

ISLAND POLITICAL PARTIES

Differentiating factors in political life in the Canary Islands

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ABSTRACT: This article provides an analysis of the role and evolution of island political parties in the Canary Islands. These political organisations emerge due to the inherent and unique characteristics typical of island life, which mainland territories do not possess. Through a descriptive methodology, electoral surveys are developed for each island alongside a summary table illustrating the combined influence and trajectory of these parties in island elections. Their significance in defending local identity, capacity to form coalitions and lead island governments are emphasised. Similarly, their focus on the island realm, flexibility in negotiations and pursuit of island power are identified. These parties emerge as significant political actors that could serve as examples for other islands facing similar challenges. Their ability to address island needs and promote island-centric development positions them as fundamental elements in the island politics of the Canary Islands, thus contributing to a more representative governance structure.

KEY WORDS: Islands, islandness, island political parties, Canary Islands.

Introduction

In the political landscape of the Canary Islands, island political parties emerge as key actors shaping island governance and representing the unique identities of their respective islands. This article provides an in-depth exploration of the role and significance of island political parties in the Canary Islands, focusing on their dynamics, influence and evolution within the contexts of the archipelago. Employing a methodology of descriptive analysis, following Peraza Padrón (1994), this study has involved the development of schematic representations

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for each island, offering a visual representation of electoral outcomes and the evolution of political landscapes over time. These representations, based on elections to the island councils, can be used as valuable tools for the comprehension of the intricate interplay of political forces within each insular community. As an illustrative example, the electoral representation for the island of El Hierro is included, providing insights into vote distribution and the performance of all political parties that have appeared there. With a total of seven surveys covering all the islands, the article incorporates detailed information about island political parties, presented in a comprehensive table within the text summarising the data from the 7 schematic representations. This table offers a detailed examination of these parties' achievements, electoral weight, presence in insular government or opposition and trajectory through elections to ascertain their role in shaping insular governance.

Through this analysis, our aim is to shed light on the unique dynamics of island politics, exploring how these parties navigate the complexities of insular governance, negotiate alliances and advocate for the interests of their respective islands. Additionally, we seek to examine the broader implications of island political dynamics, considering how advances made by these parties can serve as models for other islands facing similar challenges in governance and representation. The analysis of these political parties represents an initial step in understanding the actors responsible for governance strategies tailored to the specific challenges faced by the islands, such as economic dependence on tourism, sustainable management of natural resources or immigration. This article contributes to a deeper understanding of island politics in the Canary Islands, offering insights into the role of island political parties, their dynamics and their impact on governance and island identity in the archipelago.

II. The island political life

Residing on an island represents a unique experience characterised by the interaction between a population and a limited geographical environment (Conkling, 2007), nestled amidst a more or less extensive sea that island life revolves around to varying extents (Baldacchino, 2015). Insularity makes islands unique geographical phenomena, regardless of their position on the world map (Pungetti, 2012). While islands, in general, often share a common set of issues (Estévez González, 1992; Mitropoulou & Spilanis, 2020), their own particularities make each island different. Islands are commonly perceived similarly by residents but differently by those situated on continental territory (Gillis, 2014). For island populations, their territorial space introduces particular nuances in daily experience, highlighting the notable influence of geography on the configuration of unique life patterns. Islandness is often decisive in shaping the culture of islands (Carranza Guasch, 2022). Close interpersonal relationships in diverse island ecosystems bring their own dynamics to everyday life, where the interdependence between community and nature becomes notably relevant (Poirine & Moyrand, 2001; Prinsen et al., 2021). These dynamics vary among islands and it is important to note that not all islands experience the same challenges or the same political evolutions.

Island life is substantially characterised by the freedom associated with the surrounding maritime landscape (Constantakopoulou, 2007) and the inherent limitations of resource availability (Briguglio, 1998). The management of these resources, both natural and socio-economic, becomes a crucial factor shaping social and political dynamics. Islands can have fragmented internal markets (Carnero Lorenzo, 2016) within territories with a high

population density (Godenau & Nuez Yañez, 2013). At the same time, life on islands can foster the establishment of strong social networks and closely knit communities (Briguglio, 2001), driven by the need for cooperation to address geographic and environmental particularities. Island contexts thereby shape the cultural and social idiosyncrasy of island populations. The small size of smaller island markets prevents the development of economies of scale (Reddy, 2004). Many islands depend on specific sectors for their economic sustenance, mainly services (McElroy & Pearce, 2009). Tourism can serve as a vital source of income for some (but by no means all) islands (Baldacchino, 1994; Mitropoulou & Spilanis, 2020), significantly shaping policies on tourism development (Briguglio, 2008), infrastructure, and environmental protection (Deidda, 2016). Additionally, tourism provides substantial employment opportunities (Puig-Cabrera & Foronda-Robles, 2019) and stands out as one of the limited development options available (Walton & Nel, 2020). The significant reliance on a single economic sector results from the economic specialisation of many small islands (Godenau & Nuez Yañez, 2013). This dependence makes islands particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in those sectors (Baldacchino, 2002) and necessitates policies tailored to their unique needs. Moreover, the particular importance of tourism can exert territorial pressure on coastal areas of islands (Briguglio, 1995), limiting the development of non-tourism activities in the area. The rise of tourism is also accompanied by the decline of the primary sector (Mitropoulou & Spilanis, 2020).

The geographical isolation of many islands (Douglas, 2006) often drives a demand for greater autonomy, with islands adapting their self-governance to their unique geographical and social traits (Kopaka, 2019). Islands face transportation challenges that can impact political decisions (Mendas, 2015) and developing such infrastructure is costlier than on continents (Cerina et al., 2019), yet crucial for exchanging goods and maintaining connectivity (Marinković, 2018). Some states have established subsidies for transportation to residents of islands (Ramos Pérez, 2020). In an archipelago, transportation serves as a factor in territorial cohesion (Castanho et al., 2020). Additionally, the physical distance from continental territory can generate a sense of separation and a more island-focused approach to affairs.

