themselves (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2005, p. 400). The third *range* depends on the scope of the seriousness of the issue. The issue can be trivial and thus concerning what kind of pens to use or something more significant as strategies for developing the organization (Wilkinson et al., 2010, p. 8).

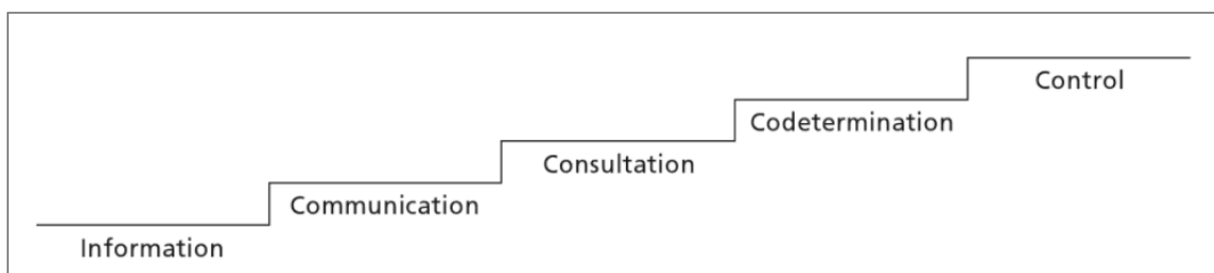


Figure 1 Escalator of Participation (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2005, p. 401)

Degree encapsulates to what extent or degree a member of an organization may affect the decisions made. These could include everything from being informed about the situation to being the ones making the decision (Wilkinson et al., 2010, p. 8). This is easily demonstrated in the *escalator of participation*, which displays that several steps are included in the degree of participation and not a straight move from non-participation to complete control. These steps include information, communication, consultation, codetermination, and control (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2005, pp. 400-401). While these dimensions may spread in different

combinations and directions, the complexity is reduced since some dimensions are likely to correlate. An example is that a higher range of issues is connected to the organizational level. Since more severe dilemmas are often discussed higher up in the organizational structure (Child, 2021, p. 121).

2.4 Theoretical Expectations

This section will view the theoretical expectations and assumptions of the findings and analysis. Thus, the assumptions made will also be a way to connect theory to the findings to display how the theories and concepts may interpret the selected cases. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, both NFU and NFSU were established on the foundation of representing the farmers in Norway. Moreover, the organizations currently play a vital role in supporting and representing the interests of the farmer and agricultural industry in the agricultural settlement. There are also differences between the NFU and NFSU, like the political orientation. Historically, NFU has been associated with bigger farms and NFSU centralized around smallholders, although this divide is currently less visible than it traditionally has been. The second difference is a willingness to negotiate and compromise since NFSU has breached the agricultural settlement more than NFU. The third difference is the capacity and resources of the organizations (Gravdahl, 1998, p. 7). This is recognized in that NFU is a larger organization and has more resources and a greater bureaucratic structure. The information about NFU and NFSU presented here will be the basis of the assumptions addressed. Further, this thesis identifies new institutionalism as a relatable approach in understanding the behavior of organizations, through focusing on normative and rational choice theory. This thesis expects the institutional characteristics of the organizations to reflect the facilitation of participation. The section on theoretical expectations will thus look at normative institutionalism and rational choice theory to discuss how these may affect the behavior of the cases as the facilitation of participation and advancing interests.

2.4.1 Normative Institutionalism – Democratic Responsibility and Negotiations

Normative institutionalism understands the behavior of an organization as an issue of norms, values, and culture apparent in the institution. As formerly addressed in this chapter are norms and values understood as designing the goals of individuals and how to pursue them. It is about the logic of appropriateness and if the behavior confirms with the norms and values of an organization. Moreover, the norms and values establish a culture that is strengthened over time

through members confirming with the culture and recruiting new members, thus reproducing the established culture. Therefore, likely that the norms and values continue to play an important role. In this sense, an expectation is that the characteristics of NFU and NFSU throughout history are still present and vital now.

NFU and NFSU are part of the agricultural settlement each year, where their role is to represent the interest of the agriculture. Hence, one of the core values of both organizations is democratic responsibility. Both organizations consider themselves democratic organizations with an essential societal role. With organizations built on this democratic principle, I would thus expect to observe norms and a culture established with democratic aspirations. This could manifest in the data through visible democratic structures such as voting and allowing actors to participate and speak. Regarding forming ideas and interests, I assume ideas and interests from the agricultural field is central to the participation process. This is connected to their democratic responsibility to representing the agriculture. The origin of the organizations is rooted on this and followed them throughout history. I assume that collecting ideas and interests from different agricultural actors is still apparent today and a central characteristic of NFU and NFSU.

Another normative characteristic visible from the beginning is *compromise* in NFU and *principled* in NFSU. As discussed, this is visible in the agricultural settlements where NFU has been part of an agreement in the settlement several times more than NFSU. These differences have been apparent since the beginning of the organization, which would indicate that it also influenced the norms and values that are still apparent. This could manifest in the empirical findings as topics and tasks in NFU are more centralized around making compromises and negotiating, and in NFSU the significant of their political believes are more important.

Regardless of what the findings may display, I expect to encounter similar responses related to the participation process in the data gathered. With the logic of appropriateness, the members of an organization do conform to the established norms and values. Thus, this logic would likely influence the interviewees to respond similarly about the organizations. This is especially evident since the most of interviewees have been part of their organization for an extended period and thus know the norms and values prominent.

2.4.2 Rational Institutionalism – Structure and Laws

The rational choice approach is concerned with how the rules and structure of an institution restrict the behavior of actors. As with the definitions of institutions presented, this thesis views the rational characteristics as the rules and structure which define who and what is part of the participation. It is understood as the mechanisms around the members which restricts them. While the rules and structure of NFU and NFSU are addressed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5, some assumptions will be discussed here. Similar to the norms and values discussed above, this thesis assumes the rules and structure of the organizations to be of democratic structure where inputs from the members are collected. Thus, structure and laws guiding actors to give their inputs rather than a structure limiting the opportunity to voice opinions. As with the understanding of composite actors, this thesis does also assume that the individuals have some collective perspectives and preferences. Moreover, that the leaders are responsible for the members and preferences of the institution. The member of both NFU and NFSU are connected to farming and the agricultural industry in some way, either by their livelihood or personal interests. Collective preferences would be concerned about achieving as great conditions as possible since the majority are working towards the same issues. Incentives are assumed to be concentrated on creating conversations and discussions. This would include a participation structure and general organizational structure where ideas and interests would be included and processed from the bottom and up rather than the top down. Since the interests of farmers are of interest, I assume that the democratic structure would include collecting inputs from members rather than a small group of representatives deciding everything by themselves.

Another assumption is that the capacities and resources of the organizations would influence the structure and rules. NFU is a bigger organization indicating that they have more resources and more members. Therefore, a structure in NFU would likely include more actors. I believe that the processes within the organization would be briefer and more manageable than extensive and comprehensive. Moreover, an assumption is that the structure displays characteristics of indirect representation. Since with many inputs and actors, not all participants may participate directly, rather a need for representatives and summaries. On the other hand, NFSU has more resources, which is probably visible in the rules and structure of the organization. This could manifest in financial and administrative initiatives. NFSU is a smaller organization with fewer resources and capacities but also a smaller number of members. The structure and rules of NFSU may therefore incorporate more of the inputs in depth since it is fewer inputs to process. It would also less likely need the same number of indirect representatives and more possibilities

for the members to act directly. Moreover, this thesis assumes the structure to be influenced by the capacities of the organization. This may manifest in initiatives concerned with financial and administrative limitations.

2.4.3 Facilitation of Participation

Regarding the facilitation of participation, the dimensions are utilized to measure. The assumption is that participation facilitation is connected to the normative and rational characteristics of NFU and NFSU. Because normative and rational approaches explain the behavior of institutions through the importance of norms or rules. Thus, the characteristics are included in this section to explain participation facilitation. The first characteristic is democratic responsibility, a vital norm in the organizations and likely established in the structure and rules. Hence, how the participation is facilitated would be characterized by democratic features. This will likely be visible at the dimension *level* with the participation occurring at the local level to involve the members. Moreover, the framework will probably illustrate two organizations that display democratic structures with high involvement of members and other actors. Hence, I assume that the *degree* of participation would be high on the escalator of participation. This would likely indicate high participation in other dimensions since the dimensions in the framework are connected. A high amount of one dimension often displays a high amount of another.

Another characteristic is the number of members in NFU and NFSU. I assume that the *form* of participation in NFU is to a greater degree more indirect than NFSU which would be more direct. I believe both processes focus on direct participation, but more visible in NFSU than NFU. The last characteristic of NFU and NFSU is concerned with compromises and principles. I assume that this also influences the facilitation of participation. The seriousness of decisions will probably impact the *range* of participation. This thesis assumes that the range is primarily severe since NFU and NFSU have a democratic responsibility, therefore the participation would concern the agricultural settlement. Moreover, I assume that the issues and topics debated in NFU are more concerned with the negotiations and begin open to making compromises. NFSU is more concerned with their own political agenda and thus would likely be visible in the topic and issues debated in NFSU.

2.4.4 Advancing Interests Based on Values?

This thesis understands values to be of importance to the behavior of an organization, which includes advancing interests. Thus, this thesis believes that the values vital to an organization are to a large extent essential to the interests advanced. Democratic responsibility is a value evident in both organizations, which will influence the advancement of interests, but not differently. However, values that differ between NFU and NFSU are; compromise and principled. Compromises in NFU indicate that the organization is concerned with the negotiations and how to make an agreement. NFSU is concerned with their own political agenda, which suggest that they are less likely to make compromises, and instead promote their core beliefs. I assume that these differences are noticeable in the interests advanced to a large extent. Because the values identified in the assumption display similar patterns as the results of agricultural settlement, where NFU agrees more and NFSU breaches more.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section will present the methodology of this research. This includes addressing the selection of case study design with NFU and NFSU as cases and the selection of qualitative research design with interviews and document analysis. Further, this section will present and explain the research design choices.

3.1 Qualitative Approach

Qualitative methods will be utilized as the chosen method in this master thesis. This research tries to explain and understand the process of membership participation in the institutions NFU and NFSU. Qualitative methods are utilized to understand and explain how and why political institutions or processes came to be, particularly when these observations are observed by actors of the institution or process (Vromen, 2018, p. 237). Thus, a qualitative approach will be necessary to understand membership participation through the actors of NFU and NFSU. Moreover, thick descriptions of this process and how the actors involved understand and reflect on the process are essential. Since participation may be understood differently by different people, it is necessary with qualitative methods to help understand these subjective understandings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 250).

Concerning the characteristics of qualitative methods, this research is a multiple-case study with two selected cases. The goal is to thoroughly analyze and reflect on the cases rather than make generalizations (Vromen, 2018, p. 243). This is achieved through semi-structured interviews and data analysis. Additional to case studies being a central part of the qualitative methods, there are several reasons for choosing this case design. Several of these reasons will be identified further in the next section.

3.2 Case Study Approach and Implications

The goal is to understand the facilitation of membership participation and consider the context of the agricultural settlement. To execute this, it was necessary with a case design that allowed an in-depth understanding of the cases while recognizing the context the cases exist in (Yin, 2018, p. 15). Moreover, a multiple case study is utilized in this thesis, with the selected cases NFU and NFSU. Case study is a demanding challenge, which one may not choose lightly. Thus, it is essential in this research to be explicit about the choices and the reasons behind the case design. Two central distinctions in case study design are whether it is a single or multiple-case

study and if there are embedded units of analysis (p. 47). This case design will conduct a holistic multiple-case study. As stated by Yin, multiple-case studies are always preferable to a single-case study if the researcher has the time and resources. In this regard, the case study is less vulnerable than solely looking at NFU or NFSU. Additionally, a multiple-case study has a more significant analytical benefit (p. 61). Moreover, embedded subunits are separate from the case design since quantitative data from each case is not included in this study (p. 62).

NFU and NFSU are selected based on their characteristics and likeness as interest organizations. In this sense, the cases are chosen because the research predicts contrasting results between NFU and NFSU. While indicating similar results display a literal replication, contradicting results, on the other hand, may show a theoretical replication (Yin, 2018, p. 61). Yin states that if a multiple-case design is selected, it should be based on replication. Thus, it is fundamental to be careful about the selection of cases. This is essential since the research should reflect a theoretical viewpoint (p. 55). In this research, new institutionalism is used as the theoretical viewpoint to understand the two cases, which have been presented in chapter two.

3.2.1 Case Selection

The selection of NFU and NFSU as cases was not a random choice but a carefully selected decision. Since selecting these cases was an intentional choice, the strategy for choosing these cases is an information-oriented selection rather than a random selection (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 230). NFU and NFSU are interesting cases since they are not typical options for understanding membership participation. They are highly politically active organizations that work towards what they believe is the ideal agricultural industry of Norway. While they are interest organizations, they also function as unions. Moreover, NFU and NFSU are in a rare position since they negotiate the economic terms of the agricultural industry with the state every year through the agricultural settlement. This kind of negotiation is unique to the rest of the world, with this type of deal with the government established in laws (NFU, 2020a, p. 15). All these factors reflect that member participation in NFU and NFSU is a unique case, and the result may be interesting and different.

The selection strategy can also be identified as an interpretative case study strategy because the interest in the cases is essential. Moreover, the goal is not to formulate a general theory but rather utilize the theoretical viewpoint to put light on the understanding of the case (Lijphart, 1971, p. 692). While other interest organizations in Norway could be selected as cases of membership participation, these cases were chosen because of their democratic role in society. First, NFU and NFSU are viewed as democratic organizations with well-established democratic structures. Both organizations are proud of their democratic structures and their members participation. This is displayed through the agricultural settlement where NFU and NFSU represent the interest of their members. The cases may thus be understood through the theory of new institutionalism rather than generating a new theory as with the interpretative selection.

While the theoretical relevance is founded on new institutionalism, the social relevance is still relevant. The agricultural settlement of 2023 made history when NFU and NFSU could not agree on a common demand (Ekornholmen, 2023). This incident displayed that understanding the organization, their participation process, behavior as organizations, and forming ideas and interests are still relevant. Thus, necessary to research these cases to understand why the breach happened from the perspective of NFU and NFSU.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Documents

Documents were essential to establish a foundation of background information about NFU and NFSU, the agricultural settlement, and the participation process. These documents are identified as documents from NFU and NFSU related to the organizational structure and the membership participation process. Consequently, the documents included were the laws and regulations of the organization, annual reports, schooling booklet, and questionnaires. These documents were found mainly on the webpage of the organizations. A limitation that affected the data collection was that some documents were difficult to find or unavailable. This is also a standard limitation in the use of documents in data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 188). I retrieved the documents through the organizations' and other web pages, and some documents were sent by mail. Still, there is a possibility that some documents were not retrieved since they were only available to the organizations.

In total, 25 documents were gathered, all listed in Table 1 in the appendix. The documents mainly contributed with information about concrete topics and questions of the schooling and how it was presented to the members. Connected to Yin (2018, p. 114), an advantage of documents is stability since one can analyze them repeatedly and unobtrusive since the documents are not a product of the case study. This advantage is why documents are included in this research, particularly when the research is concerning several years. By utilizing documents, I may analyze detailed differences between the schooling of 2020 and 2023 since the people do not remember these details. Moreover, it was essential to analyze the documents before the interviews to understand the context of the questions. When reflecting on the documents in advance, it was possible to ask questions directly about why specific choices were made (p. 115). An example is the distinct differences in the questionnaires, which will be further discussed in chapters 5 and 6. Thus, the documents contributed the necessary information to include specific interview questions.

3.3.2 Interviews

Even though, documents are essential when reviewing the organizations, the data should not stand alone but rather compensate for other sources (Yin, 2018, p. 115). Thus, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted additionally to expand on the information gathered from the documents. Interviews are one of the most central pieces of evidence in case studies, and they are particularly significant when explaining events and reflecting on the perspectives of the participants (p. 118). Similarly, interviews are the main information source in the findings and analysis. Since the interviewees contribute with information about their perspectives and observation on the facilitation of membership participation. The interviewees were selected specifically because of their role in the participation process. It was necessary with actors covering different parts of the process and sections of the organization. Therefore, the interviewees consist of several groups with various tasks in the participation process. The idea was to interview the same roles in the two different organizations. Since some of the selected interviewees were unavailable, some roles differed between NFU and NFSU. The positions of the interviewees may be found and presented in Table 2 in the appendix. One extra interview with NFSU was necessary because of less information on their webpage and some areas not covered in the former interviews. The interviewees were approached through contact information accessed either through the organization's web page or with assistance from the secretary of NFU and NFSU.

The questions were mainly from the same interview guide, with some alterations depending on the interviewee and the information I retrieved beforehand. The interview guide may be found in the appendix. The interviews were semi-structured. I wanted the interviews to remain open-ended, suggesting the interviewees could speak about their concerns and not be guided. Still, there was a need for some structure and established questions since the interviews mainly lasted 45-60 minutes, and it was vital to ensure that some themes and questions were covered (Yin, 2018, p. 119). The themes considered the different segments of the participation process and the reason why these segments were included and structured in this specific matter. Asking about the reasons behind the behavior of the organization was included to recognize the operationalization of normative characteristics. Information about the structure of the organization and participation process was included to recognize the rational characteristics. The operationalization of the concepts is moreover addressed in the section below.

Three interviews were conducted in real life, and the others through Zoom and Teams. While interviewing face to face is desirable, many interviews were executed on a computer due to the physical distance, and some interviewees preferred online since it was more effective timewise. Before the interviews, the interviewees were sent an information letter and had to give verbal or written permission before the interview started. The information letter may be found in the appendix, and it follows the ethical guidelines from Sikt (Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research). Further, all interviews were recorded and transcribed. Even though the master's thesis is written in English, the interviews were conducted in Norwegian since it was the desired language of the interviewees. Hence, the interviewees were sent a citation check with their quotes both in Norwegian and English to allow them to correct mistakes or disaffection with the transcription and translation. This was to counterbalance the imperfectness that may take place when translating some of the quotes.

