Exploring the Role of Regional Parties in the Nordic Autonomies: Why Entrenched Self-Government Matters

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Abstract

In this article we combine two traditions within political science: regional party research and self-government research. The reason behind this rationale is to show that mobilization of the electorate is solely in the hands of regional parties in the three autonomous islands under investigation: the Faroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands. We use most similar systems design as an approach to look at how the different party systems have evolved over time. The degree of entrenched self-rule has been different over time but is now on a similar level. The background variables that have been held constant in this context are the population size and the degree of a distinct culture and language, which emanates from a homogenous population on the islands. A distinct party system can evolve exclusively around a national parliament and an entrenched regional assembly. In our study regional parties are members of both. Self-government has a severe impact on the birth of regional parties, and their incumbents serve in the first instance as agents for the regional government in national parliaments. In this study we have chosen to look at the impact of entrenched self-government on regional parties and regional party systems. Self-government facilitates birth of new parties, and when the devolved government is well consolidated it gives fuel to the emergence of a distinct full-scale party system.

Keywords

Regional parties, self-government, population size, language/cultural homogeneity, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, the Åland Islands

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1. Introduction

Generally, regional and national parties compete for seats in the regional parliaments, which is the case in Catalonia and Scotland for instance. However, the mobilization of the electorate in the Nordic autonomies is solely in the hands of regional parties who are late-comers in these ethnically homogenous self-ruled territories. The aim of this paper is to explain how a limited numerical representation in national parliaments is connected by the institutional link to the entrenched regional self-government, making regional parties agents of their regional government. Regional parties with no back-up from territories with *de jure* self-government lack a distinct party system (like national systems) and are exposed to political challenges and uncertainty of a different mode. In our three regional cases they would have almost no political power in the national parliament to protect their cultural and territorial diversity. Votes count, and their small number would be totally overrun by the nation state votes and incumbents. Unfortunately, this is missing in the literature on regional parties, which we here try to discover and make understandable with our three cases. Therefore, this paper is organized to include a more extensive theoretical discussion followed by empirical evidence. In this paper two traditions meet: regional party research and self-government research. There is not much communication between these two traditions. Not a single definition of "self-government" can avoid considerable criticism. Nevertheless, we argue that definitions which underscore self-government with entrenched power to legislate best fit our cases compared to other alternatives. It is easier to find an agreement of what is considered small. Small refers to population size and homogeneous to a similar language and culture. Thus, this paper gives proof of how autonomous governments with considerable legal power, support growth of regional parties and party systems in the Nordic autonomies.

Ethnicity is said to be both broader and narrower than nationalism. Michael Keating shows that stateless movements have de-ethnicized in those cases he analysed, but in some other cases ethnic politics is evident (Keating, 2008: 160–171). Our cases include three insular territories with small populations and with strong national symbols where ethnicity is a given part of the shared nationalism. Only in the case of the Åland Islands is ethnicity much broader, as it is the language spoken in neighbouring Sweden, as well as partly in Finland. Greenlandic is linked to familiar languages in Canada, Russia and Alaska, and Faroese is solely spoken in the Faroe Islands.

An important factor in the long-run for the development and quality of self-governed territories is well-established regional parties. Recent research in relation to regionalism and nationalism shows that this type of party family is more heterogeneous than other party families on the traditional left-right spectrum. Many regionalist parties compete at more than one level in a multi-level state system – local, regional, metropolitan state and the

European Union (EU) levels – trying to press their views for better political management of their territory (Sorens, 2008; Massetti, 2009). Still, almost all studies are focused on regional parties in national state-wide elections, and much less on parties and elections to regional assemblies. In addition, we argue that it makes fundamental difference whether regional parties act in entrenched self-governed territories or not.

Another distinction within this party family is the cleavage between regionalist ('autonomist') and secessionist ('separatist') parties. While the autonomy parties' goal is a deepening and/or enlargement of the region's own policy within an existing statehood arrangement, the secessionist parties' objective is to break away from the current statehood context and create a new politically sovereign territorial state. There is also a third category of parties, which can be called irredentist parties. Irredentist movements seek to re-draw existing borders in order to transfer their region's statehood to a neighbouring kin-state with a language and culture more in line with their own identity (Ackrén and Lindström, 2012).

However, we argue that the role of regional parties in regional elections/government and in state-wide elections/government is affected mainly by the degree of autonomy and supported by population size and ethnic homogeneity in the region. A devolved government with its own power to legislate supports the birth and life of regional parties and the creation of a distinct party system. Furthermore, the discussion is blurred by diverging definitions of self-ruled territories. To make arguments clear we have chosen three small and homogeneous self-ruled territories with a high degree of entrenched autonomy (Ackrén, 2009). The Faroe Islands, Greenland, and the Åland Islands fulfil the criteria of small population size, a distinct ethnic homogeneity, and devolved legislative power implemented under different time periods. They fulfil the criterion for a most similar systems design where the different timings of full regional power of government give fuel to create a separate party system with parties of their own. In addition, it is only on these islands that regional parties can be found in the Nordic countries.

2. Parties in self-ruled arrangements

If there is or has been a disagreement of the definition and categorisation of arrangements between self-ruled territories and the core state, the situation is not better when we turn to regional parties. It seems like there is a lack of synchronicity between the theory development of self-ruled territories and party research focused on regional parties, on the one hand, and ethnic/regional mobilization on the other. Regional parties are sprung out from a centre and periphery cleavage where an ethnic group share a common subnational territorial border and an exclusive group identity. These parties are even called ethno-regionalist parties because they not only serve ethnic group interest but also regional

interests (Türsan, 1998: 4–6). Dandoy (2010) for example classifies ethno-regionalist parties in three overall categories: protectionist, decentralist and secessionist parties. The first category of protectionist parties addresses concerns related to recognition of linguistic, religious or cultural identity without challenging the state structure. The decentralist parties can also be labelled autonomist parties, since these parties demand enlargement of the region's own policy within an existing state, something which might lead to a reordering of the state structure, its institutions and its internal borders. The last category with secessionist parties demands separation from the state or outright independence (Dandoy, 2010: 205–206). The aims of ethnic mobilization in peripheral territories have been described in a simple way as: "to live in one's country, to speak one's own language, and to be autonomous" (Rokkan and Urwin, 1983: 140). Rokkan and Urwin underscore that increased devolvement is not the only aim; depending on circumstances, secession might be an option, as well as a demand for a larger share of state resources.