Islands are unique (Douglas, 2006), often fragile (Briguglio & Briguglio, 1997), and constitute valuable ecosystems that require protection. They host endemic flora and fauna (del Arco Aguilar & Rodríguez Delgado, 2018) and are especially vulnerable to climate change (Scandurra et al., 2018). Managing natural resources like forests, oceans, and marine reserves is often a political priority here. The sea is central to island culture (Beswick, 2020), making environmental sustainability and protection crucial due to the ecosystems' fragility and the local population's reliance on natural resources. The natural borders of islands promote the desire for insular political powers (Corbett, 2020) with a culture consolidated in island society (Grydehøj et al., 2020). The environment can also be a factor in attracting tourists (Deidda, 2016).

Islands often possess a strong cultural identity and sense of community rooted in their environment (Vannini & Taggart, 2013; Veenendaal, 2020) and island autonomy relies on this deeply ingrained identity (Baldacchino & Milne, 2006), which fosters a profound sense of belonging and a strong connection to island traditions, history, and way of life. This island identity can influence local politics and the promotion of measures to safeguard and promote the culture, heritage and interests of the island.

In islands, political representation may be structured differently from continental territories. Some islands enjoy political autonomy due to their own island condition

(Baldacchino, 2006), taking into account their economic, cultural, geographical, historical and legal characteristics (Olausson, 2007). Some islands often have their own governments or parliaments or may be represented at the state or regional level. As islands are administrative units that follow geographical forms, they constitute clearly defined political spaces with known boundaries (Grydehøj et al., 2023; Pérez González, 2008). As a result, such governments, supported by public administrations, benefit from a closer perspective on local issues compared to larger continental territories (Moncada et al., 2021). Island-specific political parties almost universally advocate for local interests, and the unique nature of island life shapes their political decisions and organisational structures. In other words, islandness entails particular political decisions (Marshall, 1999), conditioning the organisation of political parties formed on the islands. In this context, close interpersonal relationships can extend into the political realm, fostering a direct connection between citizens and their leaders (Bethel, 2002; Poirine & Moyrand, 2001), often resulting in the emergence of strong leadership (Baldacchino, 2012). This relationship is further reinforced by island councils consolidating competencies and public services, often overshadowing municipal authorities (Gutiérrez Barroso & Betancor Nuez, 2017). Islands thereby exemplify the personalisation of politics (Veenendaal, 2020). Locally embedded political parties facilitate participation through activism (Johnson, 2014). Considering how islandness shapes the island population's identity, it can foster nationalism (Vézina, 2014) or insularism, a perspective rooted in the unique characteristics of individual islands within an archipelago (Baldacchino, 2002). Insularism arises from the island's desire for political, economic, and social recognition of its peculiarities (Paci, 2023). They can also incorporate populist elements depending on the case (Hernández Bravo de Laguna, 1990). These ideologies often advocate for policies proposed by island-specific political parties, independent of external decision-making centres (Pérez González, 2008).

The political consequences of islandness take on another dimension when related to the dual insularity of islands located on the periphery of larger archipelagos (Persoon & Osseweijer, 2002). These islands depend on larger ones to access public services (Boumpa & Paralikas, 2020) and islandness is key in concretising island identity (Ratter, 2018; Veenendaal, 2020; Vézina, 2020). In these cases, one island acts as the centre of the archipelago, concentrating the capital, services and infrastructure (Taglioni, 2011). Between the belonging island and the archipelago, personal identification often rests with the island given the difficulties of establishing common cultural points among all the islands (Picornell, 2014). Each island has its own history and culture reflecting ethnic differences among islands (Bethel, 2002). From a peripheral island, a distinct view of the relationships between both islands is formed, translating into the political sphere demanding autonomy from the centre (Favole & Giordana, 2018). When analysing a group of islands forming an archipelago, each island constitutes a region separate from the rest of the territories (Colom i Pastor, 1978). From the archipelagic periphery, a redistribution of political power is requested (Baldacchino, 2006) and its own governability demands greater autonomy (Baldacchino, 2020). Insularism becomes the political justification for a demand for island autonomy (Paci, 2023). In archipelago parliaments, peripheral islands have a significant influence on the decisions made (Baldacchino & Duarte Ferreira, 2013). Strong inter-insular debates are established compared to disagreements with the belonging state (Ferdinand et al., 2020).

III. Island political parties as localised political organisations

Political parties that are exclusively established on an island have a localised focus centred on the interests of that particular island. Being removed from state politics and nationwide parties, they concentrate on issues specific to the island, such as the local economy, preservation of cultural and natural heritage, tourism, infrastructure and local development. Island political parties are part of the non-state party category as they are not established across an entire state (Schakel & Jeffery, 2013). Their emergence is explained by the lack of response to certain themes by existing political formations (Rama & Reynaers, 2019) while keeping in mind the institutional characteristics as well as the political evolution and social and cultural environment (Mažylis et al., 2013). In institutions, there are not infinite seats for political formations, and it is social support along with the diversity of the political agenda and the openness of the institutions themselves that determine the possibilities of a political party (van de Wardt et al., 2021). The neglect of island issues by local political parties prompts the formation of island-focused projects and parties that champion territorially unique social and economic interests gain electoral support (Cuesta i Labèrnia, 2013; Nachmias et al., 2016). But parties must adapt to the social changes in their environment; otherwise, they disappear (Cyr, 2016). Besides, not having a strong organisational structure is a cause of the dissolution of political parties (Van Dyck, 2017). These political parties prioritise their positioning on the centre-periphery axis rather than on the left-right axis (Giovanni, 2016; Terrière, 2023).

