Mapping Voters, Candidates and Parties with a Voting Advice Application

Jussi Westinen, Åbo Akademi University
Kimmo Grönlund, Åbo Akademi University

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ABSTRACT

Voting Advice Applications have become an integrated part of the process where voters choose between parties and candidates. Voters fill in an online questionnaire marking their positions on a range of policy statements; the VAA compares the answers with those of each party or candidate, and displays the proximity between the user and the parties or the candidates. In Finland, which is a candidate centered open list system, the design of the VAAs is open and they are first accessed by the candidates themselves. Proximity calculations between users and candidates are based on the candidates’ own answers.

In systems where candidates are able to respond to the questions themselves, political scientists are also able to map ideological differences between candidates both within and between parties. Our paper uses unique material, since we have access to a large dataset from a nationwide VAA. Our data cover answers from practically all candidates in the Finnish parliamentary election of 2011. Moreover, we have access to the responses by 320 000 users of the same device.

The analysis is threefold. First, we discover the opinion differences between men and women and different age groups among VAA-users and compare the VAA-users to candidates. Secondly, we concentrate on differences between candidates and test two hypotheses. The first suggests that the elected MP’s are more moderate than non-elected candidates, which follows the reasoning in May’s law of curvilinear disparity. The second suggests that elected candidates are more extreme than the non-elected, which is derived from directional theories. Thirdly, we are interested in examining how coherent the party positions based on aggregated candidate responses at the VAA are with expert surveys.

The answers of VAA-users showed that they are more willing to put national interests and interests of ordinary people ahead of minority and supranational interests. On the other hand, the VAA-users were more ready for major structural reforms in Finnish society than the candidates. Our results indicate that the incumbent candidates are actually less moderate than the non-incumbent candidates. The elected candidates are in only some cases more extreme than the non-elected candidates. Neither of the hypotheses was confirmed. The political dimensions that belong to the ideological core of a party are important to nearly of all the candidates of that party irrespective of their status or electoral success. The party positions based on the candidate responses confirmed most expert evaluations but there were also some significant differences, which show the usefulness of this VAA-based party mapping.
Introduction: VAA’s in Finland, a consensual multi-party systems

As traditional electoral cues such as group-based voting and party identification have become less self-evident, issues and policy considerations have become increasingly important for voting. Voters simply need more information on the standpoints of parties and candidates (Dalton & Wattenberg 2000, Franklin 2003; Krouwel et. al. 2012.) This is especially important in countries where voters have it difficult to find out the differences between the policy options that the parties and candidates have to offer. Therefore, online Voting Advice Applications (VAA’s) have become an integrated part of the process where today’s voters choose between parties and candidates.

Voters’ task in choosing between parties and candidates between them is especially challenging in ideologically fragmented multi-party systems which are also characterized by non-existent block politics and changing government coalitions. In the West European context, Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands and Switzerland stand out most as such consociational multi-party systems.

In VAA-research not much is known about how individual candidates respond to policy questions. The open design of VAAs in Finland makes this kind of research possible as the VAAs are first accessed by the candidates. Voters fill in the same online questionnaire marking their positions on a range of policy statements; the VAA compares the answers with those of each candidate and displays the proximity between the user and the candidate.

In many countries, where the electoral systems are party-centered or where a closed list system is deployed, the candidates do not fill in VAA’s. In these countries it is common that the VAA-user can only compare her opinions with the expert evaluations of parties. Finland represents hence an exciting case of examining how much and in what terms the candidates’ issue opinions differ from each other. The political culture and the nature of politics in Finland should discourage differences in opinions between candidates but the electoral system should on the opposite accentuate them.

In Finland, the parties have not expressed their preferable coalition partners before the elections and virtually any coalition base has been possible because of the extreme consensus
spirit of the Finnish parties and their willingness to enter the government irrespective of its political colour (see Karvonen & Paloheimo 2005, 297; cf. Müller & Strøm 2008, 171). The current government coalition, for example, consists of six parties, including the most right-wing and the most left-wing political party (Grönlund & Westinen 2012, 184). Voters become more and more confused when parties and politicians do not have the courage to challenge each other and present distinct alternatives (Karvonen & Paloheimo 2005).

Nevertheless, the Finnish electoral system not only stipulates harsh competition between candidates from different parties but also between candidates inside the same party. The electoral system in Finland that combines proportional list system with mandatory candidate voting\(^1\) encourages candidates to present distinct alternatives.

In this paper we approach the differences in candidates’ opinions on political issues in a VAA in terms of incumbency, electoral success and the party they run for in elections. Theories that build on hierarchy inside political parties, most importantly May’s law (1973), suggest that incumbent candidates may want to secure their seats by playing it safe and not distracting the voters with too extreme opinions. Non-incumbent candidates have less to lose and they can afford to have more extreme opinions.

Theories that build on directional voting do not emphasize status as much as they do the ability to get elected. They suggest that popular candidates are the ones who have more extreme opinions (Rabinowitz & MacDonald 1989). This should hold especially in questions that belong to the ideological core of the party. One aim of the present paper is to test, which theory is more applicable. The paper aims also at mapping the parties into political dimensions with the party positions being based on aggregated candidate responses at the VAA. They are compared to an important source of party mapping, expert surveys. The paper also compares the opinions of VAA-users to candidates and places the VAA-users into political dimensions.