As we can see, regional parties live and act in different institutional and territorial contexts. In relation to party research, it makes analytical sense to categorize parties, and therefore regional parties are lumped together without putting much effort into whether they emerged in small or larger regions, or if the region is a *de facto* or a *de jure* self-ruled territory. This approach makes sense if a regional party competes in a constituency with other national parties or not, or if regional parties are competing in regional elections only, or if regional parties can compete both in regional and national elections or not. The latter option has been emphasized by Charlie Jeffery, who asserts that these parties have to adapt and differentiate how they present themselves simultaneously to different electorates (Jeffery, 2009: 639–650). Eve Hepburn asserts that such parties have moved from "niche" actors in party systems to mainstream political players. Many regional parties are no longer players in the periphery, they have entered government at regional and/or state level, forcing other parties to respond to their demands, and implementing their policy proposals (Hepburn, 2009: 477–499). The success of regional parties is that they have moved from protest to power and are now typical mainstream parties. Several current studies have put effort into positioning regional parties according to their altering political preferences on different electoral scenes, which may challenge their credibility (Däubler, Müller & Stecker 2018, 541–564; Alonso, Elias, Szöcsik & Zuber 2015, 839–850; Cabeza & Cómes 2015, 851–865; Alonso, Gómes & Cabeza 2013, 189–211).

Both Hepburn and Jeffery, among others, name these regional parties stateless nationalist and regionalist parties (SNRPs). 'Stateless' is used to characterize regionalist parties which operate in nations or regions that do not enjoy full statehood, i.e., they operate on a subnational level in contrast to national parties which operate on the state level. In a note to Hepburn's article, countries are listed where SNRPs are established. SNRPs include a mix

of federal states and unitary states, such as Belgium, Germany, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland and Portugal, according to Hepburn (Hepburn, 2009). No attention is given to the Faroe Islands and Greenland. After defining regionalist parties, Emanuele Massetti claims that factors such as (1) the level of self-government, (2) whether the regionalist party enjoys a mild autonomy or exists in an outright secession situation, or (3) if the territory is a region or part of a different nation-state, simply do not matter when regionalist parties are defined and classified (Massetti, 2009: 503).

However, instead of giving the degree of self-government a passive role in understanding and explaining regional parties, it should be used as an independent variable. To be sure, it will not make any sense for the definition, but it has severe implications for how regional parties act. Institutional arrangements matter as it defines under what conditions regional parties have to accommodate. Different independent variables are used such as socio-economic, centre-periphery or ideological dimensions in regional party research. In addition, institutional variables such as type of government, electoral systems and laws regulating party life are common in party research. Regional parties acting within the framework of self-government have an advantage compared to regional parties with no territorial autonomy. New parties are said to be mortal organizations, although they seldom totally disappear (Pedersen 1982, 1–16; 1991, 95–114). They have to pass thresholds which are related to the cost of registration, access to public funding, benefits from electoral office, and the probability of getting elected (Tavits 2006, 99–119). New regional parties lacking a territorial self-government are facing multiple costs to cross barriers and rules set up by the dominant cartel of national parties in government (Katz and Mair 2018, 125–150). In a self-government context all thresholds are lower and easier to reach, as national electoral rules are not in force. Rules are set up by territorial governments without any legal interference from the core state government.

In lack of a common view on how self-government is defined and understood the concept has to be problematized and cannot solely rely on party research. Charles Jeffery is aware of the problem when he states that party competition is still focused on parties that compete for state-wide office in state-wide parliaments, and not on parties competing for office in regional elections. The way from protest to power through ethno-territorial and socio-economic mobilization is more about winning regional government office than anything else on the state or EU level of government (Jeffery, 2009: 639–650). Studies show that political decentralization gives strength to regional parties by giving them a real chance of governing at the regional level (Brancati, 2008: 135–159). Decentralization is here understood as entrenched self-rule with legislative power. A study in federal Belgium shows, not surprisingly, that sub-state governments are more responsive to their sub-state voters than the federal governments (van Haute & Deschouwer 2018, 683–702). In small

homogenous self-governed regions, the gap between voters and those elected tends to be multiplied.

It is not uncommon that territorial arrangements in federal and unitary states are mixed without hesitation, and without considering what role these parties have in different institutional and cultural contexts. Therefore, we must separate types of party systems from other individual parties and their political aims. First, it makes sense to consider if parties act in an environment of self-ruled government or not. A second important distinction is between ethnically homogenous territories – where the non-core state is territorially defined as having a sole official language or is overwhelmingly dominant – and regions where the core state language is dominant and has an official status. A third important factor is whether nations have a mixed ethnic composition – that is, a mix of language(s)/culture(s) throughout the entire state. If they do, this makes possible what Giovanni Sartori calls a polarized party system of pluralism with ideological distance (Sartori, 2005: 116–154; Mair, 1996: 83–106). Party systems in federations are nationalised but give space to regional parties in state/province government elections, especially where ethno-federalism prevails. Regional parties in Quebec and Catalonia are well known examples of ethno-federalism. This depends, of course, on the extent to which votes are translated into seats in proportional systems (Sartori, 1997: 7–10).

The parties' role at the federal level is of less magnitude. In unitary states party systems are nationalised, giving restricted options to regional parties even where government functions are decentralised but not devolved. In all cases mentioned, regional parties in unitary states face the toughest cultural and institutional thresholds to overcome, facing the risks of taking costs of collective sacrifice of votes.

3. Diverging concepts of self-rule

Self-rule as a concept is complicated to define, and it is even harder to find any common ground in the literature about what it really contains. Here we will outline a short evaluation of different definitions before we come to terms with why autonomous self-government fits our cases in contrast to federal alternatives. The concept of “autonomy” is one of the most common but also one of the vaguest concepts for mapping self-ruled islands such as the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and the Åland Islands. “Autonomy” can cover features of different forms of organizations, institutions, local and regional government and entrenched self-ruled territories. Autonomy is related to territory, but also to culture in situations where minority rights are protected from the majority culture (Lapidoth, 1997: 37–47). Territorial autonomy is sometimes labelled as asymmetric federalism when a region falls under a country-wide entrenchment but enjoys different authority. If a region

receives special treatment in constitutional and statutory law it may be called a special autonomous region (Hooghe, Marks and Schakel, 2010: 29–31).

Those influenced by federalist thinking have made several classifications of federal arrangements, such as associated state arrangements and confederations. Asymmetry in federations is linked to difference, and this has been emphasized in many ways. Alfred Stepan has mapped asymmetry in two categories: monolithic federations like the US, Australia and Germany, and asymmetrical federations like the multinational Belgium, Canada and Spain (Stepan, 1999: 29–31). Multinational asymmetry seems to have inspired scholars to introduce ethno-federalism as a concept to be applied also on other types of arrangements (Hale, 2004: 165–193; Roeder, 2009: 203–219). In this case, however, diverse ethnicity is central in how different federal arrangements are classified. Daniel Elazar has used the concept of federacy to explain the asymmetrical relationship between a larger and a smaller power (Elazar, 1987: 7).

