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Hanna Bäck^a, Marc Debus^b, Jochen Müller^b & Henry Bäck^c

^a Department of Political Science, University of Lund, SE-22100, Lund, Sweden E-mail:

^b School of Social Sciences, University of Mannheim, A5, 6, D-68131, Mannheim, Germany

^c School of Public Administration, University of Gothenburg, Box 712, SE-40530, Gothenburg, Sweden E-mail:

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Regional Government Formation in Varying Multilevel Contexts: A Comparison of Eight European Countries

HANNA BÄCK*, MARC DEBUS†, JOCHEN MÜLLER† and HENRY BÄCK‡

*Department of Political Science, University of Lund, SE-22100 Lund, Sweden. Email: Hanna.Back@svet.lu.se

†School of Social Sciences, University of Mannheim, A5, 6, D-68131 Mannheim, Germany.

Emails: Marc.Debus@uni-mannheim.de and Jochen.Mueller@mzes@uni-mannheim.de

‡School of Public Administration, University of Gothenburg, Box 712, SE-40530 Gothenburg, Sweden.

Email: henryback.bck@gmail.com

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BÄCK H., DEBUS M., MÜLLER J. and BÄCK H. Regional government formation in varying multilevel contexts: a comparison of eight European countries, *Regional Studies*. Although governance in multilevel settings has become a prominent research field in political science, there are few comparative studies that focus on explaining sub-national coalition outcomes in such settings. This paper sets out to study regional government formation in eight European countries and it builds on a dataset that covers information on the policy preferences of parties drawn from regional election manifestos. The results show that parties at the regional level are likely to form congruent coalitions, that is, ‘copying’ the patterns of national government formation, and that they are more likely to do so in specific regional contexts.

Government formation Coalition theories Multilevel systems Content analysis of policy documents Regional authority

BÄCK H., DEBUS M., MÜLLER J. and BÄCK H. 各种多重层级脉络下的区域政府形成：欧洲八国的比较研究，*区域研究*。尽管多重层级环境中的治理已成为政治学中重要的研究领域，却鲜少有比较研究聚焦解释在此般环境中次国家层级结盟的结果。本文着手研究八个欧洲国家的区域政府形成，并以一个包含在区域选举宣言中各政党政策倾向资料的数据集为基础。研究结果显示，区域层级的政党倾向“复制”国家层级政府形成的模式，进行相同的结盟，并更有可能在特定的区域脉络中进行。

政府形成 结盟理论 多重层级系统 政策文件的内容分析 区域治权

BÄCK H., DEBUS M., MÜLLER J. et BÄCK H. La formation de la gouvernance régionale dans divers contextes multiniveaux: une comparaison de huit pays européens, *Regional Studies*. Bien que la gouvernance multiniveaux soit devenue une filière importante de la science politique, rares sont les études comparatives qui visent principalement à expliquer les résultats des coalitions établies à l'échelon infranational dans de tels contextes. L'article cherche à étudier la formation de la gouvernance régionale dans huit pays européens et se fonde sur un ensemble de données qui capte des informations sur les préférences politiques des partis puisées dans leurs manifestes aux élections régionales. Les résultats laissent voir que les partis sont susceptibles sur le plan régional de constituer des coalitions harmonisées, c'est-à-dire ‘copier’ des modèles de gouvernance au niveau national, et qu'ils sont plus susceptibles de le faire dans des contextes régionaux spécifiques.

Formation de la gouvernance Théories sur la création des coalitions Systèmes multiniveaux Analyse du contenu des documents de politique générale Collectivité régionale

BÄCK H., DEBUS M., MÜLLER J. und BÄCK H. Regionale Regierungsbildung in institutionell variierenden Mehrebenensystemen: ein Vergleich acht europäischer Staaten, *Regional Studies*. Obwohl das Regieren in Mehrebenensystemen mittlerweile ein zentrales Forschungsgebiet der Politikwissenschaft ist, liegen bislang nur wenige vergleichende Studien zur Regierungsbildung in diesem Kontext vor. Im vorliegenden Beitrag analysieren wir die Regierungsbildung in den Regionen acht europäischer Staaten. Dabei greifen wir auf einen Datensatz zurück, der die Policy-Positionen regionaler Parteien sowie die Eigenschaften der potentiell möglichen Regierungen umfasst. Unsere Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Parteien dazu neigen, über die Ebenen hinweg parteipolitisch kongruente Koalitionen zu bilden. Zudem haben die programmatischen Positionen der regionalen Parteien und die institutionell vorgegebenen Kompetenzen regionaler Regierungen einen Einfluss auf das Ergebnis des Regierungsbildungsprozesses.

