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**Citation for published version:**

Hepburn, E & Detterbeck, K 2013, Federalism, Regionalism and the Dynamics of Party Politics. in J Loughlin, J Kincaid & W Swenden (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Regionalism and Federalism*. Routledge Handbooks, London & NY: Routledge, pp. 76-92.

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

Routledge Handbook of Regionalism and Federalism

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# Federalism, Regionalism and the Dynamics of Party Politics

Eve Hepburn and Klaus Detterbeck

## Introduction

Unlike many other scholarly fields covered in this Handbook, political party scholarship has been relatively slow in responding to changed understandings of state structures resulting from federalism and regionalism. Whilst territorial politics has been on the agenda of political science for at least the last 30 years (albeit in the background – see Loughlin in this volume; Keating, 2009), comparative studies of stateless nationalist and regionalist parties began to emerge in the 1990s (De Winter and Türsan, 1998), whilst conceptual analyses of state-wide party adaptation to federal, regionalized and multi-level states have only just surfaced in the last decade. Why is this? Why did party scholars come so late to the territorial politics table?

One explanation is practical: some of the most radical changes to state structures, resulting in the wholesale transferral of powers to substate levels, have only occurred in the last twenty or so years (despite the persistence of territory as a constant factor shaping politics since the birth of the ‘nation-state’ in the late eighteenth century – see Keating, 1998). This is especially true for formerly centralised states such as Spain, the UK and Italy, which have witnessed unprecedented levels of decentralisation from the 1980s onwards. Of course, ‘coming together’ federations such as the USA, Switzerland and Australia or more ‘recently’ formed federal democracies like Germany and India empowered the substate level decades ago. The lack of scholarly attention to territorial politics in these cases may result from a second explanation, which is normative in nature: party scholars, like most political scientists, tend to focus on the nation-state as the only meaningful unit of political science (Jeffery and Wincott, 2011). Indeed, scholarly understandings of parties are overwhelmingly state-centric, whereby parties are largely seen as seeking to control the machinery of the state and to represent the interests of the state citizenry. These understandings fall through, however, when pitched against the reality of most democracies today. Party politics no longer (if they ever did) exclusively take place at the state level; it does so at multiple – intertwining – levels: neighbourhood, local, regional, provincial, state and in some cases (such as the EU member-states), supranational.

It is the multi-levelled nature of the state that has caused so much head-scratching amongst scholars on how to conceptualize the role, structure and functions of parties. Political parties are generally considered to be the main instruments of national integration across states, through their representative functions and coordinated policy-making (Caramani, 2004). However, the challenges of spatial rescaling along federal and regional lines, or ‘territorialization’ to put it another way (see below), have forced state-wide parties to adapt both programmatically and organizationally to the new political realities of multi-level political structures and have challenged their integrative role and capacity.

Spatial rescaling requires that state-wide parties adapt to the creation, or strengthening, of several institutional loci of decision-making at different territorial levels, which may contain diverse electoral systems with distinct structures of party competition (Swenden and Maddens, 2009). However, recent institutional change is not the only territorial factor causing state-wide parties to alter their focus and strategies. Some issues have long caused state-wide parties to differentiate their organization in different parts of the country. The first is the mounting evidence of the fact that sub-state regions can ‘generate and sustain political cultures, serving as “small worlds” for citizens’ (Henderson, 2010). Regions have become containers of political attitudes and behaviour, as well as social and political identities, which diverge from other parts of the state even in the absence of regional political institutions (Elkins and Simeon, 1980;

Moreno, 1999). The second factor is the pressure state-wide parties have faced from the inexorable rise of stateless nationalist and regionalist parties (Hepburn, 2009). Massetti (2009) maintains that the number of SNRPs operating in Western Europe has more than tripled in the last thirty years, from 29 to 93. Furthermore, these parties are gaining in strength and power, regularly entering government at the sub-state, and sometimes the nation-state, level (Elias and Tronconi, 2011). As a result of these three factors – institutional reforms, societal conditions and party competition – state-wide parties must refocus their strategies for different regional contexts and tackle regional issues head-on. This requires a deviation from the ‘state-wide’ logic of party politics as state-wide parties must increasingly cope with an era of ‘de-nationalization’ (Hough and Jeffery, 2006: 7).

Although it has taken some time and effort to convince scholars that territory is not an irrelevance or a ‘residual’ factor in shaping party politics (see Keating, 2009; Jeffery and Wincott, 2011), it appears that issues of federalism and regionalism are increasingly on the radar of mainstream party scholarship, evident in a recent special issue of the journal of *Party Politics* dedicated to Decentralization and State-wide Parties (Hopkin and Van Houten, 2009). Indeed, there has recently been a small surge of academic inquiry into the ‘resurgence of territory’ in party politics. First steps have been made towards analysing the effects of state decentralization on formal party structures and programmes (Carty, 2004; van Biezen and Hopkin, 2006; Hopkin and Bradbury, 2006; Fabre, 2008; Maddens and Swenden, 2009; Detterbeck and Hepburn, 2010), the impact of devolution on electoral politics (Hough and Jeffery 2006), the mechanics of party systems at different levels (Deschouwer, 2003, 2006; Thorlakson, 2006, 2009; Detterbeck, 2012), and the degree of symmetry (or congruence) between coalition governments at different territorial levels (Stefuriuc, 2009). However, we still lack some of the conceptual tools for understanding how parties – both state-wide parties and SNRPs – have responded to the dynamics of multi-level systems. This aim of this chapter is make a modest contribution in addressing this gap, by exploring what we call the ‘territorialization’ of parties and party competition in federal and regionalized systems.