David Rezvani has brought new light to the scattered discussion about how to understand and categorize self-ruled territories. Above all, he makes a clear distinction between different federal arrangements and non-federal solutions designated partially independent territories (PIT). PITs are nationalistically distinct, constitutionally different territories that share and divide sovereign powers with a core state (Rezvani, 2014: 1–6; 93–97). They are not fully incorporated with the core state and are not member-units of federations or fully controlled parts of unitary states. The core state can be a federation, a decentralized union, or a unitary state.

From our perspective, we argue that PIT makes the distinction between what is an autonomous self-government and a federal arrangement more obvious. The self-ruled islands of the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and the Åland islands are by no means members of federations. Instead, they are separate territories with sovereign power to legislate and govern within realms of devolved entrenchment. The arrangement gives them veto rights if the core state intends to violate the rules of self-government. Decisions of that kind are based on bilateral agreements and legal acts. Moreover, the islands have a distinct national identity different from the nation state. The nation states and the self-governed islands are separate polities which are constitutionally unincorporated and have relative free hands to have control over foreign affairs.

4. Why small ethnically distinct islands?

Small states are mostly unitary states. (Exceptions can be found, such as some micro-states in the Caribbean and South Pacific). In unitary states sovereignty is centralised, and public administration is often decentralised, which therefore can efficiently be run by the government. By nature, unitary states' government decisions intend to follow similar paths around the country in a more comprehensive way than decentralised states with a federal arrangement. Ethnic diversity can be a challenge for all states, but especially for unitary states. There are different contexts where ethnic groups are living either scattered around in the country, as the First Nations in Canada, or where a group holds a territorial grip in a specific region, as do the French-speaking people in Wallonia in Belgium, for instance. Conflicts might occur where there are several ethnic groups living side by side in the same territory. How these groups are assimilated within the core state can then take various forms.

Rezvani, for example, is concerned with how to implement clear distinctions between federal and other arrangements, because PITs include elements similar to federalism. He focuses on ethnic divisions between core states and PITs. An ethno-federal arrangement allows a territorial homeland for ethnic minorities, a territory which they control. Rezvani concludes that PIT arrangements are favourable both for the core states and the PITs, because they serve as solutions for some of the world's most intractable nationalistic disputes.

Roeder states that such arrangements are more common in non-federal states with devolved autonomy (Roeder, 2007: 43–46). In such cases, Liam Anderson argues that two alternatives are available to ethno-federalism: Unitarianism, whereby power is centralized and controlled by a majority group, or a federal arrangement in which the geographical distribution of ethnic groups is irrelevant. His conclusion is that most states have adopted ethno-federalism because other alternatives have been tried, and have failed (Anderson, 2014: 165–204). In his view, more devolved power handled to homeland governments will enhance conflicts with the national identity that holds the common state together (Roeder, 2009: 203–219).

Islands *per se* assert a certain identity due to their isolation and physical location in the periphery; islanders feel that they belong to the same community due to their insularity and natural boundaries given by their geography (Olausson, 2007: 26–31). Islands are more distinct territories compared to landlocked regions. Consequently, islands are significantly more often self-governed than landlocked territories. Added to this, the distinction becomes even sharper if the islands fulfil the criterion of ethnoregional in relation to the unitary state's dominant language and culture. Many islands naturally enjoy some degree of autonomy, especially if they are distant from their metropolitan power and have a distinct society and

culture anchored in what could be seen as sub-nationalism. This could be explained as a regional or geographically anchored ethnicity (Baldacchino, 2010: 103–104).

The nation-states of Denmark and Finland have similar population sizes of around 5.5 million inhabitants, and a similar degree of ethnic homogeneity. Danish is the only official language in the core state Denmark. Finland is officially bilingual, with a small Swedish minority along the Southern and Western coasts. In practice, Finnish is the dominant language in the country. That is the explanation for why Swedish is entrenched in the constitution as the sole official language on the Åland Islands. In the Faroe Islands and Greenland, Faroese and Greenlandic are the official languages respectively, but Danish is used in communication with the core state. In terms of language and culture, these three small (in terms of population) islands stand in contrast to the homogenous and unitary core states of Denmark and Finland. The islanders constitute a *Gemeinschaft* national identity which is institutionalised and entrenched in a *de jure* self-rule.

4.1 The feature of regional parties

Given the concept of the distinct self-government arrangement, where the self-ruled territory has legislative power, entrenched to an elected assembly and a government, can parties in these assemblies still be considered regional or not? The answer depends on the arena in which they seek seats. If the entire party system in the self-ruled territory is distinct and includes parties that have no intentions to compete in national elections, the answer is no. No core state level parties compete with them in assembly elections and the legislators act independently from the state. It could apply to our three cases of small homogeneous territories with distinct language and culture only if parties exclusively compete for office in regional assembly elections and not in core state elections. This criterion does not fit to our cases as all parties included are involved in core state elections. Nor can core states act totally independently; their hands are tied with international agreements and commitments concerning commerce, defence, border protection and traffic, to mention some examples, which is also the case for countries that are not members of the European Union.

However, if the self-ruled territory is given a seat(s) in the core state parliament the answer is yes, as far as regional parties actively seek and compete for office in national parliaments. The intention is more important to the definition than the outcome in terms of a seat in parliament. The elected legislators represent in the first instance their self-ruled territory, even though in practice they have to seek cooperation with a party close to their political aims. Parties in the European parliament follow a similar principle, they contest elections in member states with national party symbols, a national party organisation, and they represent their country in parliament as members of a chosen European parliament party closest to

their political aims. Thus, national parties in a supra-national context can be considered regional, depending of course on whether we accept realities and open our willingness to adjust the absolute sovereignty claim between core EU institutions and its member states. This is something highlighted recently where sovereignty in its traditional sense is claimed to have eroded. Rather, there are multiple sites of sovereign authorities and therefore the term post-sovereignty is on the way to becoming accepted (Keating, 2008: 162–163).

