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National goals and local values. Changes in the municipal structure and gender representation in the Faroe Islands.

ABSTRACT
In this paper focus is on changes in the municipal structure and gender representation in local councils in the Faroese Islands. The national government's goal of reducing the number of municipalities to seven or nine, has met obstacles as local identity and local patriotism conflicts with national planning. The municipal amalgamations process has so far meant a reduction from 48 in 2001 to 29 in 2017. Thus, there still are many traditional councils, but also new constituencies based on larger aggregations of citizens. Though a micro nation with only 50.000 inhabitants, there are similarities with larger countries when comes to tensions between ideas of municipalities as a local arena for finding political solutions in the space of their community (the local space municipality model), and ideas of municipalities as administrative entities for implementing national goals (the municipal administration model). Fewer municipal councils means fewer elected representatives. Synchronously with the government's endeavors to municipal amalgamations, there have been campaigns to increase the gender balance among political representatives. Thus, the demobilization of municipal politicians has especially been amongst the male population. Gender differences in attitudes to geographical and gender representation among elected representatives might reveal different ideas of the municipalities' rationale. As expected, male politicians seem to be less concerned about gender representation than female. In this study women find both gender and geographical representation to be more important than their fellow male councilors do.

As in other Nordic countries, there are different opinions in the Faroe Islands on proper size and girth of municipal entities and the composition of the local councils. Traditional values meet changing logics for local government. The municipalities' capacity to deliver public services may be converse to their feasibility as democratic institutions, representing local communities. By reducing the number of municipalities, many municipal councils no longer serve just one local community, but consist of previously self-governed communities merged to larger entities. Divergent opinions on 'good representation' question the legitimacy of both traditional and reformed municipal councils. On one hand, citizens in former independent municipalities may find it their legitimate right to have representation from their community

in the new municipality council. On the other hand, larger municipalities may be better fit to face increasing demands for stronger representation of under-represented groups, as it may be easier to mobilize people for common political interests when the group consists of more than just a few individuals (Newton 1982:201; Offerdal 1979:57). However, one of the consequences of municipal amalgamations is that this confronts general goals of numerous democratic participation (*Demokratiutvalget 2005*). Most often amalgamations lead to a reduction in the total number of local politicians. Though one person may represent several attributes (female worker from the urban center; male director from the periphery), harder competition for fewer seats will *sine qua non* make it more complicated to satisfy the different aspects of considered good and fair representation in the municipal council. Synchronously with the government's endeavors to municipal amalgamations, there have been campaigns to increase the gender balance among political representatives. While national and local branches of the Women's Rights Movement, especially since mid-1980', have fronted the campaigns for recruiting more women to political duties, gender equality in politics since late 1990's has also become a governmental task. The combination of fewer elected politicians, abolished local councils, and demands of electing more women actualizes questions on gender differences in attitudes on representation: Do we find gender differences in attitudes to what the elected councilors consider fair representation?

This paper proceeds in the following manner. Firstly, I will discuss divergent rationales for municipal councils and different values on representation/ representativeness. Thereafter, I will discuss ongoing changes in Faroese municipal politics in light of these perspectives. I will present the traditional Faroese municipality structure and the ongoing amalgamation reforms, before taking a closer look on changes in recruitment of male and female politicians during the period of municipal amalgamation. How has the loss of seats affected the gender representation? When comparing large and small municipality councils, do we find different developments in the gender balance? Finally, I will compare male and female representatives' views on geographical and gender representation.

Rationales for municipal councils

The diverse rationales for municipality government are not permanent in a country. In Audun Offerdal (2007) words (in my translation): "The municipal structure in a country is a result of political processes, and it expresses the present hegemonic view in the political system on what a municipality is, and what the municipalities can be used for."[i]

Especially in times of change there will be different opinions on what the municipalities' political assignments should be, what should be its proper size and borders, and who is needed as representatives in the council to form the politics for a good community.

There are different understandings on *why* some issues are considered to be handled best on the local level. However the local councils' knowledge of local values and essential needs is a recurrent theme in literature. Delegating power to the local level may lead to a more effective government, as local knowledge may be used to find acceptable solutions at low costs. In addition come the values of democratic participation and political liberty to form your local society (Sharpe 1970). How strong the citizen's local identity is will vary; probably it is especially strong when the settlement has old roots and the immigration is insignificant (Rose and Ståhlberg 2000). When the municipal entity overlaps with local communities, we might expect the municipal structures to have similarities with nation states, where the state only covers one nation. The community will then consist of a group of people who, in Frazer's words (1999:241) share "a sense of allegiance".

European countries have during the last decades chosen to decrease their number of municipalities. "Local democracy is being changed and reinvented" (Ladner & Fiechter 2012:437). What is considered to be the proper size of a municipality differs; and the municipal structures do indeed differ in different countries. The only common characteristic for municipalities is that they are not politically sovereign, but need to adjust themselves to decisions made by a higher authority on national or federal level. Tensions between supporters and opponents to municipal amalgamations are often grounded on different rationales for including municipalities in a nation's government structure. On the one hand municipalities are administrative systems for implementing national policy, providing local welfare service generally being the heaviest task. On the other hand they are democratic institutions, meant to find political solutions on genuine local issues (Offerdal 2007; Frazer 1999).

The different aspects of the Scandinavian term «*kommune*» is reflected in the English language with the two concepts *municipality* and *commune*. The etymology of the English term '*municipality*' refers to a political and administrative unit, as a service provider to the community.[ii] The term is derived from Old Latin '*moenus*' meaning "service", and 'capere',

meaning to take or give. The term '*commune*' on the other hand, has a common root with the English word 'community' and 'common', thus referring to the social relations in a local society.

According to Dahl and Tufte (1973) the size of a democratic system matters, but in different ways. In one perspective, amalgamation might be an advantage for the citizens, as a system's capacity to provide services and deliver solutions to the welfare requirements of the citizens usually is easier to accomplish in a large size community. However, as Dahl and Tufte (op.cit.) point out, in a large community the inhabitants will have less opportunity to participate in the political processes; and the people's conception of personal insignificance in political outcomes will be more common in a large community than in a small one. There will be a farther distance between the citizens and their representatives (Berg 2012). Anckar (1999) also discusses the probability of more homogeneity in small polities, and thus easier to find political consensus. In this perspective, large size municipalities should be prevented.