3.4 Operationalization

Institutions and participation are the concepts introduced in the theory chapter where they are theoretically defined. Still, it is vital to operationalize the concepts to be able to measure and observe them in the empirical data (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2018, p. 105). In understanding institutions and their behavior, normative and rational choice approaches are utilized. The normative approach identifies institutions as a collection of norms, values, rules, understandings, and routines rather than focusing on institutions as a formal structure (Peters,

2019, p. 35). Thus, when measuring institutions and their characteristics, their normative elements are vital. The normative elements are developed and strengthened through time and members. Further, norms and values are shared by the organization and are part of creating the culture of the organization. Hence, normative elements are recognized in the data as the elements shared by the members of the organization. It is the elements that describe the characteristics of the organization and explains the behavior. An example is that the behavior is explained by democratic principles or efficiency.

The rational choice approach understands institution as the rules and structures of an organization that guides and restrict the members. These are more easily observable and measurable since the rules and structure is established in the formal structure of the organization. Moreover, these formal structures will be recognized in how they are restricting the member participation. This could be recognized in laws determining who may participate in decision-making or rules about what information is distributed.

Participation is also identified with rational elements since these are more easily measurable, and thus effective for analytical purposes (Peters, 2019, p. 79). Moreover, the concept is identified through the dimensions *level*, *form*, *range*, and *degree*. Level is where the participation takes place, thus recognized as which parts of the organization is involved in the participation process. The levels could be local chapters, the board, or external actors who are included. The second dimension is form and display if the participation is direct or indirect. Thus, recognized in the data as if the members themselves are part of the participation or through representatives. The next dimension is range, which addresses the seriousness of issues. Seriousness is understood as related to how significant the topics are to the members, especially concerning the agricultural settlement. The last dimension is degree which is defined through the escalator of participation. This dimension is thus measured on a scale from information to control.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process where one is “segmenting and taking apart the data as well as putting it back together” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 190-192). This process started with documents to establish what segments were part of facilitating membership participation. These segments influence the structure and construction of the questions asked in the interviews.

These segments included *preparation, schooling, external actors, and demand*. These categories were also central to collecting information from the interviews. By first structuring the information through the participation segments, I could attain an overview of the whole process and the components of the different segments. In this sense, the segments were utilized in the first round of data analysis and are used in the layout of the chapter 5 Empirical Findings. These segments and layout present the reader with the same overview of the participation facilitated and design of this process. After establishing these segments, it was necessary to look at the findings again to analyze them through concepts relevant to the research questions.

When conducting the analysis, it was essential to winnow the data since not all information from the data is useful in an analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 192). The general strategy utilized in the data analysis was to focus on specific concepts and categories based on the theoretical framework presented in the theory chapter. The theoretical concepts are the foundation of the research questions and thus shape the thesis. Therefore it would be beneficial to analyze the data through the same lens (Yin, 2018, p. 168). In this sense, the analytic technic utilized is pattern matching. Indicating a comparison between the patterns based on the empirical data and patterns established before the data collection (p. 175). An inductive and deductive process thus formed the patterns established since the theoretical and empirical evidence was considered. The coding nodes were established to create patterns based on institutionalism, and the nodes included were thus *Normative* and *Rational Characteristics*. These are related to the first research sub-question about the characteristics of the organizations. How they were identified in the data was through the operationalization of the concepts, which is discussed in section 3.4 Operationalization. Additionally, it was necessary to include *Political Orientation* and *Resources* as coding nodes to cover all organizational features apparent. Other nodes were based on the second research sub-question and theoretical concept of participation. The nodes included were based on the different dimensions of participation, *level, form, range, and degree*. These were the coding nodes included in the analysis and are also apparent in structuring the second section of the analysis.

The coded nodes were applied and analyzed in NVivo. In several incidents, a quote or information did not fit solely to one specific node, thus necessary to add it to several nodes. This was especially true for the dimensions of participation, level, form, range, and degree. As the theory chapter addresses, the dimensions are connected and influence each other. This, difficulties separating a segment or statement into one node where noticeable in theory and

practice. Since findings about one dimension probably had an influence and explanation for another dimension. To counterbalance, statements were added in several nodes. An example is a statement that there is little distance between the top and bottom of the organization would be coded as degree and form.

3.6 Ethics

Ethical considerations were considered before the study began, during the data collection, and when analyzing the data. There is a need to anticipate ethical issues that may arise, and thus is necessary with a thorough thought process about what to expect (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 88-89). Connected to this was a form sent to Sikt, to elaborate on the ethical considerations in my research. The proposal considered the codes of ethics and was therefore approved by Sikt. It was essential to consider the possibility of identifying the interviewees even though they were anonymized, particularly NFSU which is a small organization. Hence, it was vital to mention that there would be a possibility to be recognized, which all the interviewees comprehend before the interview.

Another ethical issue is identifying a beneficial research problem; “it is important to identify a problem that will benefit individuals being studied” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 92). Since I was reaching democratic structures in organizations, developing a research problem that would not be perceived as intimidating or offensive was essential. The research was not meant to be an attack on the organizations or harmful in any way. Rather an opportunity for the organization to display and talk about the democratic systems they are proud of and something other organizations or individuals could learn from. Thus, in selecting a less intimidating research questions, the organization would rather be helpful than restricting. During data collection, there are several ethical issues to consider; respect the site, avoid deceiving participants, prevent exploitation of participants, and avoiding collecting harmful information (p. 94). These concerns are not as visible in this research since the topics discussed are topics the interviewees are familiarized with and used to discussing with other actors. The interviews were conducted either at their office or online. Thus, I would claim that the research created minimal harm to the participants.

Bias is an ethical issue affecting the whole research process, especially when analyzing the findings (Yin, 2018, p. 86). One essential bias is that I know NFSU beforehand from voluntary work. This indicates that I already had established ideas of what kind of organization NFSU were. Therefore, it was important that I recognized my biases and ensured that the analysis was based on the data, not on my already established beliefs.

3.7 Reliability, Validity, and Limitations

“Unless you can convince your audience(s) that the procedures you used did ensure that your methods were reliable and that your conclusions were valid, there is little point in aiming to conclude a research study” (Silverman, 2001, p. 254). Good quality research is essential and achieved through logical reasoning. Thus, these logics may be criticized and evaluated through certain logical tests. Four of these tests have been commonly utilized to assess the quality of the research design to notice its strengths and weaknesses. These tests are construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability (Yin, 2018, p. 42).

3.7.1 Construct Validity

Construct validity is identified as “identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being studied” (Yin, 2018, p. 42). This is similar to Adcock and Collier (2001) concept of measurement validity. Both are concerned with “whether operationalization and the scoring of cases adequately reflect the concept the researcher seeks to measure” (p. 529). Correct operational measures are essential to ensure that the research is measuring what it is supposed to measure. Two concepts are central to this thesis: institutions and participation. These concepts are incorporated into the research questions to increase construct validity. The second step is to define the concepts and establish operational measures compatible with the concepts (Yin, 2018, p. 44). Institutions and their behavior are understood through the normative and rational choice perspectives. This indicates that the reasons for behavior could be explained through the norms, values, and rules apparent in the institution. While rules are more easily measurable, especially official regulations and laws since they are written documents. On the other hand, norms and values are not as easily measurable and may differ in how the interviewees understand them. To counterbalance this difficulty in identifying norms and values, history and routines are important in this thesis in determining the aspects evident throughout time.

The concept of participation is operationalized and measured by the framework presented in section 2.3.1. Here are four dimensions identified to measure the level of participation. While this understanding of participation does not measure how the participants experience participation, this is not the focus of this research. This research views the structure and facilitation of participation at the meso-level. Thus, this framework measures what it is supposed to measure. In the analysis, I perceived the dimensions as adequate to measure the information from the interviewees and documents. As formerly discussed in this chapter, the dimension issues rather overlap than not covering the findings.

3.7.2 Internal Validity

The second quality test is internal validity, which displays if and how specific conditions can lead to other conditions (Yin, 2018, p. 42). Since the research is looking at how NFU and NFSU facilitate participation, the explanation of why x led to y is outside the focus of the thesis. Still, it is necessary to look at internal validity to understand the interferences made and how this affects the research. In the instance of this research, this involves the explanation that the behavior of an institution is influenced by their norms, culture, and rules. The strategies to ensure internal validity include data triangulation and using multiple sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 208). Thus, by including several documents and interviews, this research can have confidence that the observations are based on several perspectives.

Eight interviews were conducted for this thesis, and 25 documents were gathered. Triangulation of data is considered by using both interviews and documents. The triangulation is further strengthened because different actors are interviewed, and various documents are collected. Regarding the interviews, it was essential to interview actors from different parts of the organization. This includes individuals connected to the secretary, board, and supervisory council as county leaders and market regulators. In this sense, I would have more confidence that the inferences made were not based on a view from a specific part of the organization but rather a shared understanding. The documents are also a wide variety of types. This includes laws and rules, schooling booklet, political, economic platforms, etc. With such a wide variety of interviewees and documents, the research addresses different perspectives and alternative explanations. According to Kleven (2008, p. 227), the heart and essence of internal validation are “evaluating the likelihood of, and if possible ruling out, alternative causal interpretations”. This is compensated by including the tactics discussed above.

3.7.3 External Validity

External validity is the third test and displays whether a case study may be generalized beyond the specific research (Yin, 2018, p. 42). Thus, this research may connect participation facilitation in the agricultural setting to a wider context or other contexts (Kleven, 2008, p. 223). While generalization may be executed through individuals, situations or contexts, and time, it may also be generalized using theory and theoretical concepts (Yin, 2018, p. 38). By looking at NFU and NFSU and their facilitation through the theoretical lens, the research can give insights into other research using the institutional lens to understand organizational behavior. There is little research on the facilitation of participation within NFU and NFSU. Therefore, this research could be generalizable to further research in the future about the same topic.

3.7.4 Reliability

Validity discussed above is “based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants, or the readers of an account” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.199). Contradictory, reliability is centralized around if “the operations of a study – such as its data collection producers – can be repeated, with the same results” (Yin, 2018, p. 42). Easily described as; if another researcher were to conduct the same research, would they arrive at the same findings and conclusion? To achieve this, it is necessary to minimize the errors and biases in the study (p. 42). A detailed methodology chapter and interview guide are included to make the research process as explicit as possible. While every detail is not included in the methodology chapter, I believe sufficient information is included to repeat the research similarly.

The interview guide is included to be transparent about the interviewing process. It should be stated that some questions differed in each interview. The interviews were semi-structured and thus had some room for improvisation. Additionally, I changed some of the questions throughout the interview process when I noticed questions were misunderstood or not beneficial. This may weaken the reliability since another researcher would not know exactly what questions were asked. Moreover, this thesis has been transparent about the understandings and operationalizations of the theory and concepts utilized. The transparency of the analysis was addressed by presenting information about the coding nodes. These tactics increase the reliability and thus the chance of another person repeating the research and analysis with the same conclusions.

3.7.5 Limitations

Even though this thesis has made several measures to increase the validity and reliability of this research, there are still some limitations to the research. Every study has some limitations, and it is essential to acknowledge them. Therefore, these will be addressed and recognized in this section. This thesis looks at how NFU and NFSU facilitate membership participation. All sources of evidence are collected from documents written by the organization or interviews with individuals who either work or have worked in the organization. How the participation process is perceived and presented is with a subjective opinion. This is reflected in the interviews where views about membership participation were similar and mainly positive. First, this could indicate that the actors involved have similar opinions and experiences about what constitutes participation, how participation unfolds in the organization, and why participation is formed in the manner it is. Secondly, it could indicate that the actors involved are often biased since they either believe their participation process is greater than it is or presents the participation in the best manner. It would be easier to brag about their accomplishment than conceal their faults.

Moreover, these subjective and biased opinions could be influenced by being asked about processes that took place several years ago. The human memory is imperfect, and thus impossible to remember all the details that occurred from 2020 to 2023. This was apparent in most interviews referencing agricultural settlement and participation processes many years ago. This made me assume that when asked about the participation process, the responses were based on a general understanding of the process throughout the years. This is supported by the fact that most of the processes in NFU and NFSU have stayed the same in the last years. Thus, documents were essential to uncover what questions and information were distributed in the organizations. Details that would be impossible for a person to remember. Another aspect that would be difficult to remember is all the factors involved in the participation process. This is strengthened by the fact that much participation is not observable or recorded. Hence, this research probably lacks information about the participation process, especially with informal participation which is not established in formal documents. This could be connected to the communication taking place, as with discussion within and between the different levels and what topics and questions were discussed. These types of conversations might display that the distance between the top and bottom of the organization is different from what is covered in the documents. The limitation of informal participation is addressed by mainly focusing on formal participation. This is further connected to looking at how NFU and NFSU facilitate

participation. The research question is regarding what facilitation measures are taken at the meso-level, which are mainly formal.

The last limitation is that many interviewees answered their questions regarding specific political issues rather than the overall trends and characteristics. When asked about the central values of the organization, many started to speak about a particular issue regarding more financial support to cattle or sheep. It might have been an issue that interests and values are concepts which is challenging to understand, thus these could be reformulated or asked differently. Still, I observed that some responses were similar to how one would answer a journalist or in a political debate. The topics concerned the issues the organizations wanted to achieve in the agricultural settlement rather than an organizational view on how and why the facilitation of participation took place.

4 CONTEXT

This section is included to introduce the two cases selected and the agricultural settlement, to address the context of this thesis. The context chapter first introduces the historical context of NFU, NFSU, and agricultural settlement. Further, the agricultural settlement is presented, with a focus on the years from 2020 to 2023, to recognize the differences between the years this thesis concentrates on. Then look at what NFU and NFSU ad their organizational structure.

4.1 History of the Farmer Organizations and the Agricultural Settlement

Ever since agricultural production started, there has always been a form of collaboration between farmers. Initially, it concerned helping neighbors with heavy lifting or support if sickness occurred. The agriculture industry and society evolved, and thus cooperation between farmers also grew. The solidarity between farmers became considerably intricate in Norway, and a system where this solidarity could flourish was necessary. Correspondingly, NFU was established in 1896 as a tool for the farmers, with rules that regulated actions and behavior. Throughout time, the foundation of the philosophy has remained the same; try to solve issues regarding what is commonly best (Dalberg et al., 1983, p. 8). However, not all farmers in Norway agreed upon what interests would support the common good. In the book *Den Norske Småbrukaren 1913-1988*, Feiring et al. (1988, pp. 32-33) state that the divide between the interest of big and small farms was at the center when founding NFSU. However, the founders did not intend to start a conflict with NFU. The organization was established since the interests of large and small farms were too distinct, and two organizations were thus needed. At this moment, NFU was dismissive of this belief and did not recognize NFSU as a farmer organization.

The two organizations' differences in interests and perspectives were further manifested in the agricultural settlement, founded in the basic agricultural agreement in 1950. The agreement was rooted in the necessity of determining specific prices and regulations. Before the agreement, the discussion included market organizations that negotiated with the government. Later, NFU and NFSU were invited to join the negotiations, and in 1945 were the farmer organizations requested to make a proposition of prices the following year. NFU and NFSU later agreed that there was a need for a long-term arrangement regarding decisions affecting the agricultural industry. This deal was approved in 1950 by all parts involved and became what is known as the agricultural settlement (Gravdahl, 1998, p. 5).

Since the establishment of NFSU in 1913, there has always been a divide between NFU and NFSU. Moreover, this divide has been observable in the agricultural settlement. NFU believed they were the first organization supporting all farmers in Norway, and all the people living in the districts (Feiring et al., 1988, p. 251). Otherwise, NFSU believed there was a necessity for a new organization that focused on the interest of the small-scale farmer since these interests were too different from large-scale farmers (p. 33). The relationship between NFU and NFSU has often been conflict-oriented, even though the intensity of it has varied throughout history. While the relationship was relatively good in the 1960s and 70s, this changed in the early 1980s with a shift in NFSU (Gravdahl, 1998, p. 8). Consequently, changes were made to the basic agricultural agreement. Initially, NFU and NFSU were obligated to work as one part. Suggesting that the negotiations would reach a breach if the organizations could not agree. This was problematic since, as stated, NFU and NFSU had different interests and prioritizations. This led to two breaches in 1982 and 1983 because NFU and NFSU could not agree on a common demand representing the agricultural field. Thus, NFU, NFSU, and the state changed the basic agreement in 1984. These changes included that NFU and NFSU were not required to act as one part. The government could settle with only one of the organizations if necessary (pp. 10-11).

This change may have been connected to an observed shift in NFSU, which implied a more principled organization that made fewer compromises and willing to act. These changes worsened the relationship between NFU and NFSU. NFU, the older sibling, was more pragmatic and willing to negotiate with the state than NFSU. This led to NFSU accusing NFU of being too coinciding with the state. NFU accused NFSU of exploiting the agricultural settlement to push through with their preferences and then breach to criticize the settlement freely afterwards (Gravdahl, 1998, p. 8). Other historical differences are embedded in their political standpoint. The origin of NFU is connected to the Farmers' Party, a political party in Norway currently known as the Center Party, with politics centralized around farmers and the rural parts of Norway. NFU and Center Party occasionally had close connections, often strengthened by individuals in central positions in the political party and the organization. This relation has weakened over time, with the Labor Party also being central to NFU (pp. 7-8). On the other hand, NFSU had instead connections to the labor movement. Moreover, the identity of smallholders has been significant to NFSU. While the term farmer was commonly utilized, smallholder was not used as a term for a working profession by society. The identity of smallholders thus needed to be created. Establishing smallholder as a known and proud phrase

was an essential aspect of the work of NFSU in the beginning (Feiring et al., 1988, p. 43). Moreover, the identification of smallholder and small farms is something that is still relevant to the organization today.

