A Comparative Analysis of Island Region Autonomy

Eve Hepburn

University of Edinburgh

Senior Research Fellow
Politics & IR, School of Social and Political Science
University of Edinburgh
21 George Square
Edinburgh EH8 9LD
Email: Eve.Hepburn@ed.ac.uk

Introduction

Islands have developed some of the most innovative autonomy arrangements in the world. Many small island peoples have repeatedly rejected outright independence in favour of developing unique forms of constitutional status within larger state or supranational bodies (Watts 2000; Baldacchino 2006). Islands such as Åland, Aruba, the Isle of Man, Puerto Rico, and dozens of other island territories have agreed to share their sovereignty with larger political structures rather than seek full state sovereignty. This has led to the creation of a plethora of terms to characterise the substate governance arrangement of islands, such as: 'autonomous province' (Åland Islands, Finland), 'associate state' (Anguilla, UK), 'overseas territory' (British Virgin Islands), 'special region' (Sardinia, Italy), 'commonwealth territory' (Cocos Islands, Australia), 'overseas department' (Reunion, France), 'federal province' (Newfoundland, Canada), and 'autonomous region' (Azores Islands, Portugal). The variety of substate governance arrangements of small islands presents a boon to scholars wishing to understand the wide range of currently existing institutional forms of autonomy, and how autonomy may be applied in a variety of settings. In particular, there is a need to explore why islands have so overwhelmingly sought to enhance their power, influence and capacity by developing distinct forms of asymmetrical autonomy rather than outright independence.

At the same time, there is also a need to determine to what extent islands differ from other substate territories enjoying special forms of autonomy. Rather than representing an oddity in the world political order, islands are becoming increasingly illustrative of the creative governance arrangements that many states have adopted in order to accommodate diversity. In light of the trend towards decentralisation across OECD countries (Marks et al 2008) scholars have begun to examine the implications of 'variegated' or shared sovereignty (Keating 1998, 2005; MacCormick 1999; Walker 2002). This is part of the shift away from conventional understandings of sovereignty focused on the nation-state and the (consequent) re-discovery that sovereignty was never as fully focused on the nation-state as the conventions of postwar social science would have us think.

This paper therefore focuses on two questions. First, why have islands tended to seek special forms of autonomy rather than independence or integration into state structures? And secondly, what relevance does this have for non-island regions, or put another way; what makes islands so special?

The paper is organised in four parts. It begins by exploring the ways in which globalisation and decentralisation have led to new forms of substate governance arrangements in multi-level political systems. Substate territorial autonomy has become a functionally and normatively attractive solution to the recognition of stateless nations and regions as well as an important framework for conflict settlement. The paper then focuses on a particular type of substate territory: the small island. Scholars of island studies have long emphasised the unique forms of sovereignty exercised by islands across the world. Islands have a great deal to tell us how autonomy is negotiated, exercised and enhanced through relations of dependence and interdependence with larger political structures. But are islands really so different? This is the topic of the third section of the paper, which places islands in a comparative context with non-island regions, and endeavours to identify which (if any) qualities of islands – or 'islandness' (Baldacchino 2004; Jackson 2008; Stratford 2008) – that make them distinct from other territories. The final section

begins to develop an analytical framework for the comparative analysis of island and non-island autonomy, and generates testable hypotheses that could be used to explore why some substate territories seek a higher degree of autonomy than others. The paper concludes with some thoughts on how the experience of small islands offers lessons for other states that are granting special forms of autonomy to some parts of their territory.

Recrafting Sovereignty
The last two decades have witnessed enormous changes to the structure, competences, legislative framework, economy and political systems of states (Jeffery 1997; Keating 1998, 2005; McCormick 1999; Ghai 2000; Agnew 2002; Bartolini 2005). The twin processes of supranational integration and decentralisation have resulted in a far-reaching process of spatial rescaling, the full effects of which political scientists are only just beginning to understand. Some scholars have likened the new political structures to a system of 'multilevel governance' (Marks and Hooghe 2000; Bache and Flinders 2005) whereby non-state actors influence decision-making across several interacting layers of political authority. This indicates that contemporary models of governance are no longer exclusively based on, and organised round, the sovereignty of the state.

The 'methodological nationalism' of social science scholars is a key, and often overlooked, point (Jeffery & Wincott 2010). For a number of decades political scientists have been primarily interested in only one territorial unit: the modern nation-state (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). However, with the strengthening of subnational tiers of governance across OECD countries (Marks et al 2008), scholars have recently begun to examine new forms of variegated or shared sovereignty that characterise the creative governance arrangements of decentralising multi-level states such as the UK, India, Spain and Russia. Whilst these studies are most advanced in the area of constitutional legal theory (see MacCormick 1999; Walker 2002, 2008), political science is only just beginning to move beyond the limited perspective of uncritically taking the state for granted as the main unit of analysis (Keating 2005; Jeffery 2008). Instead, governance may take place at the substate and supranational levels.

In particular, devolution in the United Kingdom, Spain, Belgium, Italy and elsewhere has energised political scientists to analyse the impact of the regional political environment on individuals, parties and governments (Hough & Jeffery 2006; Henderson 2007; Swenden & Maddens 2008; Detterbeck & Hepburn 2009). Such research helps us to understand devolution within the wider context of institutional reforms. However, political actors have been less sanguine about the direction that these (asymmetrical) decentralisation arrangements have taken. For instance, policy-makers in the UK and elsewhere have frequently expressed concerns of spiralling devolution, fuelling demands for greater autonomy and possibly independence of Scotland and Wales, which would lead to the eventual break-up of the state (Mitchell 2000). There has been an assumption that devolution in the UK is a unique process, the destabilising effects of which are still to be determined (*The Telegraph*, 13 April 2007). However, this analysis sorely lacks an international comparative perspective on the wide variety of autonomy arrangements of multi-level states, including the former Yugoslavia, the Crimea, New Zealand, Denmark, Italy, Finland, Indonesia and Vietnam. In many of these cases, autonomy is employed as an institutional framework to accommodate competing claims to self-determination (Wellar & Wolff 2005).