Peoples' local identity in the pre-industrial communities were themes in the works of Alexis Tockeville (1835)[iii] and Ferdinand Tönnies (1887).[iv] These traditional values are emphasized in some of the present days' political and academic discussions, and some even try to (re)construct small size democratic governed local communities. These are often based on ideas of an egalitarian culture in small environments, as well as the ideals of participatory democracy for solving political problems (Floridia 2017)[v]. In the counter-cultural movement fifty years ago, young people in Amerika as well as Europe chose to establish alternative communities in rural areas, and many of these are still functioning. Similar experiments with alternative government of communities have been made by and for people living in urban environments. There have been anti-authoritarian groups occupying land for a "free state", Christiania in Copenhagen being one, and their nature has been to be independent of all 'patriarchal' governing from the established state or local government. There have also been efforts from the establishment to prevent and/or limit political alienation in urban environments by constructing suburban community councils, though most often with limited political influence.

However, focusing solely on social ties may hinder an understanding of the genuine values and the need for democratic institutions on local level. Local political power must be seen in connection with the control of public space and the built environment (Elliott 2010). One of the

main virtues of local democracy is that people who live in and identify themselves with a geographically defined area, through political institutions may find (permanent or temporary) mutual solutions to conflicting interests (Offerdal 2007). Lasswell's classic definition of politics is "who gets what, when and how", but, as Joni Lovenduski (2015) points out, it must be added a "where" and a "why". The *where* depicts the importance of an institutionalized political arena. In municipal councils elected representatives[vi] have competence to take political decisions on issues that are delegated from national level to local level.

To summarize so far: Discussions on the functions of local municipality councils can be traced to three ideal-typical models. One focusses on the possibility to increase effective government by using local knowledge, which in turn may be a benefit for the local citizens, as this may lead to better and cheaper public services. This model can be labelled *municipal administration*. Another model emphasizes the social ties with mutual norms and values in local environments as fundament for the political community. This model can be labelled as *social ties community*. An alternative approach is to focus on the local space, or more precisely, the geographic entity where people share a destiny to live alongside other people with differing interests. In this perspective the main rationale for local councils is neither as an effective administrator of central policy, nor to find consensus through Habermasian dialogue to the 'right' solutions for how to manage the public good in the community. Focusing on the geographic entity, the municipality council is seen as the local arena for finding political solutions on how to deal with conflicting interests in the community. This model can be labelled the *local space municipality-model*. While the *social ties community-model* presupposes mutual norms and values in the community, both in the *municipal administration-model* and in *local space municipality-model*, an essential value is good and fair representation of groups with divergent interests.

An amalgamation of municipalities anticipates a more effective public policy performance[vii], but national plans may clash with local demands to keep democratic institutions solely for the community area to which they identify with. Among those who have a *social ties* and *local space* point of view of local government, there are mixed opinions on how many should be engaged in politics. In traditional municipalities there may be an understanding that 'proper' representation is to have local patrons in the seats (Goldsmith 1992; Kjellberg 1965; 1973). Others are concerned about the demobilization of previously politically active citizens by reducing the number of seats in local government (Offerdal 2016).

Focus in this paper will be on representation, and thus divergent values in the *municipal administration-model* and in *local space municipality-model.* The legitimacy of local representation is not restricted to local geographical representation. The present local politics era, marked by amalgamation processes, has also had a parallel trend, namely claims for stronger representation of under-represented groups. Especially there have been mobilization campaigns to increase female representation in order to improve the gender balance in local councils.

Rationales for political representation

In his study of the relationship between a representative and the electorate, Jens A. Christophersen (1963/64) points to the difference of being a *virtual* and an *actual* representative of the citizen's interests. While representation in a virtual perspective means that the politician is free to make his or her judgement, representation in an actual perspective means that the politician has closer ties to his or her backland. The elected politician is a delegate for a group, and the group forms the political mandate for the elected representative. Also in Hanna Pitkin's (1967) typology of representation focus is on the relationship between the representative and the represented, and there are links between *actual representation*, and Pitkin's concepts *descriptive* and *substantive* representation. Topical during the second wave of the Women's Rights Movement is the goal of fair gender representation, stressing values in *descriptive representation*, where the representatives should look like, have common interests with, and share experiences with the represented (Pitkin 1967; Dovi 2017). Descriptive representation values are also decisive in the *local space municipality-model*, especially when comes to claims to local representation in the council board (while under-representation of women not always is seen as a problem). Focus on *substantive representation* leads to questions on the activity of the representatives; do they advance the policy preferences that serve the interests of the represented? (Pitkin op.cit.; Dovi op.cit.). Also *substantive representation* may be seen as a decisive goal in the *local space municipality-model*, as concerns about the legitimacy and accountability of representative institutions are based on criteria of actual representation, where the elected politicians are delegates from (groups in) their local community and defend their interests against conflicting interests. On the other hand, the *municipal administration-model* where the rationale is that use of local knowledge will be a benefit for the local citizens as this may lead to better and cheaper public services, implicates less stress on descriptive and substantive group representation. Representativeness

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is less important than being well-informed source for the local and national technical and social administration.

As mentioned, the present amalgamation processes coincide with changes in the understanding of which groups should have elected representatives in the local councils, especially when comes to claims for gender balance and increased female representation. As Lovenduski (2015) says, women's shared interests in policies that increase their autonomy should not be underestimated, this, however, could also be said about other groups, for example the young people and the elderly, who might request for representation as independent and able citizens rather than being under guardianship of professional middle-aged middle-class politicians. A consequence will be increasing competition for a seat in the municipality council, or the reverse: political apathy from the invisible groups.

In the next section, the Faroese Islands will serve as an example of a country where changes in municipal structure are taking place. Focus will be on three presumable interrelated questions:

- Firstly: How have divergent values when comes to the rationale for municipalities, affected the municipal structure historically and in recent days?
- Secondly: Can we identify changes in the gender representation, and may the development be related to the size of the municipalities?
- Finally: Could we trace different attitudes to representation among male and female councilors that might relate to different rationales for the municipal councils?

The empirical source for answering the first and second questions is election data from 1992 to 2016, showing changes in nomination and election of male and female candidates. Data source for studying the third question are four questionnaires to the nominated for elections in 2000, 2004, 2008, and to the elected in 2012, where I among other asked for the politicians' opinions on the representation in the local councils.