### **Federalism, Regionalism and Parties**

Over the last few decades, states throughout the world have witnessed significant spatial restructuring of powers down to lower levels (Marks et al., 2008). The result of these territorial reforms of states has been the empowerment of the sub-state level, and in some cases the creation of new political regions. This trend is particularly marked in Europe, where all of the large west European states – such as the Germany, France, the UK, Spain, Austria and Italy, and some of its smaller ones, like Belgium and Switzerland – have created new, or strengthened existing, regional tiers of authority.<sup>1</sup> Marks, Hooghe and Schakel (2008) created a ‘regional authority index’ that illustrates the scope and depth of the institutionalization of regions during the period 1950-2006. Of the 42 mainly OECD countries examined, half of them had created regional tiers of authority and only two became marginally more centralized. This astonishing finding confirms that ‘the current trend is away from centralization and the nation-state’ (Jeffery and Wincott 2010: 168). States no longer constitute the ‘main locus of power and decision’ (Loughlin, this volume) if, indeed, they ever did. Sub-state legislatures have carved out their own spaces as sources of power and decision-making, becoming focal points for territorial interest representation (Hough and Jeffery, 2006). As such we can confidently say that sub-state

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<sup>1</sup> This was evident in Italy from 1970 when powers were transferred to 15 ordinary regions (Palermo, 2005); in Spain during the 1980s with the implementation of a regional system of 17 autonomous communities (Moreno, 2001; Colino, 2008); in France with the creation of 22 newly elected regional councils in 1982 (Cole 2006; Loughlin, 2007); Belgium in 1995 when it became a federation (Deschouwer, 2005); the UK from 1998 when new regional legislatures were created in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Mitchell, 2009); and Germany from the late 1990s with the strengthening of Laender powers (Detterbeck and Jeffery, 2009). Cases outside Europe include Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Philippines, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.

regions have become a ‘core feature of west European politics’ (Hough and Jeffery, 2006: 7). This radical transformation of the state poses important questions for the role, aims, focus and structure of political parties.

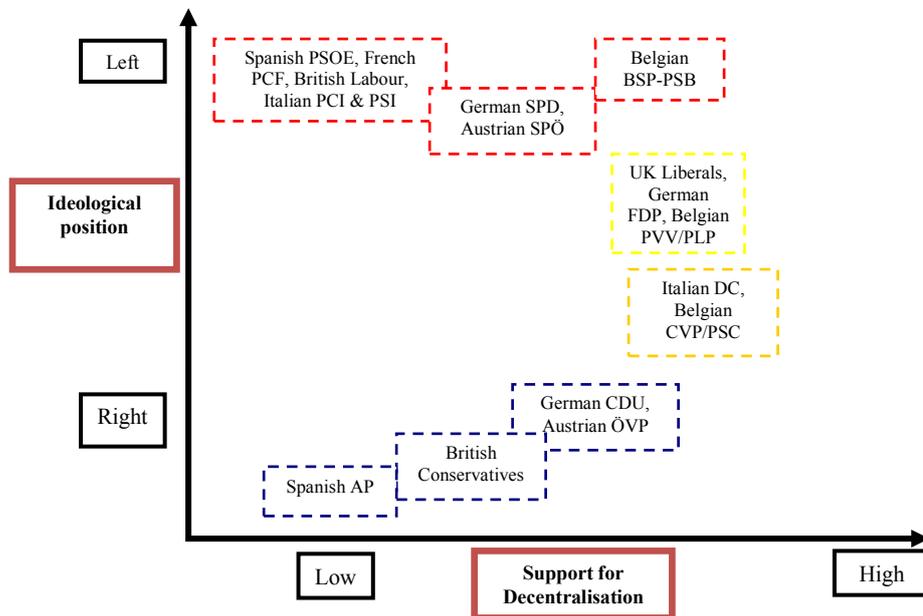
Studies of political parties and party systems, like the rest of social science, have been dominated by a state-centric bias and theories of ‘nationalization’. Scholars like Caramani (2004) and Chhibber and Kollman (2004) have argued that party systems and competition have become more nationalized in much of the industrialized West, with a homogenization of political structures and processes across the state. These studies assume that political parties are single, homogenous organizations with authority and decision-making centralized in the hands of the national executive. However, there is good reason to review and question the classical assumption on the integrative function of political parties in multi-level political systems. Political parties might once have been ‘geared to obtaining control of the apparatus of the central state’ (Loughlin, this volume) but that is no longer the case in federal or regionalized states, whereby many of the functions and powers of states have been devolved downwards. The decentralization of states has put the integrative functions of parties under severe pressure, forcing parties to re-evaluate how best to respond to, and represent, the diverse needs and interests of the electorate. This challenge has become all the more pressing in light of other significant challenges such as the decline of state-wide party membership, the rise of smaller single-issue parties (and in particular, radical-right parties), supranational integration and globalization, amongst other factors. Parties now operate in an increasingly complex and volatile environment with increased competition for votes.

Political parties have, of course, responded to these challenges in different ways – and unpacking these different strategies is a further aim of this chapter. In particular, ‘context varies and so do the internal preconditions for organizing multi-layered parties’ thereby resulting in diverse party solutions to these problems (Detterbeck, 2012). We can, however, make some general preliminary comments. The first is that parties have adopted diverse, changeable and often contradictory stances on territorial issues. Certainly, some of these parties were at the helm of the decentralization reforms, arguing that regional autonomy was a solution to administrative overload at the centre, a democratic gesture recognizing the identities of stateless nations and regions, or a panacea to problems emanating from the challenges of nationalist parties (such as the Belgian Christian Democrat, Liberal and Socialist parties that presided over several rounds of federal reforms). Others criticized regionalization reforms, arguing that they would lead to the eventual break-up of the state or, at the very least, a significant loss of sovereignty (such as the UK Conservatives and Partido Popular in Spain).