If a self-ruled region is culturally mixed and the core state language is dominant or at least official and commonly spoken the situation is different, as it usually is common in large heterogeneous regions. In Catalonia, Basque Country, Galicia and Wales there are open doors for core state parties to compete with the regional parties in regional assembly elections. Supposing that parties still are hierarchical organizations, these parties from the core state could effectively compete in order to nationalize the self-ruled assembly elections and government. Even core state parties have to organize regionally/locally to nominate eligible candidates; no other way is possible. In addition, parties tend to take a stratarchical form in which different mutually autonomous levels coexist, including a minimum of authoritative control (Katz and Mair, 2002: 113–135). The regional branch can independently control policies, programmes and strategies without the consent of the core state party. In a self-governed arrangement, it is a question of loyalty if the party branch will separate totally from the core state party organization or pronounce its difference and devolve itself to an associated branch, or else stay formally integrated. In the first two cases elected MPs to the core state parliament are representatives of a regional interest. In contrast, the last case is not a regional party, whereas parties from the self-ruled region are to be considered regional parties represented in the core state parliament. But in the self-governed legislative assembly all parties are formally equal, though dispersed loyalties can lead to scattered fractions of parties or independents. In fact, a high degree of autonomy facilitates birth of new regional parties and separations from national party organizations. Regional assemblies have the power to support regional parties with public subsidies, media attention, and legislative protection from external party pressures.

Although parties in federations and unitary states can take stratarchical forms and adapt to regional culture, they are part of complex party organizations. Regional parties stay regional within a given territory, but in national parliaments or supra-national assemblies they share the regional party character with parties from self-ruled regions. To mix regional parties with parties in legislative self-ruled assemblies is not a feasible way to proceed. Studies show how complicated it can be when parties in self-ruled legislative assemblies are lumped together with regional parties in unitary states. To be sure, there can be some common elements such as magnitude, economic difference, cultural homogeneity, and distinct ethnicity. All these elements are important especially during a *de facto* phase

of regional mobilization and recognition, but subordinated when a given territory is entrenched in a PIT type arrangement. Protected sovereignty by constitution and/or by law within a given territory gives parties a central role in dealing with budget and legislation, like parties in core state parliaments. This is different from regional parties in federal and/or unitary state parliaments, which are small bricks in a large federal or centralized unit.

In addition, regional self-governments have free hands to legislate reforms to enlarge democracy and experiment with new forms of participation and government, provided it is not contrary to the constitution. Depending on the degree of autonomy, democracy can take different forms in the self-governed region compared to the core state. In administration it is a challenge to organize law-drafting and other administrative tasks properly where there is a lack of human and material resources. Regional parties are key actors in planning and implementing these reforms.

4.2 Who governs? The impact of regional size

Following the literature on regional parties, several observations have already been mentioned. However, there are some aspects of importance that are seldom noticed. In the arguments of *de facto* and *de jure* self-ruled regions these are mixed implicitly because it does not matter, due to the arguments already mentioned. In fact, this is something that seems to characterise regional party literature. If regional parties are in focus to be explained it works to a certain extent, but not in general. The variety of size in self-ruled territories is not fully understood and examined. Many studies put emphasis on escalating conflicts between self-ruled regions and the core state in countries such as Spain, Canada, and the UK (Keating and Wilson, 2009: 536–558; Heller, 2002: 657–685; Keating, 2008). Large self-ruled regions which demand more autonomy or even independence are of course of more interest for political scientists. Other studies have a wide comparative approach, searching for ideological constraints, cleavages, and national destabilization (Janda, 1989: 349–370; Brancati, 2005: 143–159; Brancati, 2008: 135–159; Massetti and Schakel, 2015: 866–886; Massetti and Schakel, 2016: 59–79). Regional parties have an essential role in these studies of increased decentralism.

Regional parties gain visibility when they act in national parliaments demanding extended autonomy, and even strive for independence. The profile and strategy of these parties, including their electoral strength, is essential in fulfilling their aims among national legislators. Self-ruled territories such as Scotland and Catalonia are due to their size well represented in the national assemblies in London and Madrid. In elections regional parties have to compete with national parties in their constituencies, of which some take a pro-regional stand, and in some cases the hegemony of the established party system has

been eroded by the strong influx of regional parties following regional or linguistic lines (Keating, 2013: 82–85; Scantamburlo, Alonso & Gómez 2018, 615–639). But what is the case if a self-ruled region is small and regional parties only have a minimal representation in the national assembly?

Not much is said about the role of parties in small partial independent territories. We know from studies made in micro-states that parties are not well organized and are not even necessary to run for the government (Wettenhall, 1992: 56–57; Kersell, 1992: 290–293). Dag and Carsten Anckar found that democracy manages well without parties in their study of six micro-states. The lack of parties is explained by their extreme smallness, dispersed archipelagos, and cultural resistance (Anckar & Anckar, 2000: 225–247). A study from the micro-state Palau comes to a similar conclusion where size and culture contribute to the non-existence of parties (Veenendaal, 2016: 27–36). A lack of parties was also typical in our three cases during the formative years of self-government. Evidence which dates back to ancient Greece tells us that homogeneity only can be reached in small communities. Generalisations on small size communities include that members are more homogeneous, incentives to conform are strong, open opponents to the majority view are few, and conflicts among organizations are uncommon (Dahl & Tufte, 1973: 91–94).

We are now ready to study three similar insular cases in the North which are small and homogeneous, with a high degree of self-rule which developed to full force under three different time periods. How did the empowerment of devolved self-government create distinct party systems and regional parties as agents of their regional governments?

5. Parties and party systems in devolved regions

Denmark and Finland are highly integrated and politically assimilated. Attempts have been made to include the self-ruled regions of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands into the national integration, as they were in the past. Core states protect their territorial borders and try to maintain a policy of compromise with their self-ruled regions and to settle open conflicts and avoid them drifting away from state control. The self-ruled insular regions have a national identity of their own, aiming to maximise their separate political and economic interests. This approach is inconsistent with the way a centralised unitary state works. Threats of secession with international inference faced the unitary states of Finland in 1921 and Denmark in 1944 and 1948 when they were forced to accept an arrangement of self-government (Adler-Nissen, 2014: 58–61). Greenland lived with its colonial past until 1953 but became integrated as a county before Greenland gained self-rule in 1979 (Harhoff, 1993: 50–70; Lidegaard, 1991: 179–228). The process did not stop there, but the scope of politics changed to be institutionalised and regulated in law.