4.2 The Agricultural Settlement

The agricultural settlement has remained similar throughout the history explained above. The negotiation is between the state and the formerly mentioned organizations, NFU and NFSU. These two organizations are allied in the agricultural settlement and are supposed to act as one part to secure effective negotiations (Ministry of Agriculture and Food, 2015). The negotiations are founded through the Basic Agricultural Agreement established in 1950 and revised in 1992. The agreement determines how the negotiations are executed and what happens when one or both of the agricultural organizations breach (Knutsen, 2021, p. 21). The settlement addresses the prices of agricultural products and other decisions connected to the industry (Government, 2020). This kind of negotiation is unique to the rest of the world. As stated by NFU, many colleges worldwide are jealous of the opportunity to negotiate with the state as the farmers in Norway have. Additionally, no other industries have the same type of deal with the government established in laws (NFU, 2020a, p. 15).

Since the agricultural settlement was established in 1950 several changes happened, but the three phases of the procedure are still mainly the same (Gravdahl, 1998, p. 8). The first phase starts with NFU and NFSU meeting to negotiate their individual demand into a common demand representing the agriculture. In the same phase, the state begins to prepare a draft of their offer in the negotiations (p. 9). The negotiations are performed by negotiation committees, where the committee of the state consists of representatives from the chosen departments. NFU and NFSU have one negotiation committee each, with up to three members allowed (Ministry of Agriculture and Food, 2015). These negotiation committees meet in the second phase of the settlement to negotiate. This implies that NFU and NFSU first present their demand, then the state has a few days to finish their official offer, and then the negotiation starts. In this process, one may expect revised demands and offers due to compromises and probing (Gravdahl, 1998, p. 9). The result of the negotiations may end in either an agreement with one or two of the agricultural organization or a breach with both organizations (Government, 2022). If the deal is made, it is sent to the state for approval before it is implemented. The government can make a deal with only one of the organizations, but if both refuses, the government will send a

proposition based on their original offer. This is the third and last phase of the agricultural settlement (Knutson, 2021, p. 21).

4.2.1 Agricultural Settlements 2020-2023

Since the agricultural settlement usually takes place every year, there are bound to be many situational and contextual differences between the settlements each year. This thesis focuses on the overall process of facilitation, but it is still vital to acknowledge the contextual differences throughout the four years the data is collected. Thus, some context and background of these years; 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023, are necessary. In the first year, 2020, the agricultural settlement was canceled due to the covid-19 pandemic, which was on the rise right before the settlement was supposed to begin. Consequently, there were no demands or negotiations in 2020 (Government, 2022).

In May 2021, the state, NFU, and NFSU did not reach any agreement and the agricultural settlement ended in a breach. Thus, in May the actors decided on a technical agreement based on the offer from the state. In October the same year, the additional negotiations were added to the technical agreement in May. These additional negotiations were with a different government since it was an election year and a new government was installed (Ministry of Agriculture and Food, 2021, p. 4). Since 2006, the agricultural settlement has only ended in a breach four times before. This implies a negotiation where both NFU and NFSU could not agree to the offer from the state, even after negotiations (NFU, 2020a, p. 16). A breach is therefore not usual, and the breach of 2021 displayed that the offer from the state was far from the demand and expectations of NFU and NFSU. NFU themselves state that throughout the winter and spring of 2021, the farmers in Norway suffered a demanding economic situation. A central aspect in the negotiations was thus to increase the salary of the farmers. It should also be stated that there was no agricultural settlement or negotiation the year prior because of the pandemic. Thus, solely two days after the offer from the state, the breach was a fact. The reason was that the offer was not enough to achieve the raise in salary that was demanded (NFU, 2021b, p. 8). This experience of the agricultural settlement is shared by NFSU, where the leader of the organization further state that the offer from the state was not an invitation to negotiate but rather a mockery (NFSU, 2021d, p. 11).

The agricultural settlement was also impacted by a so-called *farmer rebellion* that wanted a change in the foundation of the agricultural negotiations. This rebellion mainly existed on Facebook (Knutsen, 2021, p. 22). NFU wrote in their yearly rapport that the group *Farmer Rebellion 21* and other similar groups affected the process leading up to the negotiations (NFU, 2021b, p. 8). NFSU stated in their yearly rapport that the farmer rebellion grew when the agricultural settlement ended in a breach, which displayed an engagement from the grassroots with over 60.000 supporters (NFSU, 2021d, p. 5).

The agricultural settlement of 2022 ended with an agreement between all three parties, and several aspects made this settlement different. One aspect is a new and different government. This new government consisted of political parties from the other side of the political spectrum, the Labour Party and the Center Party. This new left-winged government was expected to be more in line politically with the agricultural organizations. Confirmed by NFU and NFSU, which stated that the government has offensive and grand ambitions that the organizations support (NFU & NFSU, 2022, p. 11). The agreement was also affected by the other the situation in the world which enhanced difficulties. Not only was the Covid-19 pandemic still relevant, but there was also a conflict in Ukraine and increasing prices of electricity, oil, and gas (Ministry of Agriculture and Food, 2022, p. 1). All these issues have contributed to an immense growth of prices regarding products connected to the agricultural industry. Since many farmers already struggle with their financial situation, many farmers consider closing down their farms (NFU & NFSU, 2022, p. 4). Thus, the pressure was not only concerning NFU and NFSU to deliver a satisfactory result to their members, but the government as well to acknowledge the struggles of the agricultural industry (Ministry of Agriculture and Food, 2022, p. 1).

Regarding the agricultural settlement of 2023, it took only a few days before it made history. Because for the first time since the Basic Agreement was established in 1950, over 70 years ago, NFU and NFSU did not agree on a common demand. One of the breaking points was that NFSU had an ultimatum on changing the calculations of the interest costs either before or under the negotiations, which NFU did not agree with. The state chose to continue the negotiations with only NFU, thus they had to represent the whole agriculture by themselves (Ekornholmen, 2023). The negotiations ended in an agreement between the state and NFU (Government, 2022).

4.3 Norwegian Farmers Union

Throughout history, NFU has been the largest interest organization for farmers in Norway and continues to be. They have over 61.500 members separated into 500 local chapters and 13 county chapters. The purpose of NFU is to gather everyone who is part of or feels connected to the field of agriculture. To promote common issues, bolster farming, and protect the local communities' economic, social, and cultural interests (NFU, n.d.). This is moreover connected to their purpose clause; “The purpose of the NFU is to bring together everyone who is, or feels connected to the farming profession, promote common causes, guard agriculture and look after the communities economic, social and cultural interests” (NFU, 2019, p. 1).

The organization is politically and economically independent, often cooperating with the state due to the agricultural settlement in Norway (NFU, n.d.). NFU does not receive financial support from the state. Thus, most income is from the membership fee (NFU, 2021b, p. 45). This is embedded in that the organization also has a high degree of resources. With more members, NFU has a higher income from membership fees, more people involved in the organization, and a greater bureaucratic structure.

4.3.1 Organizational Structure

The highest governing power in NFU is a meeting held every year called the annual meeting. The figure on the next page mainly illustrates the parts of the NFU who has the right to vote. These consists mostly of delegates chosen from the county chapters, where the number of delegates depends on the size of the chapters. Four representatives from the Rural Woman Association and four from the Rural Youth Association are also part of the annual meeting with a right to vote. Additionally, the members of the supervisory council are part of the voting. Since the board are part of the supervisory council, they also have the right to vote in the annual meeting. The personnel are also part of the meeting, but only with the right to propose and speak. It is the annual meeting who decided if the meeting is open to be observed by the rest of the members in NFU. The proposals are approved with a majority decision. In this meeting are several positions elected as the representatives of the board. Moreover, the principle program is also processed in this meeting (NFU, 2019, p. 4).

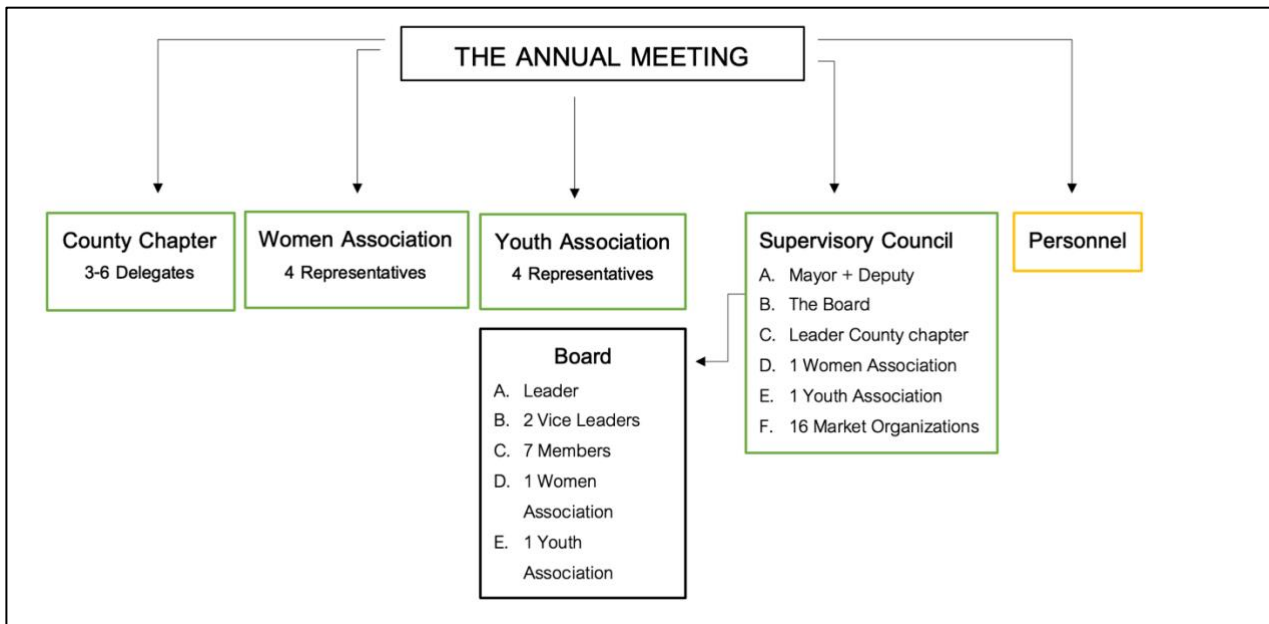


Figure 2 Structure of Annual Meeting (Green box indicates right to vote, yellow box indicates right to speak)

Besides being part of the annual meeting is the board in NFU vital. They oversee the daily business and is responsible for explaining what this entails to the annual meeting and how they have managed the resources. The board members include ten delegates chosen by the annual meeting and two representatives from each association (NFU, 2019, p. 6). The supervisory council makes decisions connected to the laws imposed on the council. Moreover, the council acts as a guiding council of the annual meeting and the board of NFU. The council comprises a mayor, a deputy for the mayor, the board of NFU, the leaders of the county chambers, and one representative from each association. Additionally, 16 members from different market organizations connected to NFU. These 16 members are cooperators focusing on various aspects of the agricultural industry, which sell or buy products from the farmers (pp. 5-6).

NFU is divided into two parts, NFU as an interest organization and an operating company which is the service office of NFU. NFU is the sole owner of the company, and the organization provides service and information to the members through this company (NFU, 2019, p. 2). NFU as an interest organization has ten employees while the service office has 110 employees (NFU, n.d.).

4.4 Norwegian Farmer and Smallholder Union

The other case is NFSU, the other central interest organization regarding agricultural politics in Norway. NFSU is a considerably smaller organization with 6.500 members, 150 local chapters, and 18 county chapters. NFSU states that they aim to improve the agriculture industry's social and economic conditions. This is achieved through the agricultural settlement in Norway and active work towards the political field in the parliament (NFSU, n.d.-b, p. 1). This is moreover connected to their purpose clause;

NFSU is a professional and industrial political organization, which aims to promote the professional, cultural, social and economic interests of people in agriculture. In all areas, the organization must work to create good and harmonious conditions for everyone in agriculture, and must be actively involved in tasks that promote development and well-being in the local community (NFSU, 2021b, p. 1)

Similarly to NFU, NFSU is a politically and economically independent organization (NFSU, n.d.-a). Since NFSU does not receive resources from the state, their income is mainly collected from the membership fee (NFSU, n.d.-b, p. 1). The number of members in NFSU is notably less than in NFU. Thus, the number of resources in NFSU is also smaller. This includes fewer members who will pay the membership fee, and fewer people are involved with the organization and a part of the bureaucratic structure. NFSU has ten employees in the secretary (NFSU, n.d.-a). This implies that there are several aspects where NFSU differ solely because they have a different amount of resources than NFU.

4.4.1 Organizational Structure

The highest governing power in NFSU is a meeting held once a year called the national meeting. In this meeting, the organization makes decisions for the future of the organization. The structure of the meeting is presented below, by displaying which parts of the organization has the right to vote. Hence, it is visible that the power lies in the hand of the local chapters since the members with a right to vote are mainly the delegates from the local chapters. The number of delegates depends on how many members the local chapters have, the higher number of members the higher number of delegates. The only other group with the right to vote is a youth delegate from the county chapters, but the age required is below 35 years (NFSU, 2021b, p. 2).

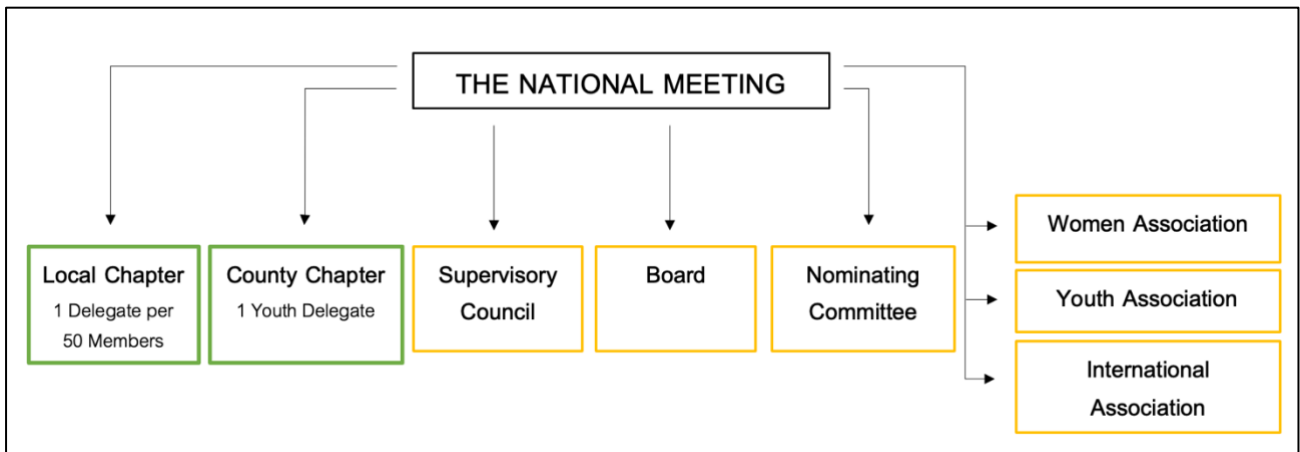


Figure 3 Structure of National Meeting (Green box indicates right to vote, yellow box indicates right to speak)

Other sections of the national meeting are the supervisory council, the board, the woman association, the youth association, and the international association. These all have only the right to speak and propose suggestions. All of the members that are not part of the national meeting are allowed to follow the discussions of the meeting (NFSU, 2021b, p. 2). The supervisory council has the same function as in NFU, a guiding organ for the board and annual meeting, and executes the cases that concern the laws. The supervisory council actors are the major and a deputy mayor, with one or two representatives from each county chapter. These two are the only ones that have the right to vote. The others that only have the right to speak and propose are the three associations, and five delegates from market and cooperative organizations (p. 3). The board is elected at the annual meeting and consists of one leader and six members, two of whom are deputy leaders (p. 4). An organ that is not included in the structure of NFU, but NFSU is the county leader meeting. As stated in the name, the leaders of the county chapters are members of this organ, and their function is to be a guiding organ to the board (p. 5).

5 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings from the documents and interviews are presented. The results are divided into two main parts, one for each organization; NFU and NFSU. The first subcategory is *political position* which includes information about the organizations and their relation to and opinion of the agricultural settlement. The rest of the subcategories concern the different segments of the membership participation process, some of which are presented in the figure below. The process of creating the demand is a thorough process over several months. Thus, the second subcategory introduced is *preparation*, which is how initial topics and issues are established. The third category is *schooling* which mainly involves the members of the local chapters. The fourth category is *external actors*, which includes how other actors, organizations, and the state are included in facilitating participation. The last category is *demand* which displays how different inputs and ideas are collected into one document and one primary demand. Below is a figure illustrating the schedule of the participation processes in NFU and NFSU.