How may we conceptualise autonomy? In the first instance it is important to understand that autonomy is a relative term that can only be understood within a larger context of complex authority relations. Rather than signifying the minimum level of independence of a particular entity, autonomy is about the extent of dependence or interdependence of an entity (be it political, economic, cultural) vis-à-vis other entities. Autonomy also has both territorial and non-territorial dimensions. With regards to the former, autonomy may refer to the state delegation of administrative and/or legislative powers to institutions representing a population inhabiting a geographically well-defined area within a state. Criteria for the possession of 'full autonomy' may include the following: a locally elected body with independent legislative powers; a locally chosen chief executive; and independent local judiciary (Hannum and Lillich 1980: 858). Non-territorial forms of autonomy are more difficult to characterise, but generally apply to members of a group that are dispersed across a state whose characteristics diverge from the majority of the state's population (Lapidoth 1996; Ghai 2000; Brunner and Küpper 2002). Clearly, autonomy is therefore evoked in a variety of ways, which has led some scholars to argue that the term is so 'hopelessly confused' as to confound any conceptual value. However, the ability of the concept to cover so many institutional arrangements could also be perceived as a strength: it may be invoked on an *ad hoc* basis in any situation that requires it (Wiberg 1998; Suksi 1998).

The majority of definitions of autonomy in the social sciences are framed in terms of states and self-determination (Safran and Maiz 2000; Motyl 2001). This echoes the legal interpretation of constitutional autonomy, which implies sovereign state independence or the constitutional recognition of autonomy within an existing state. In this understanding, autonomy either belongs to the state (attributed to the capacity of a state to exert power) or autonomy is negotiated within a state (arising from the decision of a state to allocate a degree of self-government to one or more of its constituent parts). The latter understanding is the most prevalent in the literature. According to Lapidoth (1997: 3), autonomy is a 'means for diffusion of powers in order to preserve the unity of a state while respecting the diversity of its population; it has been successful in some cases and failed in others.' As such, the concept of autonomy is often defined as constituting a number of different constitutional arrangements that include federalism, confederalism, decentralisation, associate statehood and devolution (Lapidoth 1996; Rothchild and Hartzell 2000). The decision to create autonomy arrangements is often based on the notion that national cultures are largely incongruent with sovereign states, and that some territorial or cultural communities should have the right to limited control over their own affairs. Thus autonomy implies a way of devolving authority to a lower level, but maintaining the state's territorial integrity. Let us know turn to a particular type of autonomy: that of island regions. As we shall see, islands have developed some of the most creative and asymmetrical forms of autonomy within larger state and supranational structures, which encourages further examination.

Island Autonomies

Islands have not generally attracted the attention of political scientists. Whilst anthropologists, biologists, geographers, historians and economists have capitalised on the value of islands as 'small-scale spatial laboratories where theories can be tested and processes observed in the setting of a semi-closed system' (King 1993: 14), there has

been surprisingly little work done by political scientists on the politics of islands, not least in a comparative framework. This is unusual, given that the specific spatial characteristics of islands make them ideal case studies for exploring the relationship between politics and territory. In particular, islands represent the archetypal 'periphery' in centre-periphery studies, owing to their location as a 'body of land surrounded with water which is inescapably isolated from and peripheral to continental areas' (Royle 2001: 42). As such, islands are extremely valuable, yet largely overlooked, units of analysis for the study of territorial politics. On one hand, they comprise somewhat self-contained territorial systems, which provide an excellent testing ground for examining how territory shapes political processes, institutions and actors. On the other hand, the defining characteristic of islands – their insularity – requires a certain degree of interdependence with external actors (Royle 2001; Warrington 1998; Briguglio 2004; Warrington and Milne 2007).

Islands possess shades of autonomy from full internationally recognized sovereignty – such as Malta, Cuba and East Timor – through to post-colonial self-determination across a spectrum of political decision-making. Moreover, the nature of relationships tends to vary according to the constitutional status and powers of the island. For instance, some islands are independent micro-states and full members of the European Union, such as Malta; others belong exclusively to a larger member-state, such as the Isle of Man; whilst others yet are territorially divided between states, such as Cyprus. For the purposes of this paper, an 'island' refers to a coherent territorial entity that has a continuous boundary surrounded by water, whilst an 'island region' is a water-bound territorial entity situated at an intermediate level between local and statewide levels. In the case of legislative island *regions*, which have been endowed with non-sovereign forms of jurisdictional autonomy, the primary linkages have historically been with their host state. So we are specifically interested in the 'grey area' between full state sovereignty and full integration into a state: in other words, what types of autonomy arrangements may islands exercise?

Watts (2000) offers a very useful overview of the varying constitutional forms that small islands may adopt in larger political settings. The most well-known type is the 'federacy', whereby an island may form a relationship with a larger state (often a colonial power), whereby the smaller island unit enjoys the benefits of association with the state, but at the same time is able to retain substantial autonomy and self-government (Elazar 1987). The competences and powers that islands enjoy tend to be negotiated directly with the larger polity. Constitutional asymmetry ensures that the smaller island unit has little influence or power in state decision-making, and vice versa. These bilateral systems of self- and shared-rule occur almost exclusively on islands (for instance Elazar was only able to identify two examples of non-island federacy in India: Jammu and Kashmir). Islands meeting the 'federacy' definition include: the Aland Islands (Finland), the Faroe Islands and Greenland (Denmark), the Azores and Madeira Islands (Portugal), the Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey (UK) and Puerto Rico and the Northern Marianas (USA). An advantage of this arrangement is that federacies provide a considerable measure of self-rule (whereby the island has powers over all domestic matters while the larger polity is responsible for foreign affairs, defence and currency). In addition, the relationship is relatively stable, as it can only be dissolved by mutual agreement. A disadvantage is that

there is limited share-rule; in other words, the island has little influence over state decision-making.