Island political parties possess a greater understanding of local problems, enabling them to propose effective solutions tailored to their island's reality. As a result of their deep commitment to addressing community needs, often closely tied to local identity and culture, whether ethnically motivated or not, they can enjoy strong local support (Fagerholm, 2016; Raos, 2011). These parties attract voters concerned about their community's future (Wallman Lundåsen & Erlingsson, 2023), offering a representation of specific island interests and values (Anckar & Anckar, 1995). Voting for an island-focused party becomes a means for citizens to express and reinforce their local identity, given the proximity between leaders and constituents, which aligns with their preferences (Barberá, 2010). Importantly, in archipelagos, each island often harbours distinct political aspirations (Prinsen et al., 2021), with island-specific parties gaining support by addressing local challenges comprehensively. They provide a fresh perspective compared to national parties and wield political influence in parliaments (Wauters et al., 2016), advocating for increased autonomy and competencies within island administrations. These parties are deeply ingrained in local society, composed of individuals intimately familiar with the island's unique needs and dynamics. However, these island political parties may also have a limited vision that prevents them from seeing beyond local interests. Likewise, they may have difficulties in establishing and maintaining themselves over time due to their limited geographical scope and the lack of resources they usually have compared to national or regional political parties. Additionally, they may be perceived as narrow-minded or as defenders of local interests at the expense of the interests of the entire country or region, concentrating their support in local elections (Rallings & Thrasher, 1997). Among them, these parties can also differ regarding their organisational structure, ideological positioning or electoral support (Pallarés et al., 1997).

IV. The Canary Islands

The Canary Islands are an archipelago that forms part of Spain and the European Union, located in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Morocco (Figure 1). It consists of eight islands: La Palma, El Hierro, La Gomera, Tenerife, Gran Canaria, Fuerteventura and Lanzarote with political inclusion of the island of La Graciosa (Figure 2). The islands were conquered by the Crown of Castile in 1496 during a period when they were inhabited by indigenous peoples. To govern each island, an island council called *Cabildo* was established, with legislative, executive and judicial functions (Hernández Bravo de Laguna, 2000). With the approval of the Spanish Constitution of 1812, the institutional position of the Canary Islands changed, transitioning from being a colony to being considered a regular province of the state, leading to the dissolution of the island councils. This initiated a debate on which city should become the provincial capital. The focus of the debate was between the cities of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and Santa Cruz de Tenerife, located on the islands of Gran Canaria and Tenerife respectively. For a city to be the capital is important as it marks its development (Grydehøj, 2015). This gave rise to disagreements between the political and economic elites of both islands, known as the *pleito insular* (Guimerá Peraza, 1976). At that time, the economies of both islands were based on export agriculture, competing for the same international markets (Macías Hernández, 2003) and emigration was a significant component in understanding the social dynamics of the islands at the time.

Choosing the archipelago's capital on one island or another was a matter of vital importance because it meant being closer to the state administration, for example, to develop investments or new infrastructures. Santa Cruz de Tenerife was ultimately chosen as the capital, but the debate did not diminish. From Gran Canaria, primarily, there was a push for the province to be divided. From Tenerife, efforts were made to alleviate tensions by supporting the re-creation of island councils on each island. These were established in 1912 with the same name as the former island councils, called *Cabildos*. The debate continued and in 1927, the province of the Canary Islands was divided into two provinces: Las Palmas (islands of Lanzarote, Fuerteventura and Gran Canaria) and Santa Cruz de Tenerife (islands of El Hierro, La Palma, La Gomera and Tenerife). Since then, the economy of the islands continued to rely primarily on agricultural exports until the development of tourism starting in the 1960s (Ley Bosch et al., 2024). Between 1939 and 1977, the islands, as part of Spain, experienced a non-democratic period during which the island councils became established as the expression of each island (García Rojas, 1997b). The export-oriented nature of the Canary Islands' economy was addressed in 1972 with the approval of the Economic and Fiscal Regime (Mambrilla Hernández, 1999), which established a series of fiscal and economic incentives for businesses and individuals operating in the islands. Like other island territories, the Canary Islands did not experience an industrial revolution (Poirine & Moyrand, 2001).

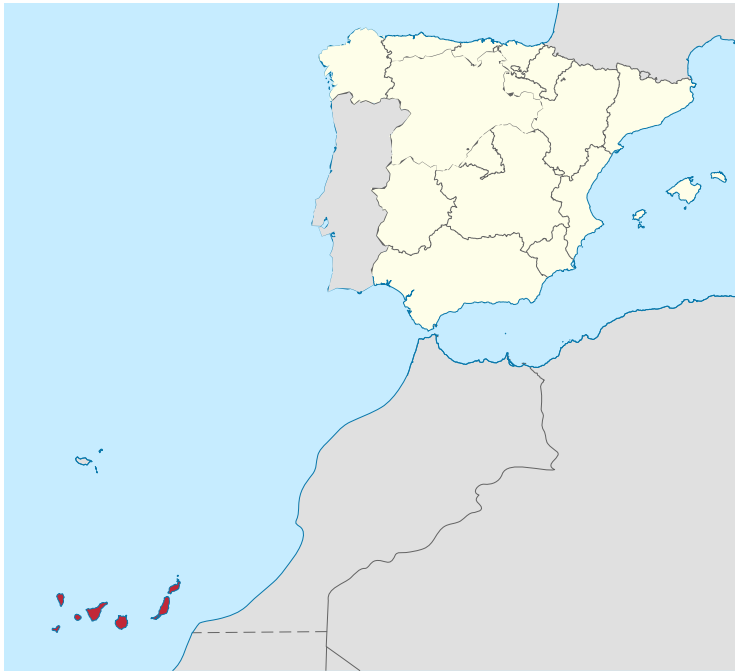


Figure 1 – The Canary Islands (bottom left, in red) in relation to Spain (top centre-right in cream) and northern Africa (Wiki Commons).



