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Putting Party First? Constituency Service in Denmark

Asbjørn Skjæveland and Flemming Juul Christiansen

Abstract

The electoral system chosen by Danish parties and politicians appears to create strong incentives for parliamentarians to undertake activities that can be labelled constituency service. In offering parties the option of running open lists – which most do – the MPs are encouraged to cultivate a personal vote to get elected. High party unity, moreover, might also be thought to be conducive towards a strong constituency focus, in that MPs will feel less party-constrained on their ‘home patch’. This article explores whether this is the case, using both survey data and interviews with MPs. Danish legislators do not neglect their constituency, promoting and protecting its interests in a variety of ways. Yet in light of the voting system incentives it is surprising perhaps that they do not do more in the way of constituency service. There is some care but little surgery. It seems ‘party service’ and the attendant career gains take precedence over constituency service although the equation varies from one MP to the next.

Introduction¹

In offering parties the option of running open lists the Danish electoral system appears *prima facie* to provide parliamentarians with an incentive to cultivate a personal vote through constituency service. High party unity, moreover, might also be expected to militate towards a strong constituency focus, in so far as MPs will feel less constrained on their home turf. To

examine whether this is the case is the primary aim of this article. True, a number of studies have examined the representational focus of Danish MPs (Marker 1999; Jensen 2004) and how parliamentary candidates conduct their campaigns (Elmelund-Præstekær and Schumacher 2014). Surprisingly, however, ‘constituency service’ is virtually uncharted territory (but see Damgaard 1979). To remedy this deficiency we explore constituency service ‘Danish-style’ – how it is undertaken and how much is undertaken. We do this on the basis of survey evidence and a series of semi-structured interviews with parliamentarians conducted in autumn 2016.

In order to contextualise the discussion we begin with a brief sketch of the primary institutions of political representation in Denmark. The interview material informs the empirical section which explores the what, why’s, and how’s of constituency service. In view of the powerful electoral system incentives and high levels of legislative unity we would expect more concern with constituency service and in the discussion section we explore a number of possible explanations for this (cf. Franks 2007). Ultimately, it seems, ‘party service’ and the attendant career rewards from parliamentary effort prevail over constituency effort.

The Context of Constituency Service in Denmark

Danish voters choose between political parties, nine of which presently have seats in the Danish parliament, the Folketing. In descending order of size, they are the Social Democrats, the Danish People’s Party, the Liberal Party, the Red-Green Alliance, the Liberal Alliance, the Alternative, the Social Liberals, the Socialist People’s Party, and the Conservative

People's Party. The Danish voting system looks complicated but the basics are simple enough. Broadly speaking, the procedure that transforms votes into seats for political parties works as if Denmark proper were a single district predicated on strict proportionality, albeit comprised at the margins by the existence of a 2% electoral threshold.² Of the 175 seats allocated in Denmark proper, 135 are constituency seats and 40 are compensatory seats. Parties are allocated compensatory seats to ensure that their total number of seats equals the number of seats they would have obtained if all seats had been distributed by means of Hare's quota and the largest remainder. The system was designed to combine PR with locally anchored MPs (cf. Elklit 2008; 2016; Folketinget 2011).

The reform of the electoral system in 2006 – a consequence of a preceding local government reform - reduced the number of multi-member and nomination districts (Elklit 2009; 2016). The allocation of seats to the 10 multi-member districts in the most recent elections can be seen in Table 1. Each multi-member district holds a number of nomination districts, of which there are 92 at the national level.³ The borders of the districts follow the borders of other administrative units, but they are not always identical to these units. Thus, a nomination district can be identical to a municipality, it can be composed of several municipalities, and a municipality can be divided into several nomination districts (Folketinget 2011). Not only Copenhagen, but also cities (or large towns) such as Aalborg, Aarhus, Odense, Randers, and Esbjerg have more than one nomination district.