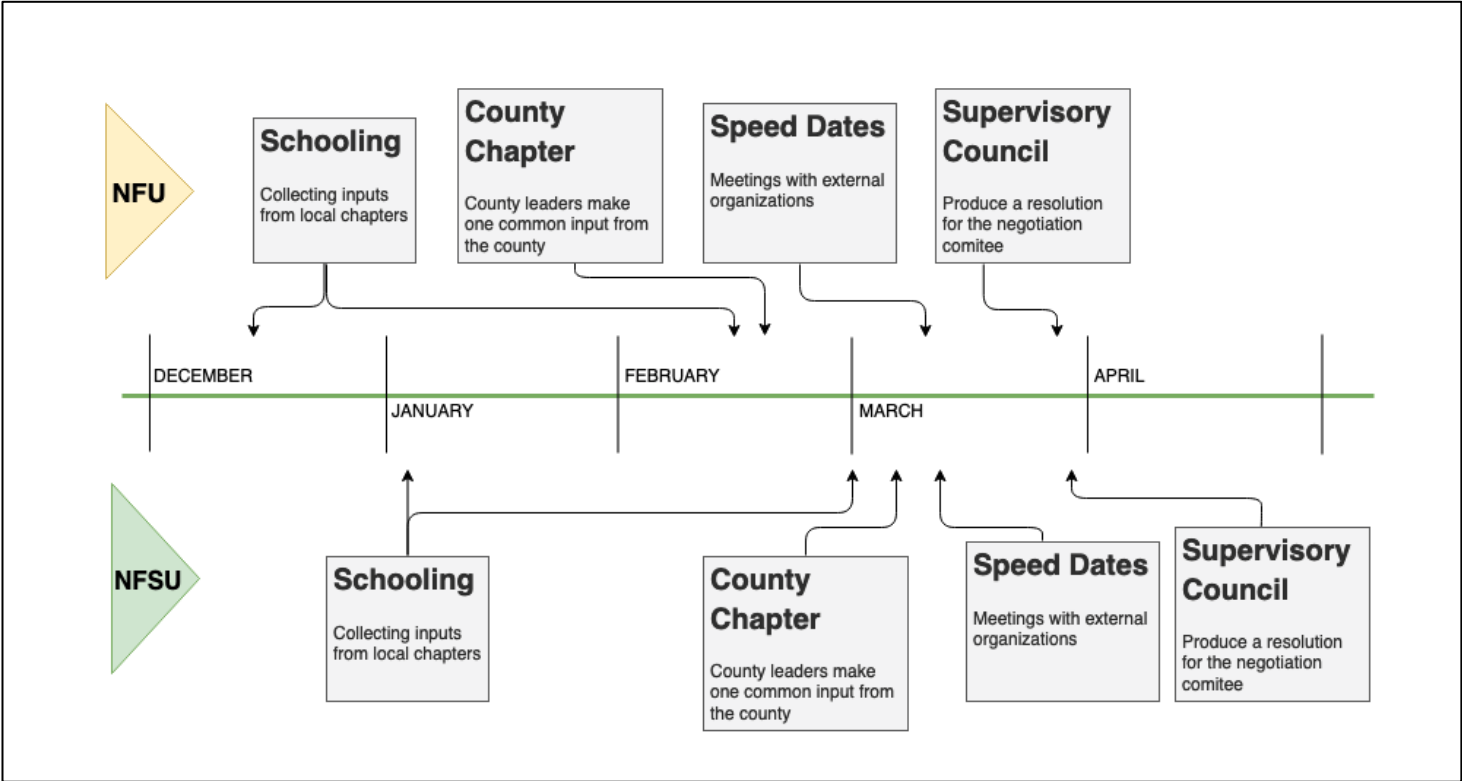


Figure 4 Participation process in NFU and NFSU

5.1 Norwegian Farmers Union

5.1.1 Political Position

As presented in the context chapter, NFU has historically been more in line with the state regarding negotiations. This is also related to their current statements. In their schooling of 2021, they state that their goal in the agricultural settlement each year is to achieve an agreement. Because if a breach occurs the government may decide the outcome by itself. NFU has a goal of avoiding a breach to make sure that they have some influence on the conditions of the agreement (NFU, 2021a, p. 39). A similar belief is confirmed by several interviewees mentioning when Sylvi Listhaug was Minister of Agriculture. Respondents 3 and 5 said that even though the offer from the state was something that NFU disagreed with, it was better to accept the deal and reduce the harm as much as possible. This is moreover deliberated on by respondent 3;

NFU has stated a few times that we have to behave within the political room of action. A good example of that is when we proceeded with a negative demand. It is of course not the best situation for the farmers, but we do it anyway. Why? Because there are political limitations. Some actors want what is very best for us, while others don't. Within this field, we are also supposed to live our lives and shape the policy. We actually have to take that into account and relate it to the political room of action that exists. We can demand whatever we want, but there is no point if we don't achieve results. Thus, we work to expand the room of action, and we will do that when there are parliamentary elections.

5.1.2 Preparation

A question to be asked is how NFU decides what questions to ask and what information to distribute in the schooling period. Moreover, this section concerns the choices and decisions connected to preparing for the agricultural settlement. Questions about this process were answered differently but not contradictory by the respondents. This may display several factors influencing how NFU construct their participation process. A vital factor mentioned by respondents 3 and 5 is that membership participation is a process throughout the whole year. Hence, the discussion of previous years guides the preparation for the following year. The process within NFU does not have a clear start or end but continues right after an agricultural settlement to evaluate the process and include this in the current process. This may consist of,

as discussed by respondent 3; “We have to make sure that it is not the same issues that are important every year. So that neither the process nor the material will be a copy of the previous year. Then it's about getting it current enough, that is where we work mostly in advance”. This work is mainly done by the secretary, who works administratively on issues and information to make it current. Related to this is also the schooling booklet produced and distributed by the secretary, the most unbiased and objective part of NFU. Mainly because the booklet is supposed to be neutral and based on current information and facts. Consequently, the secretary handles the booklet to avoid the board being accused of being biased. Respondent 3 mentioned this as essential since the board and negotiation committee are processing and prioritizing the inputs before making a demand and negotiations.

Respondent 5 also paid attention to the *Political Market Program*, a document containing solutions on the most vital topics in the following years (NFU, 2020b, p. 3). The program is adopted from 2020 to 2024, which means it is relevant to the years this thesis researched. Moreover, it is appropriate to the issues and problems NFU is working towards when facilitating membership participation. Other beliefs and reasons are significant to facilitating the participation process, as with the purpose clause mentioned by respondent 2 when identifying the core values of NFU. Democracy is another vital factor in NFU, as stated by respondent 3. Two respondents said that farmers in all shapes and places are essential to the organization. Moreover, there is a fact that NFU is an organization with a high number of members, which influences the facilitation. As stated by respondent 2; “Why do we do it? That's because we have 60,000 members, with 60,000 opinions. To run the same process and get an extract of what the members think, we simply use QuestBack”.

5.1.3 Schooling of Members

NFU starts with distributing information and advocating schooling in the different local chapters. This is achieved by allocating a schooling booklet, which provides the members with information on topics in the agricultural settlement and includes a questionnaire. Thus, the schooling segment is dedicated to learning and discussing various agriculture related issues. The only concrete task is to answer a questionnaire, which is how NFU collects inputs about the agricultural negotiations from the different local chapters (NFU, 2022c). The schooling period starts when the schooling booklet is distributed to the members in December. The purpose of the schooling booklet is to start conversations and discussions among the members

and contribute with information for the members to familiarize them with the agricultural settlement of that year (NFU, 2021a, p. 41). Additional to the schooling booklet were educational videos introduced in 2021, which informed the members on several topics regarding agricultural settlement (p. 2).

The local chapters receive a questionnaire with concrete questions regarding topics related to the agricultural negotiation. By answering, the local chapters send a clear message about topics and issues to prioritize. This feedback creates a foundation of opinions NFU represents in the agricultural settlement. Moreover, the inputs and feedback are sent to the county chapters, and the counties process these and make a summary based on the inputs and opinions. The questions are answered in QuestBack, a platform for surveys and questionnaires. Respondent 2 mentioned that QuestBack is used because it is an effective and simple way to extract the essence. This is confirmed by respondent 5, which state that it is simple to retrieve statistic from straightforward questions, which make it easier to handle the opinions of the various local chapters.

There are many questions, and the local chapters are encouraged to answer as many questions as possible (NFU, 2022b, pp. 1-2). Beneath the questions asked are alternative answers, and it is generally only possible to check one of the boxes. Each topic includes an open question asking if the members have additional input or thoughts. The number of questions in the last four years fluctuated between 50 and 80. The questionnaire includes alternative answers with text. This implies that even though the question is; *do we need more of X?*. the answers are yes and no with explanations. This indicated that the QuestBack is designed to notice opinions of why, not only if they agree or disagree. The questionnaire changed some in 2022, by including more questions with degree of agreement. This includes questions where the respondents could rank from 1 to 3, and many questions had answers ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”.

Expect from this have the questionnaire from 2020 to 2023 been similar, with alternative answers in boxes. With establishing this kind of layout, the questionnaire does not open up too much individual reflection on the different topics, but it may be simpler for the respondents since they have alternatives to choose between. An example is the question below where the respondents receive established opinions to choose between. Instead of the members responding with open minds and thoughts, a frame is established for the respondents to answer and discuss within.

Organic production

27. What is the most important measure to increase organic production and strengthen self-sufficiency?

Choose one option

- Higher land grants
- Price subsidy per unit produced
- Professional measures and advice
- Strengthen the subsidies during the conversion period
- Consignees must give organic farmers higher additional prices
- The government must cover the additional price of goods that are not sold in the market in order to maintain the “spydspissfuksjon”
- Other

Figure 5 Question from Schooling Booklet of 2023 (NFU, 2023, p.7)

Should be mentioned again that open questions are added for the respondents to add additional information that is not recognized in the questions or answers. This change was made due to expressions from members. As stated by respondent 5;

We have seen that this is an efficient way to run the organization. Over the years, it has been different, and we have received some feedback that the grassroots do not feel seen or heard. We also have structures that will take care of and improve this. At the moment we are working towards this because we have received this feedback the last year, so we are trying to adjust.

These inputs are very essential when making the demand in the agricultural settlement. The reason for the layout of the QuestBack is because of the demand NFU is preparing. Respondent 3 mentions that the QuestBack is not a direct reflection of the primary demand, but that many of the headlines and topics are similar. Thus, as stated in their schooling booklet, the inputs from the local chapters are processed by the county chapters and further is critical to the negotiation committee in forming the primary demand. While NFU state that the members mostly agree on the main goal, which is to improve the condition of the farmers, there are still some disagreements on how to achieve the goal. With a schooling period, these differences may be discussed and challenged. Respondent 3 deliberated on this and said that QuestBack brings different farmers together. A local chapter consists of farmers with different productions and in that sense different priorities, and then they discuss in which areas and productions it should be an increase or decrease in prices. The respondent further believes that the discussions and

engagement increased when the QuestBack was introduced. Since it was a simple method to contribute to inputs rather than write several pages to the secretary. Even though not all the opinions may be included in the primary demand, because they are too many and might be conflicting. The secretary in NFU still makes sure that the members know that all the inputs are read and evaluated (NFU, 2023, p. 1). This process is central to NFU since it is part of their membership democracy which decides the measures and actions to be made (NFU, 2022a, p. 6).

Many of the respondents mention that the schooling period is the most central way for members to involve themselves in the agricultural settlement. Respondent 3 addresses that members are also encouraged to promote political issues in the media, which then is recognized by the government. Moreover, respondent 5 mentions that annual meeting of the local chapters in the spring is a possibility to participate in the decisions being made. Or a member may throughout the process contact their representative, which the respondent believed to be very open.

A member always has the opportunity to contact their representative in NFU, whether it is someone who sits on the local or county board. In any case, I find this channel to be very open, because all our representatives are very accommodating, and I think they talk a lot on the phone with members who want them to listen to their issues. I think that is a strength since the representatives are also farmers, we are accommodating and answer when people call.

5.1.4 External Actors

External Organizations and Agricultural Cooperatives in Norway

In addition to the inputs from the members, there are also opportunities for external organizations which have opinions on the agricultural settlement to speak their minds. Respondent 3 explains that this unravels in something NFU calls *speed dates*. This is two days at the beginning of March, where NFU meets more than 50 organizations who give their opinions on the agricultural industry, and what NFU should prioritize in the agricultural settlement. These meetings include everything from large agricultural organizations, smaller organizations specialized in certain areas of the agricultural industry, to organizations that are not directly connected to the agriculture industry like environmental organizations. Respondent 3 continues to explain that the inclusion of external organizations is essential since NFU is

negotiating a large amount of money on behalf of not only the individual farmers but also many organizations who receive funding directly through the agricultural settlement. Thus, it is natural that these organizations have some input and opinions on how to prioritize in the negotiations. They further explain the differences in prioritization between the speed dates and member participation; "I would say that the input round is a kind of a knowledge gathering, while the democratic process in the farmers' team is policy design as I would call it. It is the creation of NFU's viewpoints". Besides collecting information and knowledge, respondent 5 mentions that "I'm not saying that this is what we emphasize the least, but the most important thing about the speed dates is that we create networks. Since we are getting fewer and fewer farmers, and we are dependent on someone cheering us on and working with us".

Respondent 2 explains that additionally to the intensive two days with over 50 organizations, NFU has a meeting with the market regulators of the agricultural industry. They have a meeting where they deliver a written proposal, but NFU does also contact them during the process if they need more clarification. These meetings are different than the speed dates, because as respondent 3 explain "The market regulators are a separate kind of group, we have them as contractual partners. We and NFSU have a written agreement with them, which is a cooperation agreement called *Council for agricultural agreement questions*". Since it is based on an agreement, the inputs the market regulators give are important to NFU. As stated by respondent 5;

Traditionally, we have listened closely to the market regulators, because we believe that it is their main task. They have been given that task by the State, and it is their task to be closest to the market. We work a lot with politics, but the market is the market regulators responsible for. We need to have some trust that the advice we get is at least somewhat accurate. In the end, it is necessary to balance this out and think a little for ourselves too, but I will not hide the fact that it has great importance.

This is confirmed by one of the representatives of the market regulators. They were asked about if they felt like they had an opportunity to influence NFU and answered;

We do, but there are always political considerations that others make that we do not have the final say on. After all, we work through the supervisory council and the resolution that is written there first and foremost. Then it is the professional association

that decides how the requirement is formulated and designed. We do not have a direct influence on anything other than through the resolution in the representative council, and I think that is an okay way of working.

Politicians and the Government

Contact with the politicians and making a beneficial conversation with the government and state is vital to NFU. As stated by respondent 3; "Agriculture is a political industry. We at NFU must take that into account. We are completely dependent on political decisions". This supports the notion that several places in the schooling booklet, the importance of contact with politicians is mentioned. This was also a question in the questionnaire of 2021, "How can you and your local team build trust, security and good dialogue with State representatives and new candidates who come from your area?" (NFU, 2021a, p. 38). Displaying the connection with the political parties and politicians are of essences. Additionally, to being mentioned several places in the schooling booklet, it was addressed by respondent 3. They mentioned that the members are important since they can be used as a connection between the state and NFU. Since all representatives in the state is from a place or community in Norway, and local and county members of NFU can reach out to the politicians by being from the same local community of city. This connection here is a simple lobbying strategy that respondent 3 illustrates.

Another lobbying strategy is to invite the parliamentary representatives to farm visits since several politicians have little to no knowledge about the food production industry. Additionally, the two other respondents talk about NFU as an effective lobby organization. Both mention former politicians that have declared NFU as one of the best lobby organizations in Norway. Respondent 5 stated that "Sveinung Rotevatn once said that no one is as good at lobbying as NFU. He stated: once they have found a politician, they sit on it until they do what they want. This is actually quite descriptive".

5.1.5 Demand

Making of the primary demand and resolution is a demanding process, where the county councils are central and vital actors. This is mainly through their work, to collect all the inputs and thoughts from the members and make summaries of the main and significant opinions of the county chapters. The number of the local chapters differs from 10 to 80, thus there are a lot of inputs and members to recognize in this process. As explained by respondent 2, the

summaries from the county chapters are presented to the supervisory council at the end of March. All these inputs and feedbacks together create a document with thousands of pages with ideas and opinions. This document is processed by the secretary, which tries to reduce the number of feedback and concentrate on the few that emphasize the essence. Further, the supervisory council process the documents and writes a resolution based on the feedback. The negotiation committee utilizes the resolution as their foundation in the negotiation process with NFSU and the state (Siv I Moe, 2022). The resolution made establishes the frameworks of the total demand and main priorities (NFU, 2022a, p. 10). This process is very demanding as described by respondent 2;

The process is comprehensive and thorough, very thorough I would say. And this is where the big organizational challenges come in, that everyone should feel heard and seen. In such a tract as we describe here, not everyone will feel heard and looked after. Because with 60,000 members and quite a few others who are not members who also have opinions, they all want to be heard. This is the big challenge for us, that people should recognize themselves in what we present as a final requirement and that they should understand and to some extent essentially agree with most of it.

The respondent further states that a way to minimize this experience of not being heard is to communicate well with the members. This means informing the members about the process, thus the members know what is happening even though they are not able to impact the negotiations. There are several moments of contact where information is spread to the organization. But the opportunity to affect is thus until the meeting with the supervisory council, after that the power is with the negotiation committee. It is from this meeting that a resolution is made with the main issues and topics in the agricultural settlement. Respondent 3 explains that this resolution is guiding the negotiation committee, and in practice working as their mandate. The committee is limited in their negotiation since they need to act and discuss within the framework established in the resolution. Still, the committee is approved by the meeting to discuss and negotiate a deal. Indicating, that the negotiation committee also in the resolution has flexibility to negotiate and make compromises if needed.

Even though the negotiant committee is negotiating with NFSU and the government without more influence from within NFU. Several respondents mention a vital mechanic within the organization, with the annual meeting being only a few weeks after the agricultural settlement. This indicates that if the organization is not pleased with the result, they can easily throw the board and elect a new one. This reflects that the members' inputs are what is most essential in NFU. As stated by respondent 5, "The resolution that is written in the supervisory council is based on what the local chapters have voiced and what the counties have then settled on". They further explain with the mechanism of the annual meeting; "We have our annual meeting 3 weeks after the agricultural agreement has been signed or breached. Thus, if we have missed the priorities badly and the organization completely disagrees with what we have done, they can throw us out 3 weeks later".