Changing the municipal structure. The Faroese case.
To grasp the background for the identity of a distinct nation's municipal system, one needs to see it in a geographical, historical, socio-economical, cultural and political context. The Faroe Islands' municipal system has some similarities with the two other West Nordic countries, Iceland and Greenland. The countries share a common heritage of being parts of the *amt-*

structure in the Kingdom of Denmark (Greenland though having status as colony until 1952). All three countries got local democratic institutions in the 1870's. Their municipal systems were modelled after - but not copies of - the Danish system established in 1837/1841. Iceland became an independent state in 1918/1944, the Faroe Islands got its Home Rule in 1948, and Greenland its Home Rule in 1984. Though called 'enhedsstaten Danmark', in the Danish state system financial affairs are and have been treated separately and differently in each of the four countries Denmark, Greenland, Iceland and the Faroes. Today Danish financial aid to Greenland is substantial, whereas aids to the Faroe Islands close to insignificant, and furthermore now being phased out by the Faroese government.

Thus, the municipality structures of these countries vary, and one main reason are the differences in geography and population. Iceland is the most populous with 332.000 inhabitants on 103.000 km². Greenland is the largest in size with the longest distances between the communities, 60.000 inhabitants on 1.443.000 km². The Faroe Islands is the most densely populated, 50.000 people on 1.400 km².

All three West-Nordic countries have experienced municipal amalgamations, but to different extends. In Iceland the number of municipalities is reduced from 229 in 1950, to 124 in 2000, and since 2013 the number has been 74 municipalities.[viii] Until 2008, Greenland had 19 municipalities, since 2009 the number is only four. Huge internal geographic and cultural differences may hinder good internal communication in the four entities. [ix] However, Greenland also has 61 *bygdebestyrelser;*[x] and protests against the restructuring of political power and loss of local councils have also lead to establishment of *lokaludvalg*, local committees, in less peripheral communities to compensate some of the democratic loss due to the amalgamation in 2009.

The amalgamation processes in Greenland and Iceland vary in form and speed. Following Klausen's (2016) classification of municipal amalgamation processes in 1) inertia, 2) continuous and 3) episodic, we see that Greenland experienced the most drastic change, qualifying for Klausen's *episodic* category. Greenland choose to follow the track of Denmark who in 2007 went from 270 to 98 municipalities. These kinds of sudden reductions demand a top down decision and implementation from state government, as local politicians if they were involved in the process, most likely would have opposed it (ibid.). Iceland's process may (as Norway and Finland) be placed in the *continuous* category, as a process once started is

often not easy to stop (Klausen 2016). The amalgamation process may slow down, thereby breaking the schedule set up by the government. But once an initiative to structural change has political support in the national government, and a decision to reduce the number of municipalities is taken, the amalgamation process according to Klausen (ibid.), may be expected to continue. How does this apply to the Faroe Islands?

In the Faroe Islands the government has set 7 to 9 municipalities as a future goal, and the number of municipalities is reduced from 48 in 2000 to 29 in 2017. The amalgamations have been voluntary. Revisions made in the municipality law in 2000 as well as public discussions on local government have led to support for creating larger entities. Following the new political signals, the municipal election in November 2004 gave a rapid reduction of municipalities, from 48 to 34. After the 2008-election the number was reduced to 30. Since then there has been only one new amalgamation: Since January 2017 the number is 29.

As the amalgamation process did not go as fast as planned by central authorities in Tórshavn, some argue for leaving the voluntary track and use the national government's legal power to implement a new municipal structure with only seven or nine municipalities. However, members of the parliament are reluctant to force through a reform against the will of their voters. In 2011 the minister in charge decided to arrange a referendum on the issue of amalgamation of municipalities. If the intention was to speed up the voluntary amalgamation process, the referendum had the opposite effect. The turnout was a meager 32,7 %, a result that might indicate that people were not sure of the implications of such severe structural changes (Dam 2013). On the regional level the majority in six of the seven regions said no to amalgamation. Only in Vágar where there already was an ongoing merging process, there was a small majority for amalgamation. On the municipal level there was a majority in some of the municipalities who had expectations to become centers in the new large municipalities. Parallel with Rysavý & Berhard (2013) findings, amalgamation seemed to be most popular among those who were not affected (p. 835). Only in three peripheral municipalities there was a majority for amalgamation, but these municipalities are still intact. The referendum in 2012 meant a stop – or a temporary blow – in the municipal structural changes. The only municipality that has merged since 2012 actually said no in 2012, but local discussions and negotiations ended with merging this tiny municipality with Klaksvík after the election in 2016; though, a local referendum might still have given a negative result. Interestingly, in Tórshavn it was the opponents to amalgamation who gave their vote in the referendum. 73,6

per cent said no, the turnout though only 20,3 per cent. Having included six surrounding municipalities since 1974, they obviously felt enough is enough,

According to Klausen's (2016) typology the amalgamation process in the Faroe Islands before 2004 and after 2008 thus may be placed in the category *inertia*, while there was a short episode of *episodic* amalgamation process from 2004 to 2008. This *stop – start – stop* process may be understood partly in an historical perspective, partly by the different values when comes to local democracy felt in different parts of the country.

Traditional communities and local entities

The Faroese municipal structure has undergone both increases and decreases in the number of municipalities. The local democracy has roots from the very first Norse settlements on the islands.[xi] In 1866 the only town at that time, Tórshavn, got a town council. In the rural districts a modern time municipality system was established in 1872. The small population, at that time less than 10.000, 800 of them living in Tórshavn, was the main reason for the Danish state government to stick to the seven parochial districts, in spite of recommendations from the Faroes to keep to the traditional community structure with around 40 entities. The local identities have been very strong in the Faroes, one example being that it has been possible to identify persons' origin from each municipality by their local dialect.

Geographical as well as perceived cultural distances to neighbor communities led to divisions, the first already in 1874. In 1967 the number was 51 (see figure 1). Wang (1988) points to municipal taxes as a major incitement for communities to establish seperate municipalities. By becoming a seperate entity, you would no more have to pay for the neighbour community's investments. Still each municipality collects and disposes seperate local taxes, within a given limit set by the government, but without any equalizing of the tax incomes between the different municipalities. When established, the municipalities' statutuary tasks were few.[xii] This opened for local financial power and entrepreneurship in the municipal councils. On the other hand they could also choose to keep the taxes low, and the expenses to municipal administration and local welfare to a minimum.

Visions of larger municipal entities

When established in 1872, the municipalities succeeded the local poverty committees, *fattigkommisioner* from 1855, introducing and formalizing the logic of a public social system

on local level.[xiii] However, municipalities were small and had few resources to solve these kind of problems. In praxis, the only municipality dealing professionally with social and welfare issues 100 years later, in 1972, was Tórshavn. The rest leant on the then Danish administered social and welfare administration in Tórshavn. By 1988 these tasks were transferred from Danish to the Faroese authorities.