Table 1: District magnitude, Elections 2015

	District seats	Compensatory seats	
2015	Allocated before elections to district	Allocated after elections to district	Total
Copenhagen	16	1	17
Copenhagen region	11	4	15
Northern Zealand	10	6	16
Bornholm	2	0	2
Zealand	20	7	27
Funen	12	6	18
Southern Jutland	18	2	20
Eastern Jutland	18	6	24
Western Jutland	13	4	17
Northern Jutland	15	4	19
Total	135	40	175 (+ 4 North Atlantic MPs)

Note: Based on information from Statistics Denmark (www.dst.dk).

Crucially for our discussion of constituency service, voters can cast a party vote or a ‘candidate vote’ (typically representing a party), but not both. Over the years, broadly half of all those casting a ballot have cast a candidate vote. Thus, at both the 2011 and 2015 elections, the proportion of candidate votes amounted to 50.1% of the total votes cast (www.dst.dk). There is little geographical variation in this share, although the older parties have a much higher proportion of candidate votes than newer ones.⁴ To determine how many

seats each party has won, party votes are initially pooled with candidate votes and both are basically counted as party votes. The election law allows for parties to run open or semi-closed lists.⁵ In open lists candidate votes are of course much more decisive in determining who gets elected than in closed lists. Stories of candidates who were not elected although they received more votes than an elected co-partisan from the same multi member district have attracted negative publicity. Thus, open lists are usually viewed as more democratic in public discourse (Bille 2001; Elklit 2016).

Candidates are elected largely in order of their individual tallies in the multi-member district.⁶ Parties using open lists have generally nominated a candidate in a nomination district which means that his or her name will appear on the top of his party's part of the ballot while the rest of the party's candidates in the multi member constituency appear in alphabetical order.⁷ Still, winning many personal votes in one's own nomination district is not enough since votes in the entire multi member district count. The only real alternative to open lists is the party list. In the latter case, candidates are elected in an order predetermined by the party unless a candidate reaches a high number of votes.⁸ Since the election of Danish MPs takes place in districts, and since voters can vote personally and affect who gets elected, the Danish election system does provide MPs with incentives for constituency service. Local party branches may view an MPs' performance in relation to the extent of constituency service rendered or they could deselect an MP if he has not followed the party line (Svensson 1982: 19).

The parties typically nominate one candidate for each nomination district; aberrations from this pattern in the form of fewer candidates is most common for smaller parties. Danish parties also tend to select locally-based candidates: in the 2015 election the proportion of

parliamentary candidates living in their district was 88% and higher than the 65% of MPs living in their district (www.dst.dk).

The decision on whether to run open or semi-closed lists is decided in the local party branch at the district level⁹ although there are a few exceptions. The rules of the Red-Green Alliance, for example, require party lists. The Red-Green Alliance is an outlier. Parliamentary candidates are nominated at the annual party congress following an ‘advisory’ national ballot among party members for its top list positions. The candidates thus selected then decide in which district to run according to their position on the list and this is often away from their own neck of the woods. Clearly, the Red Green Alliance’s candidate selection system has meant that the constituency connection is more tenuous than in the other parties. In the latter, open lists and local selection has meant nomination procedures do provide MP’s with incentives to undertake constituency service.

In sum, to understand the allocation of seats to parties, we need to focus at the national level and remember that the system is highly proportional. The allocation in the multi-member districts contributes to this and the 40 compensatory seats ensure it. However, it should be noted that no candidate is running particularly for a constituency seat or a compensatory seat. All candidates are running in a multi member district (and one multi member district only).¹⁰ Which MPs get to sit on the seats is determined largely by the list order for the Red Green Alliance and by the personal votes in the multi member district for all the other parties that run on open lists. When parties run on open lists their candidates have incentives to do constituency service to the entire multi-member district, even though this district is divided into smaller nomination districts. Yet, for those larger parties that win more MPs in each multi-member districts, MPs may also have incentives to concentrate their effort in parts of

the district and in particular in the nomination districts. This would be like suggested by Katz (1985:100) that when fewer MPs are elected for a party, they represent larger shares of the district, and that the defeat of an MP from a party with just a sole MP is more likely to be (inter-)partisan rather than a result of intra-party competition.