However, many parties changed their position in an opportunistic and instrumental fashion, moving repeatedly back and forth on the ‘territorial question’ (Meguid, 2008; Hepburn, 2010; Toubeau, 2011). We have sought to account for this repositioning of parties on the issue of de-centralisation in figures 1 and 2. The most dramatic change over time was evident in the European Left, which moved from a highly centralist position during the post-war period through to the 1960s and 1970s to becoming staunch advocates of decentralizing policies from the 1990s as part of a ‘good governance’ strategy. The most notable parties here were the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), which moved from a Jacobin-oriented perspective of the state to supporting the creation of Spanish autonomous communities (Moreno, 2001); the Left in Italy (represented initially by the Italian Communist and Socialist Parties, then the Democrats of the Left, and currently the Democratic Party) which moved from supporting a centralised, unitarist model of the state to advocating a true ‘regionalisation’ in the 1980s and moves towards federalisation in the 2000s (Hepburn, 2010); the French Communist Party and various elements of the French Socialist Party (e.g. Chevènement, Mouvement des Citoyens) which moved from anti-decentralization in the 1960s and 1970s to pro-déconcentration reforms in France in the 1980s (Loughlin, 2007); and finally the British Labour Party, which was firmly opposed to decentralisation in the 1960s, divided on the first devolution referendum in the

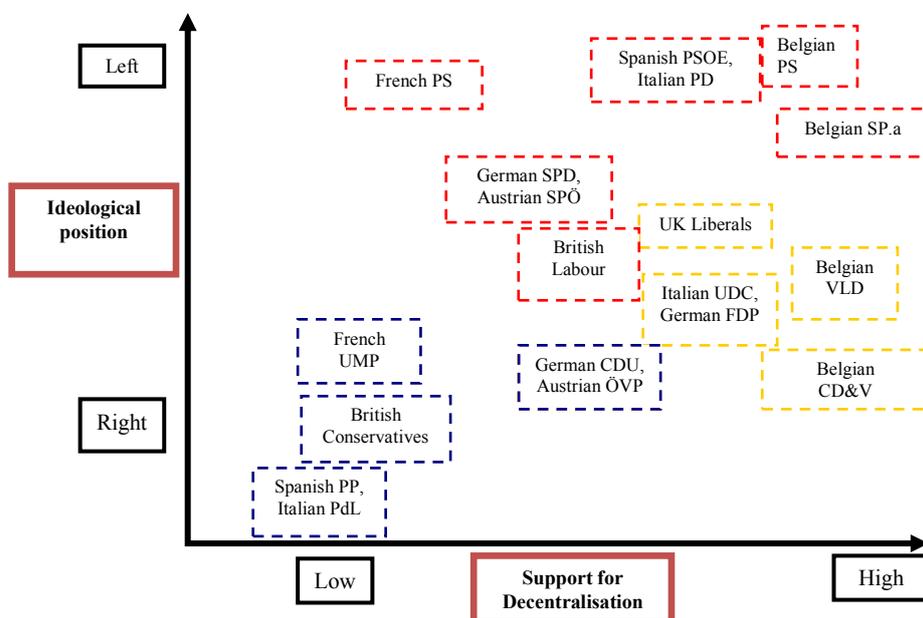
1970s and the primary instigator of devolution following a second referendum in the 1990s (Bradbury, 2006).

Figure 1: Statewide party positions on ideology and decentralisation, 1970s



The Right in Europe, meanwhile, re-positioned itself less radically than the Left, from endorsing degrees of administrative, though not political decentralization (called in French *déconcentration*) – often from a neoliberal standpoint (see Loughlin, this volume), to outright contempt for some political devolutionary measures (especially in the UK, Spain). This position was most evident amongst the British Conservatives, which did support administrative decentralisation in the 1960s (unlike Labour), however it was entirely hostile to political devolution in the 1970s and 1990s (Hepburn, 2010). In contrast, the position of the Right in Spain and Italy has been generally hostile to the political decentralisation of power or recognition of substate identities, and thus the positions of these parties have not changed a great deal between the 1970s and the 2000s, as shown in figures 1 and 2.

Figure 2: Statewide party positions on ideology and decentralisation, 2000s



Of course, some party families have a more principled approach to decentralization, evident in their more-or-less stable support for bringing power ‘closer to the people’ – and the Christian Democrat defence of the principle of subsidiarity is notable here, especially in Italy, Austria and Germany (Swenden and Maddens, 2009). Here, we see little ‘movement’ in figures 1 and 2; the positions of Christian Democrats remain more or less the same. An exception to this is provided by CD&V in Flanders which, given the new institutional and competitive context in Belgium, has radicalized her demands for autonomy since the 1970s. Liberal (Democratic) parties have, in their support for individual rights, tend to be in favour of decentralized federal structures (though backtracking on this aim if the political climate is not amenable – i.e. the UK Liberal Democrats since joining a Conservative-led coalition government in 2010). Finally, we have witnessed only moderate party repositioning on decentralisation in long-standing federal countries such as Germany and Austria, where all parties – be they left or right – generally endorse the current structures of the state (Detterbeck, 2012).

The responses of stateless nationalist and regionalist parties (SNRPs) have also varied – with some delighted at the creation of new regional polities and engaging in (coalition) governments at that level (CiU in Catalonia, Plaid Cymru in Wales, SNP in Scotland); with others radicalizing their demands to include independence, wishing to have nothing to do with the ‘pretend’ regional assemblies (iRS in Sardinia) (see Gomez-Reino et al, 2006; Elias and Tronconi, 2011). Following the implementation of reforms, however, very few (mainstream) parties have sought to overturn decentralization measures.