5.1.6 Changes from 2020 to 2023

As mentioned earlier, the data retrieved is from four different years, from 2020 to 2023. Thus, essential to look at differences in the facilitation between these years. As stated by respondent 5, NFU have not changed the process very much in the last four years. This is confirmed by the material and documents collected for this thesis, where the structure of the participation process and the schooling booklet are very similar. Still with the Covid-19 pandemic and changing situational context, some changes have been made. Respondent 2 mentioned that in 2020 started the organization to utilize more digital tools. Because of the restrictions, it was necessary with Teams and webinars to discuss and spread information. In some ways, this opened for more members to participate, but there are also negative consequences. Other changes due to Covid-19 has been the importance of motivating the members. A difference that at least respondent 5 have seen in the two last years is that they more often visit the annual meetings of the local and county chapters.

Although, most of the changes that have happened is in the members. With a more difficult economic situation and a farmer rebellion has several farmers become more demanding and critical in their opinions. As stated by respondent 2;

If you ask what has changed during the 3 years, it is probably; digital participation, change of governments affected us, and the fact that the economy has become much tighter with cost increases last year has meant that an awful lot of people have had poor finances. It makes the tone much harder and sharper.

They moreover talk about the farmer rebellion “It is a battle for positions in the organization, and it should be as well. This fight is essentially between those who want to stand tougher and those who stick to what is politically possible to achieve”.

5.2 Norwegian Smallholders and Farmers Union

5.2.1 Political Position

NFSU is known for being principled and not easily making compromises. As the organization themselves state in their political platform; NFSU has never shied away from making controversial statements concerning the future of agricultural politics (NFSU, 2020, p. i). This is also reflected in the members of the organizations. NFSU characterizes their members as interested and active in the debates taking place in closed rooms or out in the public sphere. In relation to this, several members have high expectations of the organization, which is sometimes challenging for NFSU. Some members may make threats of leaving the organization based on the current situation, the activity of the organization and political disagreements (NFSU, 2021d, p. 28). Thus, the result achieved by the organization and their political battles are very important to the members, and representing the members is thus vital to NFSU.

In relation to the agricultural settlement, NFSU wants to make the process more transparent and open to their members. Respondent 6 discusses this when they state that "Our organization wants more transparency during the actual negotiations, and more transparency about our main demand before we enter the negotiations". This transparency also addressed by respondent 4, who states that NFSU traditionally releases their demand after the agricultural negotiations. To display to the members what NFSU originally entered the negotiations with.

5.2.2 Preparation

When asked about the preparations before the schooling period and how NFSU decide on what topics to discuss and questions to ask, several of the respondents answer that this is a yearly process which starts after the former agricultural settlement. Respondent 1 explain that it begins right after the settlement regardless of it being an agreement or breach. In June, NFSU has a meeting to evaluate the negotiations, and a process is starting with understanding what accomplishments have been made and what NFSU needs to improve. Further, the participation process is understood by respondent 6 as a process throughout the year;

It happens throughout the year. We have 3 weeks of agricultural negotiations, but the result of those negotiations is not made in those 3 weeks. It's something we have to do throughout the rest of the year. The issues and cases that are relevant in the current year, that is the basis for what happens during the negotiations as well.

Two of the respondents also mentions the national meeting as essential, where the members may discuss different topics but also make decisions. This is further elaborated on by respondent 4 which explains that a reason for how the participation process is facilitated is based on the issues discussed at the national meeting;

The main reason why we choose to design it this way is the national meeting`s decision, where we follow up on what the members want. If our members want more member participation, we will facilitate more member participation. It's basically very simple. That's what it's all about, but it is also on a general basis because we see and think that it is extremely important that farmers have the opportunity to express themselves about these important things.

Respondent 8 also mentioned similar; "When we get a statement adopted in the national assembly, it is the first step for us to start to prepare ourselves for the agricultural negotiations".

Another factor influencing the preparation, mentioned by the interviewees, is connected to the core documents of NFSU. When asked about the reason for facilitating, respondent 1 answered; "We have the principle platform, we have our laws and we have a political platform which in a sense is NFSU and what our distinctive features are". Moreover, respondent 8 describes that NFSU is a grassroots organization that influences how the process is executed. The national

meeting is with participants from the local chapters. It is the people at the bottom who decides; «It must reflect us in all contexts, it is at the local level where the majority of involvement should take place. It's my philosophy around it, that we invest heavily on local chapters”.

5.2.3 Schooling of Members

One of the main segments of the participation process in NFSU is the schooling period, which in 2021 and 2022 started with a webinar about the agricultural settlement. Following, a schooling booklet was distributed to the local chapters (NFSU, 2021d, p. 9). This schooling booklet is very similar to NFU and does also include information about the different topics of the agricultural settlement and a questionnaire. The booklet is introduced to start conversations and discussions related to the question asked in a questionnaire. After the responses, digital meetings are held with each local chapter. The agenda is a summary meeting, and the board members arrange these meetings. The inputs are from the local and county chapters, the associations, and individual members. Additionally are also consumers allowed to join, with or without their own production (NFSU, 2021d, p. 9). Respondent 6 explains the functionalities of the schooling period;

It's both about getting people to gather and discuss agricultural policy, and we have at times involved people other than our own members. And to build knowledge, because it is very important to build knowledge. It may also cause a discussion, among our members and perhaps other citizens, which means that we have a better basis for understanding what is happening and having opinions about what is happening. In order to get somewhere, people have to make up their minds, we believe.

Additional to the schooling, information and building of knowledge is important to NFSU. One manner this is executed through is their newspaper which is distributed to all the members. The goal is to build knowledge, and help the members understand what the agricultural settlement entails. This is elaborated by respondent 4; “it [agricultural settlement] is notoriously known for being quite complicated. We want to facilitate so that our members can understand as much as possible and have knowledge about what is happening, and in that way also be able to get involved”. This also speaks to general desire of NFSU to inform the members and make sure they understand and comprehend the agricultural settlement and the topics and issues discussed.

As stated by respondent 4, these negotiations are notoriously difficult and thus necessary with knowledge.

The schooling booklets are distributed by the board of NFSU. Respondent 6 explained that the reason is “Because there are members in the board, but not in the secretariat. Another reason is that we have had a demanding situation in our administration with a little too few people, so we have probably had more working elected representatives”. This is also recognized by respondent 4; “There is an incredible amount of work to do and never enough people. This does not only apply to the agricultural negotiations, but it also generally applies to the organization and the politics we engage in outside of the agricultural negotiations”. Thus, the number of resources and administrative personnel is one reason why the board is involved with the schooling booklet, in addition to them being members themselves.

The schooling period is meant to start conversations within the local chapters, but it is also stated that the conversations are open to everybody that are interested. This includes everybody independent of their organizational affiliation like members from NFU or other agricultural organizations (NFSU, 2021a, p. 3). This is mentioned in the schooling booklet of 2023 where NFSU encourages the members to include other people in the area or local community to join the discussions (NFSU, 2022a, p. 2). This is further elaborated in the interview with respondent 4; “The most important is that farmers meet up together and discuss agricultural policy. About where they want it to go, that they learn something from it and that we get inputs, so we know what our grassroots think. Whether it is our members or others who live in the same village as some of our members”.

The structure and layout of the schooling booklet and questionnaires have remained somewhat the same form from 2020 to 2022. This entails that before each question, a section is included with information about the topic. These questions are open and often it is necessary to answer with several sentences to give a proper answer. Some of the questions may also be perceived as demanding in the sense that the questions are not simple to answer but require discussion and reflection. An example of this is “How can we achieve both increased self-sufficiency and income growth?” (NFSU, 2022a, p. 9). The questions is open to let the respondents decide the strategy to solve issues. Rather than asking if they want more or less. NFSU ask if the members want more or less, and how they believe this would be possible to achieve through what action or processes. This is confirmed by respondent 4 which state “Part of the reason we have very

open questions is because we don't have all the answers. We know that sometimes good solutions come from answers. That is also what we hope for, that someone has an idea for a new subsidy, for example”. In this sense not only are the members part of the schooling to answer what they prioritize in an agricultural settlement, but how it may be achieved and what solutions may be utilized.

The number of questions in the schooling booklet differs from around 25 to 45 questions. In 2021 were multiply-choice questions also included, where the respondents could check of boxes and prioritize. The schooling booklets of 2020 and 2021 include a great amount of information about the topics before the questions are asked. This changed in 2022 and 2023 when the schooling booklet had adequate information about the different topics, but visibly less. This was addressed at the beginning of the booklet with the schooling being simplified. It is not stated why, but a possible reason might be the change of schooling period in 2022. These changes are illustrated in distributing the schooling booklet in August 2022 instead of January 2023 which was the norm. Therefore, the members would be able to discuss and answer the questionnaire before the national meeting in October. Then in January when it normally is a schooling period, NFSU continues with part two. The second part will be different from before by using boxes to check of, to more easily summarize the inputs (NFSU, 2023, p. 1). Respondent 4 commented on the change of schooling;

The change was adopted in the national meeting, it was a wish from the organization. It has really been that people want the national meeting, i.e. the grassroots in the organization, to have more power over the direction taken in the negotiations. Because some may have experienced that this has not always been the case. Thus, it was proposed that the national assembly can be used to a greater extent to make decisions on what to prioritize in the negotiations.

They continue to tell that a second part was added since NFSU recognized that not all the members were able to take part in the schooling in the fall. The second part is as established, with more concrete questions. Respondent 4 tells why “Often the inputs have been very broad, and there are some who think it has been a bit challenging to boil down the inputs into something concrete for the negotiations because the negotiations are incredibly concrete”. When discussing using only multiple choice, respondent 4 explains why it is still necessary with open questions in NFSU “Many of our members are concerned with being able to express

their opinions. Thus, we have in mind that we know it is important for our members to have open questions as a basis. And try to see if we can use part two to rather sharpen, to perhaps utilize it even more before the negotiations”.

Respondent 8 is unsure about the future of the new schooling system because of criticism it has received from the members. The criticism is related to the timing since farmers are often more unavailable and occupied in the fall than at the beginning of the year.

We did it because we want to have something ready for the national meeting, which is the event of the year. Where one set guidelines for next year's policies. Thus, having a schooling period finished before the national meeting is a rational way of thinking which I agree with. One thing is to change routines, it takes some time, but people are also probably ingrained in a way of doing things. Additionally, it turns out that it was terribly difficult to get people to participate in September and October.

The other respondent also mentioned that the exact layout of the new schooling system has not been decided and changes might occur.

Several of the respondents mentioned the schooling and questionnaire as the most essential segment for the members to influence and be involved in the agricultural settlement. Expect from the schooling period, respondent 4 mentioned that submitting cases to the national meeting is another way to participate. This could be done through a local chapter and all kind of issues could be raised. NFSU also encourages the members to involve themselves in political issues in the media. Moreover, there is a short way to the top of the organization. As presented by respondent 4;

Genuinely, if there is an issue that you are very concerned about, it is actually possible to make contact with the political leadership and the board. Saying that this is important, and talking about why this particular case is important. If it concerns something specific to the case, it is of course possible to raise it in the county councils, the county councils present their own inputs.

5.2.4 External Actors

External Organizations and Agricultural Cooperatives in Norway

External organizations also have an opportunity to send in written inputs within the deadline of the questionnaire. The organizations invited to this are organizations connected to the agricultural industry, and others who are not directly connected. Respondent 4 explains that;

What is relatively new from this year is that we are a little concerned that agricultural policy is for everyone, not just for agriculture. The agricultural negotiations, which are essentially agricultural policies put into practice, are extremely closed and always have been. That's why we want to open it up. We have been very keen that everyone can give inputs, if it is the nurses' association wants to have an opinion on the agricultural policy, then they should be allowed to do so and be heard by us.

After this has NFSU two days where they meet with external organizations. Respondent 1 stated that the organizations invited are a consolation of different organizations, whomever NFSU might think be important to listen to for the current agricultural settlement. Respondent 6 stresses that these meetings are not part of the member democracy and that the inputs from these organizations are mainly advisory. The organization may often include organizations that specialize in specific interests such as bees or alpacas. Combined, these inputs give a variety of ideas and thoughts, and respondent 4 explains "Of course, not all input fits in, it must still be in line with our political documents and the input from our members. But in any case, it is very important to have an exchange there". Still, it is important to include these organizations to exchange information and knowledge.

The market regulators have a day with NFSU before the agricultural settlement, in addition to other forums where they have contact. They are also part of the supervisory council meeting where the regulators may represent their inputs and demand. Respondent 6 discusses the divide between the members of NFSU and the regulators; "For us as a union, it is easy to demand 5 kroner, but it has its consequences that you should be aware of. Although many of our members believe that the milk price must rise to 3 kroner, it is a very big step". They therefore further explain that it is necessary with a common understanding, and if it is necessary with more meetings NFSU will schedule with the regulators to clear up issues or gather more information. Respondent 4 describes this about the market regulators;

They are market regulators in the agricultural cooperatives and experts in their fields, and a separate section in the agricultural negotiations is about them. Thus, the inputs from them are very important. We are also very adamant that if we see that we disagree with what they say, there should be room for that. The political organizations know that the opinions of our members are the most important thing, that comes first and everything else is supplementary.

A representative of the market regulators stated that;

It is similar since we are invited to give a market assessment there as well and talk about our input to the agricultural negotiations. In that sense, we do have an arena to say what we think. Then there is no resolution made in the representative council of NFSU, which I have been part of at least. As you say, they are less interested in inviting us into resolution work, to the extent that they have it.

Whether a resolution is made in NFSU will be discussed further in section 5.2.5. Even though, respondent 8 did indicate that NFSU rarely changed the inputs from the market regulators.

Politicians and the Government

Contact with politicians is essential to NFSU. As stated by respondent 1;

We are completely dependent on having a good channel to political parties. Both at the county level with the county leaders, and that we have meetings with the political parties in the parliament and talk about the agricultural situation. Additionally, they contact us and ask about both their program and the negotiations when they operate, and input in the agricultural negotiations.

How much contact it is between NFSU and the parliament depends, according to respondent 4, on who sits in the board and the leadership since contact with the politicians is very personal it depends on the people. Respondent 6 mentions that contact with local politicians and parliament representatives also is important, but it differs from county to county. All respondents when asked about the relationships with politicians and the government, mentions that it depends on the which political parties are in power. As stated by respondent 8; “We always try to have the best possible contact with each sitting government. But then perhaps we cooperate better with some parties than others”.

5.2.5 Demand

It is the job of the county chapters to collect all the inputs from the local chapters to make a common statement from the county. Respondent 8 mentioned that some problems with this is to include as many of the local chapters as possible, and that more responses makes the job simpler. Since then, the county leaders have a feeling of security that the summary they present is founded in the common inputs of the county.

Respondent 1 explains that all the inputs from the members and other organizations are looked at by the negotiation committee, and they make a summary of the inputs from the local chapter and county chapters. The board also follows this process, as mentioned by respondent 1 “All this time, the board has followed closely. The negotiation committee follow what the board believes should be prioritized based on what we have from the national meeting, inputs from the organization and what we have from inputs from what is happening around us”.

What inputs to prioritize in the demand of NFU depends on the national meeting and their core documents. As stated by respondent 8

It is what has been said and done at the national meeting, what has been said and done in the county board and the county annual meeting. We have a political action plan, we have a political platform. Those who are best at using it in their argumentation during the supervisory council meeting get their way.

Respondent 4 stated that; “In general, I can say that the closer an input is to the formulation and layout in the primary demand document, the higher the probability that it will come through”. Moreover, they state that the majority of inputs from the members are closely linked to the core documents and their political platform. “People are members of NFSU because they agree with the politics of NFSU. If you are a member, you will be heard in that politic because the primary demand is built on that as a foundation”. The respondents explain that the national meeting and what is decided here is essential, which displays what the majority of members want.

The negotiation committee is in negotiations with a mandate from the board which follows the negotiations closely. Respondent 1 explains that the board and negotiant committee met some problems in 2022, where the board and negotiant committee had a different understanding of what they agreed upon, which made NFSU agree on a settlement that some in the board meant

could not be made on the grounds that the committee had. This is reflected on by respondents 6 who mentioned that the mandate has a clear direction for the negotiation committee about what they may negotiate freely about and what is necessary to reach out and check with the board. Respondent 6 further explains the importance of the mandate

The mandate is extremely important. What the board is doing is a very important job to do, creating a mandate that both ensures a direction and is so open that it does not restrict the negotiating committee too much. Because the negotiating committee must negotiate or there are no negotiations at all.

Still there are some aspects of the mandate which are vital;

We will do our best no matter what. But it is absolutely true, we have very committed members who want a lot. It also means that you have a number of things that you simply cannot go back on. It is again in the mandate that we have some things where we set limits on how far one can go.

5.2.6 Changes from 2020 to 2023

The structure of the participation process has changed a lot in NFSU the last year. This is illustrated with a shift in the schooling period with starting half a year earlier. The actual changes made are described earlier under section 5.2.3. Expect the change in schooling period, there have been other changes and influences in the last four years. The covid pandemic had an influence with restrictions and a majority of the participation happened online. The county chapters were utilized more because of the pandemic through digital spaces. Respondent 6 mentions that it became easier to keep in touch due to distance, and that the organization had a lot of conversation with county leaders.

Moreover, the economic situation also affected the organization. Respondent 1 explained what NFSU did in this difficult situation;

In the situation that has existed, we have certainly asked the members a lot. How is it going with you? And used the county leaders a lot; what is it, how serious is it? Especially now in the last few years where the prices have increased suddenly and intensely, and thus a lot who have payment problems or liquidity problems.