Seating in the Folketing is on a party group basis and once elected a new MP will find that the parliamentary party groups (PPGs) are the key actors in parliament. Legislative party unity is very high, the Rice index for divisions on bills and resolutions between 2003 and 2008 averaging 99.9 (Skjæveland 2011).¹¹ This affords little room for maverick behaviour in voting although this does occur on local matters (Pedersen 1967: 148; Worre 1970: 169; Svensson 1982: 31; Skjæveland 2001: 48-51).¹² The 25 standing policy committees in the Folketing are more arenas for the parties than actors in their own right. They facilitate a division of labour among MPs who can specialise in the issue areas of their committees and may also serve as party spokesperson in that area (cf. Jensen 2002).

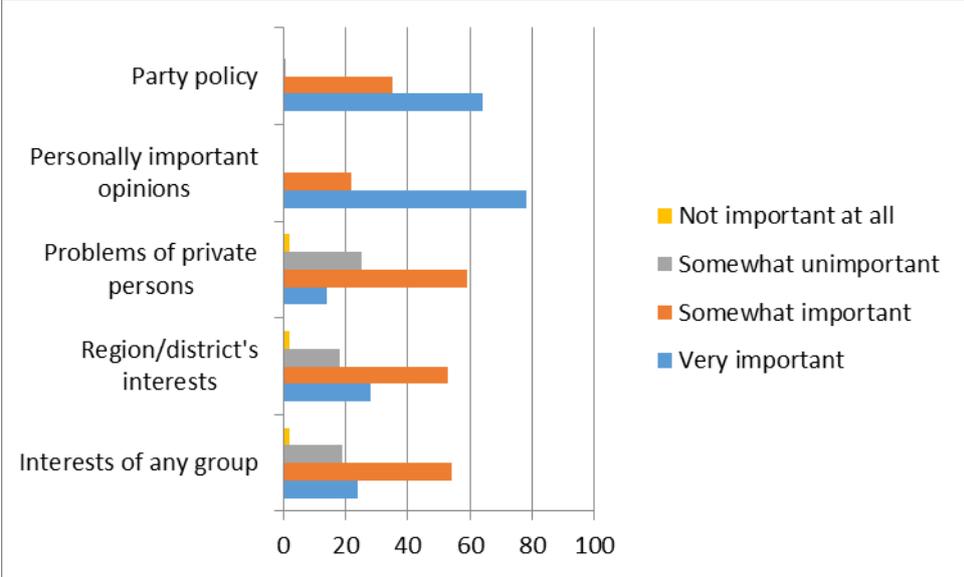
The Representational Focus of Danish MPs

How do Danish parliamentarians view their task and how, if at all, does constituency work fit into their overall schema? A survey of the 179 parliamentarians in 2008 – there were 108 respondents – allows a glimpse into their priorities¹³ (see Figure 1). The survey concerned the representative focus of Danish MPs and we use it for general descriptive purposes since it did not contain a direct question on constituency-related activities.

A majority of MPs considered it ‘very important’ to promote party policy (63%) and nearly all MP’s considered it at least ‘somewhat important’ (99%).¹⁴ Twenty-eight percent rated it ‘very important’ to promote region/district interests, whilst 80% viewed it as at least ‘somewhat important’. This share slightly exceeded the number of MPs who found it

important to work for at least one particular group in society (business, young, wage earners, pensioners, women, immigrants or farmers). A mere 14% found it ‘very important’ to attend to the problems of private citizens although 73% considered it as at least ‘somewhat important’.¹⁵ Such figures appear to indicate that representing the local constituency and the concerns of local citizens’ concerns is less important for Danish MPs than representing their political party. In another survey from 1995, based on 109 MP responses, the general pattern was very similar (cf. Jensen 2004): The party is the primary representational focus.