When the Faroes in 1972 got a new municipality law, they were following the tide and the policy in the neighbour countries. One purpose with the new law was to encourage municipal amalgamations; but as mentioned earlier, in 1996 there still were 50 municipalities.[xiv] By initative from the Faroese Home Rule administration there were made new endeavour in the 1990's to change the municipality system (Kommununevndin 1997-98), and in 2000 the above mentioned new municipal law was carried through the Løgting. Now the Home Rule government had the full responsibility of the welfare sector, and from their viewpoint it seemed natural to imitate the structural changes made in neighbor countries. Fewer municipalities might on one hand, give national authorities greater control over public finances at the local level, and on the other, arrange for a welfare policy formed at the local level by municipal councils.[xv] From the perspective of the central authorities, the local democracy's greatest quality was to be fit to take tasks that in this paper fits within the model *municipal administrations.* As mentioned above, the number of municipalities decreased from 48 in 2001 to 34 in 2005, and it was especially the smallest entities who chose to merge with neighbor municipalities, see Table 1:

Table 1: Amalgamation = reduction of small municipalities

Number of representatives in municipal councils (indicator of municipalities' size*). Inhabitants January 2017		2001	2005	2009	2013	2017
20.885	13	1	1	1	1	1
1.705-5.051	11	1	3	4	4	4
1.356; 1521; 2.060	9	3	2	3	3	3
529-1.256; 1.729	7	14	13	10	9	9
84-454	5	18	10	9	10	10
42; 45	3	11	5	3	3	2
Total number of councils		*48*	*34*	*30*	*30*	*29*

*The list of number of inhabitants shows that two municipalities have chosen to have less members in the councils than other municipalities of the same size: Tvøroyri, 1.729 inhabitants and 7 members, and Eystur kommuna, 2.060 inhabitants and 9 members.

Besides the general claims from the government that municipalities would soon meet new resource-demanding challenges, the law from 2000 has new rules that function as incitements to close down the councils in the smallest self-governed communities. One of these new provisions was on payment to mayors. While they previously might continue in their usual job, they now were obliged to serve as fulltime mayor or as a halftime job. The only exceptions were municipalities with less than 500 inhabitants, where the mayors might serve in less than half time job. Many municipalities now chose to provide their mayors with an income as fulltime mayor. As they no longer could keep on in their regular work while serving as mayor, this meant a new level of professionalization of the political leadership on municipal level, and a new understanding of municipal government as *municipal administration*.

Representation and participation

Another change concerns the number of members in the smallest municipalities. In the previous 1972-law councils should have at least 7 members, though with the possibility to reduce the number to five or even three when there were less than 1000 inhabitants in the municipality. Now municipalities with less than 500 inhabitants got a permanent state of emergency, and with the provision that councils in municipalities with less than 100 inhabitants should have only three members, and those with less than 500 inhabitants, only five members. Especially councils with only three members have met problems to function, as three is a notoriously awkward number for deliberative settings (Sunstein 2003; here Larsen 2008). Comments to questionnaires exhibit the annoying situation when the council only has three members, and one of the members is in opposition to the two others.

Another type of arguments for merging the small municipalities to larger entities was a perceived need for strengthening the local democracy. There were some concernments on future recruitment to municipality councils. A vivid local democracy is of course depending on the peoples' sense of local political issues being of importance, as well as a confidence on the political representatives being able to make a difference in local policy performance. Probably influenced by current discussions in the neighbor countries one argument for delegating welfare issues was to give the municipal councils meaningful tasks. However, election data show that worries about lacking interest and mobilization to local politics seem exaggerated, or at least premature. It is hard to find evidence of problems to recruit members to the councils.[xvi] The provisions for municipal elections are among others that the

competition should be real by the number of nominated candidates to the election always being two more than the number of seats in the council. This has been fulfilling in the material I have studied, i.e. since 1992. The councils have few seats – 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 or 13 – and to become an elected representative gives power and prestige.

One way to check how easy it is to recruit candidates for the municipal election lists is the viability for under-represented groups as women and immigrants to get nominated and elected. The women's struggle to win positions in the municipal councils is a theme later in this paper. When comes to ethnic representation, since 1992 all elected but one have been Faroese; and the names of the nominated candidates indicate that extremely few, and no one from outside the Nordic countries are on the lists. The Faroe Islands have a homogeneous population: the census of 2011 showed that only 1 percent of the population had a non-Faroese identity (Hagstova.fo). The number of immigrants has increased since then.[xvii] Nonetheless, the absence of non-Faroese may be an indicator for native interest to hold a political office in Faroese municipalities.

The people's great and stable interest in local elections is noticeable at electoral turnouts. As table 2 shows, the citizens of Tórshavn have the lowest turnout; even the smallest municipalities surpass the capital when comes to attending the elections:

Table 2 Turnout, municipal elections

	2016	2012	2008	2004	2000
Average	83,8	80,8	78,4	82,6	80,4
Tórshavn	79,2	77,4	72,4	78,1	74,8
Average, 10 smallest*	91,4	87,0	88,3	85,9	78,8

Electorate 2016, 2012, 2008: less than 300; electorate 2004: less than 150; 2000: 60 or less.

Oliver (2012) who discusses municipal democracy in US, claims that "One of the most common misperceptions about local politics is that (...) their issues are insignificant and that the voters are apolitical. In fact, just the opposite is more often the true – local voters are much more likely to embody the classical notions of an informed and rational *polis* than are national voters." (p.8). He emphasizes the influence of long-term residents and homeowners on the local political culture, as these citizens not only are likely to vote, but generally are informed and engaged in

local politics. They are driven to participate "not simply from concerns over sustaining their property values, but also from attachments to a particular vision of their community" (p.196). Oliver's active citizens fulfil Fraser's (1999) characteristica of the republican citizen "that all individuals within a community have an obligation to participate, to uphold the community's norms and laws, to sustain it as well as themselves." (Frazer 1999: 210).