According to respondent 4, the member participation has also changed due to the farmer rebellion; “I have the impression, and so do many others, that involvement has increased after the farmer rebellion”. This is because the rebellion raised issues which many farmers recognized in their own life, but which was not discussed openly. Thus, it opened a space for farmers to speak about their issues and concerns which was more accepting than before. Respondent 6 mentions that the farmer rebellion has contributed with two things;

It has put the spotlight on the numerical material. We received the Grytten report which became part of the negotiations this year and what people think in relation to it. It made a strong support for Norwegian agriculture visible in Norwegian society. With being approx. 38 thousand farmers in Norway, we need support from those outside the industry as well.

5.3 Summary of Findings

Regarding the agricultural settlement, NFU is more often part of an agreement than a breach. This is vital since a breach could indicate a worsened situation. Still, it is important for NFU to represent the members and their viewpoints in the agricultural settlement. This is first executed by facilitating a process throughout the year, displaying continuity. Moreover, a process where their political market program is utilized as a guide, where democratic structures are vital, and where inputs from all the members participating are included. This is achieved by distributing a schooling booklet and questionnaire to all the local chapters. This booklet contains information, knowledge, and questions which are mostly multiple-choice. NFU does also collect inputs and information from external actors, through speed dates and meeting with the market regulators. They are also in contact with the political parties and are known as an effective lobby organization. When creating the primary demand, the county chapters are essential. The resolution guides the direction of the negotiation but also gives the flexibility to negotiate. Even though the members are not included in the negotiations, they are able to elect a new board three weeks after if they are not pleased with the result.

NFSU is known for breaching the agricultural settlement more than NFU. In the settlement are the political principles significant to NFSU, and they further believe the settlement should be more transparent. In the negotiations, it is vital for NFSU to represent the grassroots. This is executed by using the national meeting as a place where members from the local chapters may

decide on topics and issues to include in the agricultural settlement. Moreover, the facilitation of participation is a process that continues the whole year as a cycle. The process starts with a schooling period with information and where mainly open-ended questions are asked. People and actors outside of the organization are also invited to join. In 2022, the schooling period was moved and expanded to include a second round of questionnaires with multiple-choice questions. Inputs are also collected from external organizations through speed dates and meetings with the market regulators. The external organizations invited are mainly connected to the agricultural field, but NFSU does also believe that they should include other organizations if they have input. Contact with politicians and political parties is important to NFSU, but also fluctuates depending on the people involved. A mandate is made by the organization which guides the negotiation committee. This mandate is attentive to the political principles of NFSU and established what issues can be discussed and what issues the board needs to oversee.

6 ANALYSIS

This chapter will analyze the process of facilitating membership participation in NFU and NFSU. The facilitation is identified and analyzed as one process in each organization. Even though this thesis looks at the period from 2020 to 2023, the process will still be considered as one process. This is due to the facilitation being mostly similar throughout the years even though the situations and context around changed. This has been addressed in section 5.2.6 and 5.1.6 in the empirical findings. The intention of this chapter is to discuss and answer the different research sub-questions asked in the introduction. The data and findings presented are utilized to explain and understand the questions through the concepts and theories introduced in the theory chapter. The two first questions are answered individually for each organization. Thus, the first section looks at the characteristics of the organizations regarding structure, norms, and values. Second, how NFU and NFSU facilitate membership participation regarding the dimensions; *level, form, range, and degree*. The last question is more comparative since it addresses to what extent NFU and NFSU, based on their different values, advance different interests.

6.1 Norwegian Farmers Union

6.1.1 Normative Characteristics

As established, institutionalism is utilized to understand the behavior of institutions. Normative institutionalism is addressed in this analysis, and the collection of norms, values, understandings, and routines are essential to the behavior of the institution (Peters, 2019, p. 35). The norms and values in institutions are developed over time and might be challenging to uncover since it is not observable as with laws and financial resources. Still, in the interviews presented above, several concepts and terms have been mentioned when asked to explain the organizational behavior. These concepts and terms are in this thesis understood as the norms and values of the organization, similar to how terms are understood in normative institutionalism. Further, the concepts and terms are also understood through the establishment and historical context of NFU. Based on this understanding and the findings presented above, three normative characteristics are discussed here; democratic responsibility, common interests, and compromises. These normative characteristics confirm the theoretical assumptions disclosed in the theory chapter, since the central norms and values are similar to the attributes from the establishment and early history.

The essence of democratic responsibility is a characteristic central to NFU since the establishment of the organization. Moreover, the characteristic of NFU has been apparent in the responsibility to represent the members in the agricultural settlement. The democratic responsibility of members is mentioned several times by the interviewees. This is displayed in the schooling period, where all the members may contribute with their input. Moreover, external organizations are included to ensure that the demand created is based on a significant amount of information and inputs from organizations in the agricultural field. When asked what inputs were most important, the members and their answers from the questionnaire were mainly mentioned. And the interviewees often spoke about how important it was to the organization that the members feel represented. As discussed in the findings, NFU does include feedback opportunities to secure that if the members are displeased, they may adjust their participation. Based on these incidents, I would state that an apparent characteristic of NFU is the ambition and responsibility for a democratic participation process. This is correlated to the theoretical assumption that democratic responsibility throughout history is still a vital characteristic. As assumed and presented, the democratic aspiration is visible through the importance of representing the members and for them to feel seen and heard. Regarding forming ideas and interests, the assumption was that ideas and interests concerning the agricultural field would be vital. Moreover, this is illustrated by collecting different inputs from members and actors in the market.

A characteristic which was not addressed as a theoretical assumption is the essence of supporting the common interest of farmers. Still, this may be considered a normative characteristic since, as discussed in the context chapter, common interests have been central to NFU since the establishment of the organization where NFU originated as a farmer's organization working towards common needs. This is evident and mentioned in the purpose clause of NFU. Moreover, this is currently a visible characteristic through the questions in the schooling booklet. These questions are structured in this manner to easily summarize and process the information. Thus, the inputs collected from the schooling period display the magnitude of the common needs of the members. The concern of shared interests as a characteristic of NFU is further proved by including external actors. While they are included to give more information, the shared inputs from the members are considered the democratic emphasis.

Another factor in NFU that has been central throughout history and mentioned in several interviews is the importance of making compromises. This is also an assumption formerly discussed in this thesis and is displayed in the data through the significance of the room of action. When NFU and NFSU were founded, a distinction could be observed with NFU being more concerned with making compromises and negotiating with the government. As discussed in the former section, this continues since NFU was part of agreement with the government because a breach would involve consequences, not because they were satisfied with the result. Breaching with the government is undesirable if it provokes irreversible changes or excessive destruction. This may thus also be identified as a norm in NFU. This is further rooted in their political market program being mentioned as directional when making a demand. This program is a plan of four years, hence take into consideration that goals are achieved by improving over time. Thus, this program confirms the assumption that compromises are visible through topics and tasks in NFU. Since the room of action is vital, the organization understands that they cannot reach all their goals in one negotiation and thus spread them over several years. The assumption of compromises is further noticeable in the negotiation committee, which has the resolution to act through and the flexibility to negotiate and make compromises.

6.1.2 Rational Characteristics

Rational choice theory is necessary since NFU as an institution establishes restrictions and structures which form the behavior of members (Peters, 2019, p. 55). When looking at the rules of NFU, one can view laws and its purpose clause; “The purpose of the NFU is to bring together everyone who is, or feels connected to the farming profession, promote common causes, guard agriculture and look after the villages' economic, social and cultural interests” (NFSU, 2021b, p. 2). This clause is also referenced by one of the interviewees when asked about the values of NFU. The clause demonstrates that one of the characteristics, as explained above, is to collect common inputs. As discussed in the purpose clause, it is vital for NFU that all the members are seen and heard, and how they facilitate is thus connected to an effective way to achieve this. This is linked to the assumption that the rules and structure of NFU are of democratic character. At least with the purpose clause, founded in the laws of the organization, the purpose is democratic since the aspiration is to collect inputs from the agricultural field and support common causes.

This democratic aspiration is also visible in the structure of the organization. The annual meeting is vital and the highest governing power in NFU. This is a meeting where the decisions of the organization are made, mainly through representatives from the county chapters. Therefore, connected to the assumption that NFU displays a democratic structure. This democratic structure is especially noticeable in the participation process where the members, seen as composite actors through the rational choice theory, have collective perspectives. The leadership is responsible to promote the collective perspectives, a bottom-up strategy is therefore necessary. The theoretical assumption of this thesis is evident in the mentioned annual meeting and especially in the participation process. This is a process where members are asked to give their input and together discuss the topics. This democratic structure of the participation process is further discussed in section 6.1.2 Participation.

Another assumption was that although the democratic structure was evident in NFU, they were restricted because of the number of members. This would most likely imply an indirect democracy, representatives, and summaries since listening to 60.000 voices individually would be impossible. The assumption is visible in the annual meeting with delegates from the county chapters representing the whole county. This indicates indirect participation since the members do not have the opportunity to vote themselves but through an elected county leader or representative. As assumed, summarizing is an essential aspect of the structure in NFU. As discussed in the findings, NFU is an organization with many members. To acknowledge the voices of 60.000 members, it is thus necessary with a structure that lets NFU collect all these inputs while still being able to process them productively. This is apparent in the QuestBack with multiple-choice questions. The interviewees stated that QuestBack was selected to extract a summary of what the inputs entail.

The assumption of this thesis was that the structure and rules of NFU would be mainly to bolster discussion between the members and collecting inputs. This assumption is visible since the schooling booklet is structured in a way that local chapters meet to discuss and agree on the questions. However, the thesis did not assume that the questionnaire would be restricting ideas and thoughts. The questions in the questionnaire are multiple-choice, with answers representing different opinions. As addressed in the findings, these answers are often established frames in which the members choose. These restricted answers are most likely connected to the idea of common interests and the number of members, as discussed above. NFU want all members to give their opinion and be heard, an effective and feasible manner to execute this is through the

QuestBack. Hence, the questionnaire, the central part of the participation process, is restricting and guides the members.

Even though there are many members to consider, it also implies that there are more resources to use. As presented in Chapters 4 and 5, NFU has a significant number of resources. The assumption was thus that the number of resources would manifest in financial and administrative resources. Some initiatives displaying the resources could be the information work that NFU executes. As addressed in the findings, the secretary goes through an extensive collection of information and facts to assess the context and situation. However, other distinctive observation where the NFU display their resources is not identified by this thesis. I believe that the resources are reflected more in the work NFU does outside of the organization. NFU as an effective lobby organization is an example. Where NFU approach the politicians and political parties to promotes their issues. Thus, the assumption is evident in the work NFU does outside the organization, but not as evident in the participation facilitation. Hence, the assumption that the resources of NFU would be visible in the democratic structure of membership participation is not confirmed. The discussion of the effect of resources in NFSU continues in section 6.2.2.

6.1.3 Facilitation of Participation: Level, Form, Range, and Degree

This section discusses the dimensions of participation. The assumptions presented in section 5.2.3, addressed that the institutional characteristics of NFU are visible in the dimensions discussed here. This would indicate that democratic responsibility and structure would be evident in how participation is facilitated. As discussed above, other institutional characteristics of NFU were identified then the one discussed in the theoretical assumption. Thus, the next section will identify the facilitation of participation and recognize the connection to the institutional characteristics of the organization.

Level

The dimension of *level* display where participation occurs, as formerly addressed, is mainly at the local and county levels. This confirms the theoretical assumption of this thesis that participation mostly takes place at the local level due to the democratic responsibility of NFU. The reason is that the schooling period, where the local and county chapters are vital actors, is the most central segment in the participation process. The members of the local chapters execute

the schooling. The county board, mentioned by several interviewees as the most prominent group in NFU, summarizes the inputs from local chapters. When viewing the annual meeting, the county chapters are the ones that distribute delegates. This may reflect the characteristics of NFU with a democratic structure influenced by the number of members. With a high number of members, it is necessary with representatives who can represent the inputs of a larger group of members. This will be discussed more in the dimension *form*.

External organizations are another level that is not included in the membership participation but still essential in creating the resolution. As discussed in the findings, NFU has two days to listen to external organizations. The reason for this is explained as collecting information and creating networks. As identified in the norms and values, NFU works towards the common best of the framers, and they thus see it as necessary to talk to organizations connected to this field. Since the agricultural industry involves more actors than the members. Several interviewees stated that this is not essential for the democratic structure, but still necessary to look at here in this analysis since it displays that NFU focuses on the room of action, which is a norm founded in the organization. The information gathered is necessary to understand the current context and situation. With this information, may NFU understand the room of action they currently exist in and what interests lead to an agreement, and which do not.

The level of the secretary plays a significant role in gathering information and distributing the schooling booklet. Still, I would argue that the local and county levels are most important when addressing the different levels included. Here, the fundament of the demand is collected and the main focus of the participation process. Thus, connected to the assumption, one may observe a similar pattern here focusing on the local level. Moreover, another assumption was that instrumental characteristics are visible in what levels are included. This is already addressed with norms and rules explaining the levels evident. The normative and rational characteristics display that democratic responsibility is vital, expressed through mainly focusing on the local and county levels.

Form

The *form* in which participation is facilitated is both direct and indirect. Hence, the assumption is visible since NFU displays participation facilitation focused on direct participation. The participation is direct in how the members themselves execute the schooling. The members receive the booklet and questionnaire, and the local chapter members discuss together before

they deliver their opinions. From this point, the inputs are handled and processed by representatives. First by the counties, and then the board oversees and decides what inputs are fronted and promoted. This may be related to the characteristic of NFU, as discussed earlier, where the democratic structures are central but restricted by a high number of members. Thus, it is also related to the assumption that indirect participation is noticeable in NFU. It is central to have some aspects of the participants being direct since the members feel seen and heard, which is also mentioned by some interviewees. Moreover, since it is a common issue for all farmers who will be promoted, the participation is indirect, where representatives are chosen to represent the members and summarize all the inputs.

Indirect participation is evident when looking at the negotiation committee. This group of three representatives is given a resolution with leading conditions to what NFU wants to prioritize. From this point, the negotiation committee is on its own and may discuss and debate with NFSU and the government guided by the resolution but with the flexibility to make compromises. This means the committee has some guidelines to follow but still obtains the room to negotiate. This is related to the norm in NFU with compromises and the room of action. While the resolution is essential to ensure that the inputs of the members are at the center. It is expected and added room in the resolution for the negotiation committee to make eventual considerations that may be needed in the negotiations. Consequently, as assumed, several normative and rational characteristics are also evident when undertraining the form of participation. Since the participation process is direct and indirect reflected by the number of members and compromises.

Range

The range of participation, which indicated the seriousness of an issue, would be serious in the case of NFU and the agricultural settlement. This also relates to this thesis's assumption; that the range would primarily be serious. The seriousness is founded in the organization but also in the lives of the members. Many members are either farmers themselves or connected to farming through family or friends. Thus, the issues discussed and questions answered in the questionnaire concern the livelihood of the members. The interviewees discussed the importance of the settlement to their members. Moreover, it is a severe issue to NFU since the agricultural settlement is one of the main tasks of the organization. Hence, the participation is facilitated to let the members participate in the discussion in the agricultural negotiation. The purpose of NFU is to promote the common interests of the farming industry and maintain the

interest of the local communities. Hence, facilitating participation regarding these issues is natural and beneficial.

The questions in the questionnaire may illustrate what precisely regarding the agricultural settlement the members are able to comment on. As presented in section 5.1.3, the questions asked are primarily multiple-choice and specific and precise. This is similar to how the agricultural settlement is structured, where much of the discussion is about prices, numbers, and details. As discussed, the room of action and democratic structure are also related to this way of facilitating participation. This is similar to the second assumption regarding range that this dimension would be concerned with compromises and negotiations. Members may give their inputs through the questionnaire created within the room of action since the questions reflect the discussion topics during the agricultural settlement. In this sense, the range of participation is high since the questions in the questionnaire are directly connected to the negotiations. This is related to the intuitional characteristic in NFU where the room of action is vital. In this sense, the assumption is relevant since the institutional characteristics also influence the range of participation.

Degree

The fourth dimension is *degree*, which illustrates how much a member may affect the decisions being made. The stages are defined in the escalator of participation; information, communication, consultation, co-determination, and control. The assumption is that NFU displays a high degree of participation because of the democratic responsibility of NFU. This thesis will thus go through the different steps in the escalator of participation to uncover what steps are included in NFU. The step of *information* is illustrated in that members are informed of the decisions made, the agricultural settlement, and topics of interest. This is apparent in the schooling period, where the members receive information about the agricultural settlement and the topics they should discuss. The information continues throughout the process. Even when the negotiation committee is negotiating with NFSU and the government, the information they are allowed to spread is sent to the county leaders and the local chapters. *Communication* is also a stage visible in facilitating participation since the whole process concerns communication between the different levels. From members to local chapters, county chapters, supervisory council, board, then the negotiation committee, and reversed.

The *consulting* stage is primarily evident in the schooling period, where members are consulted to give their input on the topics and issues of the agricultural settlement. External organizations are also apparent in this stage, where they may discuss and share their insights on the settlement. The next stage is *codetermination* which is identified as evident within section 6.1.2 with the discussion of the dimension form. The members are part of the process by giving inputs and electing the representatives to represent them in the decision-making through the annual meeting and negotiation committee. Additionally, external organizations are included in the decision-making since they are part of the supervisory council and have the right to vote during the annual meeting. The last stage is *control*, and in the case of negotiations thus the members have control since the negotiations and creation of the demand is executed by representatives. While the members do not have complete control of the decision-making, NFU still has facilitated the participation process in a way that the members have some control. One example is that the members may elect a new board at the annual meeting if they are not pleased with the result. Thus, they are able to make changes to the structure of the organization if it is desirable.