Figure 1: Proportions of MPs in per cent who find it important to represent different groups and interests, 2008.



Source: Data provided by Christiansen and Nørgaard. N between 103 and 106 out of 108, i.e. between 2 and 5 missing. ‘Interests of any group’ is constructed by the authors as a measure of the highest level at which an MP has mentioned representation of at least one of the groups business, young, wage earners, pensioners, women, immigrants or farmers.

The Dimensions of Constituency Service

The choice of methods for studying a topic should depend on that topic and on the amount of knowledge already available on that topic. Semi-structured qualitative interviews are recommended when the researcher wants to investigate worldviews and reasons for acting; when little is known on the topic or when information is needed from people with unique information (Harrits et al. 2010: 145-146). Constituency service meets all three criteria and particularly the two last ones. With this in mind, a series of 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted with MPs in the Folketing building in the autumn of 2016. The respondents were not selected to constitute a representative sample; rather, we aimed for variation on variables and talked to MPs who in many ways are typical members of the Folketing. There were representatives from the Red Green Alliance, Social Democrats, Social Liberal Party, Liberal Party, Danish People's Party and the Liberal Alliance.¹⁶ This wide spread of parties yields variation on party size and on the list format since the Red-Green Alliance uses semi-closed lists while the rest use open lists. We also have variation on other variables such as gender, living in or outside the constituency, centre/periphery, frontbencher/backbencher, and district size. Yet, this is not a representative sample, and it cannot be used to draw firm conclusions but rather they are empirical qualitative indicators suggesting which factors that may have an impact. We contacted 22 MPs. Thus, we cannot rule out self-selection bias implying that respondents who find constituency service at least somewhat important are overrepresented. Since there is no Danish-language term for 'constituency service', we concentrated on their approaches to the various dimensions of constituency service set out in the Introduction to this special issue, namely, casework, information provision, outreach and parliamentary initiatives related to the constituency.¹⁷

In terms of the first-mentioned, only a solitary interviewee approached casework narrowly defined by Arter (introduction cf. Cain et al. 1984) as “‘surgery work’ undertaken on behalf of individuals or groups of constituents by the MP and/or dedicated staff in a physical premise (usually a constituency office) in the district”. None had a constituency office or conducted regular surgeries elsewhere. A number of MPs had considered the idea but cited the lack of economic resources as a reason for not doing so, or then they took refuge in the view that the constituency connection is different in a multi-member districts compared with the single member constituencies of UK or Germany. None of the MPs employed personal assistants in the constituency. Some received help from their secretary or from the PPG’s press office, which identifies local stories of relevance for the MP. Some mentioned that volunteers from the local party organisation helped them. Yet, in general the MPs did not receive much help from their party, except at the local level.

As the scale and scope of government have grown – and the administration associated with an advanced welfare system is large and complex – it might have been expected that MPs would be approached to help citizens caught up in the bureaucratic net. Paradoxically, this type of ‘classical’ casework has, if anything, declined since in the immediate post-war years it was relatively commonplace (Thorsen 1949: 141), although the development of a large public sector organised at the municipal level had reduced the MP’s load by the 1970s (Damgaard 1979: 149). Whilst most parliamentarians are still contacted quite extensively on such issues of perceived maladministration (albeit often by voters outside their district), many it seems are reluctant to take up individual cases. Among the reasons cited were that delving into cases would compromise the division between executive and legislative branches of government, or simply that it would take up too much time. Nevertheless, some MPs do take on such cases, particularly when they involve issues from which they can gain political capital and/or

provide them with an opportunity to put a formal question to a minister. Casework may also involve referring a case to the relevant minister.

In terms of information provision, it is probably fair to say that most MPs 'feed' their constituency and/or a particular locality within it. Few seem to have a regular [local] newspaper column but they pen letters to the editor and write discussion pieces. Facebook usage is standard; whilst Twitter and Instagram are not uncommon, especially among a younger generation of legislators. Other ways of informing the constituency include media appearances, meetings, newsletters, telephone contacts and even live question time on video by cell phone.