Oliver (2012) emphasizing citizen's devotion to their traditional municipalities also points to the impact of power relations in politics, claiming "... it is very likely that politics will be dominated by a political regime oriented around an agenda of perserving the mal-apportionment of public resources." (p. 192). The combination of high political mobilization in stable communities and traditional power regimes' efforts to preserve their control, may provide some explanation to the different response from central and peripheral municipalities when comes to amalgamations, see Figure 1:

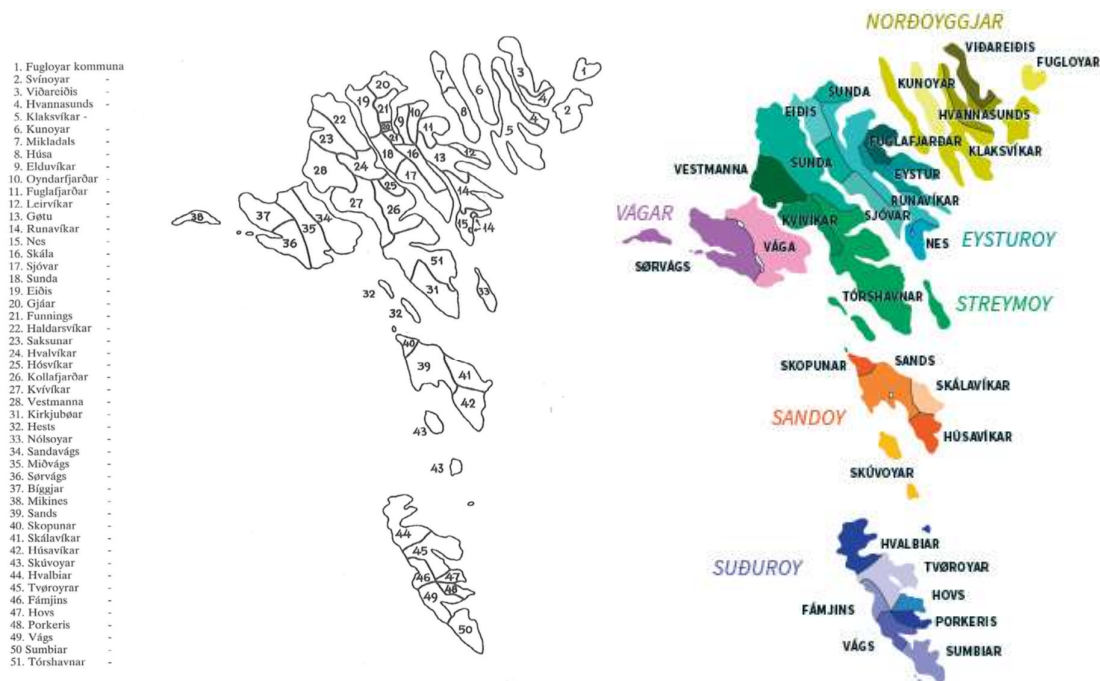Figure 1: Uneven development in different parts of the country.

Figure 1 shows that while the municipalities in the periphery – in Suðuroy, Sandoy and in parts of Norðuroyggjar – have chosen to keep their traditional structures, municipalities in central areas of the islands have chosen to merge to larger entities. There seems to be less opposition to municipal amalgamation in communities in the central areas – Streymoy,

Eysturoy, Vágar and Klaksvík - who are knit together with tunnels and bridges, and people commute between the municipalities for work and school. However, wether small scale municipality councils in the periphery are dominated by a traditional elite, is an empirical question. Is it so that traditional power structures are better prevailed in these municipalities? As one of the characteristica of the traditional regimes is male dominance, we might start by having a closer look on changes in the gender distribution in municipal councils the last 25 years.
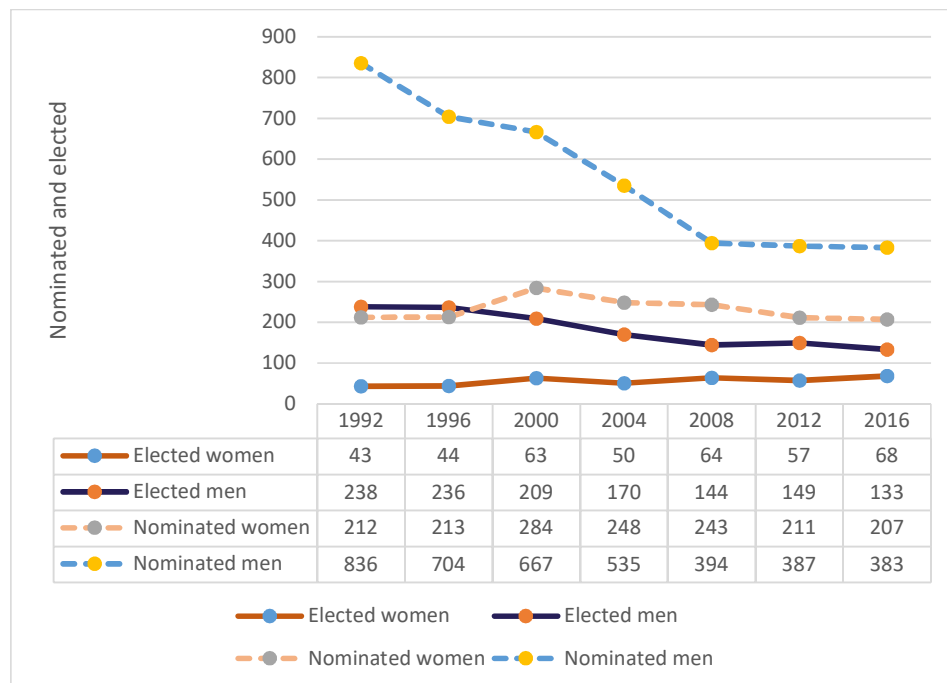
Women's entrance to municipal councils

Incidentally, the present amalgamation processes coincide with changes in the understanding of which groups should have elected representatives in the local councils, especially when comes to claims for gender balance and increased female representation.

Faroese women are latecomers in the local councils as well as the national parliament. The first woman elected to Tórshavn municipal council, from a women's list for the period 1956-60. The next female candidate elected in the capital came from the Social Democrats' list for 1968-72. Thereafter no woman entered the capital's council until 1984. (Jákupsstovu 1996). Not until 1978 the first women were elected to the parliament Løgtingið. Absence of women in political arenas mobilised a Faroese Women Rights' movement, who organized for training women in politics, and encouraged women to get nominated for elections. Especially in middle-sized municipalities where there was no tradition of using the national party system at the municipal level, women organized special women's lists, often with positive results. The low female representation in parliament began to draw international attention around 2000. West Nordic Council recommended in 1999 the Faroese government to appoint a committee to work for increased gender balance, as this had been a success in Iceland. In 2006 the Faroese government also got complaints from UN, CEDAW, on too low female share (9,4 per cent in the parliament). This triggered the parliament to appoint a committee, *Demokratia,* and their public financed campaigns to increase women's share in political arenas seem to have had some impact on the public attitudes to female participation. Since the mid 1980's several middle-size municipalities have succeeded to raise the gender balance by using special women's lists. In the larger municipalities, using the national party system with up to seven parties, newcomers would meet hard competition, also from feminists nominated on the established parties' lists (Jákupsstovu 1998; 2008b).