From the very beginning politics was dominated with the relation to the core state, and it still is. Domestic issues in politics are important to parties but always subordinated to the self-rule status triggered by the core state or the region itself. In these homogeneous insular regions parties were not necessarily needed to defend their self-rule against the core state. More important was their regional government, which had the strongest mandate to negotiate with the core state government. Therefore, participation in national elections involving parties and voters does not have the same priority as elections to regional assemblies (see Appendix 1). Generally, voter turnout is higher in Denmark than in Finland, which tends to have a slight mobilising effect on the island electorate. Nevertheless, it is obviously clear that all three islands follow a similar pattern. National politics does not trigger islanders to the ballot box in the same manner as in the rest of Denmark and Finland. The difference is large, with some occasional exceptions when the difference is less than ten percent. Generally, the gap is 20 or more than 30 percent. Only once have the island voters been more active, which occurred on the Åland Islands in 1939, when the island was still integrated in the South West constituency and had to compete with the mainland electorate to win a mandate. The separation to an Åland constituency in 1948 calmed down the activity. In addition, separate island constituencies sorted out national party candidates from the election. National parties lost their grip on the island due to changes in electoral law. Comparing the three islands, it appears evident that voter turnout is generally higher in the Faroe Islands than in Greenland and on the Åland Islands. Geographical distance to the national mainland seems not to matter.

Most parties are relatively new; all of them are small, and weakly organized. Figures show (Tables 2, 3, and 4) that devolved self-government facilitates birth of new regional parties and actors, and the birth of a complete party system when the regional government has consolidated itself to full legislative power. None of the core state parties have access or presence in regional elections or elections to the core state parliament. This is not uncommon in territories with national minorities or distinct language communities, as is the case in our study (Keating, 2013: 82–85). Thus, regional parties act and compete distinct from the much bigger core state parties during the electoral process. It makes sense when constituency borders and the island territorial borders fit (Sundberg, 2011: 163–204). It gives more political fuel to emphasise distance from the nation state. How the elections are organised or how the islands are divided into small constituencies is of less importance. More important is the joint effect of constituency borders that fit with the regional legislative dominion.

Thus, it is the content of both that makes sense for the birth of a party system including new regional parties. Regions without devolved self-government (*de facto* regions) can give birth to regional parties, but not party systems as in *de jure* regions which have

entrenched legislative power. Party systems can take different forms and numbers of parties. According to Giovanni Sartori, two conditions must be fulfilled if a party should be counted as a part of a party system. Firstly, the party has a coalition potential as the party must be needed, on at least some occasion, for a feasible coalition that can control government. Secondly, the party has a blackmail potential as the party's existence affects the tactics of party competition of those parties that do have a coalition partner (Sartori 2005, 107–110). Saying that, the criteria are fulfilled in our three cases, and, a distinct party system cannot appear in regions which lack entrenched legislative power within their domain. The notion of party systems can be confusing in regional party research because it implicitly refers to party systems at the core state level. Therefore, we have to add that regional parties can be included in party systems on both the national and regional levels if the region follows those criteria discussed above.

As the magnitude is small in the three regional constituencies, measures had to be taken to fit into the national system with minimal exceptions. The population of the Faroe Islands was 30,000 in 1948 compared to about 50,000 today; Greenland had a population of 50,000 in 1979 and about 57,000 today; the population of Åland was about 20,000 in 1921 and is about 30,000 today. Parliamentary elections on the national level are organised by the nation state, not by the self-ruled regions. In none of the three island regions under discussion were national electoral laws an issue. It was more a concern for the national governments to minimise the parliament's influence from the islands, as MPs from the islands participate in all national decisions whereas MPs from the mainland are excluded from decisions written in the act of self-rule. In addition, concerns were met that incumbents from the islands could hold the balance of power. The electoral systems are now standardised to resemble the system on the mainland. Proportional voting is implemented, though the system on the Åland islands is odd as only one incumbent is elected. The Faroe Islands, and Greenland have two incumbents each in the Danish parliament. The sole incumbent from Åland acts alone among 199 other incumbents representing national parties, and the four total incumbents from Faroe Islands and Greenland are in a similar position among 179 MPs.

Representation in core state parliaments has never been a main issue for the self-ruled regions. The lack of conflict between the core state governments and the regional governments on how seats are distributed in national parliaments indicates its low importance in enhancing regional aims. The means of influencing decision-making in national parliaments can either be initiated within the house or externally in negotiations between national and regional governments. Regional parties with no representation in cabinet have a theoretical chance to raise an initiative in parliament, but with the support of one or two seats it is an unrealistic option. To ensure a strong regional government a

better option is how core state and regional governments come to terms. Party engagement in regional assemblies and government increases the more legislative power is devolved to the regional government and downgrades the engagement for the core state parliament. However, acts are checked before coming into force. Acts are not allowed to be against the constitution or violate the legislative competence given to the self-ruled region. Most conflicts between the core state and the self-governed region have their origins in different interpretations of legality, where the core state usually is in a more advantaged position.

5.1 Loyal regional agents in national parliaments

Given this meagre representation in these two national parliaments it seems obvious that legislation and policy matters for the three regions and good prospects are unlikely to be accomplished. Without an entrenched self-rule protected by law these territories would be totally exposed to the majority will in the national parliaments. The situation is partly different in large self-ruled territories like Catalonia and Scotland. Regional representation by national and regional parties is much bigger in the national parliaments and they have more to say by using different strategies to fulfil their aims. Still, the entrenched self-rule gives them a protection and opens the doors to deepen and enlarge their nationalist identity. Common institutions and borders matter in state-making. Nation-building takes place when the inhabitants of the state form a community marked by a *Gemeinschaft* – a feeling where members distribute and share benefits (Finer 1975, 85–86). However, territorial oppositions and waves of counter mobilization threaten the unity of the nation and set limits to nation-building (Rokkan 2009, 46–71). Entrenched self-government includes main components of state-making and nation-building which partly differ from the core state. Within its realm a regional identity and loyalty to its government and legislation can take place. This process is enhanced if the region is well governed and better off than the core state. Given that the self-government arrangement is written in the constitution or is well anchored in legislation, it effectively protects regional parties and voters from eventual core state pressures.

Protection has its limits in relatively new democracies with less consolidated procedures to handle human and civil rights. It works best in established liberal democracies where minority rights are protected in the constitution and respected by the legislators. In addition, these regional parliaments give regional parties a better platform to act and lead governments, which gives visibility and power to negotiate with the core state government. A combination of inside activity in the core state parliament and government to government debates should be more efficient than relying exclusively on regional parties in national parliaments. The Spanish core state government has made things clear. It was exclusively the Catalan

parliament which had the disputed formal power to declare independence. Therefore, the Catalan president and the government was expelled by the Spanish government, and the leading actors were prosecuted by the Supreme Court. Entrenched self-government has a coercive role in times of coexistence and conflict with the core state authorities, as it has the exclusive authority to institutionalize decisions from diverging views.