A second type of autonomy arrangement involves 'associated states'. In similarity to federacies, smaller units are linked to a larger polity in a radically asymmetrical relationship. However, unlike federacies, associated states can be dissolved bilaterally by either of the minor or the major unit in the partnership (Watts 2000: 27). Therefore, the associated state has the right to declare independence. Such entities are usually also recognised by international law and subject to international conventions (unlike federacies). Islands exemplifying this type of constitutional arrangement include the Antilles in relation to the Netherlands, the Cook Islands and Niue in relation to New Zealand, the Marshall Islands and Palau in relation to the USA. In addition, the larger British overseas territories, including Bermuda and Gibraltar, have similar relationships to the UK as Crown dependencies. While Britain is officially responsible for defence and international representation, these jurisdictions maintain their own militaries and have been granted limited diplomatic powers, in addition to having internal self-government. The advantages of associated statehood are that the island in question is internationally recognised as a 'self-governing state' and may establish diplomatic missions abroad. The main disadvantage is that this type of constitutional relationship is less stable than federacies, as either unit may dissolve the unit acting alone.

A third type of common constitutional arrangement is that islands may constitute fully-fledged constituent units of federations. According to Watts (2000: 25), this is the case for twenty island regions with form parts of Canada, the Comoros, Malaysia, Micronesia, Spain, St Kitts and Nevis, and the USA. An advantage of this type of constitutional arrangement is that political partnerships constitutes a strong sense of shared rule, which enables redistribute policies to be carried out, in addition to substantial influence over the policies and decision-making of the larger polity. A downside to federation status is constitutional complexity, and to some extent the fact that island autonomy is limited to the powers assigned to it by the constitution, which is very difficult to amend.

Many island territories therefore manifest diverse expressions of governance and exercise a level of political autonomy that falls short of full sovereignty. They do not have, nor do most of them want, full statehood. This was recently evident in the decision by the small islands of Tokelau to reject independence (*Washington Times*, 16 February 2006). Other island peoples that have rejected independence in popular referendums include Mayotte (1994), the Dutch Antilles (1994), Puerto Rico (1993 and 1998), US Virgin Islands (1993) and Bermuda (1993) (see McElroy and De Albuquerque 1996). Instead, islands have preferred to enjoy some of the benefits of association with a larger political entity, seeking a balance of shared- and self-rule, or put another way, autonomy and influence at the centre (Baldacchino 2006).

How did these types of autonomy arrangements come about? Let us consider in more details some different types of island autonomies, existing within: a federacy, a federation and a decentralising (or regionalised) state.

To begin with an example of a federacy, the Åland Island in Finland constitutes a relatively wealthy self-governing legislative region of an otherwise unitary state. For over 650 years, Åland belonged to the Kingdom of Sweden (along with Finland) until the war in 1808-9, at which point Åland and Finland were ceded to Russia. When Finland

declared independence in 1917, the question emerged as to whether Åland should fall to Finland or its Swedish motherland. Åland initially rejected Finland's offer of autonomy in 1920, but the following year the League of Nations issued a resolution acceptable to both parties, and Åland's autonomy within the Finnish state was guaranteed by international law (Hannum 1990: 371). Åland was granted a government, legislative assembly, and a Governor who is appointed by the Finnish Government. Åland also enjoys direct representation in the Nordic Council as a result of its Autonomy Act, and it is able to send a representative to the Finnish Parliament. Politically, Aland has a different party system to Finland, with a mix of Åland-only regional parties and a small nationalist party demanding independence. Culturally, Åland enjoys a distinct and identity in Finland, largely owing to the fact that the island is 94% Swedish-speaking (Daftary 2000). And perhaps most interestingly, Åland has its own regional citizenship that is separate from Finland, and guaranteed by the EU, whereby one must live there for 5 years in order to own real estate or gain the right to vote or stand as a candidate in Legislative Assembly elections (Hannum 1990: 373).

An example of a federation is provided by Prince Edward Island, which is the smallest province in Canada. PEI lies on Canada's eastern flank in the Maritime provinces, separated by some 8 miles from mainland New Brunswick, which has been helped by the creation of a new 'confederation bridge' in 1997 (Baldacchino 2007). PEI resisted joining the Canadian confederation straight away in 1867, as it found the terms of union unfavourable and as such chose to remain a colony of the UK. It even explored the possibility of becoming a discrete dominion of its own, as well as entertaining the notion of joining the United States of America. Yet the deal was sweetened by the willingness of the Canadian federal government to assume the colony's extensive railway debts and finance a deal to free to island of leasehold tenure. Canadian promises, combined with pressures from the British government, pushed the island into Confederation in 1873. At this point, PEI became a fully-fledged provincial unit, with a government, assembly and Lieutenant-Governor. In addition, PEI is fully represented in the Canadian federal parliament and Senate, and by tradition has representatives in the Canadian federal cabinet (Watts 2000: 27). Currently, PEI is one of the less wealthy regions of Canada, dependent on fiscal equalisation transfers. Unlike Åland, there are no nationalist parties, no PEI-only parties, and no regional mobilisation around issues of language or culture as the island is 94% English-speaking.

Our third example is of island autonomy within an asymmetrically regionalised (or 'federalising') state. Sardinia was granted 'special status' in the Italian constitution of 1948, along with Sicily and the three border-regions of Northern Italy. This was largely a result of the formidable inter-war nationalist movement, which demanded a federal state and won approximately 40% of the vote in Sardinian elections (Hepburn 2009a). Sardinia's autonomy was based on a particular Statute of Autonomy, which comprised exclusive legislative powers in certain domestic areas and some financial autonomy. Sardinia has about half a dozen nationalist parties seeking anything between greater autonomy to independence, and Sardinian branches of statewide parties generally enjoy significant autonomy within the Italian parties. Sardinia has its own distinct language and culture, which have mobilised demands for autonomy. Economically, Sardinia is one of the poorest regions in Europe, and it received Objective 1 structural funding from the EU

before the rules changed with enlargement in 2004-6. Sardinia is, through Italy, part of the EU, though it has very little direct representation in Brussels or Strasbourg.