We try to provide answers to the following questions:

1. How well do the opinions of voters and candidates match?

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\(^1\) In the Finnish electoral system political parties and party alliances nominate candidates for lists with no predetermined ranking order. When calculating the results, candidate votes are first summed at the level of the electoral district so as to determine the vote totals of the various lists. The D’hondt method is applied for determining which candidates get chosen. (Karvonen 2011.)
2. Do the candidates’ opinions on political issues vary according to status and electoral success?

3. How do the candidates’ VAA-answers function as a tool of party mapping?

The paper is organized in the following manner. First, we handle the theories that explain why there should be differences on political issues between candidates according to their status and electoral status. We compare the opinions of the VAA-users to candidates with a dataset from a nationwide VAA. We proceed to test the hypotheses on the differences between candidates and lastly we place the voters and candidates into six political dimensions.

May’s law of curvilinear disparity – top-leaders vs. sub-leaders

John May's (1973) law of curvilinear disparity divides people inside a political party into three categories according to their status and power: top leaders, sub-leaders and non-leaders. May’s law suggests that sub-leaders are ideologically more extreme than top-leaders while non-leaders are more moderate than top-leaders (ibid 135–136.) The non-leaders refer to occasional party supporters but as we cannot detect the party preference of the VAA-users, it is not possible to analyze how the supporters of individual parties place themselves along political dimensions.

May suggested that top-leaders – e.g. members of government and MP’s – are more moderate than sub-leaders – e.g. regional and local party office-holders and other constituency activists – because they are more constrained by the electorate and public opinion. Securing re-election requires moderate views that please a large number of voters. Sub-leaders on the other hand will be more concerned with ideological purity than electoral popularity. Ideological purity can be seen to handle especially the issues that belong to the ideological core of the part.

The ideological core can be approached with the term issue ownership, which refers to the tendency where parties want to claim ownership on issues that are favourable for them because of their political or ideological substance. It as a matter of whether the electorate
regards a certain party as trustworthy of taking care of certain issues (Budge & Farlie 1983; Petrocik et. al. 2003.)

We treat incumbent MPs in this study as top leaders. Non-incumbent candidates on the other hand are often sub-leaders i.e. regional and local party office-holders and other constituency activists although some of them have their merits elsewhere – they can be celebrity. Deriving from the expectations of May’s law, we set a hypothesis on how the candidates should differ from each other ideologically when incumbency is taken into account:

**H1**: Incumbent candidates have more moderate opinions than non-incumbent candidates

Case studies have found contradictory evidence regarding the hypothesis. Many studies have concluded that the elite is actually more extreme than the sub-leaders (e.g. Iversen 1994; Herrera & Taylor 1994, Norris 1995; Narud 1999). The political circumstances that vary from party system to another and from election to another affect the pattern (see Kitschelt 1989). It may be rewarding for a candidate to take extreme positions if the potential voters demand distinct issue positions. Furthermore, in parties which have extreme ideology or extreme electoral strategies, such as radical right or radical right parties, it is most likely rewarding to take extreme positions regardless of the status inside the party.

**Directional theory of issue voting - elected vs. non-elected candidates**

Directional models have suggested that presenting ideologically distinct opinions on issues is a rewarding strategy. Most famously, Rabinowitz and MacDonald (1989) suggested in their directional theory of issue voting that voters want to choose their sides on issues. They want to set different political alternatives against each other and vote for a candidate, who is on the same side as they are in salient issues, not necessarily the candidate who is closest to them. To assure that an issue where the voter has a distinct opinion is pushed further, the voter may want to vote candidate who has even more extreme opinions on the issue at hand. Hence, the directional theory of voting rejects the benefits of moderate positions in the middle of issue dimensions.

Valen and Narud (2003) have supplemented the theory with the notion that directional theory applies in those issues that are most relevant for each party and its ideology which accentuates
the importance of ideological core of the parties, just as in May’s law. It can be hence
assumed that being elected is into some extent reliant on enough distinct positions on key
issues. We set now a second hypothesis that concerns the relationship between opinions on
political issues and the ability to get elected. This hypothesis should hold especially true in the
questions that belong to the ideological core of the party.

H2: Elected candidates have more extreme opinions than non-elected candidates

Here we should note that H1 and H2 are competing: it is unlikely that they can both be
verified. This is due to that incumbents renew their seat in the parliament more often than not:
incumbents and chosen candidates consist largely but of course not entirely of the same
politicians. Thus it is not in most cases possible that incumbents are moderate and elected are
extreme in their opinions. Furthermore, as the category of incumbent, non-chosen candidates
tends to be small or non-existent in small parties, it is not possible to make reliable
conclusions if incumbency and electoral success would be combined as variables.

**Finding the ideological core of the parties**

Both elite theories and directional theories emphasized the significance of being loyal to the
core of party ideology. Elite theories suggest that sub-leaders accentuate the loyalty and
directional theories suggest that the loyalty is crucial in getting elected. One electoral strategy
for the parties has indeed been to represent distinct alternatives in those policy fields that
contribute to the identity and the ideology of the party (Budge and Farlie 1983).

In order to test the hypotheses from the scope of core issues we have detect the relevant
dimensions that they constitute. Dimensions, such as socioeconomic left-right-dimension,
conceptualize and illuminate the fairly stable features of political competition and conflict.
(see e.g. Oscarsson 1998; Thomassen 2005; van der Eijk et. al. 2005.)