Figure 2 – The Canary Islands (Wiki Commons).

In 1978, with the approval of the Spanish Constitution, the Canary Islands was established as an autonomous community with its own government, parliament, court of justice, and statute of autonomy, implying a significant degree of legislative and administrative autonomy (Hernández Bravo de Laguna, 2000; Olausson, 2007). The Economic and Fiscal Regime of the Canary Islands is enshrined in the islands' statute of autonomy (Organic Law 1/2018, arts. 165-168). Inter-island debates evolved to focus on power distribution within the autonomous community. Nonetheless, the island councils in the Canary Islands retained their unique identity as the primary public administration entities for each island (Báez-

García et al., 2023). They have jurisdiction over their own territory and collaborate with the municipalities and with the Government of the Canary Islands (Lasso et al., 2002). Each island council has a president, several vice presidents as well as its own government. Competencies and internal organisation are regulated by various legislation approved for this purpose. The term of office for island councils is four years, with representatives being elected using the d'Hondt electoral formula (García Rojas, 1997b). Exclusive island political parties have been developing on each of the islands since the beginning of self-government in these archipelagos. It is within the island councils, due to their connection to each island, that these island parties aspire to be represented. Internal political dynamics reflect the complexity of managing autonomy within the national context, with inherent challenges in coordinating insular policies and harmonising local and national interests.

Currently, the Canary Islands is a densely populated archipelago (Godenau & Nuez Yañez, 2013). Tourism and construction have been largely responsible for the recorded population growth (García-Rodríguez et al., 2018). In 2022, tourism contributed over 35% to the Canary Islands' GDP (Exceltur, 2023). In 2023, 16,210,911 tourists visited the islands (Canary Islands Statistical Institute, 2024b). The population grew from 1,398,915 in 1982 to 2,202,048 in 2023. This increase has been particularly notable on some islands such as Lanzarote, where during the same period, the population rose from 52,894 to 159,021 people (Canary Islands Statistical Institute 2024a; Canary Islands Statistics and Documentation Centre, 1989). The Canary Islands have historically relied significantly on the tourism sector which constitutes a cornerstone of their economies (Báez-García et al., 2018). The tourism industry benefits from the natural characteristics of the archipelago. The geography of the Canary Islands is diverse, marked by their volcanic origin and stable climate throughout the year (Alonso-Pérez et al., 2021). Islands such as Tenerife, Gran Canaria, La Palma, La Gomera and El Hierro are more mountainous with rugged terrain. In contrast, Lanzarote and Fuerteventura are flatter with more arid and desert-like landscapes. Parts of the Canary Islands are protected, with four national parks (Santana-Jiménez & Hernández, 2011). The archipelago is an internationally known territory for tourism. In recent years, the tourism orientation of the islands has been complemented by immigration (Melotti et al., 2018), establishing spaces for European retirees (Calzada, 2018) and centres for the internment of irregular immigrants. In 2023, 39,910 irregular immigrants arrived in the Canary Islands by sea aboard 610 vessels (Ministry of Interior, 2024). The Government of the Canary Islands has requested their transfer and distribution among the autonomous communities of mainland Spain. Immigration and emigration are a concern on the islands (McCall, 1994).

V. Island political parties in the Canary Islands

The creation of island political parties is determined by the electoral opportunity to obtain representation in the island council, at a specific moment, depending on the political dynamics. In this regard, it is important to consider the relationships established between different political formations participating in elections, regardless of their ideology or territorial implantation. The initial drive for forming political parties of this nature in the Canary Islands has surfaced at various points in the islands' electoral history, each time displaying either similar traits or notable differences depending on the specific political project.

Since 1977, elections have been held regularly in the Canary Islands. It is important to consider the periodic renewal, every four years, of the island councils, which are considered

symbols of Canary identity (Galván Tudela & Estévez González, 1997). On election day, elections are also held for the various municipal councils on the islands and for the Parliament of the Canary Islands. Therefore, with election results announced simultaneously, political parties contemplate possible agreements at all three levels of government. Since 1977, the political parties that have gained traction in the islands have responded to either national or local dynamics. This period saw the emergence of nationally established parties such as the Union of the Democratic Centre (UCD), the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), the People's Alliance (AP) and the Communist Party of Spain (PCE), among others (López Nieto, 1992). Initially, local political formations on the islands faced challenges in surpassing nationally rooted parties. However, starting from 1979 with the inaugural elections to the island councils, they began to assert themselves. These elections became synonymous with island identity, leading to the establishment of several island political parties, each achieving varying degrees of success (García Rojas, 1997a).

Between 1977 and 1982, Spanish politics revolved around the UCD, which led the government of Spain (Caciagli, 1984) which received the most votes in all the Canary Islands in the general elections of 1977 and 1979 (Hernández Bravo de Laguna, 1987). Between 1977 to 1982, Spanish politics centred on UCD, which led the government of Spain and emerged as the most popular political force in all the Canary Islands during the general elections of 1977 and 1979 (Hernández Bravo de Laguna, 1987). By 1982, with its electoral decline and subsequent disappearance, the consolidation of bipartisanship between the PSOE and the People's Party (PP), which succeeded AP and occupied part of UCD's political space was witnessed (Cazorla Pérez & Montables Pereira, 1997). This balance remained stable until the early 21st century when new political formations like Citizens (CS), We Can, and Vox emerged, breaking the bipartisanship and leading to the first coalition governments since the 1930s (Rama et al., 2021). In the Canary Islands, UCD governed from 1977 to 1983, holding all island councils except in Fuerteventura and El Hierro. In these two islands, UCD was surpassed by two local parties: Majorera Assembly (AM) and El Hierro Independent Group (AHI). This is because the dissolution of UCD prompted many of its leaders to remain active in politics by forming island-specific political parties (García Rojas, 2004). This occurred in all the islands except Gran Canaria, where national political parties adopted insularist positions (Hernández Bravo de Laguna, 1990).