This does not mean, however, that parties fully comprehend the scope of what has happened, or indeed, how to respond effectively to the challenges of multi-level party systems. Ideology has provided some broad parameters for the strategic and organizational responses of parties. We have found, for instance, that in contemporary European party systems, it is the parties on the Left that tend to be more in favour of decentralization and also more likely to regionalize their own party organizations, while parties on the Right generally seek to maintain tighter centralized control of the party (see figure 2; also see Detterbeck and Hepburn, 2010). However it is important to remember that this used to be the opposite case; with the Left in favour of the unitary Jacobin state, while the Right promoted degrees of (administrative) decentralisation (and there were – and still are – also factions within each party that disagree with the party leadership on the territorial question).

As such, there are, as we shall see below, no hard and fast rules as to how parties respond to the creation of multi-level party systems or the flourishing of territorial movements seeking the radical restructuring, or indeed complete disintegration, of the state. With the rise in prominence of a number of SNRPs from the 1970s onwards, the capacity of state-wide parties for national integration and representative linkages has been (further) compromised. Given the significance of SNRPs’ territorializing influence on politics, it is worth dwelling on these political actors in more detail.

### **The Rise of SNRPs**

Stateless nationalist and regionalist parties have been the subject of a great deal of academic debate in the last two decades, and especially in the last few years. In countries throughout the world, but particularly in Europe, these parties have been responsible for pushing the agenda for radical constitutional change, resulting in decentralization and federalism, and some of them have been able to enter government at the regional, and even state, level (Hepburn and Zaslove, 2009; Elias and Tronconi, 2011). Their core business is sub-state territorial empowerment, whereby empowerment involves seeking to represent and advance the particular interests of the

sub-state territory (Hepburn, 2009). According to Gomez-Reino, De Winter and Lynch (2006: 258), the decentralization of political structures ‘represents a major policy victory of autonomist parties, as transfer of power from the national to regional authorities constitutes the core demand of regionalist parties’. This is especially true given that many of these parties have waited so long to see some of their goals realized.

While a handful of SNRPs emerged at the turn of the twentieth century, these parties made their first big splash in the 1970s (De Winter and Türsan, 1998; Keating, 1998; De Winter et al, 2006). During the heyday of the decolonization struggles, the birth of the civil rights movement and peace movement, worldwide student protests and economic turmoil following the oil crisis of 1973, many SNRPs won the sympathy of regional populations and were elected to Parliament.<sup>2</sup> Stein Rokkan and his colleagues (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Rokkan and Urwin, 1982) developed the most authoritative framework for explaining the emergence of these ‘peripheral movements’. They argued that during the first wave of centralizing state formation, whereby territories were expanded and governed by a single authority, state agencies faced the existence of relatively autonomous peripheral communities. A centre-periphery cleavage was drawn between the dominant national culture and the ethno-linguistic minorities, which mobilized along territorial lines (using whatever territorial, economic or cultural resources were available to them) in resisting centralizing and standardizing policies from the centre (Rokkan and Urwin, 1982). As such, parties and party systems are formed around such cleavages and have the ability to ‘freeze’ them even when the relevance of the cleavage has declined (Lipset and Rokkan 1967: 50). However, at the time, Rokkan and Urwin (1983: 165) were unable to find evidence of ‘unfreezing’ of politics resulting from peripheral movements, which they concluded had ‘not been very successful’. They would probably draw different conclusions if they applied their framework to today’s politics.

Once considered to be ‘throwbacks to the past’ (Hobsbawm, 1990), SNRPs have established themselves as both reputable and influential political players in most West European democracies. Whilst Rokkan and Urwin (1983) identified 29 ‘peripheral parties’, Lane, McKay and Newton (1991) put this number at 44 ‘ethnic parties’, and Massetti (2009) has recently estimated that 93 such parties exist. Clearly, SNRPs are increasing in numbers, thereby contradicting modernization theory that posits that territorial cleavages will be eventually ironed-out during the process of nationalization (see Keating, 2009). Not only that, but SNRPs have also moved from ‘niche’ actors in party systems to mainstream political players, or ‘protest to power’ as Elias and her colleagues argue (Elias, 2009; Elias and Tronconi, 2011). No longer the ‘outsider’ in party politics, these parties have successfully entered government at the regional and state levels and many have been responsible for pushing the agenda for radical constitutional change. SNRPs have also sought to adapt to multi-level politics, by differentiating their party machines at different territorial levels – in particular, the supranational level. Of note, SNRPs have prolifically taken advantage of opportunities at the European level for building alliances and networking, with many endorsing the popular (but ultimately disappointing and short-lived) goal of a ‘Europe of the Regions’ (Lynch, 2006; Elias, 2008, 2009; Hepburn, 2008, 2010).

SNRPs have also had success, to varying degrees, in entering government at different territorial levels (Gomez-Reino et al, 2006; Hepburn and Zaslove, 2009; Stefuriuc, 2009; Elias and Tronconi, 2011). With the creation of new sub-state electoral arenas, many SNRPs have sought to transform themselves into governing parties at that level. This, however, presents multiple challenges for these parties; in decisions crossing the threshold of government (especially if they consider themselves ‘anti-system’ parties), in entering coalition government and possibly having to moderate/abandon some of their goals as part of a compromise deal, and the effects of government incumbency, whereby a poor performance may be severely punished

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<sup>2</sup> For example, Partido Andalucista, Volksunie in Flanders, Scottish National Party, Unione Démocratique Bretonne, Liga Veneta, Partido Nacionalista Vasco, and Convergència i Unió in Catalonia.

by their supporters (see Elias and Tronconi, 2001). As such, operating in a multi-level political environment often forces these parties to change their strategies, behaviour and in some cases, to compromise some of their principles.