The Finnish party system is ideologically multi-dimensional. The following dimensions have
been regarded as most relevant in the 21st century: 1. socioeconomic left vs. right 2.
centralization-decentralization of government 3. The interests of the Swedish- vs. Finnish-
speaking 4. Liberal vs. conservative moral and cultural values 5. Environmental protection vs.

When testing the hypotheses H1 and H2 we expect that they hold true especially in issues which represent the ideological core of their party. Based on previous literature (ibid.) we can state that the socioeconomic left–right-dimension is most important to leftist parties, Left Alliance (VAS) and Social Democrats (SDP) and to the main conservative party (KOK). The centralization–decentralization -dimension is especially important to the agrarian-based Centre Party (KESK).

The dimension between the interests of linguistic minority (Swedish-speaking) and majority (Finnish-speaking) is most important to Swedish People’s Party (SFP). Regarding moral-cultural values, the True Finns (PS) and Christian Democrats (KD) are the most conservative, whereas the Green League (VIHR) is the most liberal. The conflict between environmental protection and economic industrial growth, on the other hand, constitutes another core dimension for the Greens. Lastly, the dimensions between European integration and national sovereignty and people and elite are core dimensions for the True Finns: the emphasis on these has only accentuated with the Euro crisis (see Arter 2011).

**The electoral context and the VAA-data**

The 2011 Finnish parliamentary election was marked by a record-high net volatility between parties (15.9 %), practically all due to the electoral victory of the nationalist-populist True Finns Party. It became the third largest party in the parliament with 39 seats while it had only 5 seats prior to the election. In addition, the composition of the parliament changed substantially. Of the 200 MP’s only 116 renewed their place: 38 incumbents did not run in the 2011 elections, whereas 46 incumbents were not re-elected. Hence, 84 new MP’s were chosen to the parliament in the 2011 election. (Borg 2012.) This is why the 2011 election offers a good case to test May’s law and directional theory as many candidates were not re-elected and many candidates were newly elected.

The VAA-data used in this paper cover answers from practically all candidates in the 2011 elections. Our data is provided by a commercial TV-channel MTV3, whose VAA has become
one of the most popular in Finland – it gathered responses by over 300 000 users. The VAA was first accessed by the candidates themselves and they answered 40 policy statements (see Appendix 1). Then the same online questionnaire was opened to the general public. All of the statements had a scale from 0 to 100. Low value values indicated not agreeing and high values agreeing with the statement. The respondents could give any point of the scale and they were not obliged to answer every question. The VAA showed which candidates’ answers match best those of the VAA-user.

Table 1 shows the amount of candidates in the VAA-data per party. It differentiates incumbency and electoral success in the election. The candidates of fringe parties outside the parliament are excluded from the following analyses as none of them was successful in getting elected. Of the 162 incumbents 94 per cent provided their answers to the MTV3-VAA. The data also cover also the answers of nearly every new MP and 95 per cent of the non-elected, non-incumbent candidates of the parliamentary parties.

Table 1: The amount of candidates of the parliamentary parties in the 2011 Finnish parliamentary election in the VAA-data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>KOK</th>
<th>SDP</th>
<th>PS</th>
<th>KESK</th>
<th>VAS</th>
<th>VIHR</th>
<th>SFP</th>
<th>KD</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Re-elected</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not re-elected</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newly elected</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-elected</td>
<td></td>
<td>171</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>1358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altogether</td>
<td></td>
<td>228</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>1593</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We sorted the questions in the data thematically in order to constitute solid political dimensions. This means that the statements belonging to the same dimension must correlate with each other and measure the same phenomenon. Cronbach’s alpha is a good measure for this as it estimates the validity of the constituted index. A high alpha confirms that the items are measuring the same thing and a low alpha suggests a strong possibility of multidimensionality.

The questions that constitute the dimensions are presented in Table 2. Four of the dimensions are sum variables, whereas two dimensions only consist of one question due to the VAA questions. The alpha-values vary between 0.62 and 0.79, which can be considered as a satisfactory level.

The dimensions of the VAA-data correspond well to the previously identified political dimensions in the Finish party system, though some modifications had to be made. First, the scope in the conflict between Finnish- and Swedish-speaking is limited to the position of Swedish language in the schooling system: whether it should be replaced with Russian in eastern parts of the country. Secondly, the conflict between further European integration and national sovereignty handles merely the management of Euro crisis.

Thirdly, the VAA-questions indicate that the opposite pole of environmental protection could as well be freedom from environmental norms. When efforts have been made to tackle climate change and protect the nature more intensively it has led to a larger number of norms, which has been conceived as intervening everyday life of ordinary people (see Ruostetsaari 2011, 125). Lastly, the tensions in the dimension between elite and people are thematically present at many questions that belong to other dimensions in Table 2:

Table 2: A Comparison of Voters’ and candidates’ opinions in the VAA-data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political dimension</th>
<th>VAA-users</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>KOK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic right (Cronbach's α=0.78)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The progressivity of income</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital tax should be increased closer to the level of income tax*</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is better for the economy to increase taxes than to cut welfare benefits*</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is necessary to raise the retirement age from the present 63 years of age</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower wage levels should be introduced especially in the service sector in order to safeguard employment</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Decentralization (α=0.62) 65 69 57 63 78 78 78 61 63 70