Having considered these diverse cases, the next question we may wish to ask is: why do islands often choose special autonomy arrangements rather than full sovereignty? A first motivation may be historical. Islands have long been sites of conquest and assimilation into larger continental political structures. One only has to think of Cyprus divided by Greece and Turkey, Ireland in the British Isles, Puerto Rico in the United States, and the colonial islands of the Caribbean and East Pacific. The vast majority of islands in the world were conquered at one point or another by either the European, American or Japanese empires during the age of colonialism. This type of conquest involved being subject not only to foreign military domination and political rule, but also integration into the economic systems of their overlords (Royle 2001). The backdrop of colonial inheritance often encourages island to continue to develop political and economic ties with larger political structures rather than seek independence.[1] Some scholars also believe that this historical legacy may also create a post-colonial culture of dependence (Royle 2010). Secondly, there may be economic motivations to develop special autonomy status. Islands are typically understood as being 'small, poor and remote', being surrounded by sea and cut off from the mainland (Selwyn 1980; Royle 2001). As such, many scholars point to the inherent economic disadvantage resulting from geographical peripherality, high transport costs, and insufficient resources (Baldacchino and Milne 2000; Armstrong & Read, 2003; Baldacchino 2006; Stratford 2008). This encourages islands to forge ties with larger political structures that can guarantee islands with trading markets and potentially fiscal transfers. Finally, there may be political reasons for seeking to establish a partnership with a larger state. In particular, in federations islands may gain greater powers and capacity through their influence over the decision-making and policies of a large state, rather than going it alone.

Yet as Baldacchino and Milne (2006) observe, there are not only island-level reasons for seeking an autonomy arrangement; there may also be strong motivations on the part of the state to accommodate a federacy or associated state arrangement. Island autonomies may develop as a result of the machinations of central governments to exploit islands as managed' zones for economic or security-related activity in a globalised economy (ibid). Such a scenario would doubtless fuel resentment and perhaps mobilize the population towards independence. This has certainly occurred in several island regions that have successfully contested and severed their relations with the state, such as in Anguilla, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and the Comoros. Nationalist movements demanding greater powers have also emerged in Tobago, Kiribati, Corsica, Sardinia and Puerto Rico. However, the fact that even islands are not immune to the lure of independence, like any other substate territory with a strong claim to autonomy, raises another important question: what makes island autonomies and island claims to autonomy so different from any other place?

The Island Differential?
Islands are not the only territories to enjoy special forms of autonomy. The development of creative forms of jurisdictional autonomy within larger political and economic

---

[1] Though this is certainly not always the case, as numerous cases of independent post-colonial island states demonstrate, such as Barbados, Cuba, East Timor, Madagascar, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

structures also constitutes a practicable strategy in light of the de-centring of states (Baldacchino 2006). Hitherto centralised states have been required to devolve powers downwards and upwards to the regional and supranational level in response to decentralisation and globalisation (Hepburn 2009b). As a result, non-sovereign political autonomy has become a common status not only for islands, but also small nations and regions within other multi-level states, such as Quebec in Canada, Catalonia in Spain and Flanders in Belgium. So how are island regions any different?

   To answer this question, one must delve into a debate amongst scholars of island studies on two key concepts: insularity and islandness. The concept of insularity is the older of the two terms, which relates to the physical boundedness of islands. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, insularity encompasses both a physical status, as well as the effects of this status on its human inhabitants: "1. The state or condition of being an island, or of being surrounded by water; 2. The condition of living on an island, and of being thus cut off or isolated from other people, their ideas, customs, etc.; hence, narrowness of mind or feeling, contractedness of view" (see Jackson 2000: 48). However, this characterisation of insularity, which is somewhat tautological on the first definition and rather judgemental on the second, is unhelpful in seeking to understand insularity as a social scientific term. Some scholars have sought to help us with this task. For Warrington & Milne (2007: 383), insularity is:

> a set of tensions and ambiguities, opportunities and constraints arising from the interplay of geography and history. *Geography tends towards isolation*: it permits or favours autarchy, distinctiveness, stability and evolution propelled endogenously. *History*, on the other hand, *tends towards contact*: it permits or favours dependence (or interdependence), assimilation, change and evolution propelled exogenously. An island's character develops from the interplay of geography and history, evasions and invasions, the indigenous and the exotic.

However, this view has been challenged by scholars who argue that geography is not really the key driving force when it comes to understanding islands and insularity. For Hache, (1998: 47) insularity is more of a social phenomenon as well as an instrumental concept: this geographical characteristic is used by islanders in order to assert a distinctive identity, and to justify demands for enhancing their economic, social, cultural and political situation. This sociological understanding of insularity is turned another way by Hay (2003: 203) who believes that physical boundedness conduces to psychological distinctiveness, because it promotes clearer, ''bounded'' identities. However, he also has a strongly normative view of insularity, whereby it is perceived to contribute to low dynamism, and social and political conservativism (see Stratford 2008: 163). Indeed, one of the problems with the concept of insularity is that it is largely used and understood as a negative term, representing closure and closed minds (Jackson 2008: 48). For that reason, island scholars have turned to another, less normative, concept to help characterize the distinctiveness of islands: *islandness*.

   Islandness refers to the specific qualities of islands – geographical, social and political – that distinguish them from those of continents (Jackson 2008: iv). According to Baldacchino (2006: 9) 'The core of 'island studies' is the constitution of 'islandness' and its possible or plausible influence and impact on ecology, human/species behaviour

and any of the areas handled by the traditional subject uni-disciplines (such as archaeology, economics or literature), subject multi-disciplines (such as political economy or biogeography) or policy foci/issues (such as governance, social capital, waste disposal, language extinction or sustainable tourism).' Yet although there is broad agreement amongst island scholars that there is something important about islandness, there is little agreement about what it actually constitutes. Islandness is a contested concept with multiple definitions. To take some examples, Royle (2001: 42) defines islandness as 'those constraints that are imposed upon small islands by virtue of their insularity'. Baldaccino (2004a: 278) understands islandness in a more dynamic sense: 'Islandness is an intervening variable that does not determine, but contours and conditions physical and social events in distinct, and distinctly relevant, ways'. Jackson (2008: 47) defines islandness 'as the dynamics of the natural boundary and the resulting island qualities, including elements geographical (for example, degree of separation from a mainland), political (often expressed through tensions between autonomy and dependence on a mainland jurisdiction) and social (such as islander identity and sense of place).' Meanwhile, Stratford (2008: 160) takes a more sociological approach, understanding islandness as 'a complex expression of identity that attaches to places smaller than continents and surrounded entirely by water.'