Consequently, this thesis concludes that participation in NFU is between consulting and control on the escalator of participation. The degree is thus high and displays democratic features. This is correlated to the theoretical assumption that the degree would be high mainly reflecting the democratic responsibility.

6.2 Norwegian Smallholders and Farmers Union

6.2.1 Normative Characteristics

Normative institutionalism is utilized, where norms and values are recognized to explain the behavior of the institution. At the same time, the collection of norms, values, understandings, and routines is more challenging to identify than financial numbers. Some characteristics have been vital in the interviews and documents when explaining the choices and behavior of NFSU. These factors have also been visible throughout history, most likely displaying norms and values developed over time. The three normative characteristics which will be discussed here is thus democratic responsibility, grassroots, and principled. In this sense, the theoretical assumptions addressed are visible in these characteristics. Since as assumed, the characteristics of NFSU of the past would be observable in the current norms and values of the organization.

The first assumption was that democratic responsibility would be rooted as a vital normative characteristic in NFSU. This is evident in the participation process, where everybody is allowed to say speak freely. This is displayed in their schooling period and questionnaire, which is the foundation of the demand NFSU presents in the agricultural negotiations. NFSU provides room for members and others to give their input and thoughts. As addressed in the findings, the reason is to create a space where individuals and actors feel included and part of a democratic process. Thus, a democratic process where the identities can take part in the process and answer questions they are concerned about. The importance of the schooling period is further proved by the changes made. The schooling period was moved to create more time to work through the inputs before the national meeting. A second part was included, which reflect on the importance of schooling period and feedbacks from the local chapters. Because the participation process was extended rather than decreased. This confirms the theoretical assumption that democratic responsibility is visible through the democratic role they play in society. This is further visible in forming ideas and interests related to the agricultural field, which was another theoretical assumption. Not only are the inputs from the members necessary, but NFSU also collects inputs from external organizations as actors from the market and other who would like to be involved.

The second characterization is the value of the grassroots, which in this analysis is understood as the core of ideas and the inclusion of all people. This characteristic was not addressed in this thesis when discussing theoretical assumptions. This displays another direction than the assumption mentioned above, where this thesis believed NFSU would collect inputs from the agricultural field. While the input from the agricultural field is at the center of ideas and interests in NFSU, other actors are also invited into the participation process. As discussed in the findings, the schooling period is open to people who are not members to take part in the discussion. When NFSU receives inputs from external organizations, they further want all organizations to take part, even though they are not directly connected to the agricultural field. This is because they believe that everyone should have the opportunity to speak about the agricultural settlement if they are concerned about it. Including other identities and actors, displays that when NFSU invites the grassroots it does not signify only the members of NFSU but beyond the organization. The grassroots is for everyone with an interest in the agricultural settlement. Thus, the assumption that the ideas and interests of actors within the agricultural field are less significant than assumed. Instead, the collection of inputs is still regarding agrarian topics but from actors within and outside the agricultural industry.

A third assumption is that the normative characteristic principled is vital in NFSU, and this is reflected on the principles rooted in the main documents in the organization. When asked about the norms and values, several interviewees mentioned the core documents of NFSU. This is related to one normative characteristic of NFSU, their political beliefs founded in their core documents. These include the principle and political platforms, which are directional when forming the inputs to a demand. When the organization is going to compromise the inputs and create a demand, the politics of the organization is the most essential. As mentioned in their principle platform; Collaborate with other organizations when the collaboration promotes the purpose and is in line with the principle platform (NFSU, 2021c, p. 1). Connected to this as presented in Chapter 5.0 Findings, several interviewees also mentioned that their politics is prioritized and vital to the organization. Thus, I identify their principles and the importance of their core documents as a norm and values in NFSU. This confirms the assumption that principles are evident in tasks and topics presented in the organization.

Related to the logic of appropriateness, the political view also influences the members of the organization. The interviewees stated that most of the inputs from the members are easily summarized since the majority is in line with the political beliefs. Thus, one could believe that the members continuously uphold the political principles, and their behavior relates to the norms and values of the organization. The consequences regarding themselves are less vital if their action conforms with the organization. Since NFSU has founded a noticeable political belief in society over time, one could assume that the identities that take part in NFSU already agree with the political viewpoint. Hence, further strengthens the already established norms and values in NFSU. One of the respondents similarly stated that when becoming a member of NFSU they often already agree with the politics.

6.2.2 Rational Characteristics

While normative characteristics are essential to understand the behavior of institutions, the rational choice perspective is also utilized to recognize how rules and incentives restrict the behavior of the members. An assumption of the rational characteristics in NFSU is the democratic feature where inputs from members are collected. This assumption is recognized in the purpose clause of the organization; “NFSU is a professional and industrial political organization, which aims to promote the professional, cultural, social and economic interests of people in agriculture” (NFSU, 2021c, p. 1). This purpose clause is founded in the laws of

NFSU, thus telling us something about the restrictions of the members. The support of the agricultural field is established as a structural feature of NFSU. In this sense, the collective preferences of the composite actors are supported by the leadership. These composite actors, or the members of NFSU, have collective preferences for improving the agricultural field. A bottom-up strategy is thus necessary to capture the essence of the collective preferences.

As assumed, this is reflected in the structure of NFSU. First of all, through the annual meeting, a place where members may voice their issues and cases, which the organization then follows up if the majority of the organization agrees. As discussed in the context and findings, the structure of the national meeting is rooted on the local level. While not everyone can participate in the national meeting and vote, all the local chapters have at least one representative. The local chapters send delegates, and they are the only ones that has the right to vote. The national meeting is mentioned by several members as vital for suggesting and deciding on issues and topics which are prominent in the demand of NFSU in the agricultural settlement. This is one way that NFSU continues to promote the voices of the grassroots and give them the power to have a deciding voice followed throughout the participation process. This democratic structure is also visible in the participation process, further discussed in section 6.2.2.

Another assumption is that the number of members in NFSU influences the democratic structure. Since the organization is smaller, would this thesis assume to see more extensive ideas included and direct participation than in NFU. As addressed above, this is visible in the national meeting, where delegates from the local chapters can participate. This indicates a direct form of participation even though only some participate. Moreover, the inclusion of extensive and broad questions are visible in the questionnaire. Rather than distributing multiple-choice questions, the questions are more open and thus possible to give more comprehensive answers. This would likely be difficult if the number of local chapters was much higher. With open questions in the questionnaire, the structure of NFSU is less restrictive for the members in the case of schooling. The questions are open and thus the members may answer without established guidelines. In this sense, the structure of NFSU is less guiding and restricting in the questionnaire. The members being less restricted by the organization is also evident in the annual meeting where only the local chapters may vote. Moreover, evident in the resolutions where board oversees some issues the negotiation committee may not discuss entirely on their own. In this sense, the members are less restricted by the structure which was not an assumption made by this thesis. A less restricting structure is still suitable with the democratic structure

since the power lies with the members, and the organization has fewer members thus easier to have an effective direct representation.

The assumption, regarding the limited number of resources, addressed that this limitation probably impacted the structure of NFSU. This assumption is visible in the findings, where some interviewees discussed that there is never enough staff. This is confirmed and displayed in the schooling where an interviewee stated that they do not know everything and thus need the members to contribute with eventual solutions and alternatives. This correlates with why the questionnaire is structured with open and reflective questions. On the other hand, the participation process has recently been extended to a greater process. That NFSU facilitates an extended participation process compared to NFU is not addressed by the theoretical assumption. But might display that the democratic aspiration of NFSU is of greater impact than restricted resources. It may also reflect that the capabilities of participant influence the capacity of the organization, as addressed in section 2.3. Thus, since the members of NFSU are active and engaged. The participation process of NFSU rather creates energy than limiting it. The number of resources is moreover reflected in the work outside of the organization. NFU displays their resources by being an effective lobby organization. NFSU does not have the same capacity to lobby as NFU, and their contact with the politicians is rather based on the personnel and representatives involved. Thus, the assumption that the resources would reflect the participation process is not confirmed, but rather visible in the work NFSU does outside of the membership participation process.

6.2.3 Facilitation of Participation: Level, Form, Range, and Degree

Further are the dimensions of participation addressed in this discussion. The assumptions of these dimensions were mainly that they reflect the institutional characteristics of NFSU. Additionally, the thesis assumed that democratic responsibility would be visible in the facilitation or participation. Moreover, there are more characteristics identified in section 6.2.1 which is also included in this section. The section below thus looks at the characteristics of the different dimensions and how they are connected to the normative and rational characteristics of NFSU.

Level

Level indicates the location where the participation takes place in the organization. The membership participation is facilitated in a manner that focuses on the local level. This is related to the assumption that the local level is the most evident in the levels of participation. This is proven through the schooling period, which is the basis of the demand of NFSU. The booklet and questionnaire are discussed and answered in the local chapters. Further, the county boards summarize the inputs from the local chapters and support them forward in the process. It should also be mentioned that some interviewees stated that the distance between the bottom and top levels is short. A local chapter member may call the board and speak to them. This displays that even though a member is located at the bottom, it is not difficult to communicate with the representatives higher up. Likely this is also a reflection of the size of the organization. Since NFSU is considered a smaller organization, cross-communication is more feasible. The distance between the level at the bottom and the top of the organization was not established as an assumption but still reflects the democratic responsibility of the organization.

The local chapter is vital in the participation process and the national meeting. It is described in the section above that the structure mirrors the norms in the organization. Members have the opportunity to take part in the national meeting themselves and not be represented by a county representative. This strengthens the norm of the grassroots in NFSU and proves that they facilitate participation where the location is mainly at the local level. A further discussion of direct and indirect involvement will be elaborated on when discussing the dimension form in the next section. It is significant to recognize that the delegates from the local chapters are the only ones with the right to vote, the only level in the national meeting with the power to make decisions.

Another level to acknowledge is external organizations and market regulators. As presented in the findings, NFSU collects inputs from external actors which are included in the demand. These organizations may consist of everybody with an opinion on the agricultural settlement. These are mainly included to gather information, and as the market representative addressed: they are not part of making any resolution. The board is also a central level apparent in the participation process. The board creates and distributes the schooling booklet, and oversees the negotiation committee in the agricultural settlement.

In this sense are the assumptions visible in regarding the levels. The democratic structure is apparent and is centralized around mainly the local level. Other characteristics are also evidential, like the grassroots and number of members, when reflecting the level of participation.

Form

The participation *form* may be either direct or indirect, and the facilitation of participation in NFSU has both included. Participation is direct because, as with NFU, the members are able to participate directly by responding to the questionnaire. But the inputs are handled by the county chapters, secretary, and board before creating the demand. Several interviewees displayed that it is essential for the members to give their meaning and input on topics and solutions. Thus, it is necessary with a direct form of participation where the desire to participate is met. As mentioned above, the national meeting is a situation where the members can participate directly in what concerns and issues will be significant in the agricultural settlement. While not all members of a local chapter can vote in the meeting, this thesis still considers the form direct considering that the local chapter represents themselves and are the only ones with the right to vote. This is related to the assumption that the participation is primarily direct. Direct participation is the most essential part of membership participation. This reflects on the characteristics of NFSU which are centralized around the grassroot and democratic responsibility. It is essential to NFSU that the members as the foundation of the organization, may influence and decide the discussion.

Still, indirect participation is part of the participation as well. 6.500 members cannot all take part in the agricultural negotiations. Therefore, several aspects of participation facilitation are also indirect. There are many different inputs and a need to summarize and condense them into one demand that the negotiation committee will negotiate with NFU and the government. These three delegates represent the rest of the organization and have received a mandate concerning what topics and issues to discuss. Still, as discussed in the findings, the negotiation committee may have to check with the board during the negotiations. Thus, when negotiating the demand and proposals, the participation is less indirect since the negotiation committee does not have total independence to make their own decisions. Similar to the assumption, this display that NFSU has more direct participation than NFU. However, the negotiation committee, which indirectly represents the members, has less power and flexibility in the negotiations than the negotiation committee of NFU.

Range

The *range* of participation in NFSU, the seriousness of issues, is relatively high. The assumption expected similarly with the severity of issues begin high. Many of the topics discussed concern whether farmers may continue farming. The participation is thus facilitated to incorporate this range of participation. The schooling period concerns the agricultural industry and how it needs to evolve. As discussed in the findings, the questions asked to the members are open and complicated, hence demanding discussion and reflection. The questions concern solutions and how one may change the structure and system. In this manner, the seriousness is high since it concerns the structure of the industry. As mentioned by the interviewees, the members are very active and have strong opinions on these topics. This is why the questions are asked in this manner, to enable the members to contribute concerning the issues that matter to them. This reflects on the rational characteristics that there are few resources and thus beneficial with support from the members. As formerly discussed, the members in NFSU are helpful to the organization as a resource because of their activism. Moreover, it reflects the power which lies with the members. They are part of discussing vital topics and issues which are part of defining the politics of the organization.

The questions are not directly connected to NFSU being principles, which is an assumption of this thesis. Still, the principles are recognized in range through what guides the prioritization and creation of the demand. The inputs central to the summary are the ones aligned with the core beliefs of NFSU. This is also similar to the inputs from the external organization. Their inputs are essential since they contribute with information about topics and solutions that NFSU is looking for. As discussed in the findings, the inputs supporting the principal platform are the most vital to NFSU. This indicates that the range of seriousness for the external organization is restricted to what concerns NFSU politically. While issues concerning NFSU may be considered serious since they are part of their politics in the agricultural settlement. It is still limiting regarding issues outside of the scope of their political principles. One might also discuss if the seriousness of participation is lower since the topics are unrelated to the agricultural settlement. Regarding that the issues go beyond what is discussed in the agricultural settlement. One of the respondents mentioned similarly that the NFSU goes beyond the state, in the sense that they discuss issues ten years ahead of the government. Hence, how serious the issues discussed in NFSU are, may be related to if NFU and government can agree on the importance of these issues. As assumed, the characteristic of principled was evident in the dimension range. The democratic responsibility is also apparent through discussing topics that

concern the members. In that sense, the assumption that characteristics reflect on the range is noticeable.

Degree

The last dimension *degree* stretches from information to control. This thesis assumes that NFSU displays a high degree of participation established in their democratic responsibility. The first step is *information*, which is a central part of facilitating participation. The spread of information is throughout the year and starts after the agricultural settlement. Most of the information about the process is spread through the schooling booklet and their newspaper. As discussed above, NFSU wants the negotiations to be more open and incorporate the information stage into a section of the agricultural settlement that is not established in the current situation. The second stage is *communication*, which is significant in NFSU since there is short distance between the different levels. A situation that reflects this, as mentioned in the findings, is that a member of the local chapter may call a board member to discuss a case. The distance between the levels is small, and the communication thus goes through short distances.

The third state is *consulting*, which is crucial in the schooling period where all members are consulted. The members are also consulted in the national meeting and throughout the process. Also, the negotiation committee at times is required to consult the board. *Coordination* is another stage which is through choosing representatives, this stage is already discussed in the dimension form. The external organizations are allowed in the consulting phase but not as apparent when consulting, which is displayed in how they are not part of creating the mandate for the negotiation committee. The last stage is *control*, where in making the demand and negotiating with the state, NFSU is primarily apparent through representatives. In contrast, it should be stated that the local chapters have the power to make decisions in the annual meeting. The issues decided there will be relevant for the rest of the participation process. In this manner, the members have some control. The board, which is several elected members of NFSU, has some control over the negotiation committee since the mandate might be restricted to some issues or topics.

As assumed, the degree of participation is high and, like NFU, between coordination and control. This thesis considers NFSU to display more characteristics of control than NFU in the instance of membership participation. Because the negotiation committee is connected to the board more than in NFU. On the other hand, one could say that the negotiation committee of

NFU is in more control than NFSU. Since the committee has more power and flexibility in the negotiations.

6.3 Advancing Different Ideas; Agreement or Breach?

The last section will discuss if different values in NFU and NFSU influence the different interests the organizations are advancing. The theoretical assumption is that the differences in values between NFU and NFSU reflect the advancement of interests. As formerly established, values in NFU are based on promoting the common issues of the farmers in Norway through a democratic process but recognizing that the negotiations exist in a restricted room of action. Contradictory, NFSU has values founded in promoting the grassroots through a democratic process, and they are concerned with their already established political principles. To what degree these values influence advancing interests will be discussed in this section. First, it should be stated that both organizations are concerned with the democratic responsibility and the voices of the members. Both organizations were founded to support farmers and the issues that matter to them, and these concerns are still vital to NFU and NFSU. As addressed in the theoretical assumptions, democratic responsibility is not a value that differs between NFU and NFSU. Therefore, it will not be further discussed in this section as a different value. However, compromises and principled are values that differ between the organization and those were assumed in the theory chapter. Other values that differ are common interests and grassroots, and these values were not assumed by this thesis. But is discussed and recognized as significant values through this analysis. Thus, the assumption is that the different values of NFU and NFSU influence advancing different interests.

Advancing different interests in this thesis is mainly understood through the results of the agricultural settlement. The issues which are promoted by NFU and NFSU change each year. Some years prioritize the cattle industry and other years are concerned with the agricultural industry in the west of Norway. However, some similarities are seen throughout the different settlements. The interests advanced by NFU are more often part of an agreement with the government, and the advanced interests of NFSU more often end in a breach. It is necessary to identify the facilitation process in NFU and NFSU to recognize how values might influence forming the advanced interests in the agricultural settlement. To understand to what extent the values influence the interests advanced.