Information provision and outreach are close bedfellows and most Danish MPs attend public meetings in the constituency, some organised by the local branch party. No constituency is that large that the summer recess is needed for an organised tour of the district. Meetings in the district often take place on Mondays that are kept free from meetings in parliament.

'Availability' will, of course, take different forms. One MP deliberately shopped at various places in the district so as to be 'close to the whole district'. Some use Facebook to reach out; others use more personalised 'instruments': a Social Democratic MP mentioned that he gave the occasional concert. Several MPs observed that they focused on reaching out to their constituents far more during election campaigns than at other times during the electoral cycle.

There is a range of parliamentary mechanisms available for promoting the district interest although constituency-related non-government bills are very rare.

Yet, typically, matters such as traffic or the opening/closing of public facilities can mobilise collective action and involve legislators over and above party. The interviewed MPs mention railroads, educational institutions and museums, and barracks. A recent example also

mentioned by the MP's was the decision on the location of a second Danish police academy outside Copenhagen (cf. Nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2017-01-24-her-skal-den-nyepolitiskole-ligge, accessed 25 March 2017). MPs across the country raised their voices together with local mayors (e.g., www.mja.dk/artikel/slog-et-slag-for-politiskolen, 20 May 2016. Accessed 15 February 2018).

Generally, MPs believe that the constituency matters can be promoted via legislative activity, not least a seat on a standing committee with a policy remit relevant to the district in question. Most MPs inform us that they ask constituency- related parliamentary questions, either so-called Section 20 questions or a 'committee question'. Less formally, MPs contact the relevant minister. One MP reported that he had spent half a night printing sheets with signatures in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the closing of a local barracks; another had been in contact with the minister concerning the electrification of a railway line. Generally, there was little inclination to contact civil servants except perhaps when the MP's party was in government.

All in all, the evidence suggests that Danish MPs do care about their constituencies but they do not do a lot of constituency service.¹⁸ In a political system where much is determined at the national party level and a substantial part of the rest by municipal authorities, there is not that much room for individualised constituency service. MPs attend meetings organised by local party branches, the MPs themselves, or others. Generally, constituency related parliamentary initiatives will be rather small or will have to go through the PPG or the relevant party spokesperson. Most MPs write letters to the editor of the local newspaper and at least some of these letters are suitable for the national press as well. Surgeries are rare, and

while many MPs are attentive to individual problems, they generally do not consider this a primary task. Digitalisation makes it relatively easy for citizens to get in touch with an MP without the MP having an office in the district. On the other hand, digitalization facilitates direct contacts between citizens and the bureaucracy (cf. Arter introduction).

It was argued earlier that there is value in getting the message straight from the horse's mouth and even if the scope of individually-initiated constituency service appears limited, legislators will have different perceptions of the constituency connection and their approach to it. For many there is a feeling of duty – an obligation to voters and a sense that they should remember who elected them. For others, personal satisfaction is gained from constituency work. For some an ulterior motive for constituency activity is re-election. Remember here that since most parties use open lists, electoral competition is both inter-party and, as importantly, intra-party. They need more personal votes than their co-partisans to get elected. Such rivalry dictates a measure of personal-vote-seeking through constituency work.

We do observe an impact of party magnitude.¹⁹ Apparently, for those parties with open lists electing more MPs within a multi-member district, and hence an increased intensity of intra-party competition, we observe more constituency work from the elected MPs.²⁰ Also, some MPs from larger parties may spend more time to do constituency service, since the parliamentary workload is spread on more shoulders. When asked what they see as their constituency ('valgkreds'), most pointed to the multi-member district; some pointed to both multi-member district and nomination district, and some were mainly thinking of the nomination district or another highly localised aspect. The two respondents from the largest party, the Social Democrats, both gave relatively localised answers. MPs interviewed from minor parties, who represent the entire district themselves, report fewer locally oriented

pursuits of votes with outset in one particular part of it such as the nomination district.²¹ Many of our interviewees, from both larger and smaller parties, note this pattern between larger and smaller parties. To parcel out a part of the larger constituency may be an efficient manner to mobilise votes. This is in accordance with the general empirical observation of Katz (1985: 100) that intra-party rather than inter-party competition is more important for parties electing more members in each district.