Regierungsbildung Koalitionstheorien Mehrebenensysteme Inhaltsanalyse programmatischer Dokumente Regionale Autorität

BÄCK H., DEBUS M., MÜLLER J. y BÄCK H. Formación de gobiernos regionales en diferentes contextos de varios niveles: una comparación entre ocho países europeos, *Regional Studies*. Aunque la gobernanza en entornos de varios niveles se ha convertido en un destacado campo de investigación en ciencias políticas, existen poco estudios comparativos sobre los resultados de una coalición sub-nacional en tales entornos. La finalidad de este artículo es estudiar la formación de gobiernos regionales en ocho países europeos a partir de un grupo de datos que abarquen la información sobre las preferencias políticas de los partidos extraídas de los programas electorales regionales. Los resultados indican que los partidos de ámbito regional tienden a formar coaliciones congruentes, es decir, ‘copiando’ los modelos de la formación del gobierno nacional, y suelen hacerlo en contextos regionales específicos.

Formación de gobierno Teorías de coalición Sistemas de varios niveles Análisis de contenido de documentos políticos Autoridad regional

JEL classifications: R, R5, R50

INTRODUCTION

Governing in coalition governments has become the ‘norm’ in modern democracies (LAVER and SCHOFIELD, 1998; MÜLLER, 2009a). Even the United Kingdom is governed by a coalition government since the elections for the House of Commons in May 2010 (for example, HOUGH, 2011; LEES, 2011; MCLEAN, 2012). Since devolution, however, the UK had already had some experience with coalition governments: some state governments of Scotland and Wales were formed between more than one party (for example, LAFFIN, 2007), which resulted in the drafting of coalition policy agreements and, thus, the implementation of policy compromises between the parties in government (for example, PARRY, 2008; KEATING, 2010). A number of theoretical models on coalition governance and their empirical evaluation demonstrate that parties with a different ideological background or different policy preferences have to agree not only on the distribution of portfolios in the cabinet, but also on the content of future policies. Moreover, they show that governing in coalitions makes a difference for the policy outputs a government produces (for example, LAVER and SHEPSLE, 1996; SCHMIDT, 1996; WARWICK, 2001, 2011; McDONALD and BUDGE, 2005; BRÄUNINGER, 2005; STRØM *et al.*, 2008; KNILL *et al.*, 2010; BÄCK *et al.*, 2011). From this perspective, it is important to know why and how coalition governments form. Despite the growing importance of the regional or sub-state level in Europe (for example, HOOGHE, 1996; KEATING, 1998; JEFFERY, 2000; BULMER *et al.*, 2006), there have only been few comparative research efforts focusing on government formation and coalition politics at this particular level of political decision-making (however, see DOWNS, 1998).

This paper focuses on the latter aspect and analyses the patterns of government formation at the sub-state level in eight European democracies. More specifically, it aims to explain why certain coalitions form at the

regional level in varying multilevel systems. Most of the previous studies on sub-state government formation are single-country or small-*n* comparative studies (for example, BÄCK, 2003; PAPPI *et al.*, 2005; DEBUS, 2008; STEFURIUC, 2009; WILSON, 2009), which makes it difficult to account for institutional variation across political systems and to generalize the findings on sub-national government formation.