Another major challenge for these parties, which results from the development of a multidimensional policy space within multiple political arenas, is the creation of a new political rival, in the form of regional branches of state-wide parties that have become more autonomous and territorially focussed (Hepburn, 2009; Elias, 2011). The decentralization of state-wide party organizations means that SNRPs are no longer the only ones seeking to represent territorial interests or presenting alternative constitutional goals. A difficult challenge for SNRPs is when the territorial goals of the state-wide party prove more popular than their own aims (for instance when regional electorates choose autonomy over independence in a referendum – a scenario likely to happen in Scotland in 2014-15), however, the worst-case scenario is when state-wide parties effectively ‘steal’ the goals of the SNRPs, rendering them obsolete. This situation occurred in Belgium in the 1960s and 1970s, when SNRP success encouraged the Christian Democrats to split into two autonomous unilingual parties in 1968 to pursue their separate visions of the future of the Belgian state (followed by the splitting of the Liberal and Socialist parties along similar Flanders-Walloon lines in the 1970s). Furthermore, the new Belgian ‘regional’ parties essentially adopted the SNRPs’ positions in their efforts to reform the state along federal lines. On the plus side, the aims of the SNRPs had been met; on the down side, this act removed their very reason for existing, resulting in a steep electoral decline (Deschouwer, 2009). However, regionalist parties continue to have a place in federal Belgium – often as coalition brokers. As Gomez-Reino et al (2006: 258) argue, ‘no autonomist party is entirely satisfied with the current depth, width and speed of these [decentralization] transfers’. Few parties will see that such reforms constitute a ‘mission accomplished’; instead they will keep fighting for more powers.

The next question is: how do state-wide parties respond to this competition from SNRPs? The obvious answer is that they must present themselves, and their programmes, as serious regional rivals to the nationalist/regionalist party vision. However, the way in which they do this varies enormously from place to place and party to party.

### **The Territorialization of State-wide Parties**

The reconfiguration of political authority across different territorial levels, combined with the persistence of regional identities and the rise of SNRPs, has necessitated an adjustment to how state-wide parties organize and compete. The creation of multi-layered political arenas means that parties can no longer pursue one strategy for office in a single state-wide political arena. Instead their priorities are split: they must target different arenas for decision-making at several territorial levels. In particular, at the sub-state level, state-wide parties must refocus their strategies for different regional contexts (and in European countries, parties must also address and compete on European policies and issues).

The resulting reorganization and re-positioning of parties to compete on these multiple territorial levels may be described as the ‘territorialization’ of political parties. We use the term territorialization, as opposed to the ‘regionalization’ (Swenden and Maddens, 2009), ‘federalization’ (Koole, 1996) or ‘decentralization’ (Fabre, 2008; Hopkin and van Houten, 2009) of parties, for a number of reasons. All of these terms seem to imply that a degree of power is given to sub-state party branches, to act autonomously from the central party. However, this ignores two different aspects of power relations. First, there is a need to account for the direction of power redistribution. Political parties, in responding to multi-level politics, may choose to concentrate power at the state or supranational levels, as opposed to devolving authority downwards. This is evident, for instance, in the case of Australia whereby local party branches have sought to work together to strengthen their national party strategy (Koop and Sharman 2008), or in countries in Europe, where parties have developed a strong European arm,

which may even interact with regional branches independently of the state level (Moon and Bratberg, 2010). In these cases, power is redistributed across multiple levels, which could mean upwards to the state or Europe, as well as downwards to the regions. Second, there is a need to account for power-sharing and interdependence within parties. The notion of devolving authority downwards in parties is unable to account for the fact that this autonomy may be constrained by what Carty (2004: 9) calls ‘a fundamental interdependence of parts’, whereby authority is shared across a party, rather than concentrated in a single place. It is therefore necessary to take into account the interlocking as well as autonomous aspects of political parties as they become more focussed on territorial issues (alongside other old and new cleavages) as well as organizationally attuned to multi-level political structures

The ‘territorial rescaling’ of state-wide parties has a number of dimensions. First, regional branches of state-wide parties have adopted stronger territorial party identities and rhetoric. This involves altering party logos, letterheads, posters and other party literature to reflect the importance of the locality to the party. It also involved a qualitative change in party discourse, emphasizing the importance of the territory (be it culture, identity, social values), territorial representation within the state, and often pledges to defend the interests of the territory. In some cases this has led to sub-state branches declaring themselves to constitute *the* party representing the nation/region in opposition to SNRPs.

Second, different sectors of parties have adopted different policy goals. In particular, sub-state branches of state-wide parties may develop constitutional alternatives to independence to defuse support for SNRPs. This is facilitated by the exploitation and repackaging of party traditions with regard to their positions on regional autonomy. All of the main party families have both centralizing and decentralizing traditions, as argued earlier. For instance, whilst Liberal (Democratic) parties have at times supported the creation of a federal state, in which the identities and traditions of a territory are recognized, at other times they have opposed ‘particularism’ in any form. Left-wing parties have shifted back and forth between centralism and regionalism, the latter especially when they entered alliances with SNRPs. Christian Democrat parties have advocated bringing powers to local communities in line with the principle of subsidiarity. In every case, however, when competing with SNRPs, regional sub-state branches of state-wide parties must emphasize the commitment of the party to a stance on decentralization that is seen to outweigh the benefits of secession.

Third, the territorial rescaling of parties results in the organizational differentiation of regional parts from the centre. The fact that sub-state branches often need to differentiate their policies from the centre to ‘fit’ the local setting has resulted in a desire for greater sub-state organizational independence, with control over candidate selection, finance and electoral strategies. This transition has not always met with the blessing of the central party. In many cases, the central party’s reluctance to grant concessions to the sub-state branch has led to intra-party tensions, with regional units threatening to secede.