All regions should be kept vital 68 77 67 75 82 85 83 71 70 78

The questions marked with * have been recoded for the sum variables/dimensions so that the questions point to the same direction in the dimension.
with means of regional policies
Finland should concentrate on developing the metropolitan area to keep up its economic competitiveness*
Municipality mergers should be fostered with force if needed*

Against mandatory Swedish teaching
Instead of mandatory Swedish, an option should be given to study Russian at school in certain regions, e.g. in eastern parts of Finland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservative moral/cultural values (α=0.79)</th>
<th>51</th>
<th>46</th>
<th>46</th>
<th>39</th>
<th>72</th>
<th>51</th>
<th>29</th>
<th>21</th>
<th>26</th>
<th>71</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gay and lesbian couples should have a right to same sex marriages*</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The weakening of moral and traditional values in Finland worries me</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians should be primarily favoured in immigration policies</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland needs more immigrants*</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less environmental norms(α=0.71)</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>56</th>
<th>59</th>
<th>53</th>
<th>86</th>
<th>55</th>
<th>53</th>
<th>26</th>
<th>48</th>
<th>66</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finland is too eager in implementing the environmental and climate norms of EU</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The decree on sewages in sparsely populated areas is too strict a norm</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic solidarity in the EU</th>
<th>38</th>
<th>39</th>
<th>39</th>
<th>33</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>35</th>
<th>28</th>
<th>49</th>
<th>56</th>
<th>22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The member countries of the EU should always help a member country that has faced financial difficulties*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(N) 312 853 1593 228 234 225 223 215 219 69 180

The table presents how VAA-users and candidates of the parliamentary parties responded to the questions. In comparison to the candidates the electorate demanded more determined the abolishment of Swedish as mandatory school subject, less environmental norms, less solidarity towards other EU-countries and more conservatism in lifestyle issues and immigration. These tendencies point to a general populist direction where national interests and interests of ordinary people are put ahead of minority and supranational interests (see Paloheimo 2012). On the other hand there two dimensions where the citizens are more ready than the candidates for reforms that would make the life conditions of people more unsecure. The electorate backs stronger major reforms in social and economic policies and in community structure.
It should be noted that the differences in opinions between VAA-users and candidates are not dramatic with the exception of immigrant policy. At large, they match fairly well those of the candidates. In order to separate more between the voters, we take also into account their gender and age, which they provided in the VAA. Table 3 illuminates that the traditional dimensions concerning socioeconomic questions, decentralized society and Swedish language do not separate much between voters although men are bit more for socioeconomic right and centralization and against Swedish language.

Table 3: A Comparison of men’s and women’s opinions in different age groups in the VAA-data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political dimension</th>
<th>Man</th>
<th>21-25</th>
<th>26-30</th>
<th>31-40</th>
<th>41-50</th>
<th>51-</th>
<th>Woman</th>
<th>21-25</th>
<th>26-30</th>
<th>31-40</th>
<th>41-50</th>
<th>51-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic right</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decentralization</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against mandatory Swedish teaching</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative moral and cultural values</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less environmental norms</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic solidarity in the EU</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The differences are much more pronounced in issues that belong thematically to “New Politics”. In contrast to the “Old Politics” that lays an emphasis on social structure and ground-breaking conflicts, especially the economic ones, the term “New Politics” pictures postmodern politics. Environmental protection, moral and sexual liberalism and multiculturalism cannot be easily situated to the framework of Old Politics (Dalton 2008, 161). As can be expected, old men are most strongly against New Politics and for moral-cultural conservatism and environmental norms whereas especially young women show the opposite pattern. Men between 16 and 20 years of age are almost equally conservative as women between 41 and 50 years of age. The environmental dimension is even more separating than the moral-cultural dimension.
The EU-dimension does not have such a strong connection to both gender and age. Age seems to explain economic solidarity towards other EU-countries better than gender: the young have more understanding for helping countries that have faced financial difficulties. It may be that also this question reflects postmodernism: the young people value other things than personal economic security or national interests (see Inglehart 2007, 224-226.) Up next we will discover, whether there are also substantial differences inside the parties at the candidate level and test the set hypotheses.

Does incumbency lead to moderation?

May (1973) suggests that top-leaders are more moderate than sub-leaders because they are more constrained by the electorate and public opinion. Securing re-election requires moderate views that please an enough large number of voters. Following May’s law, the incumbent candidates should be more moderate than non-incumbent candidates in their opinions on political issues, especially in the ones that belong to the ideological core of each party.

H1 is tested with the means of independent samples T-test, which compares the means on the issue dimensions between incumbent and non-incumbent candidates. The results are presented in Table 4 in which the core issue dimensions of each party are marked with bold font.