However, representation requires seats in the political arena. Due to amalgamations, the number of members in municipality councils in the Faroes has reduced from 272 to 203 since 2000. Fewer municipalities has especially effected the number of nominated which has reduced from 1048 to 590 since 1992. This relates to the number of lists at municipal elections. While the national party system as mentioned above, is only present in the largest municipalities, and most often not representing all seven national parties at the local elections, even the smallest municipalities usually have two lists, medium-size lists three to five lists, representing special local interests. Sometimes these lists link to the ideologies of the national parties, but most often they represent conflicting interests in the community. When municipalities disappear, obviously many lists with many nominated disappear as well.

Figure 2 Gender distributions at municipal elections. Absolute number.

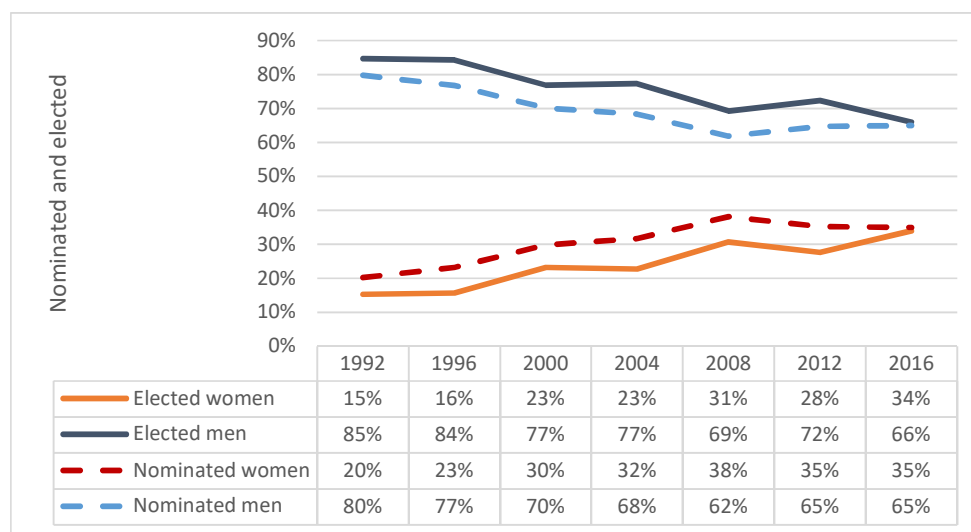|	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
Elected women	43	44	63	50	64	57	68
Elected men	238	236	209	170	144	149	133
Nominated women	212	213	284	248	243	211	207
Nominated men	836	704	667	535	394	387	383

As Figure 2 shows, there has been a 'landslide' in the number of nominated men, especially from 1992 to 2008, when the number of nominated men dropped from 836 to 304. The 'democracy project' this period has been gender equality, and the percentage of female municipality representatives has increased from 15 percent in 1992 to 34 percent women in 2016 (see Figure 3). However, Figure 2 shows that the *number* of elected women has not had any impressing increase, the total number was 25 more women in municipal councils in 2016 than in 1992. The reduction of municipal councils has less effect on the political mobilisation

of women than on men, and thus Faroes got more gender equality in politics. On the other hand, from a democracy perspective the price of the amalgamations has been a huge demobilisation of local politicians, as the total number of elected reduced.

Figure 3 shows the slow and not quite steady course towards more equal gender representation. Interestingly, the results from the last election in 2016 do not show the traditional picture of voters preferring male candidates. Being a woman now did not seem to reduce the candidates' chances to be elected.

Figure 3 Gender distributions at municipal elections. Per cent.

	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
Elected women	15%	16%	23%	23%	31%	28%	34%
Elected men	85%	84%	77%	77%	69%	72%	66%
Nominated women	20%	23%	30%	32%	38%	35%	35%
Nominated men	80%	77%	70%	68%	62%	65%	65%

The general trend is more gender equality among local politicians. The election in 2016 actually gave a female majority in Tórshavn, eight women and five men, and for the second time the capital now has a female mayor. Maybe value changes have opened up for a new type of political elite that includes women, while peripheral municipalities still are male dominated? As Table 3 shows, the picture is not that clear.

Table 3 Women's share of the elected in small, medium and large municipalities*. Per cent.

	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
13 & 11	25	24	33	30	39
9 & 7	23	20	28	23	29
3 & 5	23	26	33	32	37

*Municipality size here: size of the council, see Table 2

Table 3 shows that the female share is the same in the smallest municipalities as in the most urbanized municipalities. One reason may be that the population is very small and decreasing in the smallest municipalities with less than 500 inhabitants, thus mobilizing all elective citizens for service. The middle size municipalities have in average the poorest gender balance. Comparing the development in middle-sized and larger municipalities there is a noticeable slower increase in female participation in the former group. The campaigns for recruiting more women to the local councils have reached the whole country, and actually, as mentioned above, in several of the middle-sized municipalities there have been local efforts to increase the female share by launching special women's lists. Some have succeeded to get women elected from these lists, but only in one municipality, Vestmanna, to such degree that they won the majority in the council which they held from 1992 to 2004, when they lost for a 'male-list' with the explicit goal to re-gain male control in the council (Jákupsstovu 2008b). In other municipalities the preferences for male dominance in local politics has been less overt, though lists without female names may be an indication of ruling attitudes.

This study of municipality elections has shown that changes have taken place when comes to gender representation, women now held a more fair share of the seats in the councils. However, is there a difference between the male and female councilors when comes to attitudes to local and gender representativeness?

Elected representatives' opinion on the composition of the municipal councils

In this paper it has been claimed that the *local space municipality-model* implicates that descriptive and substantive representation are decisive claims when comes to politicians' representativeness in the local council board. The representatives should look like, have common interests with, and share experiences with the represented, and they should act as delegates and defend their 'backlands' interests against conflicting interests. In the *municipal administration-model* these forms of actual representation are less important, it is sufficient to qualify as a well-informed source for the local and national public administration, mediating information about what is considered to be the local understanding of common needs and adequate solutions. How do these models apply to elected councilor's opinions on representation? Do men and women differ in their opinions?

As described above, for about forty years there have been extensive campaigns to mobilize women for political duties, first organized by the Women Right's movement, and since 2006 also by the national government. Proclaimed need for increased representation of underrepresented women are congruent with rationales in the *local space municipality-model* of councilors' representativeness. According to this model, there should also be a fair representation of different local communities in the municipal councils.

Local councilors elected in 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012 have been asked for their opinion on, among others, the composition of the municipal councils when comes to gender equality and representation of local communities, on a scale from 1 to 5. Figure 4 shows the share of men and women answering that this kind of representation is *important* and *very important* (4+5).