As we have described the Danish multi-member districts after the electoral reform of 2006 elect an average of 17.5 seats. Hence, few voters are likely to have voted for a party without a local MP. Yet, in the two-member district of Bornholm, more voters are likely to consider someone from a party, they did not vote for, as ‘their MP’ like it is known from UK single-seat constituencies or for German MPs elected on ‘first votes’ (Norton 2002; Lundberg 2007; cf. Zittel 2012, 106). According to the literature referred by Arter in the introductory article, we should expect members of single member districts to have incentives to present themselves as general representatives of their local area. Among our interviewees, only the member from Bornholm does surgery work. This observation is an outlier. For the others, we find no pattern related to district size. However, the interviewed MPs from geographic areas with a strong local identity appear more likely to have a strong constituency focus, i.e., in places away from the capital of Copenhagen or other urban places like Aarhus, Odense, Aarhus, Esbjerg, and so on.

Summing up, constituency service in Denmark reflects a mix of political and personal motives that are not contradictory because they can all be viewed as part of the representative process. One Social Democratic MP said that unless an MP does a good job – which includes

constituency service – voters will de-select that MP. It appears to be very much up to the MPs to decide how much of their limited time they spend on this effort.

One final observation on the dimensions of constituency service is in order. It concerns the media structure. In the capital Copenhagen and its hinterland there is not the same sense of locality and the daily newspapers are national. In contrast, the regional newspaper in northern Jutland maintains an office in the Folketing and politicians representing the area thus have a ready channel for reporting on parliamentary business

Mandates at the sub-national level could also affect the extent to which they undertake casework and communicate with citizens wearing their ‘municipal councillor’s hat’. At present, 1:7 Danish parliamentarians holds a mandate down from 1:4 before 1973 (Damgaard 1977; <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2017-11-02-politikere-sidder-baade-i-folketinget-og-byraad-nu-kraever-parti-forbud>). According to our interviews the ‘added value’ in doubling up as an MP and local councillor is deeper connections with parts of the district, often the nomination district. But it also takes more time, one of the scarcest resources of an MP.

Discussion

Based on secondary survey data and first-hand interviews with members of parliament, this article has gone some way to plugging the gap in our understanding of the workings of the constituency connection in Denmark. Call it constituency service, constituency work or constituency efforts, Danish MPs do not neglect their ‘home turf’. They attend to it for a complex mix of expressive and instrumental factors – a feeling they have an obligation to, and

derive satisfaction from representing, their own ‘neck of the woods’, and personal political gain (through a pertinent parliamentary question for example).

In the comparative context of this special issue, the Danish electoral system would appear *prima facie* to create a powerful incentive for parliamentarians to cultivate a personal vote through constituency effort. With the exception of the Red-Green Alliance, all the Folketing parties deploy open lists which necessarily generate a degree of intra-party competition for seats and by extension the value of local name-recognition. Why then do Danish parliamentarians perform less constituency service than the electoral system rules might predict?

First, local party ‘selectorates’ do not appear to value a parliamentarian’s constituency record over his/her legislative performance in the nomination process and, by and large, MPs broadly adapt to, and develop the legislative role assigned to them – as a committee chair, policy spokesperson, and so on – by the PPG. After all, career advancement is through the parliamentary channel. Along with the high levels of party unity we see a strong division of labour giving most MPs specialised work areas, they may easily find rewarding. With nine parties in the Folketing, parties are generally not large and can find interesting tasks for most MPs in parliament.