Table 4. The positions of incumbent and non-incumbent candidates on political dimensions in the 2011 Finnish parliamentary election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Incumbency</th>
<th>KOK</th>
<th>SDP</th>
<th>PS</th>
<th>KESK</th>
<th>VAS</th>
<th>VIHR</th>
<th>SFP</th>
<th>KD</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Socioeconomic right</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5**</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11**</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Decentralization</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>71*</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>62*</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Against mandatory Swedish-teaching</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>49*</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td>83</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>69*</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Conservative moral and cultural values 0.05</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>52**</td>
<td>46*</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>59***</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>45**</td>
<td>38*</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>50***</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Less environmental Norms</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>44*</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7***</td>
<td>32*</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>54*</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>27***</td>
<td>51*</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Against economic solidarity in the EU</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>76**</td>
<td>96*</td>
<td>77***</td>
<td>91***</td>
<td>70*</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>91*</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66**</td>
<td>88*</td>
<td>62***</td>
<td>71***</td>
<td>50*</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>77*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The cases that verified H1 are marked with dark background.
Table 4 shows that the incumbents are, contrary to our expectations, more extreme than the non-incumbents in 12 cases. Only three cases confirmed the expectations. The SDP-incumbents had more moderate moral and cultural values than the non-incumbents of the party. The Green non-incumbents were more extreme in their pro-EU-solidarity views than the incumbents and finally the SFP-non-incumbents were more extreme in views on centralization. But none of these dimensions are really essential for SDP, Greens and SFP – they are certainly not even close to being their core dimensions (see Paloheimo 2006, 2008; Grönlund & Westinen 2012). The results give very limited support for the first hypothesis.

The evidence against the hypothesis is more convincing. There are three statistically significant cases where the incumbents are less moderate in relation to the core dimension of their party. The incumbents of Left Alliance (VAS) were more leftist than the non-incumbents of the party. The incumbent VIHR-candidates have more extreme pro-environment views than their counterparts and the PS-incumbents are even more strongly against EU-solidarity than non-incumbents. Furthermore, the incumbents of Centre Party were significantly more conservative and against further economic integration inside EU than the non-MP’s. National sovereignty and conservative moral values have been at the heart of the Centre Party (see Paloheimo 2006).

In more detail, the socioeconomic left-right-dimension did not bring about differences between incumbents in non-incumbents inside KOK and SDP whose core dimension it is. The MP’s and non-MP’s of the Centre Party were equally strongly for decentralization, which constitutes the ideological core of the party. The candidates of the Swedish People’s Party are equally unanimously against the weakening of Swedish language. When taking into account the core dimensions, May’s law comes nearest of finding support in the case of Christian Democrats (KD). The KD-incumbents have more moderate moral and cultural values than non-incumbents but the difference is not statistically significant.

**Are the elected candidates more extreme?**

Directional models presume that ideologically distinct opinions are rewarded in elections. The candidates with the most distinct and extreme opinions on issues that are most relevant for each party and its ideology are appealing to voters (Valen & Narud 2003). In directional
theory incumbency and being a part of political elite is not most essential: it handles about the ability to get elected irrespective of whether you are incumbent or not.

In Table 1 we could see that the incumbents and elected candidates were essentially the same persons only in the case of SFP. All SFP-incumbents who ran in the elections secured their place and there was just one newly elected SFP-candidate. For the other parties, we should expect different kinds of results than in the previous section on May’s law and incumbency. The procedure is the same: the means on the issue dimensions between elected and non-elected candidates are compared.

When elected and non-elected candidates are compared in Table 5, the amount of statistically significant differences between the groups is smaller than in the case of incumbents and non-incumbents. There are no significant differences between elected and non-elected PS-, VAS-, SFP- and KD-candidates.

**Table 5. The positions of elected and non-elected candidates on political dimensions in the 2011 Finnish parliamentary election**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>KOK</th>
<th>SDP</th>
<th>PS</th>
<th>KESK</th>
<th>VAS</th>
<th>VIHR</th>
<th>SFP</th>
<th>KD</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Socioeconomic right</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Decentralization</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Against mandatory Swedish-teaching</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Conservative moral and cultural values</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Less environmental Norms</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Against economic solidarity in the EU</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the evidence from the other four parties is supportive rather than contrary to H2. The elected candidates have more extreme issue opinions in seven cases whereas there were only three cases where the non-elected were more extreme. The non-elected KOK- and

---

5 The cases that verified H2 are marked with dark background.
VIHR-candidates had a bit more extreme pro-EU opinions than their elected correspondents and the non-elected KOK-candidates were stronger against environmental norms but there were not any differences in the core dimensions.

Elected SDP were more extreme than the non-elected in three and KESK-candidates in four dimensions. Elected KESK-candidates are the only ones whose opinions are more extreme in the core dimension of the party: they are even more strongly for decentralization than non-elected KESK-candidates. It seems that ideological purity paid off for many elected Centre Party candidates. The directional theory seems to be party-bound as it did not get wide supportive evidence from the data.

As hypotheses H1 and H2 could not be confirmed, we have to ask why the evidence was against them. When we look at Tables 4 and 5, we notice that the candidates were extremely loyal to their core ideology in the issue dimensions that their parties “own”. Issue ownership thinking and ideological loyalty seem to be so incorporated into the thinking of candidates that there are no great differences in the opinions of candidates irrespective of incumbency or getting elected to the parliament in 2011. When looking at the dispersion inside the parties on each policy statement we find that the standard deviation tends to be smallest on questions that belong to the ideological core dimension of the party. Even through restricted by consensus democracy, candidates can afford to present strongly ideological opinions.

Even when considering other dimensions than the core dimensions of each party, there was not great difference in opinions on political issues between the elected and non-elected. Personal qualities and abilities play a big role for the voters as stated in national election studies in Finland (Bengtsson & Grönlund 2005; Holli & Wass 2009). The attitudinal differences were larger between the incumbents and non-incumbents. For party mapping research this is especially interesting.