Figure 4 Council members' opinion on representation. Per Cent.
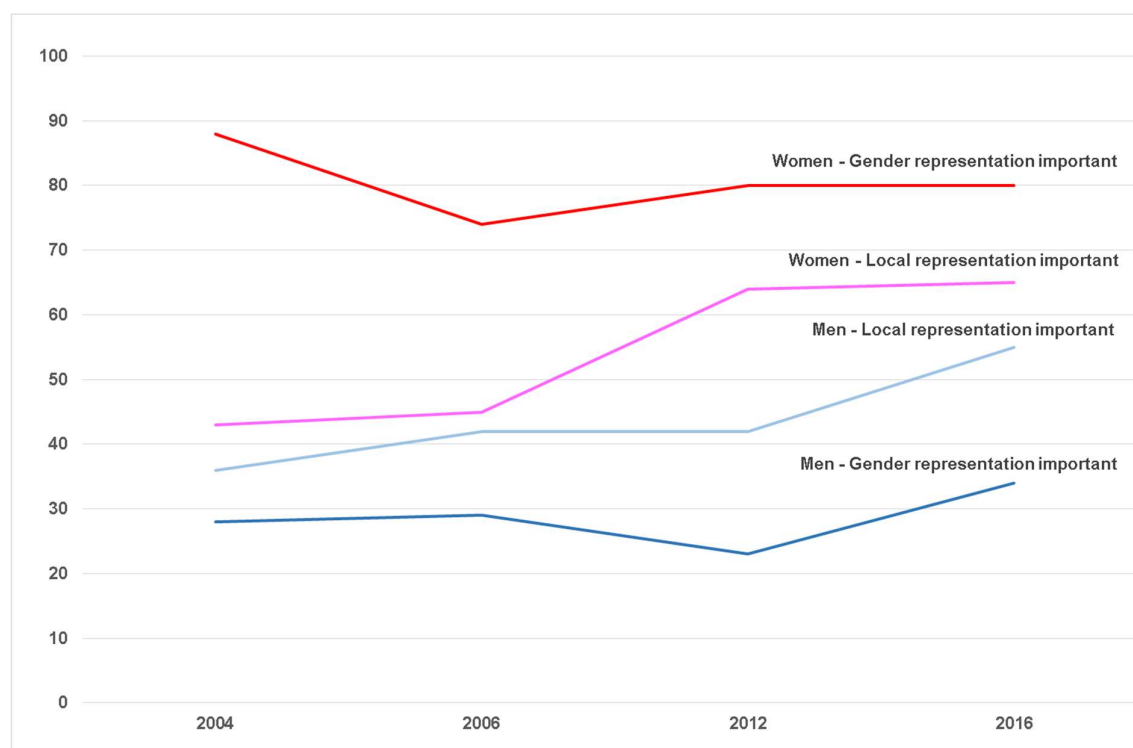
Question 23: Hvussu heldur tú at bygda/býráðið eigur at vera samansett? Vinaliga set kross við allar pástandirnar, frá 1: lítlan týdning til 5: stóran týdning. **23 a**: Umleið sama tal av monnum og kvinnum; **23 d**: Umboð fyri ymiskar bygdir og býarpartar í kommununi.

Figure 4 shows that while women have been very concerned about female representation, men in a far less degree find this important. Women are not to the same degree concerned about local representation in the councils, but still a larger share of women than of men thinks that local representation is important.

These findings indicate that there may be gender differences in views on political representation in the Faroe Islands. A major cause might be the massive emphasis to motivate women to become women's representatives in local councils as well as the national parliament. In campaigns solely given women, not men, women got training in democratic thinking and were encouraged to political participation. The campaigns' emphasis on female representation in the local councils may cause an understanding among women of municipal politics in the rationale of the *local space municipality model*. On the other hand, men seem less concerned about the councilors' representativeness; maybe municipal politics in their rationale is closer to a *municipal administration model*, or even a *social ties municipality model.*

One way of improving the representation of underrepresented groups and interests might be to increase the number of representatives in the councils. Generally, the opposite has been the case. A side effect of the reduction of the number of municipalities that may or may not have been intended is that this usually leads to a reduction in the total number of local politicians. From a *municipal administration* point of view, the fewer politicians, the easier to avoid 'endless' political debates; the politicians in power can, together with a professional administration, make decisions on how to manage local services. Decreasing the number of local politicians also means less disbursement to wages for politicians – 'savings' which may be used to finance a professional administration. Table 4 shows the local politicians' opinion on the size of the councils:

Table 4 Council members' opinion on the size of the councils. Per Cent.

	2004	2006	2012	2016
Too many members	13	14	16	9
Right size	77	77	79	87
Too few members	8	8	4	3
N=	147	128	99	124

Question 24A. Hvat heldur tú um støddina á bygdaráðnum/býráðnum? Alt. 1: Vit velja ov nógv fólk til at sita í bygdaráðnum/býráðnum. Alt. 2 Tað sita passaliga nógv fólk í bygdaráðnum/býráønum. Alt. 3 Vit velja ov fá folk inn í bygdaráðið/býráðið.

As Table 4 shows, the grand majority of the elected politicians find their council to have the proper size. The councils are small, especially compared to the Norwegian local councils, and

small councils makes the seats exclusive. The councilors do not have to share their power with many others.

Conclusion

In this paper focus has been on tensions between ideas of municipalities as a local arena for finding political solutions in the space of their community (the *local space municipality model*), and ideas of municipalities as administrative entities for implementing national goals (the *municipal administration model*).

We find great general interest for municipal politics in the Faroe Islands, but also divergent opinions on 'good representation' when comes to local and gender representativeness. Local political resistance to national stated goals has slowed down the amalgamation process, which since 2001 has meant a reduction from 48 to 29 municipalities. The municipal structure now has a hybrid pattern, comprised of new constituencies based on larger aggregations of citizens in the central areas, and traditional municipalities with unchanged boarders in the more peripheral areas.