The main hypothesis of this paper is that parties at the sub-national level are likely to ‘copy’ the patterns of government formation at the national level, and thus show a high degree of national-regional congruence in coalition outcomes (for example, PAPPI *et al.*, 2005; DEBUS, 2008; STEFURIUC, 2009). The paper also develops some hypotheses that stress that the importance of ‘congruence’ should vary across contexts. For example, it evaluates the hypothesis that a high degree of congruence is to be anticipated in settings where the electoral competition is highly ‘nationalized’, and the hypothesis that coalition patterns will display a lower degree of congruence in systems where the regions have strong competencies. In order to evaluate this latter hypothesis, the case selection is based on this feature. On the basis of data drawn from the index of regional authority, recently constructed by MARKS *et al.* (2008a), the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK are selected as examples of states where regional authorities have a rather low degree of competencies, and focus is concentrated on party competition in Austria, Belgium, Germany and Spain as examples of states where the regions have rather strong competencies. The analysis is thus based on a completely new dataset that covers information on all potential coalitions that could have been formed at the regional level since the 1990s in eight differently structured European countries.

The results show that besides the ‘classical’ coalition variables such as a feature measuring the policy distance between parties in a government, congruence between the different levels of party competition, as well as the

degree of regional authority and nationalization of the regional party system have an impact on the outcome of regional government formation in multilevel systems. These findings have decisive implications for further studies on policy-making focusing on the regional sphere. If the policy positions of regional parties matter for government formation, then it can be assumed that they also play a role for policy outputs and outcomes, like the composition of regional budgets, or the amount of regional taxes, likewise to policy-making at the national level (for example, HIBBS, 1977; 1992; CUSACK, 1999; BRÄUNINGER, 2005; OSTERLOH and DEBUS, 2012). Thus, the data on the preferences of regional parties presented in this contribution offer new material for analysing the political process of policy-making in European regions.

GOVERNMENT FORMATION IN MULTILEVEL SETTINGS

This section describes the hypotheses to be evaluated in order to explain government formation at the regional level. Since the authors believe that the same logic to some extent applies to political actors on all levels of a political system, this section starts out by deriving some hypotheses from the classical theories about coalition formation, originally developed for the study of national-level coalitions. However, the multilevel structure of political systems also sets incentives for specific coalition strategies of political actors at the regional level that might differ from the expectations derived from standard theories about coalition formation. Therefore, the review of classical theories is followed by a discussion of the factors that more specifically influence government formation at the regional level.

'Classical' theories of coalition formation

According to standard theories of coalition formation, political parties are primarily interested in maximizing their office payoffs and implementing their policy preferences (for example, LAVER and SCHOFIELD, 1998; MÜLLER, 2009a). While the office-seeking approach considers only the strength of a political party as a unitary actor within a legislature, policy-driven theories take the programmatic positions of parties on an overall left–right scale into account. Generally speaking, the office-orientated approach argues that coalitions will form which control a small (VON NEUMANN and MORGENSTERN, 1944, pp. 429–430), or the smallest (RIKER, 1962), winning majority inside the respective parliament. A third important office-orientated and policy-blind approach is the bargaining proposition, developed by LEISERSON (1968). Leiserson assumed that it is not the strength of each political party, measured by its seat share in the parliament, which is decisive, but

rather the absolute number of parties involved in the coalition formation game. Therefore, the coalitions that form should satisfy two conditions. First, they must have a parliamentary majority; and second, they should include as few parties as possible. Transaction costs should thereby be reduced to a minimum.

Theories that are based on non-cooperative game theory also highlight the importance of the strength of parties in the parliament. AUSTEN-SMITH and BANKS (1988) argued that the strongest parliamentary party has the best chance of becoming the 'formateur'. In most cases, the 'formateur party' becomes a member of the next government and, furthermore, has a strong bargaining position in the coalition negotiations (also BARON and FEREJOHN, 1989; BÄCK and DUMONT, 2008). Three hypotheses are derived from 'office-seeking' accounts on coalition formation:

Hypothesis 1a: Coalitions should be more likely to form if they fulfil the characteristics of a minimal winning coalition, a minimum winning coalition or the bargaining proposition.

Hypothesis 1b: Coalitions should be more likely to form if they include the largest parliamentary party.

Hypothesis 1c: Coalitions should be less likely to form if they are not supported by a majority in the parliament.