**Placing parties and voters on ideological space**

The tracking of party positions along political dimensions can be done in a variety of ways. First, the political programs of the parties can be analyzed by coding their ideological substance (see e.g. Budge, 2000; Budge et. al. 2001; Klingemann et. al. 2006). Although this
manifesto-based method offers the most systematic data, it has also several problems. Comparatively the biggest problem is that the parties do not entail all the relevant policy dimensions in their programs and the coding categories do not include all the relevant and newest issues (see Benoit & Laver 2007.)

Secondly, the party positions can be derived from the evaluations of the voters in surveys. Most common is that the respondents are asked to place the parties on a left-right-dimension. But the respondents are seldom asked to place the parties in other dimensions. (see Steenbergen & Marks 2007.)

Third option is to use expert surveys to locate parties on concrete issues. The evaluations are done by country experts, who are well informed by the dimensions of party competition in their respective countries. (Hooghe et. al. 2010, 692–697). Nevertheless, the expert surveys have their pitfalls such as the variance in the specialized knowledge among researchers to place the parties, especially the small and non-extreme ones in less salient issues. (ibid; Marks et. al. 2007; Steenbergen & Marks 2007).

The VAA’s, which are assessed by the candidates themselves, offer a plausible alternative. When the answers of candidates of the same party are aggregated, we can capture the party positions in several issue dimensions. The final analysis of the paper places parties in ideological space using two party indicators. The first is party elite position (incumbents) and the other is party sub-elite position (non-incumbents). Although the category of non-incumbents entails former MP’s or other persons with a high rank within parties, the overwhelming majority of non-incumbent are regional and local party actives with no parliamentary experience.

First, the parties are placed on dimensions between socioeconomic left and right and liberal and conservative moral/cultural values. These dimensions have been connected to each other in several studies on party mapping although the value dimension is handled more broadly as conflict between green/authoritarian/libertarian and traditionalist/authoritarian/nationalist values (GAL-TAN-dimension).

Figure 1 confirms the traditional order of Finnish parties in the socioeconomic left-right-dimension. The order of the parties is exactly the same as in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey in
2010 (CHES 2010) where ten Finnish party experts placed parties on political dimensions. It also shows that the left-wing and left-leaning parties become more left-wing when the party position is derived from the party elite. But the same logic does not apply to centrist or right-wing parties. The incumbents of KOK, SFP, KESK and KD are not more bourgeois.

We can also notice that even the most right-wing party, KOK, is in the middle of the left-right-scale. It shows that there is not a single parliamentary party in Finland that is strongly in favour of reforms that would shatter the principles of the Nordic welfare state. Questions on fostering market economy and entrepreneurship would have presumably brought about positions more towards the right.

The party positions along the moral-cultural dimension are also exactly the same as in CHES 2010 -data irrespective of whether the party positions are derived from top-leaders or sub-leaders. The populist True Finns Party is even more conservative than Christian Democrats (KD). The party elites of KD and KESK are actually quite close to each other in this dimension but when the sub-leaders are taken into account KD comes out as far more conservative.
Secondly, we can compare party positions in two dimensions that are intertwined to each other in a way that has not been noticed largely in previous research. For example Hooghe and Marks (2009) and Kriesi et. al. (2008) have noticed that electorates are challenged by an impact of supranational institutions, integration of markets and new waves of immigration. The losers of globalization and weakened national sovereignty tend to be against multiculturalism that the immigrants bring with them. Thus the national sovereignty-EU-dimension and the cultural dimension overlap.

But the EU-dimension can also be intertwined with the environmental protection dimension. One VAA-question in our data handled the restrictions that norms put on citizen’s everyday life in the sparsely populate areas and the other whether Finland is too eager on supplementing the environmental and climate norms of EU. A few populist parties have politicized environmental fuzz and True Finns is one of them: it states that ordinary people and the environment have to be protected from environmentalists. (see Ruostetsaari 2011, 125).

The populists have pointed out that during the Euro crisis, just as with the environmental protection, the ordinary people are being made to pay for the direction that the political elite has chosen. During Euro crisis, the top-down-mechanism has been loan guarantees to economically mismanaged countries. (see Raunio 2011.) Thus, we can compare the party positions in the moral-cultural dimension and EU-dimension.

As these dimensions entail populist tendencies it is not surprising stand the True Finns stands out in Figure 2 as the most critical party both towards EU and environmental protection (cf. CHES 2010). In the EU-dimension, the most significant difference in the order of parties in comparison to the expert evaluations is that the Swedish People’s Party is the most pro-EU party instead of the National Coalition Party. Other than that, the positions on economic solidarity reflect the general position on European integration.
The governmental positions have also affected as the representatives of oppositional parties demand a stop in helping other EU-countries. But also the incumbents of governmental parties (KESK, KOK, VIHR and SFP) were less enthusiastic about EU-solidarity than their non-incumbents counterparts. This may signal a starting point of a change where party elites do not want to irritate the voters with pro-EU opinions. Curiously enough, the VAA-users were not as strongly against EU-solidarity as the bulk of incumbents: the party elites may have overreacted to the Euro crisis.