Second, according to the interviews, the central parties offer no or only limited support for constituency service. It indicates that the parties do not strongly promote its incumbent candidates in the intra-party competition. Perhaps, the parties seek to maximise internal competition.

Third, some MPs have fewer incentives for constituency service because they face limited co-partisan competition. This is the case for MPs elected as single representatives for their multi-member district, which is more often the case for smaller parties. We have studied the 67 MPs elected in marginal seats in the 2015 general election for the eight parties using open seats; of those the 35 MPs elected as single representatives of a multi-member district had an average marginal of 4.283 votes to the next candidate, whereas the average for the 32 other marginal MPs elected together with co-partisans was about at 2.146 votes.²² The same pattern applies for the three larger parties with an average marginal of 2.072, votes whereas the five smaller parties had an average of 4.990 votes (calculations based on numbers from www.dst.dk).

Fourth, we argue that the importance of the municipal level of administration as a welfare provider has squeezed the room for individualised constituency service in the Anglo-Saxon tradition.

Whilst a seemingly pedestrian point, the evidence suggests that constituency work in Denmark is what the MP makes of it and herein lie several important lines of future inquiry. The first relates to electoral system variables and precisely how open and closed lists impact on constituency service. Although Denmark has used the essentials of the present voting system of ‘personal proportional representation’ since 1920, the parties have changed what formulas they use. Time series comparisons could evaluate the impact on constituency service although it also required historical data to be derived, perhaps from memoirs. The reform in 2006 of the electoral law provides another manner to study increase in the average district size, and how it may have changed MPs’ constituency relations? Did it increase as Carey and Shugart (1995) should lead us to expect? (See also Andre and Depauw (2013)) In particular

we would like to know what great (or small) a part constituency work plays in the self-promotion process or personalisation.

Second there are party system factors. Over the last 20 years, new parties have entered parliament. Are there systematic differences in how they go about doing constituency service? We could also look deeper into why most parliamentary parties run open lists when by doing so, they lose control over which candidates are elected. Could it be designed to stimulate co-partisan rivalry as a conscious vote-mobilisation strategy?

The ‘personal element’ is reflected in the incidence of ‘candidate voting’ on open party lists within districts. However, the preferential factor is mirrored not only in voting but also in candidate behaviour. Danish parliamentarians are first and foremost partisans and the pathway to ‘higher things’ is through loyal party service. It is a party democracy but with a local connection, so there are cross-pressures: Party loyalty cannot be at the expense of constituency neglect. In addition, Danish MPs have only few resources to do constituency service despite their incentives to do so. It is against the backdrop of that dynamic tension that the constituency connection in Denmark warrants greater research from both a demand and supply-side perspective.

¹ We thank the two editors, David Arter and Tapio Raunio, our two reviewers, our sections in Aarhus and Roskilde, and the other contributors to this special issue for their comments and inspiration.

² There are two other ways to pass the electoral threshold but these are of little importance. See Elklit (2016) for further details.

³ Except for Bornholm with 2, there are between 6 (Northern Zealand) and 13 (Southern Jutland) nomination districts for each multi-member district.

⁴ The share was only slightly higher in Mid- and Northern Jutland (50.8) than in Copenhagen (48.8) in 2015. There is more difference between the parties where the personal vote is highest for the four old parties: Liberals (62.5); Conservatives (61.5); Social Democrats (56.6), and Social Liberals (52.3) and lowest for the newer parties: The Alternative (33.2), Liberal Alliance (38.4), Red-Green Alliance (39.4), and the Danish People's Party (40.1) (www.dst.dk).

⁵ The electoral law also allows parties to let party votes in each nomination district go to its nominated candidate, but as of 2015 no party uses this possibility (without also using the party list system). We may speculate that this could have motivated to more constituency focus on the nomination district rather than the entire multi-member district.