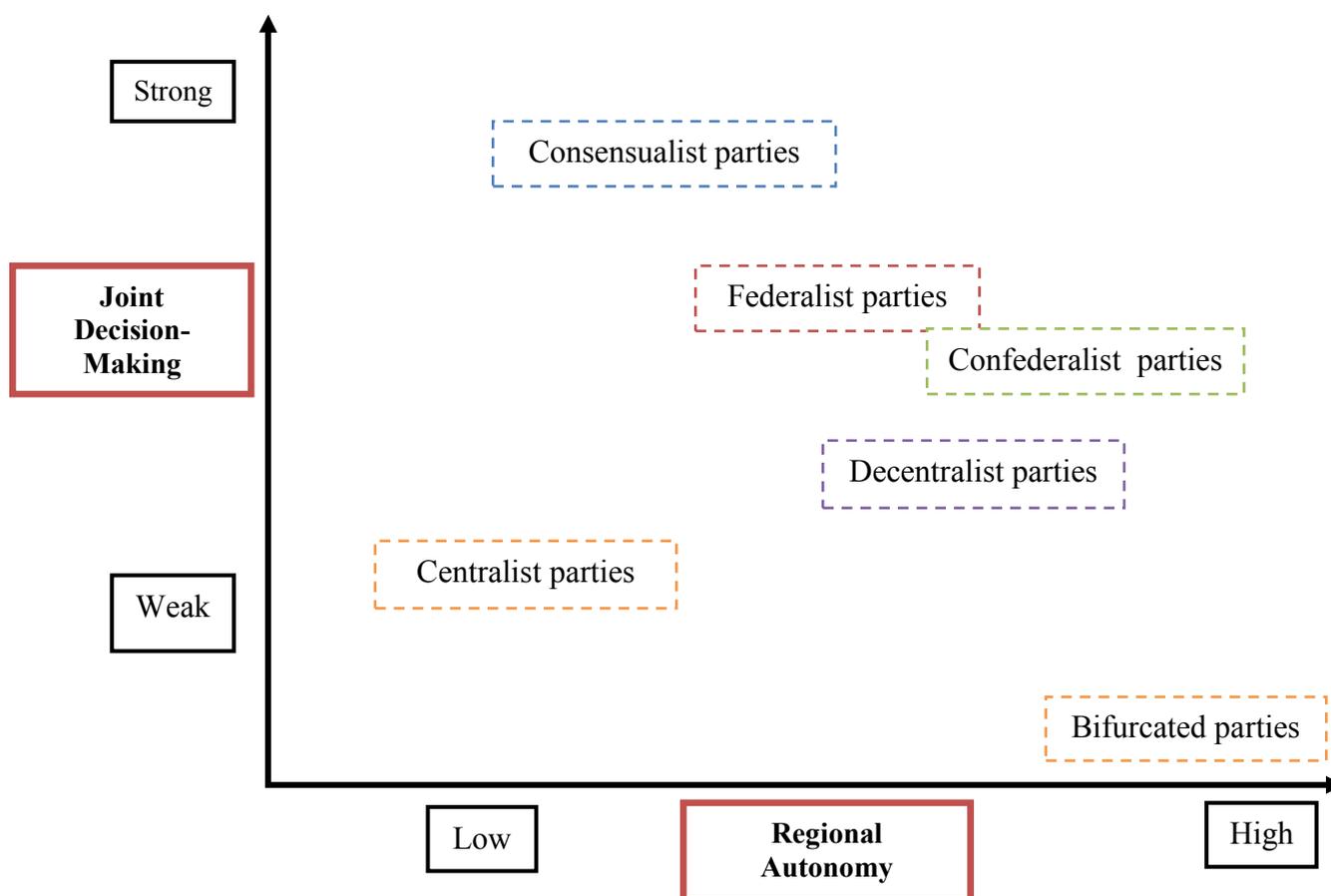
Fourth, the territorial rescaling of parties has resulted in new forms of power-sharing amongst constituent units. In rescaling party organizations, power and authority no longer rest in one single place, but rather different organizational units within parties possess different powers and autonomous functions. This raises questions for how the different parts interact with, and influence, one another. In this sense, parties are developing new stratarchical organizational structures, replacing the hierarchical structures of old (Carty, 2004). In the remainder of this chapter, for reasons of space, we will focus in particular on the last two dimensions of territorial rescaling, concerning state-wide party organizational responses.

### **State-wide Party Responses to Multi-level Competition**

Following our argument, we suggest looking at the interaction of two key dimensions when exploring the relationships between the central party level and its sub-state branches: the strength of joint decision-making structures within party organizations, and the degree of

organizational and programmatic autonomy enjoyed by sub-state branches (see Dyck, 1996; Deschouwer, 2006). Indicators of joint decision-making are formal and informal linkages between state and sub-state units that determine the extent of ‘shared rule’ within parties, including mechanisms for regional input into state-wide decision-making, joint party structures and the inclusion of regional officials in the state executive. Indicators of sub-state autonomy, or ‘self rule’, are regional control over candidate and leadership selection, policy programmes, campaign strategies, coalition-building and finance. The combination of different degrees of joint decision-making and autonomy creates a set of ideal types of state-wide party organizations, which are captured in figure 3 below. Most of these party types are integrated across territorial levels. However, the typology also covers bifurcated parties which compete at multiple levels but have cut organizational linkages between territorial party layers (Smiley 1980). We will illustrate each party type by giving some examples. These examples also point to the fact that individual parties may move between types over time.