In the first elections to the island councils in 1977, political parties were identified on all islands except La Palma and Tenerife, because on these islands other national-level political parties, like UCD, were highly entrenched at a time when the recent Spanish democracy was just beginning. As a result, in the island council of Tenerife, all political parties constituted a part of the governing group, assuming management responsibilities. At this time, the island political parties that emerged were driven by a particular vision of their island and the desire to give greater prominence to the island councils, starting from these first elections.

In 1983, as noted, island political parties emerged following the disappearance of UCD. These parties adopted similar names across all the islands, emphasising their independent profiles. Thus, the La Palma Independent Group (API), La Gomera Independent Group (AGI), Tenerife Independent Group (ATI), Independents of Fuerteventura (IF), and Lanzarote Insular Group (AIL) were established (Hernández Bravo de Laguna, 1990). Some of these parties later modified their names, such as AIL changing to Lanzarote Independent Party (PIL). Prior to these, AHI had already emerged on the island of El Hierro. The significance of this event lies in the fact that all these island political parties have been able to govern the island council of their respective island at some point. Inspired by the success

of island political parties, new political entities emerged, aiming to secure a political space by either advocating for their island's specific interests or competing directly with national political parties. Former national party leaders on islands often departed to establish island-based parties with similar ideological stances, thereby challenging their former affiliations. This trend sometimes involves members of other parties forming new entities. Consequently, local branches of national parties often adapted their positions accordingly (Broekema et al., 2021). Furthermore, internal disagreements within the islands can prompt members to align with island political parties that better reflect insular realities. For instance, in Fuerteventura, as splinters from the PP, the Popular Platform of Fuerteventura (PPF) emerged in 1999, followed by Majorero People's Union (UPM) in 2003, and the creation of the Majorero Progressive Party (PPMAJO) in 2011.

The success of island political parties spurred the creation of new political formations with strong ties to the territory but differing visions on various public policies. In Tenerife, in 2007, after years of environmental debates, Yes We Can - Alternative for Tenerife (ASSPPT) emerged as a new political expression in response to social mobilisations against various infrastructures. In the same way as in Tenerife, in Fuerteventura, in 2007, in the municipality of Pájara, the Municipal Assemblies of Pájara (AMP) emerged as a new local political point of view and from 2011 it expanded to the entire island with the denomination of Municipal Assemblies of Fuerteventura (AMF). Similarly in Fuerteventura, the vision of one's own island allowed disparate projects to come together in favour of a common insular project. This was the case of: Win Fuerteventura (GF) which in 2019 emerged as the meeting point of two island political parties, the PPMAJO and UPM.

Alongside the emergence of these island political parties, it is possible to identify their disappearance. Since the first elections, only El Hierro Independent Group (AHI) party, from the island of El Hierro, has remained stable over time. The rest of the island political parties have disappeared or integrated into broader and more stable electoral coalitions or party federations. The disappearance of island political parties is identified: firstly, as a consequence of a negative electoral result that leaves the party in opposition or outside the insular institution, and secondly, due to the union with other political parties. If they fail to gain representation in the island council, they disappear from the political scene and are forgotten by the citizens. Moreover, an unfavourable outcome often sparks the inception of a new political initiative (Hagberg, 2019). For instance, the island political parties that emerged from UCD formed a federation of parties with the aim of governing the archipelago and leading the Government of the Canary Islands. In 1986, they established the federation known as Canaries Independent Group (AIC). In this situation, they advocated for defending the interests of their territory in higher political spheres (Monro, 2019). Faced with broader political projects, they were interested in grouping with island parties from other islands with the idea of influencing regional or national politics together. Despite running in elections at higher levels, their messages remain local (Hijino & Ishima, 2021). AHI further elaborates on this idea, asserting that political parties from peripheral islands have the ability to influence decisions made in the Canary Islands Parliament (Wauters et al., 2016). This situation is perceived in El Hierro and AHI's votes have been crucial in deciding which party who governs the archipelago, since their support is essential in cases where there is no absolute majority. They all seek greater authority for island councils, the central political entities of each island, from both the State and the Autonomous Community. This issue was pivotal in the formation of regional government (García Rojas et al., 2001). AIC was the first step to unite with other political parties present across all the islands and create Coalición Canaria (CC) as the political option that has governed the

Government of the Canary Islands since 1993, except for the period between 2019 and 2023 when it was surpassed by the PSOE.