The environmental dimension brings on more differences between the parties than any other dimension. The positions of Greens and True Finns are extremely apart from each other. The order of the parties is a bit different in comparison to expert evaluations. The candidates of Left Alliance locate more into the middle of the party sphere, while experts place it the second most pro-environment party. Moreover, the candidates of Christian Democrats are second most against environmental norms after the True Finns, while experts place the party into the
middle of the dimension. These differences may partly be due to the fact that the expert survey measured party positions in a dimension where the opposite pole of environmental protection was economic growth (CHES 2010).

Thirdly, we compare two dimensions that characterize the Finnish party system in a specific way. The conflict between rural/decentralizing and urban/centralizing tendencies has not settled down as it has in many other West European countries (see Moisio 2012). The conflict concerning a linguistic minority is special in the sense that Swedish-speaking population has been conceived as influential and privileged, not a suppressed, minority (Bengtsson 2011). Another thing that combines the dimensions specifically in our data is the view of local/regional context. The VAA-question on the position of Swedish language in school system focused on the possibility to replace Swedish with Russian in eastern parts of Finland. Many municipalities in Eastern Finland are reeling with economic problems and enhancing skills in Russian could serve as an economic boost for these areas.

Figure 3: Party positions in the dimensions between centralization and decentralization and mandatory Swedish and non-mandatory Swedish
Figure 3 shows that these dimensions go into some extent hand in hand with each other with the exception of Swedish People’s Party. Especially the candidates of Centre Party, which has strong support in Eastern Finland (see Grönlund & Westinen 2012, 165) may see the Swedish question more as regional politics than as a question of protecting the position of Swedish-speaking minority in Finland.

There is a quite broad support for decentralizing politics inside every party, although KOK, VIHR and SDP show least support to decentralization, which has been evaluated also by experts (CHES 2010). The Centre Party does not actually stand out from other parties although it has programmatically spoken overwhelmingly most of all parties about decentralized society (Paloheimo 2006). In fact, the sub-leaders of True Finns were more for decentralization than the sub-leaders of the Centre Party (cf. CHES 2010). Moreover, the party-elite position of Left Alliance is far more to the decentralizing side than party experts evaluate the party to be.

The dimension concerning the position of the Swedish language shows how the Finnish-speaking parties and the voters would be ready to weaken the position of Swedish in society. Nevertheless, the party elite is less eager to do so in many parties than the sub-elite. Swedish People’s Party is defending solely the status of Swedish. The Finnish-speaking parties have been quite quiet on the status of Swedish with the exception of True Finns, which is clearly against Swedish (see Grönlund & Westinen 2012, 169). The party positions have not for this reason been previously documented in this dimension in other studies, which shows the usefulness of VAA as a tool of party mapping.

Lastly, we take a look at how the VAA-users can be placed on the same political dimensions as the candidates. First, we can notice that the voter positions in the socioeconomic dimension and moral-cultural dimensions are not correlated when gender and age are taken into account in Figure 4. When compared to Figure 1, we can state that True Finns should be targeting older men and Coalition Party young men in these dimensions. Green League on the other hand have the most obvious target in young women how situate a bit to the left from the average and have the most liberal moral-cultural opinions.
When the VAA-users are placed on the environment- and EU-dimensions in Figure 5, we notice a pattern that is more striking than among candidates. Anti-solidarity for other member countries in the EU is strongly correlated with being against environmental norms: the pattern is almost linear. When True Finns appeal to anti-environmentalism and EU-scepticism, they are appealing really strongly to older men but also to older women. The Greens have good reasons to appeal to young women also in these dimensions: they are the most environmentalist and somewhat solidary for the economic integration in the EU.

Third, the positions of the VAA-users in the dimension concerning language politics and decentralization show in Figure 6 an opposite pattern than among candidates in Figure 3. Non-mandatory Swedish in school is associated with more centralizing attitudes when the voter positions are based on gender and age. The gender gap here is obvious and it is interesting that young male voters do not have an alternative in the party sphere in Figure 3 that would correspond to their anti-Swedish language position combined with only mild support for decentralization.
Figure 5: Voter positions in the dimensions between economic solidarity and non-solidarity in the EU and environmental protection and freedom from environmental norms.

Figure 6: Voter positions in the dimensions between centralization and decentralization and mandatory Swedish and non-mandatory Swedish.
Conclusions

This paper had a threefold task. It focused on whether the candidates’ opinions on political issues vary according to the status and electoral success of the candidates. May’s law of curvilinear disparity and directional theory were tested with Voting Advice Application-data where the candidates provided themselves their answers. Second, it set the parties on ideological space based on the candidates’ opinions on issues rather than deriving party positions from party programs or expert evaluations. Third, it compared the opinions of VAA-users and candidates and set VAA-user groups on ideological space.

Against the logics of May’s law, the incumbent candidates (top-leaders) did not have more moderate opinions on political issues than the non-incumbents (sub-leaders). The data showed that the law could be the other way around: top-leaders are more extreme. The theorization for the found pattern could be as follows.

In consensus democracies the incumbents are forced to make compromises that blur their political profile. It is hard for the voters to know what the parties and MP’s actually represent as the consensual spirit conceals the ideological differences and it may seem that the MP’s have given up on their loyalty to the party ideology and on their political principles.