If coalition formation is also about ideology, then political parties with similar ideological backgrounds should be more likely to form a coalition government. AXELROD (1970) called this the theory of minimal connected winning coalitions. Such coalitions are characterized by two features. First, the coalition is minimal winning; and second, the participating parties are 'neighbours' on a common left–right continuum. DE SWAAN's (1973) assumption was that rather than a simple left–right ordering, it is the ideological distance between the parties that is decisive for the outcome of the coalition game. Following this perspective, political actors 'calculate' the distance between themselves and the other parties, so that coalitions should be formed which minimize that distance.

With regard to the research question – what factors determine government formation on the regional level? – a one-dimensional perspective is not sufficient. As several studies reveal, patterns of party competition in modern democracies are structured by at least two policy dimensions, mostly an economic left–right dimension and a conflict line between progressive and conservative positions on the order of society (LIPSET and ROKKAN, 1967; also LAVER and HUNT, 1992; BENOIT and LAVER, 2006; WARWICK, 2002, 2006). In addition, ethnic and linguistic diversity in some European states resulted in pressure to give more power to sub-national units and, thus, to decentralize the structure of formerly centralized states. This has been the case particularly in Spain and Belgium since the 1980s and in the UK since the mid-1990s. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2: The greater the distance between a set of parties in terms of economic, social and/or decentralization policy, the less likely the formation of the respective coalition should be.

In a study analysing government formation in a comparative and multivariate design, MARTIN and STEVENSON (2001) showed that office and policy-related factors are not the only decisive aspects for coalition formation. They found evidence that government formation is also influenced by institutional and contextual factors. Such factors could be, for instance, the requirement of votes of confidence as well as rejections of feasible coalitions. Standard spatial models of government formation do not include such institutional or behavioural constraints (for example, STRØM *et al.*, 1994). One such constraint is the partisan composition of the incumbent cabinet. FRANKLIN and MACKIE (1983) (also BÄCK and DUMONT, 2007) argued that familiarity, that is, that some parties know how to work with each other in coalition governments, and inertia, which means that the parties that form the current coalition are more likely to collaborate again, better explain which parties will form a coalition than the size-concept and the inclusion of ideological positions. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 3: Coalitions are more likely to form if they include the same parties as the incumbent government.

Government formation in multilevel settings

Even if the motivations that influence government formation at the national level are relevant at the regional level, other mechanisms should play a role. This is due to the specific characteristics of policy-making and party competition in multilevel systems and reinforced by the relationship between national parties and their regional branches. Since most sub-national parties are subordinated to their national counterparts, their actions should be adjusted much more frequently to the necessities and constraints that result from a political systems' multilevel structure and the national parties' preferences, than vice versa (for example, MÜLLER, 2012; VAN HOUTEN, 2009). In other words, the multilevel structure induces constraints which may in some cases be even more important in explaining government formation than the factors discussed above. However, the relevance of these constraints should depend on the characteristics of the respective multilevel system. Furthermore, the degree to which regional government formation is shaped by the situation at the national level should depend on the specific characteristics of the respective institutions.

Beside office-, policy- and context-based factors, some determinants of sub-national level government formation can be drawn from the literature on governance in multilevel settings. The most important argument made in the literature on multilevel government formation is that of congruence. In general, congruent

coalitions can be defined as coalitions at the regional level whose partisan composition corresponds with the one of the national government (STEFURIUC, 2009). The importance of congruence in multilevel settings has been stressed by a number of authors (for example, DOWNS, 1998; DÄUBLER and DEBUS, 2009; PAPPI *et al.*, 2005; STEFURIUC, 2009), and has been defined and termed in various ways. STEFURIUC (2009) argued that the congruence feature can take on three values:

full congruence – the same parties are participating in both the regional and central government; full incongruence – there is no overlap; and partial (in)congruence – some, but not all, of the governing parties at one level are also governing at the other level.

(p. 96)

It is contended here that what matters is not so much that a regional-level coalition has exactly the same composition as the national-level government ('full congruence' as defined by Stefuriuc), but rather that the coalition does not cut across the national government-opposition divide. DÄUBLER and DEBUS (2009) called such coalitions 'cross-cutting'. Thus, the argument is that cross-cutting coalitions are less likely to form in multilevel systems than the two other types of coalitions, that is, 'fully congruent' and 'fully incongruent' coalitions, which can be seen as less problematic for the parties.