Island political parties aim to contest elections by fielding candidates across all municipalities in the archipelago. They may endorse and collaborate with local candidacies to extend their reach, effectively using these as localised representations of the island party. It is possible for municipal candidacies to serve as a local brand for an insular party. In Tenerife, ATI relied on various municipal projects. It is important to note that they consider the possibility of integrating local candidacies within their ranks. In their eagerness to reach every corner of the island, agreements are identified with local political groups with the possibility of integrating them later. Thus, in Tenerife, ATI reached agreements with local candidacies that allowed it to consolidate its insular power. Despite the extensive support a party may have in municipalities, an electoral result can lead to a lack of an absolute majority, necessitating agreements with other political formations. In this sense, in the Canary Islands, there have been what are known as ‘cascade pacts,’ which are agreements governing multiple levels of government: archipelago, islands and municipalities. Additionally, governing an island council is understood as a political counterbalance to the government of the archipelago. By representing the island in higher levels of government, the image of insular defense against other governments is conveyed. One of the partners of ATI, the PIL, which governed Lanzarote uninterruptedly between 1991 and 2007, managed to remain in the insular government between 2007 and 2011 thanks to a coalition agreement. Moreover, such prolonged governance by a single party as in the case of the PIL, can result in consolidating significant insular leaderships. A similar example is Casimiro Curbelo, who has been the President of the La Gomera Island Council since 1991, having consolidated a style of government known as *curbelismo* (Gutiérrez Barroso & Betancor Nuez, 2017). These alliances with other political groups to secure the best results in the island council, the central arena of island politics, aims to govern territories effectively.

Island political parties’ position on the left-right ideological axis allows them to attract members from other political parties with common ground. What matters is the island, and their moderate position on the ideological spectrum allows them to be an alternative to the membership of both centre-right or centre-left. Their ideological position revolves around insularism, regionalism or nationalism. Moderation and centrality are justified because above all is the island, and nationalism allows them to immerse themselves in insular culture to project themselves politically. Within the party system, they aim to maintain a central and moderate position. The desired greater relevance means that government pacts necessarily involve these parties. Even if they are not the political force with the most votes, this central position gives them greater citizen projection than any other political formation. The ideology can be ambiguous (Geser, 2009), possibly synonymous with moderation. Insularism is a defining trait of the island population (Meliá, 1994). Positioned centrally, island political parties prominently use symbols that represent local identity, such as flags and landmarks. In Tenerife, the Teide – the highest peak in Spain – was used by ATI in 1987 together with the poetic phrase (in translation) “Tenerife is our island. The Teide our identity. The flag our symbol. The Cabildo, the strength of Tenerife”. These symbols are integral to their message, translating into a distinctly insular partisan identity. In 1987, in La Palma, the La Palma Independent Group (API) used the electoral slogan “defend your island, it’s your future”. Since ideology is not the most important factor in insular politics, close personal relationships prevail (Veenendaal, 2020). Daily personal life, with family and friendship connections, facilitates a connection beyond the political realm. The candidates of these parties enjoy greater citizen recognition.

Conclusions

Island political parties focus on the local sphere and the defence of insular identity. Their message revolves around the partisan translation of local identity, reflecting the importance of the island and its particularities in their political platform. Additionally, island political parties aspire to have a solid presence in each municipality of the island, enabling them to effectively address local issues and represent the interests of diverse communities within the island. Flexibility and adaptability are distinctive characteristics of these parties, as they are willing to form coalitions, establish agreements with other political forces, and lead insular governments in situations of lack of absolute majority. This demonstrates their ability to negotiate even in complex political contexts, which could serve as an example for other islands facing similar challenges in government formation and political decision-making. The pursuit of insular power is a priority for these parties, as the centre of their political activity lies within the island councils. Their main objective is to achieve the best outcome in these institutions, granting them greater influence and capacity for action in decision-making at the local level. Additionally, these parties tend to consolidate strong insular leadership to maintain a solid and prolonged presence, crucial for defending local interests and driving their political agenda.

In the case of the Canary Islands, in particular, island political parties play a fundamental role in island politics, representing local interests, promoting insular identity, and seeking power and influence in the insular councils. Their flexibility, adaptability and focus on the local sphere make them relevant political actors in the insular context and can serve as an example for other islands, demonstrating how to address political challenges and promote development centred on local needs.

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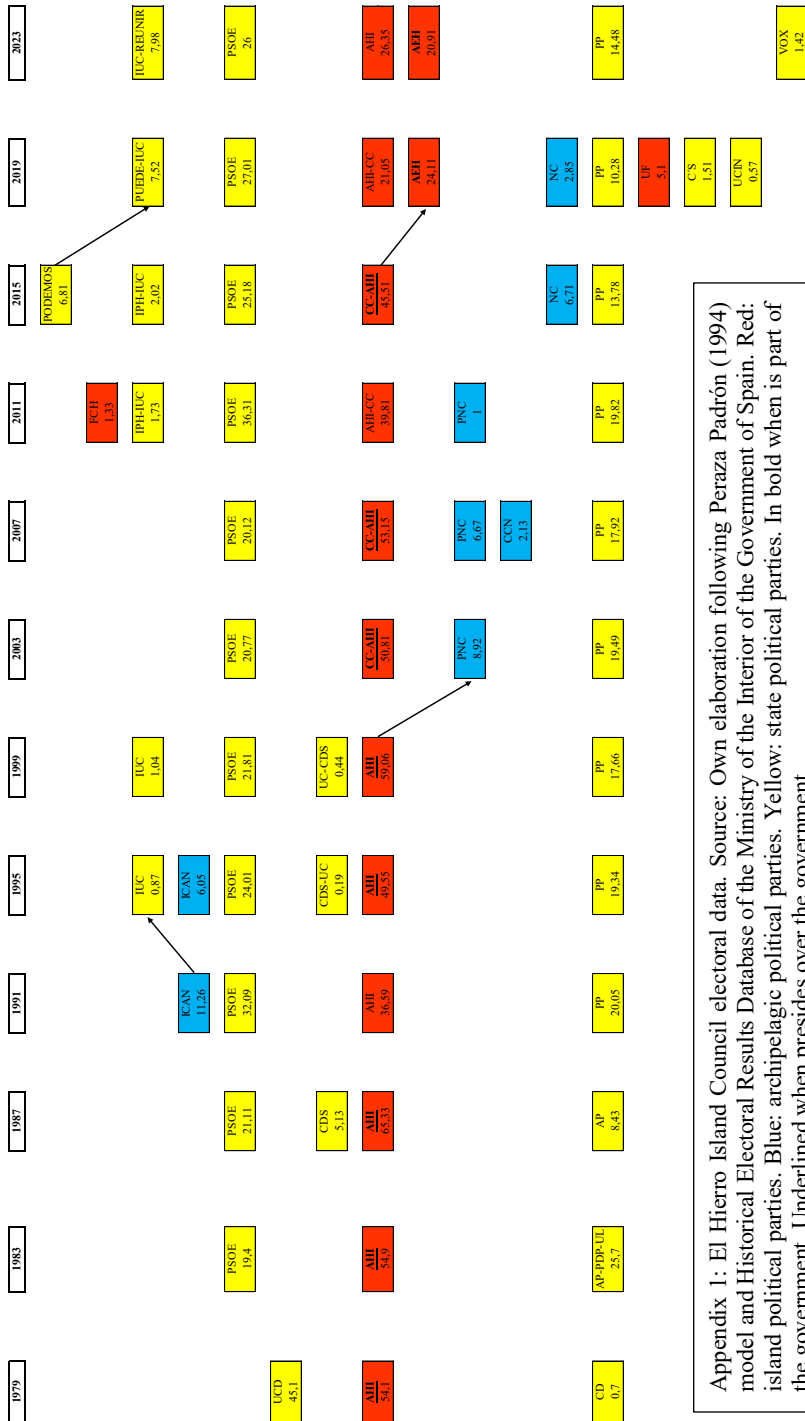
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Appendix 1: El Hierro Island Council electoral data. Source: Own elaboration following Peraza Padrón (1994) model and Historical Electoral Results Database of the Ministry of the Interior of the Government of Spain. Red: island political parties. Blue: archipelagic political parties. Yellow: state political parties. In bold when is part of the government. Underlined when presides over the government.