There is therefore 'much scope for unpacking what is meant by *islandness*' (Baldacchino 2004: 272). For the purposes of this paper, it is necessary to identify several key dimensions of islandness. These are: geographical (i.e. separation from mainland); political (expressed through a desire to be self-governing); social (i.e. a sense of islander identity); demographic (i.e. high rates of emigration); historical (as sites of conquest, assimilation and colonialism); and economic (i.e. limited resources and economies of scale, and high transportation costs) (Villamil 1977; Hache 1998; Adrianto and Matsuda 2004; Baldacchino, 2004; Hay 2006; Jackson 2008). In particular, there is a need to account for whether these aspects of islandness make a difference to whether or not islands pursue autonomy and not independence. For many scholars, the answer is self-explanatory: the decision to enter into various forms of administrative and legislative autonomy with larger structures represents an astute political response to the geographical and logistic challenges resulting from the condition of 'islandness'. In particular, the political affiliation of island to larger bodies endows them with substantial socio-economic advantages (Connell 1994; McElroy & Mahoney 2000). However, there is a need to investigate whether these core traits of islands is a crucial factor distinguishing island autonomies from non-island autonomies. And for that it is necessary to engage in comparison across island and non-island cases.

Developing a Framework of Research
There has been virtually no cross-over between island studies and the broader field of territorial politics (encompassing studies of regionalism, federalism and multi-level governance). The research tools and methodologies developed to analyse cases of regionalism and federalism have neglected the island dimension, whilst political science approaches are notably absent in the field of island studies. Indeed, there has been extraordinarily little work done by political scientists on the institutions, actors and policy processes of islands, not least in a comparative framework. This is unusual, given that the

spatial characteristics of islands make them ideal case studies for analysing the relationship between politics and territory.

The development of a new comparative research agenda on islands politics has been identified as an area that sorely needs attention in the field of island studies, an inter-disciplinary field that is nevertheless dominated by anthropologists, geographers, economists and ecologists (Baldacchino 2004). In particular, Watts (2000) has identified a particular gap in work on islands, whereby there has been no in-depth comparative analysis of island (and non-island) forms of asymmetrical autonomy resulting from associate statehood, federacies and other types of 'lilliputian federalism' (Ancker 2003). Because autonomy arrangements can only be understood in the context of a particular state's history, cultural system, political and institutional structures, we are often informed that any scholarly examination of autonomy arrangements can only be particularistic. However, this should not preclude us from identifying common patterns among autonomous territories.

So how might we develop a framework of analysis for comparing island autonomies with non-island autonomies, with a view to understanding why some territories seek more autonomy than others, and how we may differentiate islands from other territories? The goal of the next part of this paper is to develop some testable hypotheses to explore and compare island autonomies with non-island autonomies. These hypotheses will be developed by building upon and synthesising the literature on autonomy, regionalism and federalism with that of island studies and 'islandness'. The aim is to identify constellations of factors that might play an important role in shaping demands for island and non-island autonomy, to help structure comparison across cases. The variables are grouped into five themes, which will be used to explain why islands and other regions seek autonomy, independence, or integration into state structures. In brief, these are: (1) distinctiveness of the party system; (2) strength of identity; (3) economic resources; (4) external relations with state and supranational bodies; (5) state territorial management; and (6) factors associated with 'islandness'. While the first five dimensions are common to regions in general, the sixth variable stems from the concept of insularity as defined above, and will therefore act as a control variable for testing the 'distinctiveness' of autonomy demands on islands.

The aim therefore is to document and explain the *degree of autonomy* that is sought by island and non-island regions within larger state structures. The focus is on a particular type of region - that which has legislative powers and therefore a capacity for authoritative decision-making. The degree of autonomy exercised by legislative regions is measured by the range of powers and competences for which a regional government is responsible. This ranges from full integration into state institutions (i.e. shared rule) to having an independent legislature and executive with primary powers over a wide range of policy areas (i.e. self-rule).

Factors affecting the degree of autonomy sought by regions include the following. First, evidence suggests that the degree of symmetry between party systems at the regional and state levels is an important determinant of demands for regional autonomy (Hough & Jeffery 2006; Swenden & Maddens 2008; Detterbeck & Hepburn 2009). In particular, the existence of an electorally successful nationalist party seeking greater self-determination, and the regionalisation of statewide parties to respond to regional

concerns, have strengthened the territorial dimension of party competition and highlighted demands for autonomy (Hepburn 2010b). As such:

H1 The greater the degree of decentralisation of statewide parties, the more distinctive the regional party system, and therefore the stronger the demands for autonomy.
H2 The existence of one or several nationalist parties seeking self-determination leads to demands for a stronger degree of autonomy.

Secondly, the existence of distinctive regional identities and attachments is strongly associated in the academic literature with the decentralisation of states (Henderson 2007; Guibernau 2006). The research will examine the strength of island region vs. state-level identification (as captured by the widely-used Linz-Moreno scale of regional identification, whereby the respondent chooses from a range of options including, for example, 'more Catalan than Spanish'; 'Catalan not Spanish'; and 'Spanish not Catalan'; see Moreno 1988). This leads us to hypothesise that:

H3 The larger the share of citizens who identify (either exclusively or predominantly) with the region as opposed to the state, the stronger the demands for autonomy.