It is uncertain whether there will be more voluntary amalgamations, as well as whether national politicians, many of them with strong ties to local communities, will carry through forced changes. There still are many unanswered questions on what the traditional municipalities will gain by merging with neighbor municipalities, or will lose by status quo. In the central part of the Faroes, emphasis is on values connected to the *municipal administration model*. In some of the smallest communities, which have merged with the wealthier cities Tórshavn and Klaksvík, the villagers are satisfied, as their local taxes could previously not provide the means to develop local infrastructure. A consequence of the municipal mergers is that the villages are now able to fund infrastructure needed, for instance to meet the increasing stream of visiting tourists. Some of the former independent municipalities now have local committees (*staðbundna nevnd,* see Jacobsen 2008b) to pronounce their requirements for their new, more remote municipal council, and some may even have an elected representative from their community in the municipal council. However, a transition from having a municipal council managing local tax income and dealing with traditional local problem solving, to become a council functioning as municipal administration, may not be attractive for other municipalities where local tax income covers infrastructure that the council wishes to implement. In these local communities the legitimacy

of local government is connected to values in the *local space municipality model,* but also in the *social ties community model* where representativeness is less stressed.

On the other hand, infrastructure and welfare services are separate values. To the citizens a municipality is not only a provider of infrastructure, but also a frame surrounding a social community, which the members wish to be able to make their impact. Large municipalities may be fit to solve local social problems; however, this would demand municipalities of other dimensions than the Faroese. Few or none Faroese municipalities beside Tórshavn have resources to provide their citizens with an administration of welfare services on par with the national welfare apparatus. From the individual citizen's perspective there may be negative expectations to welfare policy and performance being delegated from national to municipal level, as "direct relationship with the 'state' can be a liberation and a guarantee of his individual rights." (Frazer 1999: 207).

Fewer municipal councils means fewer elected representatives. Synchronously with the government's endeavors to municipal amalgamations, there have been campaigns to increase the gender balance among political representatives. Thus, the demobilization of municipal politicians has especially been amongst the male population. Gender differences in attitudes to geographical and gender representation among elected representatives might reveal different ideas of the municipalities' rationale, as *actual* representation where the representatives mirror the constituency, is more decisive in the *local space municipality model* than in the *municipal administration model.*

As might be anticipated, male politicians seem to be less concerned about gender representation than female politicians are. In this study, women find both gender and geographical representation to be more important than their fellow male councilors do. One explanatory factor might be the gender segregated political cultures, women more exposed to campaigns for increased representation of women as a group, while men's entrance to local politics may be more individually founded.

Present changes, and resistance to changes, in the composition of Faroese municipal councils, might to some degree base on divergent values represented in the *local space municipality model* and the *municipal administration model.* We also find different attitudes to representation among male and female councilors, but it is more doubtful how this relates to

different rationales for the municipal councils. Maybe a majority of men rely on values in the *social ties community model* where mirror representation has less significance? The interplay between 1) changing attitudes to what should be the municipal councils' duties, 2) attitudes to representativeness, 3)reductions in number of citizens involved in local politics, combined with 4) the entrance of female politicians, calls for further investigations. The next step might be to take a closer focus on local power structures. Municipal structures are results of political power. As Frazer (1999) says, the communal constructive processes of social individuals and social formations, and of values and practices "need to be analysed in terms of power – power which can account for when individuals manage to reconstruct their circumstances, when they move from context to context, when they get trapped, when they rest content." (Frazer 1999: 1-2).

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[i] The text in Norwegian: *Kommuneinndelinga i eit land er resultat av politiske prosessar og uttrykkjer det synet på kva kommunane er og kva dei kan brukast til som til ei kvar tid er rådande innanfor eit politisk system.*

[ii] cf. Lat. '*municipalis*', from 'munus' and 'capere', meaning "a service performed for the community" or "public spectacle paid for by the magistrate, (gladiatorial) entertainment, gift"

[iii] "Man create kingdoms and republics, but townships seem to spring from the hand of God" (Tockeville 1835; here Sharpe 1970)

[iv] Tönnies' dichotomy *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesselschaft* are often translated to *community* and *society*. Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft* shows to the traditional communities where the inhabitants were closely knitted and interdepended. With industrialization, urbanization and capitalist economy these communities faded away, according to Tönnies.

[v] Habermas' dialogical democracy has a different rationale for political participation, see Floridia (2017).
[vi] Some Western countries deviate from this model. Swiss municipalities have different institutional settings, and some of them (also) practice direct democracy, see Ladner and Fichter 2012 .

[vii] The prime justification for structural changes on local level, led by the national government, is presumed more effective welfare services in larger municipalities than in small units, a claim which does not have a unison support from research in the field, but will not be discussed further here.

[viii] While ¾ of the population live in large municipalities in the capital-area, one third of the municipalities have less than 500 inhabitants (Eythórsson 2013). Some of the reduction of municipalities are due to demographic changes; urbanization has led to population decrease in peripheral districts. In addition, and partly as a consequence of decreased population, small municipalities may find it necessary to amalgamate to be able to manage new tasks that have been decided to be delegated from national to municipal level (Reynisson 2008).

[ix] The huge internal distances in each of the four municipality means that for some representatives the shortest travel to municipal meeting may be through Iceland. Another obstacle is that members of the same municipal council may even have difficulties to understand one another because of differences in the Greenlandic language.

[x] These local councils with elected representatives have long traditions in the remote communities, and seem closer to the origin of local democracy described in the opening of this paper.

[xi] *Seyðabrævið* from 1274 has rules and procedures for regulation of sheep farming etc., and g*rannastevna* is still held between neighbour comminities when decisions have to be made about use of common natural ressources; though today the urbanized part of the population may not beware of the existence of these local institutions.

[xii] The main tasks were supply of water and drain; and school buildings, as compulsary school attendance was introduced with the municipality system.

[xiii] Ólafsson (1993) sees the origin of Icelandic municipalities being need to manage poverty; they were decision making institutions for who were to be responsible for those in need. There is no evidence of similar formalized local institutions in the Faroe Islands before the poverty law from 18xx. The priests were ex-officio members of the councils until 19xx).

[xiv] The first amalgamation was Kaldbak which in 1974 became a suburb to Tórshavn. However, the local political identity in Kaldbak is obviously intact, as demonstrated by the present disagreements on the municipal council's decision on areal use in the former independent Kaldbak municipality. The village has mobilized to protest against infringement on the treaty from 1974, which was supposed to secure local involvement in such cases (*Sosialurin,* June 14. 2017, p.8-9).

[xv] By the logic of "those who have the shoe on, know where it squeezes".

[xvi] Rysavý & Bernard (2013) report from Czech municipal elections where there also are many municipalities and small councils. In the Czech Republic there has not been required more candidates than seats ("non contest"), nevertheless they experienced cases of not having enough candidates to fill all the seats.

[xvii] Cf. the forthcoming works on the citizenship and participation of female immigrants in the Faroe Islands, done by adjunkt Erika Heyfield and PhD-student Runa Preeti, both at the University of the Faroe Islands.