	1979	1983	1987	1991	1995	1999
La Palma			API 24,52	<u>API</u> 33,18		
El Hierro	<u>AHI</u> 54,1	<u>AHI</u> 54,9	<u>AHI</u> 65,33	<u>AHI</u> 36,59	<u>AHI</u> 49,55	<u>AHI</u> 59,06
La Gomera		<u>AGI</u> 39,9	CDS-AGI 30,71 UPG 1,83	CDS-AGI 32,91 UPG 0,48		AGI 0,84
Tenerife		ATI 20,2 SEV 6 0,8	<u>ATI</u> 41,3	<u>ATI</u> 44,27	<u>CC-ATI</u> 41,93 AT 0,7 IZEGWAGEN 0,39 AFIT 0,21	AC-CICA 0,23
Gran Canaria	AV 10,6		AIGRANC 1,71 ALCI 0,2 UDCE 0,13	IGC 4,98 AIGRANC 0,33	PGC 4,26 CGC 2,94	PGC 3,99 PD 0,41 LAGA 0,37 AMAGA 0,18
Fuerteventura	<u>AM</u> 49,6	<u>AM</u> 46 <u>IF</u> 28,1	<u>AM</u> 37,16 <u>IF</u> 23,56 IUPC 1,53	<u>AM</u> 36,22 <u>IF</u> 18,7	<u>IF</u>	<u>IF</u> 16,56 PPF 2,18
Lanzarote	GI 5,1		AII 9,01	<u>PIL</u> 49,02	<u>PIL</u> 32,21 ACN 2,95 PCS 0,99	<u>PIL</u> 31,5 APIL 1,75

Appendix 2: Island political parties electoral results at island councils' elections (1979-1999). Source: Own elaboration following Historical Electoral Results Database of the Ministry of the Interior of the Government of Spain. In bold when is part of the government. Underlined when presides over the government.

	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019	2023
La Palma	INPA 4,17	INPA-NC 3,19			CPROG 0,76 PDB 0,36	MAE 1,76
El Hierro	<u>CC-AHI</u> 50,81	<u>CC-AHI</u> 53,2	AHI-CC 39,81 FCH 1,33	<u>CC-AHI</u> 45,51	AHI 24,11 AHI-CC 21,05 UF 5,1	AHI 26,35 AFH 20,91
La Gomera				<u>ASG</u> 50,48	<u>ASG</u> 57,86	<u>ASG</u> 58,48 <u>DLG</u> 14,20
Tenerife	CCR 0,54 UTI 0,17 AGC 0,16	ASPPT 2,34 LV-IU-UC 1,86 CTF 0,13 CGCA 2,57	ASSPPT 4,56 CICAN 0,62 CSDC 0,12 CGCA 2,1	XIF-NC 2,22 SXT- 1,07 VERDES	ASTF 0,43 NIVARIA 0,31 UDCA 0,17	UDCA 0,23
Gran Canaria	UC-FNC 3,15 UCEE 0,13	VU 0,39 PGC 0,28 AMAGA 0,28	CIUCA 1,87 SCC 1,42 VU 0,38	UXGC 11,48 PVC 1,23 MXT 0,28	CC-UXGC 10,79 MXGC 0,76 PRG 0,14 VOTATE 0,11	UXGC 4,83 HAH 1,14
Fuerteventura	IF 9,6 UPM 1,85	CCN-IF 4,39 NF-NC 1,7	PPMAJO 14,15 AMF 7,53 NF-NC 3,67	PPMAJO 8,41 AMF 4,82 NF-NC 1,63	GF 4,76 PF 3,27 VOTEMOS 1,34	AMF 9,4 PXF 1,3
Lanzarote	<u>PIL</u> 32,29 AC25M 7,47 ACO-PA- 2,62 PCL 1,02 MCD	<u>PIL</u> 23,19 PNL-NC 6,99 AC25M 4,33 ISAL 3,08 PVP 0,6	PIL 13,27 AC25M 5,36 PNL-NC-OPL 4,36 GFL 1,43	SOMOS 7,02 PIL 6,84 SB 2,13	SOMOS-NC 4,82 LAVA 4,62 UPL 1,47 TPL 0,9 FVL 0,65	LEP 2,04

Appendix 3: Island political parties electoral results at island councils' elections (2003-2023). Source: Own elaboration following Historical Electoral Results Database of the Ministry of the Interior of the Government of Spain. In bold when is part of the government. Underlined when presides over the government.