Third, research suggests that the economic status and resources of substate territories affects demands for autonomy, whereby economic self-sufficiency has become an overriding concern of nationalist movements (Jeffery 2006; Hepburn 2010). The relative economic wealth in island regions within the state concerned will be explored, as measured by freely available transnational data (EU, OECD) on GDP per head. As such;

H4 The greater degree of economic wealth and resources of the region, the higher the degree of autonomy will be sought.

Fourth, research has indicated that regions' ability to access supranational institutions will increase their desire to achieve more autonomy to stand alone in international negotiations (Aldecoa and Keating 1999; Keating and Hooghe 2001; Hepburn 2010a). This is especially true if supranational and international organisations such as the European Union, the Nordic Council and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) offer island regions potential sources of funding, representation, networks and trade links. This research allows us to formulate our next hypothesis:

H5 Higher levels of regional access to supranational organisations will lead to increased demands for autonomy.

Fifth, there are also top-down exogenous factors affecting the degree of autonomy demanded by substate regions. In particular, the state's 'territorial management' of the region, in either accommodating or opposing regional reforms, will have an impact on the formulation of autonomy demands (Keating 1988). This leads us to a further hypothesis:

H6 The state's unwillingness to recognise and accommodate the identity and interests of a region will lead to demands for greater autonomy.

Sixth, while the above hypotheses were developed from the general literature on regional and federal studies, the interdisciplinary literature on island studies has suggested a range of other factors affecting island autonomy. Aspects of 'islandness' include the geographical proximity of the island in relation to the mainland (Armstrong & Read 2002), the extent to which transport links have been developed between the island and mainland to ensure territorial continuity (Baldacchino & Milne 2000), the level of economic concessions the island has extracted in special arrangements with the state (McElroy & Mahoney 2000; Armstrong & Read 2003), and the existence of clientelistic networks (Elias and Hepburn 2008). These lead to several hypotheses:

H7 The greater the geographical proximity of the island to the mainland and its centres of power, the lower degree of autonomy demanded by the region.
H8 The development of good transport links to other regions/states and the mainland leads to higher demands for regional autonomy.
H9 The larger the amount of state economic concessions the region receives, the weaker the demands for autonomy.
H10 The existence of strong clientelistic networks reduces regional autonomy demands.

The next step is to gather systematic data across cases on the various forms of autonomy that regions exercise within larger structures. Further research is necessary to test these hypotheses in an exploration of island and non-island autonomies. This research should seek to account for variation in the nature and scope of autonomy demands by island and non-island regions, and differentiate case studies along the type of state of which they are a part (i.e. unitary, devolved, federal) and the type of constitutional status they enjoy (associated state, federacy etc). In a large comparative project, these five constellations of variables could be used to determine why different regions have come to seek different forms of autonomy, and whether there is indeed something special about island regions.

Conclusion
This paper has questioned the extent to which the exercise of island autonomy is a unique form of self-determination that is distinct from other substate regions. Scholars of island studies have long emphasised the special characteristics of islands – or dimensions of 'islandness' – that have led to distinct constellations of dependence and inter-dependence, or as Warrington and Milne (2007) argue, isolation and contact. The spatial separateness and 'geographical precision' of small islands encourages forms of governance and political dynamics that are quite idiosyncratic (Baldacchino 2004: 273; Baldacchino & Milne 2000). Indeed, some scholars maintain that subnational island jurisdictions are pioneering some of the world's most creative forms of sovereignty (Baldacchino 2010).

This paper explored some of these creative forms of shared sovereignty, ranging from island federacies and associated statehood to island autonomies located within federal or decentralising states. In many cases, islands are over-represented in the category of 'lilliputian federalism', that is, radically asymmetrical relations between small units that are associated with, or partnered to, larger units. Scholars have pointed to a number of reasons as to why islands have sought to exercise autonomy within larger political and economic structures rather than seek sovereign state independence,

including historical, economic and political motivations. However, islands are not the only territories to have demanded special forms of autonomy status in recent years, as the wide literature on territorial politics demonstrates. Many other states are undergoing processes of asymmetrical spatial rescaling, thereby granting one or more (non-island) regions special status. The increasing prevalence of complex forms of sovereignty in the modern world system raises the question of whether island regions are indeed a specific set of polities with distinct processes of autonomy and self-government, or whether their autonomy arrangements are the same as any other mainland region, but which are enhanced and exacerbated in an island setting.

In order to answer this question, this paper put forward a framework of analysis for comparing island autonomies with non-island autonomies, in order to determine what factors influence the degree of autonomy that is sought, and ultimately, to identify factors that might confirm the 'island differential'. Several hypotheses were developed, drawing from the literatures on territorial politics (regionalism, federalism, autonomy studies) and island studies (with a focus on specific traits of 'islandness'). It was suggested that these hypotheses could be tested in a comparative framework.

There are a number of benefits to conducting future research along these lines. In particular, understanding what constellations of factors lead to what types of autonomy (or indeed, lack of autonomy), may help us understand better the pluralism and creativity of new forms of political order around the world. In particular, if islands are found to have developed demands for more innovative governance arrangements with their host states, they would have important lessons to teach for non-island territorial sovereignty within the state. For instance, the experience of island regions could tell us that innovative autonomy arrangements can create political stability, sustain economic growth and manage cultural diversity (which is often the inverse of the argument used against the devolution of powers). The relationship between islands and their 'host' structures also elucidates struggles for self-determination by small territories. These attributes of islands are of great relevance to scholars of nationalism, federalism and regionalism, who seek to understand how particular places are governed according to their distinctive circumstances. As such, it is possible that the experience of small islands, and the multiplicity of forms of shared sovereignty, may offer important lessons for states such as the United Kingdom, Spain, Belgium, Italy, Canada, India, Indonesia and Nigeria, which are all undergoing processes of recrafting sovereignty. Importantly, future research could show that asymmetrical devolved or federal arrangements that have historically characterised island-mainland relations are not relics of a bygone age or messy examples of state failure. Instead, the diverse types of 'shared sovereignty' constitutional relations between islands and their host states, and more recently exercised by substate regions and nations within larger multi-level states such as the UK, should no longer be thoughts of as quirks and exceptions to the system, but rather a practical response to spatial rescaling (Baldacchino 2006).