Figure 3: Typology of Multi-level Party Organizations



#### *Consensualist parties*

Consensualist parties have a strong tendency towards uniformity in political appeal and to find consensus through joint decision-making. Sub-state branches have only limited autonomy but possess privileged access to central party decision-making. There is a high degree of multi-level cooperation inside the party organizations resulting in common policies and strategies suiting all territorial interests. In terms of membership structures, party bureaucracy, parliamentary coordination and career patterns, the links between party levels are extensive. Party elite coordination in state executives is one of the main features here. In consensualist parties,

everything comes together at the centre which is the 'heart' of the party. In the joint federal systems of Austria and Germany parties have come to mirror the strong interdependence between territorial levels in their internal structures. However, there are differences between the more hierarchical approach of the Social Democrats and the more decentralized traditions of the bourgeois parties in both countries. Moreover, in recent years, Austrian and German sub-state party branches have made more extensive use of their formal rights in going their own ways (Detterbeck and Jeffery, 2009). Thus, there has been a gradual move from the consensualist to the federalist model of territorial party organization.

#### *Federalist parties*

Federalist parties combine strong shared rule with strong self rule. Sub-state branches have considerable freedom to decide over internal procedures while at the same time being strongly involved in central decision-making processes. There will be a delicate, sometimes contested, balance between the institutionalized will to find common ground and the need to allow for diversity among the different sub-state branches. Federalist parties are most likely to thrive in joint federal systems. The Austrian and German Christian Democrats, which have been established in the *Länder* first before building the state-wide organization, are probably the best examples here. Yet, as noted above, the other parties in these countries have come to resemble the federalist type more closely over time.

#### *Con-(Federalist) parties*

Like federalist parties, the confederalist type is characterized by elaborate joint decision-making mechanisms and a strong element of sub-state autonomy. Here, however, the locus of control rests with the constituent parts. The central party coordinates rather than leads the party, the sub-state branches delegate organizational competences according to their own preferences.

Con-(Federalist) parties are most likely to thrive in dual federations. Despite differences in the actual degree of standardization in policy-making, party organizations are centred on the constituent units (cantons, provinces or states) of the federation in countries like Australia, Switzerland and the USA. Regional party branches dispose much of the organizational resources and have considerable leeway in devising their strategies and policies. Nevertheless, the central party level has taken on an increasingly important role in coordinating territorial interests and levelling out differences. Central bodies have thus become stronger in leading the parties and in managing diversity without imposing uniformity (Rydon, 1988; Ladner, 2007). The internal flow of power has thus been reconfigured into a 'two-way street' (Wekkin and Howard 2012). The Latin American federations of Argentina and Brazil show similar developments. In both countries, the base of political support is traditionally concentrated at the regional level. Provincial and state governors and party bosses are key figures at both central and regional party levels. But again, national party bodies have grown stronger in recent decades in enforcing party loyalty and discipline (Gordin, 2004; Santos and Pegurier, 2011).

#### *Centralist parties*

Centralist parties are integrated by virtue of hierarchical control. The central party interferes heavily in sub-state party matters, whereas the regional branches have limited impact on central affairs. Both shared rule and self rule are weak. As a result of centralist coordination, which extends to all facets of party activities, party cohesion is rather strong. Depending on the strategies of the central leadership, these parties will be capable of having uniform party policies and electoral tactics across the territory.

An important route to party centralism seems to be one-party hegemony. In countries like India, Malaysia, Mexico and South Africa a dominant party has been (or still is) at the centre of federal politics. These 'catch-all parties' have brought together a variety of social

forces in their quest for power. The centralism in political organizations, often based on clientelistic networks, has strengthened the position of state-wide leaders in such parties. Looking at developments over time, however, federalism has proved to be a powerful weapon for opposition parties to challenge one-party hegemony. In a similar vein, sub-state party elites have grown more self-confident in asking for more autonomy or a stronger voice at central level. In the Mexican *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), for example, there has been a shift in authority towards the regional party leadership after the party lost power at the state level in 2000 (Prud'homme, 2012). More generally speaking, party centralism may be conceived of as a means of 'holding-together' in plurinational settings (Stepan, 2001). Top-down hierarchy prevents sub-state branches from adopting autonomist and separatist positions. In this sense, central control can serve both the aims of leadership ambitions and national integration. 'Holding-together' has been an important motto not just of parties like the Malaysian *Barisan Nasional* (BN) or the *African National Congress* (ANC) in South Africa but also of state-wide parties in Spain and Italy. In these countries, we may again note differences between party families. Conservative parties tend to be more hierarchical than their left-wing competitors that show more open leadership structures (Hopkin, 2009; Fabre and Méndez-Lago, 2009).

#### *Decentralist parties*

Decentralist parties put a strong emphasis on self-rule. In a stratarchical way, there are multiple territorial centres of power which operate with a considerable degree of independence from one another. While still being integrated parties, most vital activities have been separated between territorial levels and vertical links are rather weak. Decentralist parties can have quite distinct policy profiles and electoral strategies in different parts of the country. Traditional examples of this party type are the Swiss parties or the Australian Liberal Party. Today, there are several cases of asymmetrical federalism and regionalism where the relations between the central party and individual sub-state branches show decentralist traits. In Great Britain, Labour and the Conservatives have devolved substantial powers to their Scottish and Welsh branches while establishing only weak instruments of joint decision-making (Bradbury 2006). In Spain, the Catalan Socialists and the Conservatives in Navarre (until 2008) enjoyed a special status allowing them strong autonomy rights at the sub-state level (Fabre and Méndez-Lago, 2009). In Italy, the centre-left Democratic Party has inherited a formally federal party network in which, in particular, the sub-state branches in the party strongholds yield significant autonomous resources and powers. This, however, rarely translates into influence at the national level (Conti et al, 2009).