Before the elections the incumbents may feel a need to offer distinct opinions, not both–and–answers to the electorate. In majoritarian systems the political alternatives that the MP’s represent is better known, but in proportional systems with ideologically diverse government coalitions they are far less distinct. This paper offers of course very limited evidence of the pattern that is contrary to May’s law but further VAA-studies especially on consociational democracies could verify whether political culture and the nature of party competition could contribute to this pattern.

The directional theory, which suggests that having radical and distinct opinions is a rewarding strategy for candidates, received some support. The evidence was limited to two parties, Social Democrats and Centre Party, which indicates that the directional theory may be more party-bound. There is not however a chance to test with VAA-data whether the voter chooses the candidate who is ideologically at the right direction.
The paper also showed that VAA’s in which candidates fill in their own answers on policy statements can function as a plausible way of mapping the parties in ideological space. One party position was derived from the incumbent candidates’ positions in political dimensions and the other from the non-incumbent candidates’ positions. The first reflects the position of the party elite and the other the position of the party sub-elite.

When parties are placed on ideological space based on the content of party programs or on expert surveys, it is seldom reflected into what extent the positions are based on the party elite or party activists. In Finland, the ones holding regional or local party positions constitute a large proportion of the non-incumbent candidates. They can also affect the official line of the party, expressed in the party programs, as the Finnish parties have many bottom up mechanisms in their decision-making (Sundberg 2008.) Thus program-based party positions should reflect more the position of sub-leaders than the leaders. Expert survey -based party mapping could be assumed to be based more on the evaluations on where the party leaders and MP’s stand ideologically: the positioning of sub-leaders is more difficult to access.

The candidate-based party mapping in this paper showed that the order of the parties in different dimensions is essentially the same irrespective of whether the party positions are based on top-leaders or sub-leaders of the party. But the distances between the parties changed a lot according to which one of these the party position was based on. The results also showed that there was a good congruency between candidate-based party positions and expert evaluations of party positions. Nevertheless, expert surveys may miss some dynamics that are ongoing in the party sphere and this study provided with new information on the ideological position of the parties.

Lastly, in comparison to the candidates the VAA-users expressed willingness to put national interests and interests of ordinary people are put ahead of minority and supranational interests. On the other hand, the VAA-users were more ready for major structural reforms in society than the candidates, which shows that the politicians and those aiming to be politicians may lack the courage to change the basic pillars of Finnish society.

The analyses of VAA-users showed that there are major gender- and age-based differences in the electorate especially in dimensions concerning moral-cultural values, environmental norms and the EU. Young women and old men had the opposite values in these dimensions. It
became obvious that especially the candidates of Green League have similar opinions with young women while the candidates of True Finns have a lot in common with old men in terms of values. When having access to individual responses of VAA-users, future research could entail more encompassing comparisons between the VAA-users and candidates and also show more precisely the possible opinion gaps between political elite and people.
References:

Literature


Data


Appendix 1:

The policy statements in the MTV3-VAA:
1. Finland needs more immigrants
2. Christians should be primarily favoured in immigration policies instead of other religious groups
3. Beggning should be forbidden
4. Gay and lesbian couples should have a right to same sex marriages
5. The weakening of moral and traditional values in Finland worries me
6. There should be a law that would oblige MP’s to inform about their commitments
7. EU should be entitled to collect taxes straight from the citizens in its member states
8. The agricultural budget of EU should be reduced even though it would reduce the subsidies of the Finnish farmers
9. The member countries of EU should always help a member country that has faced financial difficulties
10. The progressivity of income tax should be reduced
11. Capital tax should be raised closer to the level of income tax
12. In order to safeguard welfare society it would be better for Finland to take more debt than to raise taxes
13. Income tax should not be increased
14. It is better for the economy to increase taxes than to cut welfare benefits
15. Child benefits should be paid to every family irrespective of the family’s income level
16. Basic welfare benefits should be prioritized ahead of earnings-related benefits
17. The deductibility of mortgage loans should be maintained as it is
18. The indebtedness of the state should be stopped even though it would lead to cutting welfare benefits
19. It is necessary to raise the retirement age from the present 63 years of age.
20. Lower wage levels should be introduced especially in the service sector in order to safeguard employment
21. Finland should join NATO
22. The power of the President should not be reduced
23. Finland should reduce foreign aid
24. Finland should shift to a professional army
25. Finland should stay in Afghanistan as long as the international community needs Finland there
26. I choose an organic alternative in grocery store even though it would cost more than other products
27. Agricultural discharges should be reduced more effectively in order to enhance the condition of the Baltic Sea and inland water
28. The decree on sewages in sparsely populated areas is too strict a norm
29. Finland is too eager in implementing the environmental and climate norms of EU
30. Finland needs more nuclear power
31. All regions should be kept vital with means of regional policies
32. Municipality mergers should be fostered with force if needed
33. Finland should concentrate on developing the metropolitan area to keep up its economic competitiveness
34. Instead of mandatory Swedish, an optional possibility should be given to study Russian in school in certain regions, such as in Eastern Finland
35. Finland cannot afford to have universities in every part of the country
36. Social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.) is nowadays a necessary tool for politicians to keep in contact with their voters and to sense the changes in political environment
37. Important societal questions should be decided more often by holding referenda
38. A limit should be set on the maximum allowed campaigning costs for candidates
39. The party chairman should also unambiguously be the prime minister candidate of the party
40. The development of railways should be set as the primary goal in traffic politics with a funding program for several election periods