References

Adrianto, L. & Y. Matsuda (2004) 'Study on assessing economic vulnerability of small island regions', *Environment, Development and Sustainability,* vol. 6: 317–36.

Agnew, J. (2002) *Making Political Geography*, London: Arnold Publishers.

Aldecoa, F. and M. Keating (1999) *Paradiplomacy in Action: The Foreign Relations of Subnational Governments*, (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass).

Anckar, D. (2003) 'Lilliput Federalism: Profiles and Varieties', *Regional & Federal Studies*, 13(3): 107-24.

Armstrong, H. W. & R. Read (2002) 'The phantom of liberty? Economic growth and the vulnerability of small states', *Journal of International Development*, *14*(3): 435-458.

Armstrong, H.W.,&Read, R. (2003) 'The determinants of economic growth of small states', *The Round Table*, 368: 99-124.

Bache, I and M. Flinders (2005) *Multi-level Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Baldacchino, G. (2004) 'The coming of age of island studies', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie,* vol. 95, no. 3: 272-83.

Baldacchino, G. (2004) 'Autonomous but not sovereign?: a review of island sub-Nationalism', *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism,* vol. 31: 77-91.

Baldacchino, G. (2004) 'Sustainable use practices, including tourism, in/for small Islands', *International Journal of Island Affairs,* vol. Year 13, no. 1: 5-10.

Baldacchino, G. (2006) 'Small islands versus big cities: lessons in the political economy of regional development from the world's small islands', *The Journal of Technology Transfer,* vol. 31, no. 1: 91-100.

Baldacchino, G. (2006) 'Innovative Development Strategies from Non-Sovereign Island Jurisdictions: A Global Review of Economic Policy and Governance Practices', *World Development*, Vol. 34, No. 5: 852-867.

Baldacchino, G. (ed.) (2007) *A world of islands: an island studies reader*, Agenda Academic & Institute of Island Studies, Malta & Canada.

Baldacchino, G. (2010) *Island Enclaves. Offshoring Strategies, Creative Governance and Subnational island Jurisdictions.* Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.

Baldacchino, G. & Milne, D. (eds) (2000) *Lessons from the Political Economy of Small Islands: The Resourcefulness of Jurisdiction*, Basingstoke, Macmillan.

Baldacchino, G. and D. Milne (2006) 'Exploring sub-national island jurisdictions: an editorial introduction', *The Round Table*, Vol. 95, Issue 386: 487-502.

Baldacchino, G. and A. Spears (2007) 'The bridge effect: a tentative score sheet for Prince Edward Island', in G Baldacchino (ed), *Bridging islands: the impact of fixed links*, Acorn Press, Charlottetown, pp. 49–68.

Bartolini, S. (2005) *Restructuring Europe: centre formation, system building and political structuring between the nationstate and the European Union*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Briguglio, L. (2004), 'Economic vulnerability and resilience: concepts and Measurements', in L. Briguglio & E. Kisanaga (eds), *Economic vulnerability and resilience of small states*, Islands and Small States Institute of the University of Malta and Commonwealth Secretariat., Malta, pp. 43-53.

Brunner and Küpper (2002) 'European Options of Autonomy: A Typology of Autonomy

Models of Minority Self-Governance' in Kinga Gál (ed) *Minority Governance in Europe* (Budapest: European Centre for Minority Issues).

Connell, J. (1994) 'Britain's Caribbean Colonies: The End of the Era of Decolonization' *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 32(1): 87-106.

Daftary, F. (2000) 'Insular Autonomy: A Framework for Conflict Settlement? A Comparative Study of Corsica and the Åland Islands', *European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) Working Paper*, No. 9.

Detterbeck, K. and E. Hepburn (2009) 'Party Politics in Multi-level Systems: party responses to new challenges in European democracies' in W. Swenden and J. Erk (eds) *New Avenues of Comparative Federalism Research* (London and NY: Routledge).

Elazar, D. (1987) *Exploring Federalism*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Elias, A. and E. Hepburn (2008) 'Island Nations in a 'Europe of the Peoples': Corsica and Sardinia compared' Paper presented at UACES Annual Conference, Edinburgh, 1-3 September.

Everard, J. A. & Holt, J. C. (2004) *Jersey 1204: the forging of an island community*, London: Thames & Hudson.

Ghai, Y. (2000) *Autonomy and Ethnicity: Negotiating Competing Claims in multi-ethnic States*, London: Cambridge University Press.

Ghai, Y. (2002) 'Global prospects of autonomies' in H. Jansson & J. Salminen (eds) *The second Åland islands question: autonomy or independence?,* Mariehamn: Julius Sundblom Memorial Foundation.

Guibernau, M. (2006) 'National identity, devolution and secession in Canada, Britain and Spain', *Nations and Nationalism*, 12(1): 51-76.

Hache, J.-D. (1998) 'Towards a political approach to the island question', in G. Baldacchino & R. Greenwood (eds), *Competing strategies of socio-economic development for small islands*, Institute of Island Studies, Charlottetown.

Hannum, H. (1990) *Autonomy, Sovereignty and Self-Determination. The Accommodation of Conflicting Rights*. Penn: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Hannum, H. and Lillich (1980) 'The Concept of Autonomy in International Law', *American Journal of International Law,* 74.

Hay, P. (2003) 'That islanders speak, and others hear', *Isle*, 10: 203-205.

Hay, P. (2006), 'A phenomenology of islands', *Island Studies Journal,* 1(1): 19-42.

Henderson, A. (2007) *Hierarchies of Belonging and Political Inclusion: national identity and political culture in Scotland and Quebec*, Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Hepburn, E. (2009a) 'Explaining Failure: The Rise and Fall of Sardinian Nationalism', *Regional & Federal Studies*, 19(4/5): 595-618.

Hepburn, E. (2009b) 'Substate Strategies in Response to Europeanizing and Globalizing Trends' in P. Della Posta, A. Verdun and M. Uvalic (eds) *Globalization, Development and Integration* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).