Why should one expect congruent coalitions to form in multilevel systems, or more specifically, why should parties at the regional and national level care about achieving congruence? Several authors have pointed to the advantages associated with congruent coalitions in multilevel systems. For example, BOLLEYER (2006) argued that congruent coalitions are advantageous since they facilitate cooperation in policy-making across different levels. In policy areas which necessitate joint decision-making between the centre and the regions, non-congruent coalitions can lead to stalemate (HOUGH and JEFFERY, 2006; STEFURIUC, 2009). In the German system, for instance, congruence is important as the Bundesrat can be a veto player in federal legislation (BRÄUNINGER and KÖNIG, 1999; KÖNIG, 2001).

Cross-cutting coalitions may also be disadvantageous for electoral reasons. This argument is based on the assumption that parties are vote-seeking, which they are likely to be for instrumental reasons, that is, parties should care about winning votes in order to facilitate government participation, which in turn should increase their chances of implementing a specific policy programme (for example, MÜLLER and STRØM, 1999). As argued by STEFURIUC (2009), governing at one level with a party which is your opponent at another level may be problematic in terms of winning the approval of the party's voters. For example, if at the national level a party stresses that its national-level coalition partner is the party most likely to help them implementing a specific policy programme, it may be

difficult to convince voters that another party is a more appropriate partner at the regional level. Thus, there are several reasons for parties to form congruent coalitions in multilevel systems. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 4: Potential coalitions which are cross-cutting are less likely to form at the regional level, that is, regional coalitions should be less likely to form if they consist of parties who participate in the national-level government as well as parties that do not.

However, the extent to which congruence is desirable depends on the institutional setting (for example, ROBERTS, 1989). STEFURIUC (2009) argued that the distribution of power across levels should influence whether the actors have incentives to form congruent coalitions. As suggested by the case of Germany, congruent coalitions should be more likely to form in systems where regions are veto players in national-level decision-making (for example, THORLAKSON, 2006). But even in systems where regions do not act as veto players, congruent coalitions should generally be more likely to form. One way to view changes in the likelihood that cross-cutting coalitions will form relates to, first, the strength of power a regional government has in terms of policy implementation – the so-called ‘self-rule’ in terms of MARKS *et al.* (2008a) – in the respective region and, second, its influence on decision-making at the national level, the degree of so-called ‘shared rule’ as labelled by MARKS *et al.* (2008a) (for further clarification, see also below). From a general perspective, it would be assumed that the freedom of political parties and individual politicians at the sub-national level with regard to government formation increases according to the competencies and power that a regional government (and thus the actors in the regional political arena) has. Therefore, the following are hypothesized:

Hypothesis 5a: Cross-cutting coalitions are more likely to form the more competencies a region has in a multilevel structured political system, that is, the greater the self-rule.

Hypothesis 5b: Cross-cutting coalitions are less likely to form in systems where the regions have a high level of influence at the national level, that is, the greater the shared rule.

Sticking with the contextual setting in a region and its position within a multilevel political system, a further factor may be relevant for the outcome of the coalition formation process. Several authors have argued that the character of party competition may influence the decisions of actors involved in sub-national coalition formation (for example, BÄCK, 2003). In a study of local coalitions, DENTERS (1985) argued that if local parties believe that voters base their local vote choices on evaluations of the behaviour of the national parties, they should not have to consider the effects on future elections when forming coalitions. This type of feature has been termed ‘localization’ or ‘nationalization’ of elections

(which may vary both across and within countries), and it is argued here that it should influence the role of congruence in multilevel systems. The inclusion of a variable that reflects the degree of asymmetry between regional and national party systems also covers the effects of voter preference changes over time, in general, and during a legislative period at the national level, in particular. While the first aspect refers to the process of ‘dealignment’ (for example, DALTON *et al.*, 1984), which results in higher volatility and, therefore, in an increasing chance for new parties to win parliamentary representation, the second point refers to the literature on the so-called ‘mid-term loss’: regional elections can be seen as an opportunity for voters to punish the parties that form the current federal government (for example, JEFFERY and HOUGH, 2001; GAINES and CROMBEZ, 2004; BURKHARDT, 2005; WEBER, 2012). This means that the losses of the governing parties and gains of the opposition parties reach their peak in the middle of a legislative period. Both aspects make it more difficult to form coalitions that reflect the partisan composition of government and opposition at the national level. It can therefore be expected that congruent coalitions are more likely to form in regions where the elections are highly nationalized, so that the hypothesis to be tested is thus:

Hypothesis 6: Cross-cutting coalitions are more likely to form in systems where elections are highly ‘localized’, that is, where regional electoral outcomes differ greatly from the national election outcomes.