Although the one (Åland) or two (Faroe Islands and Greenland) elected incumbents from the islands are formally involved in decision making concerning the entire nation, in practice they have little to say if they lack collaborating parties. Non-island incumbents in national parliament, on the other hand, are excluded from the legislation process devolved to the island parliaments. There is no formal hindrance that an incumbent elected from the islands could be included in national cabinet, yet it has not happened. A silent agreement keeps them out as it could give too much advantage to the self-ruled regions, which is not in line with a unitary state. Fears have been raised in Denmark that the four incumbents from the two self-ruled regions could utilize their mandate if the two-party blocks in parliament are of equal strength.

This seems to be one main informal difference between federal states and our examples of self-government arrangements, that is, whether the federal states are asymmetric, or even the smallest member states, are not discriminated against when cabinet members are recruited. It is the essence of how federal states are organized and political parties behave. The unitary core states of Denmark and Finland systematically exclude their self-ruled regions from the national nucleus of government. National parties recruit cabinet members from their own active cadres with the intention to be representative for the entire nation. Incumbents representing small parties from self-governed islands are automatically excluded. This distinction shows that in practise national government parties consider elected incumbents from the self-governed regions as different “nationals” representing their partly sovereign interests.

Although the role of island incumbents in national parliaments can be discussed, they fulfil an important mission for their regions. As members of parliament they get up to date information about coming and ongoing legislation, budgetary process, and the discussion in the house. Most important, the incumbents are kind of gate keepers who alarm the national and regional governments when matters concerning the self-ruled region are neglected or violated and when proposals from regional governments are not proceeding. Regional governments find it important to assist their incumbents by the supporting service of “mini island embassies” in the respective capitals of Copenhagen and Helsinki. That would not be the case if the role of island incumbents had been neglected or considered superfluous. Compared to incumbents from other national constituencies, the island incumbents have a more strategic role as they are legislators in the national parliament and simultaneously

represent the policy of legislators in the self-ruled island parliaments. Therefore, they have been given the role as loyal agents to the regional governments, although the governments have no role in the process of nomination and election. Regional parties have nominated them, voters have elected them, but they are liable in the first instance to the regional government, not to their party or their voters. This is not a contradiction in small homogeneous regions insofar as deep internal political conflicts are avoided.

Legislatures from the Faroe Islands and Greenland have the role of distinct ethnic regional parties in the Danish Folketing. They form a parliamentary party of their own, usually representing the two largest parties from the two regions separately. The one-member parliamentary parties are members of the Faroe Islands committee and the Greenland committee respectively, together with 27 other members representing the core state parties in the Danish Folketing. The sole Åland incumbent is an independent member of the Swedish People's Party parliamentary party, with no formal connection to the party organization. So far, this concept has worked, no matter which party the sole incumbent represents on the Åland Islands. To join a parliamentary party with a similar party label would not work due to deep language and cultural differences.

5.2 Regional governments with authority

The life of regional parties is essentially different depending on the institutional context. In an entrenched self-ruled arrangement sovereignty is devolved from the core state to the regional government. This government has the mandate and authority to negotiate with the core state government resembling when two independent states negotiate. Parties behind the government, whether regional or branches of national parties, may well have different policy views, but when decisions are taken the outcome are institutionalized. The process of institutionalization gives the regional government authority to act. In regions lacking entrenched self-rule, elected authorities are subordinated to the national government. They stand weak against central authorities and are dependent of how national resources are distributed. Open opposition against national decisions is not the best option to take; it may severely harm the region. Regional parties, on the other hand, are better suited to express discontent and to mobilize voters to push their aims. Thus, the platform to act is different. Regional parties have to manage on their own compared to regional parties in self-ruled territories, who can lean on its government and administration. Studies show that it is not easy for these parties to manage on their own, and there is no wonder that protest has turned to cooperation and compromise.

The development of a distinct regional party system with no organizational links to national parties has, as already mentioned, been typical for minorities and distinct language

communities. The pay-off for national parties to compete in core state elections is minimal as the regions have maximally two seats in parliament. In addition, language and culture raise barriers to overcome. Under such circumstances a regional multi-party system can be developed only if the self-ruled territory has internal sovereignty to legislate. Elections to these assemblies can be managed without parties, but even in small communities cleavages are found which in the long run have been politicized and loosely organized to political parties. However, in major issues related to their self-ruled status all three regional governments have called for referendums.

Examples of such mobilizations are found in all three self-ruled islands. More than the other two, Greenlanders have sought popular support to enhance pressure on the core state. An example took place in 1979 as a massive percentage (70.1 percent) voted in favour of the establishment of the Greenlandic parliament, including sovereignty in areas like education, health, fisheries and the environment. In 1982, the Greenlandic government appealed to voters in a referendum whether Greenland should continue to be a member of the European Economic Community. A majority was against (53.02 percent) continued membership, which had been enforced against their will when Denmark joined in 1973, though Greenlanders were opposed at the time. After 30 years of self-rule, a new referendum was called for to enlarge Greenlandic sovereignty and to enhance plans for a future independence. A vast majority (75.5 percent) supported this referendum, which gave the Greenlandic government a strong basis for negotiations with the core state. In all three cases the popular will was approved by the Danish government and the EEC.

An independence referendum was called for in the Faroe Islands in 1946, which won a minimal majority (50.7 percent). The Danish government did not accept the result, but the Faroe Islands received self-rule as compensation. Two petitions were collected in 1917 and 1919 on the Åland Islands and handed over to the Swedish government. The petitions received massive support among the Ålandic population, who wished to reunite with Sweden. A conflict between Åland and Finland and between Finland and Sweden resulted in the Åland case being settled by the League of Nations. Åland was compensated with a sovereign self-rule against its will. In 1994, a referendum was called for in Åland regarding European Union membership. The voter turn-out was only 49.1 percent, but a vast majority of 73.6 percent voted in favour of EU membership. To their disappointment Åland was denied a seat in the European Parliament and a demand for correction is continuously on the agenda with the Finnish government.

A massive level of support for the regional government policy in a referendum widens and deepens the political demand to the core state government, similarly as the Brexit vote in the UK opened the gates for secession preparations from the EU. When the support is not massive, as in the case of the UK, deep cleavages seems to follow. Regional governments

take risks in calling for referendums if they are not ensured that the result will strongly support their political aims. Issues related to secession are subject to divide citizens in territorial autonomies. Referendum as an instrument to enhance political aims with severe impact on legislation is used both in core states and in devolved self-governments.

Although the three self-ruled regions have different histories of party systems, a similar cleavage structure is visible. One is between separatism and unionism, and the other crossing the line is between left and right. Although the former cleavage fits better to the Faroe Islands and Greenland, it can to a certain extent even be applicable to the Åland Islands (Hoff and West, 2008: 311–332). The former cleavage distinguishes the self-ruled regions from party systems in the core states. The latter cleavage follows the pattern in core states. However, the overwhelming cleavage goes between separatism and unionism, which either unite or open rifts between people on the islands. The more united the common will, the less need for a party system from the outset. The left and right cleavage grows in importance when the redistribution of welfare service dominates the budgetary process in the regional assemblies. Still, the separatist and unionist cleavages continue to shadow all parties from the left to the right.