#### *Bifurcated parties*

Finally, bifurcated parties compete in multiple territorial arenas under the same party label but have cut all organizational linkages between state-wide and sub-state levels. The lack of common membership and leadership structures allows each party unit to develop its own position autonomously. At the same time, bifurcated parties are unable to engage in internal multi-level coordination activities with respect to electoral campaigns and public policy-making. In Canada, the Liberal Party has formally separated into independent federal and provincial organizations in four of the nine provinces, including Quebec and British Columbia (Thorlakson, 2006). In the other provinces, vertical linkages are comparatively weak. The Conservative Party at state-wide level has no organizational connection to the provincial parties which bear the same name (Cross, 2004). In Belgium, parties have split along linguistic lines. All major parties compete at federal and sub-state levels but restrict themselves to either Dutch-speaking or French-speaking electorates. Organizational linkages to the ideological 'sister party' in the other language community have become dormant (De Winter, 2006). Thus, Belgian parties are multi-level organizations which operate on a non-state-wide basis.

### **Explaining variance in party responses**

Clearly, state-wide parties have developed a range of different responses to the increasingly asymmetrical nature of party competition in federal or decentralized states. Responses have varied across countries, as well as across parties within one system. In explaining variation, we take clues from some of the major schools of party research (Ware 1996): sociological approaches, which focus on social cleavages; institutional approaches, which focus on either structural aspects of the polity or the organizational structures of parties; and rational choice approaches, which focus on party strategies in competitive environments (see Deschouwer, 2006; Swenden and Maddens, 2009).

The first explanation concerns the salience of territorial interests and identities within society. The existence of territorial cleavages – including distinct sub-state identities or regional economic disparities – can act as an independent factor influencing the organizational decisions of state-wide parties (even in the absence of an SNRP that seeks to effectively mobilize these interests). In the Spanish or Italian parties, for example, sub-state branch autonomy tends to be higher in regions where there is stronger support for sub-state nationalism.

Second, party responses are affected by the institutional structures of the multi-level state. Within this category, two aspects define the environment in which parties operate: the territorial structures of the state and the structures of the electoral process. The territorial structures of the state determine the degree of interdependence between political levels. In federal and regionalized states, these levels can be heavily intertwined or strongly separated. To illustrate: the strong linkages between party levels in Austria and Germany mirror the extensive cooperation within their federal systems. Furthermore, structures of the electoral processes – primarily electoral systems and electoral timing, but also parliamentary rules of incompatibility of mandates and state regulations on public funding of parties – must be taken into account. As with territorial state structures, electoral structures influence the degree of interdependence between political levels. In the UK, for example, differences in electoral formula and the separation of devolved elections from Westminster elections have added to the distinctiveness of the Scottish and Welsh party systems.

Our third set of factors relates to ‘sticky’ party traditions, which shape the ways in which individual parties distribute power internally and link territorial levels. Party traditions can be understood with respect to party ideologies and constitutional aims. In many cases parties adopt the organizational structures that they wish to see implemented within the state. Christian Democrats, along with Liberals and Greens, may find intra-party decentralization more suited to their programmatic profiles and tradition than Social Democrats and the more radical Left. Internal party dynamics, while being based on historical trajectories and party ideologies, will also be affected by the specific position a party has in a competitive environment. This may lead to a stronger propensity to adapt strategically to changing structures of competition. Among the most relevant aspects of this fourth explanatory dimension are the access to government at state-wide and sub-state levels, variations in electoral strength between different arenas and the impact of SNRPs on competitive dynamics. All of these factors will have an impact on internal power balances between the central party and regional branches. Quite often, parties in government at the state-wide level have seen a diminishing role of the regional party “barons” inside their party organizations.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, this chapter has argued that political parties, which were once instruments of national integration, are now faced with the challenge of regionalism, federalism and ‘denationalization’. It seems that the territorial cleavage, which Rokkan and his colleagues posited had only a negligible effect in shaping state-wide party competition in 1982, has since borne fruit with the institutionalization of regions over the last thirty years. In addition to the

persistence of regions as ‘small worlds’ as containers of political attitudes, behaviour and identities, and the consolidation of stateless nationalist and regionalist parties as mainstream players in party systems, it is clear that state-wide parties operating in multi-level systems must adapt to the territorial cleavages cemented by the institutionalization of political regions. As we have shown, there are numerous ways in which political parties have responded to state structural change and the strengthening of the territorial dimension of politics. Whilst some have sought to reflect new divisions of powers within the state in their own organizational strategies, others have held on to the belief that a united party will underpin a unified state. We have identified six modes of adaptation amongst the parties: centralist (with centralized decision-making and weak joint structures), consensualist (implying consensus through joint decision-making), federalist (where parties mix strong intra-party coordination with high degrees of flexibility), confederalist (supremacy of the sub-state party level within integrated structures), decentralist (where parties devolve significant control to regional branches) and bifurcated parties (showing a lack of vertical linkages between levels).

The re-positioning and reorganization of parties at the regional level heralds a new type of political representation in multi-level states. Whilst parties have traditionally claimed to represent citizens across the state by appealing to a common political vision, in multi-level states it has become difficult to commit the party as a whole to a single policy programme. Parties must now adapt to several arenas of political authority, compete with SNRPs on the territorial dimension, and accommodate the territorial interests of the regional electorate. This has had a significant impact on party systems, causing greater divergence between regional and state-wide parties and systems, and leading to new forms of coordination and interdependence within parties. Though it is too soon to herald the decline of state-wide political representation, state-wide parties must urgently re-think how to maintain their integrative functions in increasingly disintegrating party systems, otherwise they run the risk of disintegrating themselves.

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