⁶ In rare cases the total number of personal votes in the multi-member district does not completely determine which candidates are elected. This is due not to the list order but to the fact that the nomination district has been the basic counting unit (cf. Elklit 2011). This might have led MPs to spread their efforts more evenly in the entire multi-member district.

⁷ The election system was modified in 2017. Now parties can decide to let personal votes in the multi member district completely decide which candidates are elected. Also, parties running on open lists can choose to decide the order of candidates in each nomination district.

⁸ Folketinget 2011: 9 and Elklit 2016: 47-48 describe how to calculate this number.

⁹ Bille (1997) systematically collected data on the nomination rules in eight of the parties that were represented in parliament at the time. Three of the parties are no longer represented, and there are four new parties. Furthermore, the electoral reform of 2006 replaced counties as the level of multi-member constituencies, which also affected local party structure and its nomination rules. For the Danish People's Party there is a 'screening' of candidates by a national sub-committee that could deselect prospective candidates but the selection between those who passes this procedure takes place locally.

¹⁰ In principle, a candidate could run in one nomination district only.

¹¹ The average Rice index was 99.7 if no corrections are made for reported voting errors (Skjæveland 2011).

¹² In 1990-1996, the main exception to the general picture of extremely high party unity was not local matters but ethics, where one or more MPs quite frequently deviated from the rest of the party group (Skjæveland 2001).

¹³ We thank Peter Munk Christiansen for giving us access to the data set collected by him and his collaborators. The values have not been used in other studies yet, but see a description of a former data set in Christiansen and Nørgaard (2003: 238f).

¹⁴ As shown in Figure 1, the most frequent answer was to represent personal opinions (78%). We agree with Esaiasson (2000: 57) that ‘Burkean representation’, i.e., MPs trust their own judgement or personal opinions, has more to do with representational ‘style’ than ‘focus’ since they then ‘represent themselves’.

¹⁵ Problems from private citizens can come from both inside and outside the constituencies. Our interviews indicate that they mostly come from the constituency unless they concern those topics where the MPs are spokespersons.

¹⁶ We interviewed Henning Hyllested (Red-Green Alliance); Jan Johansen (Social Democrats); Morten Marinus (Danish People’s Party); Finn Sørensen (Red-Green Alliance); Villum Christensen (Liberal Alliance); Peter Juel Jensen (Liberal Party); Andreas Steenberg (Social Liberal Party); Benny Engelbrecht (Social Democrats); Anonymous (Danish People’s Party); Henrik Dahl (Liberal Alliance); and Lise Bech (Danish People’s Party). We contacted 22 MPs and five of them were women. In the process of finding a female interviewee we were made aware that a male MP might be interested in giving an interview. His inclusion compensated for the fact that our interview with the other MP from his party was our shortest at only 22 minutes while the longest interviews were over an hour. The Liberal Party was in government during all interviews. A government enlargement with The Conservatives and the Liberal Alliance took place while we did the interviews and a few days before one with Henrik Dahl. We did not contact MPs from the Faroe Islands or Greenland. Our interview guide is available on request. All interviews were transcribed and analysed in NVivo 11.

¹⁷ We mostly report descriptive variation. With 11 interviews we cannot conduct statistical control for other explanations. Yet, we have attempted to select our cases to allow for comparisons to evaluate possible explanations.

¹⁸ It should be noted that there is variation: some respondents do more constituency service than others.

¹⁹ When measuring and reporting variation in levels of constituency service, we rely on the four dimensions of constituency service. When asked about the time they spend on their district, the respondents generally note that it is hard to estimate. Hence, we think that the four dimensions of ‘how’ provide a more reliable estimate of the level of constituency service performed.

²⁰ This pattern is upheld when we take variation on other variables into account: We make an additional comparison that only includes MPs who are male, elected outside Copenhagen, backbenchers and living in the district. District size does not seem to impact either, except for Bornholm, as described in the text.

²¹ This pattern is upheld in comparisons that eliminate other factors.

²² The number of votes for an elected MP includes personal votes and the added list votes.

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