Appendix 4: Acronyms glossary

Alternative Electoral Movement (MAE);
Assembly of Neighbors (AV);
Benahoare Peoples (PDB);
Canarian Alternative – Independent Citizens of the Canary Islands (AC-CICA);
Canarian Coalition - El Hierro Independent Group (CC-AHI);
Canarian Democratic Movement (MCD);
Canarian Green Party (PVC);
Canarian Initiative (ICAN);
Canarian Management Assembly (AGC);
Canarian Nationalist Centre (CCN);
Canarian Nationalist Centre – Independents of Fuerteventura (CCN – IF);
Canarian Nationalist Party (PNC);
Canarian Socialist Party (PCS);
Canarian Social Democratic Centre (CSDC);
Canarian Union – Canarian Nationalist Federation (UC-FNC);
Canarian-Spanish Democratic Unity (UDCE);
Canary Islands for Progress (CPROG);
Canary Reformist Centre (CCR);
Centrist Union - Democratic and Social Centre (UC-CDS);
Citizens (C'S);
Citizens for Change (CIUCA);
Coalition for Gran Canaria (CGC);
Commitment for Gran Canaria (CGC);
Commitment for Tenerife (CTF);
Common Sense in the Canary Islands (SCC);
Democratic and Social Centre (CDS);
Democratic and Social Centre - Centrist Union (CDS-UC);
Democratic Coalition (CD);
Democratic Union of the Canary Islands (UDCA);
Electoral Group for El Hierro (AEH);
El Hierro Can - United Left of the Canary Islands (PUEDE-IUC);
El Hierro Independent Group (AHI);
El Hierro Independent Group - Canarian Coalition (AHI-CC);
European Centrist Union (UCE);
Everyone for Lanzarote (TPL);
For Tenerife – New Canaries (XTF-NC);
Free Association of Independent Canarians (ALCI);
Frontier Union (UF);
Fuerteventura Party (PF);
Gomera Socialist Group (ASG);
Gomero People's Union (UPG);
Gran Canaria Insular Group (AIGRANC);
Gran Canaria Party (PGC);
Green Left of the Canary Islands (IZEGWAGEN);
Independent Centre of the Canary Islands (CICAN);
Independent Family Groups of Tenerife (AFIT);
Independent Group (GI);
Independent Popular Group of Lanzarote (APIL);
Independents of Fuerteventura (IF);

Independents of Gran Canaria (IGC);
Initiative for El Hierro - United Left of the Canary Islands (IPH-IUC);
Initiative for La Palma (INPA);
Initiative for La Palma – New Canaries (INPA-NC);
Initiative for La Gomera (IXLG);
La Gomera Independent Group (AGI);
La Palma Independent Group (API);
Lanzarote Assembly – Arrecife Party – Citizen Platform of Lanzarote (ACO-PA-PCL);
Lanzarote Insular Group (AIL);
Lanzarote Independent Party (PIL);
Lanzarote Moves Forward (LAVA);
Lanzarote Neighbors Force (FVL);
Lanzarote on Foot (LP);
Let's Talk Now (HAH);
Let's Vote Fuerteventura (VOTEMOS);
Majorera Assembly (AM);
Majorero People's Union (UPM);
May 25 Citizen Alternative (AC25M);
Majorero Progressive Party (PPMAJO);
Managers for Lanzarote (GPL);
More for Gran Canaria (MGC);
More for Telde (MXT);
Municipal Assemblies of Fuerteventura (AMF);
Nationalist Assembly of Lanzarote (ACON);
Nationalist Magic Alternative (AMAGA);
Nationalist Party of Lanzarote – New Canaries (PNL-NC);
Nationalist Party of Lanzarote – New Canaries – Option for Lanzarote (PNL-NC-OPL);
Neighborhood Party for Progress (PVP);
New Fuerteventura – New Canaries (NF-NC);
New Canaries (NC);
Nivaria (NIVARIA);
People's Party (PP);
Platform for Fuerteventura (PXF);
Popular Alliance (AP);
Popular Alliance - Popular Democratic Party - Liberal Union (AP-PDP-UL);
Popular Democracy (PD);
Popular Platform of Fuerteventura (PPF);
Roque de Gando Party (PRG);
San Borondón (SB);
Socialists for Tenerife – The Greens (SXTF-VERDES);
Socialist Group of Tenerife (ASTF);
Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE);
Tenerife Assembly (AT);
Tenerife Independent Group (ATI);
Tenerife Union (UTI);
The Blue Seagull (LAGA);
The Greens – United Left – Citizen Union (LV-IU-UC);
United for Lanzarote (UPL);
United for Gran Canaria (UGC);
United Left of the Canary Islands (IUC);
United Left of the Canary Islands – Gather (IUC-REUNIR);

United Neighbors (VU);
Vote (Votate); Vox (VOX);
We Are (Somos);
We Are – New Canaries (Somos – NC);
We Can (PODEMOS);
Win Fuerteventura (GF);
Workers for Democracy (TD);
Yes We Can - Alternative for Tenerife (ASSPPT).