Hepburn, E. (2010a) *Using Europe: territorial party strategies in a multi-level system,* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Hepburn, E. (2010b—forthcoming) 'Small Worlds in Canada and Europe: A Comparison of Regional Party Systems in Québec, Bavaria and Scotland' *Regional & Federal Studies*.

Hough, D. and C. Jeffery (2006) (eds) *Devolution and electoral politics,* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Jackson, R. (2008) *Islands on the Edge: Exploring Islandness and Development in Four Australian Case Studies*, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Tasmania.

Jeffery, C. (ed) (1997) *The Regional Dimension of the European Union. Towards a Third Level in Europe?,* London, Portland OR: Frank Cass.

Jeffery, C. (2006) 'Devolution and Social Citizenship. Which Society, Whose Citizenship?' in S.L. Greer (ed) *Territory, Democracy and Justice. Regionalism and Federalism in Western Democracies*, Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Jeffery, C. (2008) 'The Challenge of Territorial Politics', *Policy and Politics* 36(4).

Jeffery, C. and D. Wincott (2010) 'The Challenge of Territorial Politics: Beyond Methodological Nationalism' in C. Hay (ed) *New Directions in Political Science* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

Keating, M. (1988) *State and Regional Nationalism: Territorial Politics and the European State*, (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf).

Keating, M. (1998) *The New Regionalism in Western Europe: Territorial Restructuring and Political Change*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Keating, M. (2005) *Plurinational Democracy. Stateless Nations in a Post-Sovereignty Era*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Keating, M. and L. Hooghe (2001) 'By-passing the Nation State? Regions in the EU Policy Process' in J. Richardson (ed.), European Union: Power and Policy-Making, London: Routledge, 2001

King, R. (1993) 'The Geographical Fascination of Islands' in D. Lockhart, P. Schembri, and D. Smith (eds) *The Development Process in Small Island States*, London: Routledge.

Lapidoth R. (1997) *Autonomy: flexible solutions to ethnic conflicts* (Washington, DC : United States Institute of Peace Press).

MacCormick, N. (1999) *Questioning sovereignty: law, state, and nation in the European Commonwealth*, Oxford : Oxford University Press.

Marks, G. and Hooghe, L. (2000), *'Types of Multilevel Governance'*, European Integration Papers Online, 5:11.

Marks, G., L. Hooghe and A. Schakel (eds) (2008) 'Regional Authority in 42 Countries, 1950-2006: A Measure and Five Hypotheses', *Special issue of Regional & Federal Studies.*

McElroy, J. L. & K. de Albuquerque (1996) 'The social and economic propensity for political dependence in the insular Caribbean', *Social and Economic Studies*, *44*(1): 167-193.

McElroy, J. L. & Mahoney, M. (2000) 'The propensity for political dependence in island microstates', *Insula: International Journal of Island Affairs, 9*(1): 32-35.

Mitchell, J. (2000) 'Devolution and the end of Britain?', *Contemporary British History*, 14(3): 61-82

Moreno, L. (1988) 'Scotland and Catalonia: The Path to Home Rule', in D. McCrone and A. Brown (eds) *The Scottish Government Yearbook* (Edinburgh: Unit for the Study of Government in Scotland).

Motyl, A. (2001), ed., 'Autonomy', in *Encyclopedia of Nationalism: Leaders, Movements and Concepts*, Vol. 2, (London: Academic Press).

Pitt, D. (1980), 'Sociology, islands and boundaries', *World Development,* vol. 8: 1051–9.

Rothchild, D. and Hartzell (2000) 'Security in Deeply Divided Societies: The Role of Territorial Autonomy' in Safran, W. and Maiz, R. (eds) *Identity and Territorial Autonomy in Plural Societies*, (London, Portland OR: Frank Cass).

Royle, S.A. (2001) *A geography of islands: small island insularity*, Routledge, London and New York.

Royle, S.A. (2010) 'Postcolonial culture on Dependent Islands', *Space and Culture*, March.

Safran, W. and Maiz, R. (eds) (2000) *Identity and Territorial Autonomy in Plural Societies*, (London, Portland OR: Frank Cass).

Srebrnik, H. F. (2004) 'Small island nations and democratic values', *World Development*, *32*(2): 329-342.

Stratford, E. (2008) 'Islandness and struggles over development: A Tasmanian case study', *Political Geography* 27(2): 160-75.

Suksi, M. (ed) (1998) *Autonomy: Applications and Implications*, (The Hague: Kluwer Law International).

Swenden, W. and B. Maddens (2008) *Territorial Party Politics in Western Europe,* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Villamil, J.J. (1977), 'Size and survival: planning in small island systems', *Microstate Studies,* vol. 1: 1-17.

Walker, N. (2002) 'The Idea of Constitutional Pluralism' *Modern Law Review*, Vol. 65(3): 317-359.

Walker, N. (2008) 'Taking Constitutionalism Beyond the State' *Political Studies*, vol. 56: 519-543.

Warrington, E. (1998) 'Introduction: Gulliver and Lilliput in a new world order: the impact of external relations on the domestic policies and institutions of micro-states', *Public Administration and Development*, *18*(2): 101-105.

Warrington, E & D. Milne (2007), 'Island governance', in G. Baldacchino (ed), *A world of islands: an island studies reader*, Agenda Academic and Institute of Island Studies, Malta & Canada, pp. 379-427.

Watts, R. (2000) 'Islands in Comparative Constitutional Perspective' in G. Baldacchino and D. Milne (eds) *Lessons from the Political Economy of Islands. The Resourcefulness of Jurisdiction.* Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Wellar, M. and Wolff, S. (eds) (2005) *Autonomy, Self-governance and Conflict Resolution: Innovative Approaches to Institutional Design in Divided Societies.* London: Routledge.

Wiberg (1998) 'Political autonomy: Ambiguities and clarifications' in M. Suski (ed) *Autonomy: Applications and Implications* (The Hague: Kluwer International Law).