Regarding NFU, the values are about compromises and common interests. As discussed, the inputs from the members were collected based on topics and questions directly addressed in the agricultural settlement. The external organization contributes to and has a vote in the resolution made by being part of the supervisory council. This influences what NFU promotes in the agricultural settlement; it is the ideas of the members in a situated context of external interests. This reflects the values, as discussed, that NFU supports the common issues of farmers in Norway within the existing limits. Since not all farmers are members of the organization, listening to other organizations and knowing the current limitations is necessary. This is displayed in several segments, many of which are already discussed. Still, a clear connection is that the core documents of NFU is the political market program which is vital when creating the demand. This program is utilized to acknowledge that the issues take time to achieve. Also, the name of the program is an acknowledgment of what is of the essence, the political and financial context.

In NFSU, the values concern the political principles central to the organization and the grassroots. The ideas collected are more concerned with the greater question, like how one may execute and achieve different ambitions. The ideas and what the members want are vital, and NFSU is less concerned with the limited room of action. NFSU also collects information about interests outside of NFSU, but these interests are utilized to support the already established ideas within the organization. In this sense, the ideas of the members are formed within the context of internal interests. The ideas are affected by the core principles of the organization, which are established in their core documents. These principles are also noticeable in what ideas and interests are advanced by NFSU in the agricultural settlement. There are some issues that NFSU will never compromise on since they are vital to the organization. Additionally, the negotiation committee does not have a mandate in the agricultural settlement as with NFU. With needing to check with the board on different topics, NFSU does weigh their principles higher than letting the negotiation committee engage within the room of action. This reflects the values apparent in NFSU, the grassroot and their core principles.

To further discuss to what extent different values contribute to NFU and NFSU advancing different interests, one might argue that this is correct to a large degree. As established, while some values are similar, there exist different core values in NFU and NFSU. Both organizations in the participation facilitating have similar structures when forming ideas and interests, which might be connected to their aspiration toward a democratic process. But what guides and directs

the advancing of interest in the two organizations differs. The room of action guides NFU, and NFSU is directed by the political principles within their own organization. The agricultural settlement of 2023 is an example that correlates with this interpretation. NFU and NFSU could not agree on a common demand, and several newspapers said that this incident was because NFSU wanted to review the numerical basis, while NFU disagreed. In this sense, NFU acknowledges and accepts the room of action. Contradictory, NFSU is more concerned with whether the facts presented benefit the agricultural industry, and thus does not have the same belief in the established structure and system. As stated by the newspaper Nationen; «Radical rebel spirit crashes with belief in the systemic structure, (over)optimism against pragmatism. Strictly speaking, they both benefit from hassling with each other» (Ekornholmen, 2023).

Therefore, different values in some way contribute to advancing different interests in the agricultural settlement. Additionally, essential to recognize that other factors influence what interests are advanced by the organizations. The size and number of members are vital, NFU has a distinctive higher number of members, and it is thus natural that interests are easier to process than many different ideas. Moreover, NFSU has noticeably fewer members which are less restricted by the structure of the organization. Thus, the interests advanced is also influenced by the ideas and interests of the members. Since the members often become members because of the politics established. Consequently, the interest of the members will continue to be centralized around the politics of NFSU. Even though other factors may influence the advancement of different interests, the discussion above displays that values are at least one vital factor that influences. This is also in line with normative institutionalism, built on the idea that values and norms affect the behavior of organizations. Moreover, there are many similarities between the values of NFU and NFSU and the interest advanced in the agricultural settlement. Further, the participation process is part of explaining how values influence advanced interests. With this understanding, this thesis consider the correlation between values and advancing interests to be evident to a large degree in the case of NFU and NFSU.

7 CONCLUSION

Conclusively, this thesis will answer first the three research sub-questions, before addressing the main research question. Then discuss theoretical reflections. At last present and reflect on further research.

7.1 Key Findings

The first sub-question asked: *What are the characteristics of NFU and NFSU regarding structure, norms, and values?* A theoretical assumption of this thesis was that the current normative characteristics in NFU and NFSU are similar to characteristics apparent throughout history. Because norms and values are strengthened over time and through new and established members. This was confirmed by identifying normative characteristics in NFU as democratic responsibility, common interest and compromise because of the room of action. While the normative characteristics in NFSU were identified as democratic responsibility, grassroot, and core principles. The rational characteristics are identified in the rules and structure of the organizations. The assumption was that both structures would display democratic features, which was displayed through a structural focus on the members and inputs. Another assumption was that the number of members and resources would influence NFU and NFSU. This was recognized through the data collected, where NFU concentrated more on the common inputs and indirect participation and NFSU utilized their members as a resource. However, the data did display that the members in NFU were more restricted by the structure than the members in NFSU which had more power. This thesis identified this as a connection to the distinctions between common versus grassroot, and the number of members.

The second sub-question regarded: *How do NFU and NFSU facilitate member participation regarding level, form, range, and degree?* As discussed in theoretical assumptions in the theory chapter, an expectation was that the participation facilitation would be high regarding the different dimensions of participation. The findings presented displayed a similar trend for both organizations, where the dimensions addressed illustrate similar patterns. *Level* was rooted mainly at the local level, with including external actors connected to the agricultural field. *Form* is direct with the schooling and indirect with the negotiation committee. *Range* is serious in both organizations, but also different in the sense that NFU discusses more specific and numerical issues while NFSU discusses solutions and structure. As assumed are both NFU and NFSU high in the escalator of participation regarding *degree*, between codetermination and

control. One could presume that the facilitation of membership participation is more towards control in NFSU than NFU. Based on the aspect that the resolution to the negotiation committee is restricted in NFSU, in the sense that the committee might need to go back to the board in the negotiations. While the members are in more control in NFSU, one could also make the statement that the negotiation committee in NFU has more control since they have greater room to discuss with the state and NFSU.

The third sub-question addressed: *To what extent do different values contribute to NFU and NFSU advancing different interests?* The participation process reflects on the democratic responsibility NFU and NFSU have in society. They negotiate with the state and try to influence the outcome of the agreement. In that sense, the organizations advance different interests formed throughout the participation process. As established are NFU and NFSU recognized as different organizations with different interest. The analysis displayed that there is a connection between the values and interests advanced. As assumed, in NFU are the advanced interests more in accordance with the government in negotiations, and a higher number of times agrees on the settlement. This is in relation to the values established that compromising with the room of action is central and in that sense is more concerned with external political and economic interests. Similar to the assumption, NFSU displayed the advanced interests to be more principled, and a higher number of times disagreed with the state in the agricultural settlement. This is connected to their values that their principles and political view are significant, and do not make compromises on these principles either internal or external of the organization. Thus, the different values to a great degree influence the advancement of different interests in the case of NFU and NFSU in the agricultural settlement.

Thus, the main question is; *How do NFU and NFSU facilitate membership participation in forming ideas and interests in the agricultural settlement?* Overall, this thesis answers that the participation process in forming ideas and interests is facilitated regarding the institutional characteristics of NFU and NFSU. Both organizations base their facilitation on a responsibility towards a democratic process where the inputs of the members are at the center. NFU concentrates more on the common interest of the members. NFSU is concerned with the vision of the grassroots within and external of the organization. Ideas are formed by members answering questions with different degrees of openness. This also includes external actors which are included mainly to provide information and networking. Interests are formed based on inputs mainly from the members with guidance and directions. NFU are more concerned

with compromising, what is possible within the room of action. NFSU is more concerned with their principles and changing the structure of the system. The norms, values and structure of the organizations are vital to the explanation of this facilitation. While the number of members and resources also influence the facilitation.

Correspondingly, NFU facilitates a participation process where the summary of members' ideas is collected and then shaped by external interest. This implies that the facilitation is built on a democratic responsibility where ideas and interests of members and external actors are collected, moreover are these inputs formed by the room of action. This happens throughout the process and has implications on what topics are discussed and how to prioritize. How it is facilitated thus corresponds with the instrumental characteristics of NFU, democratic responsibility, and compromising. Simply, this thesis state that the interests NFU presents in the agriculture settlement are ideas formed by external interests. On the other hand, NFSU facilitates membership participation by collecting ideas from the grassroots, and these are shaped by the internal interests of NFSU. This implies that the facilitation is built on a democratic responsibility where ideas from many actors are collected and shaped by the core principles of NFSU. These principles are essential for the topic discussed and how to prioritize. How it is facilitated thus corresponds with the instrumental characteristics of NFSU, democratic responsibility, and core principles. Simply, this thesis state that the interests NFSU present in the agriculture settlement are ideas formed by internal interests.

Regarding the conclusions drawn, it is vital to also include some theoretical reflections. In this thesis normative and rational institutionalism have been utilized to explain the behavior of the institution. When the interviewees were asked about the reason for the behavior of the institution, most of the interviewees in the same organizations answered similarly. This reflects the logic of appropriateness; the members have the same perception of the organization. The interviewees do not go against the established norms and values. It is thus essential to remember that there might exist some elements or details that were not acknowledged. Moreover, it is important to recognize another limitation in normative and rational institutionalism, the difficulty of falsifying. This indicates that no matter what the empirical findings display, one can argue that the behavior observed is connected to normative or rational characteristics in some way. This could indicate that there are other explanations which would be possible for the behavior of the institutions. Even though, I would state that there is an explanation through the connection between instrumental characteristics and facilitation of participation. This is

illustrated through the many connections between history, data, and the current situation where rational and normative recognize similar patterns.

7.2 Further Research

This research has given insights into the facilitation of membership participation on the meso-level. It would thus be fruitful to do research which concentrates on the individual level, which in this case would be the members of NFU and NFSU. While this thesis may explain why the choice of participation is made, it does not explain how participation is perceived by the actors involved. Moreover, it does not cover if the members and actors feel represented, if they perceive their role as influential or if there is a mismatch in any way between the individual and meso-level. These concerns would be interesting to look at and could tell us if the process is perceived as democratic by the members. And if the norms and values of an institution reflects the norms and values of the individuals. As mentioned by several of the respondents, that including individuals in the membership participation is at times difficult. To further research this it would be necessary to look at the individual level to understand why certain members do not participate and what could contribute to a higher participation.

Other further research could concentrate on other interest originations which differ more than NFU and NFSU. Even though these organizations are different in several aspects as size, resources, and values, they both are still concerned with the same topic and have members with similar concerns. Looking at another interest organization with a democratic role in society, but in another field would be interesting. In this sense research if the interest organization also is influenced by norms, values, and structure in the same sense as NFU and NFSU or if other variables are more important. This kind of organization could be another union to compare with this element of NFU and NFSU, or another interest organization. This would be interesting to include since the participation process in NFU and NFSU are similar in structure and segments. Moreover, this could become a comparative study with to other organizations. This could give information about if the similarities between NFU and NFSU are because of the role in the agricultural settlement, similar norms and values, same field, and members etc., or something else.

Lastly, the effects of the so-called farmer rebellion would be an interesting topic of research. Based on the interviews conducted in this thesis, the farmer rebellion seemed to be a reason for a shift in the debate of the agricultural field. The interviewees gave the perception of the debate to become sharper and more serious. Not only has the overall debate shifted course, but changes are seen in NFSU especially. Their new leader Tor Jacob Solberg was formerly involved with NFU, and one of the founders of the farmer rebellion in 2021 (NFSU, 2022b). Some also state that NFSU is going through radicalization because of the farmer rebellion. The agricultural settlement of 2023, where NFU and NFSU could not agree on a common demand, could be the start of this radicalization. These are points that were outside of the scope of research for this thesis, but which would be an interesting topic for further research.

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9 APPENDIX

9.1 Interview Guide

- What roles/positions do you have in the NFU/NFSU? And how long have you been in these positions?
- What are your roles/tasks regarding membership participation and the agricultural settlement since 2020?
- How does the organization decide which topics/issues are relevant in the member participation processes?
- Briefly explain the idea behind the formation of the member participation. And why the organization has selected to design the participation process in this way?
- Which voices or interests does the organization think are most important in the member participation process?
- Which part of the organization is most central in member participation?
- Towards the formation of the primary demand, how may the members influence the most through?
- How are the speed dates important for the participation process?
- How involved are the market regulators (Norwegian agricultural cooperative)?
- How is the process of gathering all the input into the primary demand? And what are the biggest challenges?
- Over the years, are there any interests that are particularly emphasized in the formation of the demand?
- What or who does the organization want to represent through its demand?
- How is the relationship and contact with politicians and the government?
- Which values are central to the organization, and do the members share these values?
- The questionnaire contains multiple-choice questions with quite concrete and detailed questions, what is the idea behind this? And do many people answer "other"?
- NFU is a large organization with many members, how does this affect how participation is facilitated?
- How has the change in the schooling period been?
- The questions related to the schooling booklet are quite open and complicated to the extent that you cannot answer yes or no. Why are the questions designed in this way and what is the response from the members?

- How is the participation affected by that the members are highly engaged and have high expectations of the organization?
- What are the biggest differences you notice between taking part in the supervisory council at NFU and NFSU?
- Is the market regulator recognized and acknowledged more in one of the organizations? Why or why not?
- Have there been any changes in how you facilitate the participation process between 2020 and 2023? What changes are we talking about? What was the reason for this change?

9.2 Information Letter for Interview Respondents

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

«Medlemsdeltakelse i interesseorganisasjoner»

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å se på medlemsdeltakelsen i Norsk Bonde- og Småbrukarlag (NBS) og Norges Bondelag (NB). I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Dette forskningsprosjekt er en del av min masteroppgave. Formålet med prosjektet er se på medlemsdeltakelsen i NB og NBS opp mot jordbruksoppkjøret i 2020 til 2023.

Problemstillingene i masteroppgaven omfatter å avklare hvordan NB og NBS tilrettelegger for medlemsdeltakelsen. Ved å se på dette ønsker jeg å oppnå en større forståelse for hvorfor tilretteleggelsen av deltakelse er utformet som den er, og hva som kan forklare den valgte tilretteleggelsen. Videre hvordan NB og NBS har en demokratisk rolle i det norske samfunnet, og fungerer som en demokratisk institusjon som fremmer interesser og ideene til sine medlemmer.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Instituttet for politikk og forvaltning ved Universitetet i Bergen er institusjonen som er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du blir spurt om å delta siden du har sittet eller sitter i en posisjon som gjør at du har kunnskap om medlemsdeltakelses prosessene i din organisasjon. Andre som har blitt spurt er flere fra din organisasjon og andre sentrale posisjoner fra den andre bondeorganisasjonen. Til sammen er det snakk om 8-14 stykker som har blitt spurt.

Kontaktopplysningene dine har jeg enten selv funnet på nett eller ved å ta kontakt med din tilhørende organisasjon.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at man deltar på et intervju. Det vil ta deg rundt 30-45 minutter. Intervjuet inneholder spørsmål om din organisasjons tilretteleggelse av medlemsdeltakelse opp mot jordbruksoppkjøret i 2020 til 2023. Videre generelt om medlemmene og strukturene i organisasjonen. Dine svar fra intervjuet blir tatt opp på lydopptak og transkribert.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det

vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Opplysningene vil bare jeg ha tilgang til, i tillegg til veileder. Ingen andre ved eller utenfor universitetet har tilgang til opplysningene. Tiltakene som blir gjennomført for å sikre at ingen uvedkommende får tilgang til ditt navn og kontaktopplysninger, er å erstatte dette med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data. Alt materiale blir også lagret på en sky hvor bare jeg har tilgang.

Informasjonen som blir publisert om deg er hvilken organisasjon du er tilknyttet, enten Norges Bondelag eller Norsk Bonde- og Småbrukarlag. Videre kan også stilling, verv eller posisjon bli publisert som betyr at det er en mulighet for at du kan gjenkjennes.

Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?

Prosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes 1.juni 2023. Etter prosjektslutt vil datamaterialet med dine personopplysninger slettes. Det som slettes er dermed lydopptak av intervju, og alle dokumenter med eventuelle personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Institutt ved politikk og forvaltning ved Universitetet i Bergen, og NSD har Personverntjenester vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Institutt for politikk og forvaltning ved Emma Holen (e-mail) eller veileder Arild Aurvåg Farsund (e-mail)

Vårt personvernombud:

- Personvernombud ved UiB: Janecke Helene Veim

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til Personverntjenester sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- Personverntjenester på epost (personverntjenester@sikt.no) eller på telefon: 53 21 15 00.

Med vennlig hilsen

Arild Aurvåg Farsund
(Veileder)

Emma Holen

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *Medlemsdeltakelse i Interesseorganisasjoner*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- Å delta i *intervju*
- At opplysninger om meg publiseres slik at jeg kan gjenkjennes gjennom en beskrivelse av min rolle og posisjon i NB/NBS
- Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

9.2 Table 1: Overview of Documents

Author	Document Type	Date	Information
NFU	Schooling booklet (4 documents)	2020-2023	Information about the schooling process
NFU	Questionnaire from schooling (2 documents)	2022-2023	Questions asked in schooling period
NFU	Annual Report (2 documents)	2020-2021	Background information about the organization
NFU	Laws	2019	Information about the structure and values of the organization
NFU	Settlement Guide (4 documents)	2019-2022	Background information
NFU	Training Booklet	2020	Information about the schooling process
NFU	Political Market Program 2020-2024	2020	Guiding program of the organization
NFSU	Laws	2021	Information about the structure and values of the organization
NFSU	Principle Platform	2021	Guiding program of the organization
NFSU	Political Platform	2020	Guiding program of the organization
NFSU	Annual report (2 documents)	2020-2021	Background information about the organization
NFSU	Schooling booklet (5 documents)	2020-2023	Information about the schooling process

9.3 Table 2: Overview of Interviews

Organization	Interviewee	Date	Minutes
NFSU	Board	07.02.23	01:02:48
NFU	Secretary	16.02.23	38:19
NFU	Secretary	16.02.23	58:46
NFSU	Secretary	23.02.23	59:55
NFU	Board	02.03.23	53:16
NFSU	Board	07.03.23	50:07
NFU/NFSU	Supervisory Council (Market Regulator)	22.03.23	17:07
NFU	Supervisory Council (County Leader)	29.03.23	45:25