At the moment between six and eight regional parties contest for mandates in the legislative assemblies in the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and on the Åland Islands (see Appendix 2). Despite cleavages between the regional parties, personal image make sense, and so do kinship and informal networks including place of residence. On the individual level conflicts can escalate deeply, but between organized parties conflicts are moderate. Regional parties have little to say in relation to the core state. The best option is to maximise votes and power in order to be included in the regional government. The regional government has the legislative power and the constitutional mandate to pursue its aims for the Danish or Finnish governments.

6. Conclusions

In this paper we have tried to understand and explain the role of regional parties in small self-ruled regions. In contrast to what is explicit or implicitly said, entrenched self-government matters, but its impact on regional parties is regulated by the region's size and its distinct language/cultural homogeneity. In this paper we have selected the smallest, most autonomous, and most culturally distinct island regions to discover common knowledge of regional parties. In this setting regional parties have a function in regional assembly elections and in regional government. Additionally, regional parties also have a function in core state elections. But the main actors are the core state government and the regional government in resolving interest of conflicts, which often is a result of

diverging interpretations on the division of legislative power. In this context regional party incumbents in national parliaments function as agents for the regional government. Due to the small size and high homogeneity there is no contradiction between being an agent to the regional government or the voters. Their mandate is given by the voters, but it includes serving as loyal agents to the regional government, not to their loosely organized party.

More interesting, however, is the question on what the mechanisms behind the limited role of regional parties in core state politics are. We have in this paper operated with two background variables:

1) population size

2) the degree of a homogeneous and distinct language/culture

This is in order to fit the criteria of most similar systems design. The populations are small, and culture and language are distinct from their mainland nation states. What differs is the introduction and consolidation of the degree of entrenched self-rule.

The degree of self-rule can take different measures; however, in our cases all three regions show a high degree of autonomy. A considerable amount of legislative power is devolved to these three regions. Population size gives electoral power, but in our three cases size is small and the electoral power in core state elections is restricted. A region may be homogeneous or diverse on a scale between those two extremes. In our cases homogeneity is in the first instance focused on a distinct language and culture, but also on a relatively equal distribution of income. In diverted regions cleavages are deeper and party conflicts may take another magnitude. The situation in our study is asymmetric as the regional legislative power is strong, the electoral strength is low in core state elections, and regional party conflicts are low or moderate. However, regions with strong electoral power and low homogeneity easily give birth to disagreement on the degree of self-rule or even independence. Regional parties which act in an environment without *de jure* self-government with legislative power are in a different situation. They lack a regional assembly with the right to legislate, and one which is partially protected from the core state authority. Instead, they have to overcome the thresholds to be represented in the core state legislative parliament, and a separate party system is by definition unheard of. In our three cases regional parties paid none or a minor role in the introduction of self-government. It was a result of international events and pressures that gave birth to these self-governing territories.

However, high degrees of homogeneity and very small population sizes make regional parties in national parliaments agents of their own regional governments, which in fact maximises the regional influence on decisions made in the national parliament. It would be a mistake to dismiss our three extreme cases to a residual category of exceptions. In contrast, the choice has been made to elaborate more evident arguments. First, will the

role of regional parties increase when the degree of autonomy is low? Second, what is the linkage between regional parties, including national parties with mandates from a large multicultural region and the regional government in the national parliament? Third, to what extent are regional party and national party incumbents agents of the regional government in the first instance, and their party organization in the second instance? Fourth, who are the main actors in pursuing regional demands to the core state government: the regional government, regional parties, or core state parties? These questions and comments open up a more systematic and comparative approach for future endeavours in the field of regional party research. Finally, to what extent is entrenched self-government similarly relevant in other forms of autonomous arrangements?

[i] Secession of Iceland in 1944 and the risk of secession of the Faroe Islands in 1946.

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Appendix 1

Voter turnout: Nationwide compared to island votes

Year	Finland	Åland	Year	Denmark	Faroe Islands	Greenland
1945	74.87%	55.6%	**1945**	86.29%	57.3%	-
1948	78.25%	45.9%	**1947**	85.78%	60.2%	-
1951	74.58%	38.8%	**1950**	81.87%	22.0%	-
1954	79.90%	33.1%	**1953**	80.80%	*	68.6%
1958	74.99%	38.6%	**1957**	83.73%	37.6%	61.8%**
1962	85.09%	51.6%	**1960**	85.64%	57.1%	65.8%
1966	84.94%	50.7%	**1964**	85.81%	50.2%	48.9%
1970	82.23%	60.9%	**1966**	88.61%	48.8%	59.0%***
1972	81.40%	51.5%	**1968**	89.28%	56.6%	56.3%
1975	73.80%	58.5%	**1971**	87.16%	56.8%	52.1%
1979	75.31%	56.2%	**1973**	88.72%	54.6%	67.6%
1983	75.73%	56.0%	**1975**	88.23%	56.4%	68.7%
1987	72.06%	52.8%	**1977**	88.70%	62.9%	70.0%
1991	68.39%	50.8%	**1979**	85.62%	65.4%	50.3%
1995	68.58%	52.1%	**1981**	87.77%	55.4%	61.0%
1999	65.27%	54.8%	**1984**	88.44%	61.0%	64.0%
2003	66.71%	60.3%	**1987**	86.74%	68.9%	44.9%
2007	65.02%	57.0%	**1988**	85.70%	70.3%	57.9%
2011	67.37%	51.1%	**1990**	82.85%	54.4%	50.8%
2015	66.85%	57.9%	**1994**	84.25%	62.3%	58.7%
			1998	85.95%	66.2%	63.4%
			2001	87.15%	80.0%	61.5%
			2005	84.54%	73.0%	59.6%
			2007	86.59%	66.8%	64.5%
			2011	87.74%	59.8%	57.5%
			2015	85.89%	66.2%	49.9%

*Source: IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance), http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=74; http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=63 (accessed 14 August 2015); Folketingsvalg på Færøerne siden 1953, http://www.ft.dk/Folketinget/Oplysningen/Valg/Valgresultater_Faeroerne.aspx (accessed 14 August 2015); Folketingsvalg i Grønland siden 1977, http://www.ft.dk/Folketinget/Oplysningen/Valg/Valgresultat_Groenland.aspx (accessed 14 August 2015); ÅSUB, http://www.asub.ax/text.con?iPage=261; http://www.asub.ax/files/riksdagsval_2015.pdf (accessed 14 August 2015); ÅSUB, http://pxweb.asub.ax/PXWeb/pxweb/sv/Statistik/Statistik__VA/VA008.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b911eedb-3596-4162-bb57-8f5ab57afbfc (accessed 16 August 2015). *Straw voting; **Straw voting in the number 2 constituency; *** Straw voting in the number 1 constituency.*

Appendix 2

Table 1: Overview of the Faroese party system with electoral results 1945–1990 (in percentages)

Party	1945	1946	1950	1954	1958	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978	1980	1984	1988	1990
Conservative Party	43.4	40.9	32.3	20.9	17.8	20.2	21.6	20.0	20.5	17.9	18.9	21.6	23.2	21.9
Unionist Party	24.4	28.7	27.3	26.0	23.7	20.3	23.7	21.7	19.1	26.3	23.9	21.2	21.2	18.9
Social Democratic Party	22.8	28.1	22.4	19.8	25.8	27.5	27.0	27.2	25.8	22.3	21.7	23.4	21.6	27.5
Independence Party	9.4	-	8.2	7.1	5.9	5.9	4.9	5.6	7.2	7.2	8.4	8.5	7.1	8.8
Independent Candidate	-	2.3	-	2.5	-	-	-	-	2.5	-	-	-	-	-
Republican Party	-	-	9.8	23.8	23.9	21.6	20.0	21.9	22.5	20.3	19.0	19.5	19.2	14.7
The Progress Party	-	-	-	-	2.9	4.4	2.8	3.5	2.5	6.1	8.2	5.8	5.5	5.9
Progressionist's Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.1	-
Socialist Separatist's Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.3
Voter turnout	**75.5**	**73.3**	**61.3**	**66.9**	**71.0**	**74.0**	**80.0**	**80.0**	**80.0**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**87.5**

Table 2: Overview of the Faroese party system with electoral results 1994–2015 (in percentages)

Party	1994	1998	2002	2004	2008[1]	2011	2015
Conservative Party	16.0	21.3	20.8	20.6	20.1	22.5	18.9
Unionist Party	23.4	18.1	26.0	23.7	21.0	24.7	18.7
Social Democratic Party	15.3	21.9	20.9	21.8	19.3	17.8	25.1
Independence Party	5.6	7.6	4.4	4.6	7.2	4.2	4.1
Republican Party	13.7	23.8	23.7	21.7	23.3	18.3	20.7
The Progress Party	6.3	2.5	-	-	-	-	-
The Centre Party	5.8	4.1	4.2	5.2	8.4	6.2	5.5
Worker's Movement	9.5	0.8	-	-	-	-	-
Freedom Movement	1.9	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Faroese Party	2.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Funny Party	-	-	-	2.4	-	-	-
Upper Secondary School Party	-	-	-	-	0.7	-	-
Progress	-	-	-	-	-	6.3	7.0
Voter turnout	**82.5**	**88.2**	**91.6**	**92.1**	**89.2**	**86.6**	**88.8**

Source: Statistics Faroe Islands; available at www.hagstova.fo/en

[1] In December 2007 the proportional electoral system was changed from a system of 7 constituencies to only consist of one constituency.

Table 3: Overview of the Greenlandic party system with electoral results from 1979–2014 (in percentages)

Party	1979	1983	1984	1987	1991	1995	1999	2002	2005	2009	2013	2014	2018
Siumut	46.1	41.3	44.1	39.8	37.3	38.4	35.1	27.1	30.4	26.5	42.8	34.3	27.2
Atassut	41.7	46.6	43.8	40.1	30.1	30.1	25.2	18.4	19	10.9	8.1	6.5	5.9
Inuit Ataqatigiit	4.4	10.6	12.1	15.3	19.4	20.3	22.1	29.7	22.4	43.7	34.4	33.2	25.5
Sulisartut Partiiat	5.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Akullit Partiiat	-	-	-	-	9.5	6.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Issitup Partiia	-	-	-	4.4	2.8	0.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alliance of Candidates	-	-	-	-	-	-	12.3	3.6	4	3.8	1.	-	-
Demokraatit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	19.7	22.6	12.7	6.2	11.8	19.5
Sorlaat Partiiat	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	1.3	-	-	-
Partii Inuit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6.4	1.6	-
Partii Naleraq	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11.6	13.4
Nunatta Qitornai													3.4
Samarbejdspartiet													4.1
Others	-	0.5	-	0.4	0.9	4.7	5.3	0.1	0.7	0.2	-	0.1	-
Voter Turnout	**69.6**	**75.1**	**66.8**	**69.6**	**67.5**	**69.6**	**76**	**55.8**	**74.9**	**71.3**	**74.2**	**72.9**	**71.9**

Sources: Maria Ackrén (2014), Table 1 and 2, pp. 176–177; Maria Ackrén (2015), Table 3, p. 332. https://www.valg.gl

Table 4: Overview of the Ålandic party system with electoral results 1971–2015 (in percentages)

Party	1971	1975	1979	1983	1987	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015
Liberalerna på Åland	7.6	8.2	29.6	28.9	23.7	22.9	26.6	28.7	24.1	32.6	20.3	23.3
LoS-Liberalerna[i]	-	21.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LoS[i]	57.1	29.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Åländsk Center	-	-	42.3	35.6	28.7	30.2	27.8	27.3	24.1	24.2	23.6	21.6
Åländska förbundet[i]	6.9	6.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Frisinnad samverkan, framstegslistan[i]	-	4.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Frisinnad samverkan[i]	13.8	11.8	13.9	16.6	17.3	19.8	20.6	14.5	13.6	9.6	13.9	17.9
Åländska socialdemokrater	13.1	16.4	12.0	16.5	14.0	14.5	15.2	11.8	19.0	11.8	18.5	15.8
Åländsk vänster	1.5	-	2.1	2.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Obunden samling	-	-	-	-	7.0	9.7	9.8	12.8	9.4	12.3	12.6	9.6
Gröna	-	-	-	-	6.7	2.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fria Åland	-	-	-	-	2.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ålands framstegsgrupp	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.8	3.4	-	-	-
Ålands framtid	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6.5	8.3	9.9	7.4
Hut-gruppen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.2	-	-
Hållbart initiativ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.8
Åländsk demokrati	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.6
Others	0.0	1.9	0.1	0.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.1	-

Sources: Ålands statistik- och utredningsbyrå (ÅSUB): Available at http://www.asub.ax/statistic_detail.con?iPage=45&m=76&sub=2; Peter Söderlund (2008), p. 132.