To sum up, it is expected that, firstly, coalition formation at the regional level should be influenced by the ‘standard’ motives of political actors, that is, the maximization of office and policy payoffs. Secondly, however, it has been argued that in political systems structured by a multilevel character, government formation is influenced or constrained by additional factors. Most importantly, coalitions with a high share of ‘cross-cutting’ seats should be less likely to form in multilevel systems. Moreover, the importance of congruence should vary across polities (that is, the political system and the power of sub-national units in policy-making and political decision-making inside a constitutional system) and depend on the context of party system and party competition.

CASE SELECTION: THE REGIONAL SETTING OF EIGHT EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

This paper has chosen to study government formation in the regions of eight European countries. In order to achieve variation in regional authority in the sample, the paper has based the case selection on the dataset

provided by MARKS *et al.* (2008b). To clarify, a region is defined by identifying the 'principal regional level'. There is great variation in the competencies and the role of the regional authorities in the respective multi-level systems of the eight countries under consideration here. MARKS *et al.* (2008a) distinguished two dimensions in classifying the systems: *regional self-rule*, which is defined very closely with the criteria used in the Council of Europe Charter on Local Self-Government (that is, policy scope, control of economic resources and local representation); and *shared rule*, which centres on the opportunities that are provided to the regions to influence national politics and policy-making. The opposite relationship, the national government's steering of the regions, is implicit in the first dimension of regional self-rule (or rather in the restrictions to regional self-rule). Fig. 1 maps all the countries and the regional units (if they received a score in the regional authority index that is different from the one of the respective country) included in this study along these two dimensions, which illustrates the substantial variation in regional authority in the sample.¹

Following this, a brief presentation of the countries studied in this contribution, classified into four groups based on the dimensions presented by MARKS *et al.* (2008a), is provided: (1) countries where the regions have a low degree of self-rule and a low degree of shared rule (the Czech Republic, Sweden and the UK), (2) countries with a high degree of self-rule and high shared rule (Austria, Belgium and Germany), (3) one country with a high degree of self-rule and a low degree of shared rule (Spain), and (4) a country with low self-rule combined with high shared rule (the Netherlands).

Low self-rule and low shared rule: the Czech Republic, Sweden and the UK

Swedish counties (*landsting*) existing since 1863 all have formal status as local authorities. The fourteen Czech *kraje* are a post-Communist creation (BAUN and MAREK, 2006; ILLNER, 2003; ILLNER and VAJVODA, 2006). Swedish county councils are strongly focused on healthcare, whereas Czech regional authorities mainly have planning and coordinating tasks. The principal sources of revenue for Swedish local authorities are local income tax, central government grants and fiscal equalization grants. Czech regions, on the other hand, are heavily dependent on central government funding.

Generally speaking, regional authorities in these countries can be classified as top-down systems, with a low to medium level of local self-government. The opportunities for county councils to exert influence over national decision-making are very limited. These conclusions are in line with the observations of MARKS *et al.* (2008b), with Sweden and the Czech Republic ranking among the lowest in regional authority among the eight countries.

In the 1997 British election campaign, Labour initiated radical constitutional changes (LARSSON and BÄCK, 2008; LIDSTRÖM, 2001). The institutionalization of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly in 1998 was a consequence of these changes (BULMER *et al.*, 2006; KEATING, 1998; LOUGHLIN, 2001). The Scottish Parliament has a residual legislative power over matters that are not reserved for central government, which gives it a relatively broad task portfolio. The authority of the Welsh Assembly was initially more restricted. Furthermore, the governments of Scotland and Wales are heavily dependent on central government funding. Thus, the two regional authorities

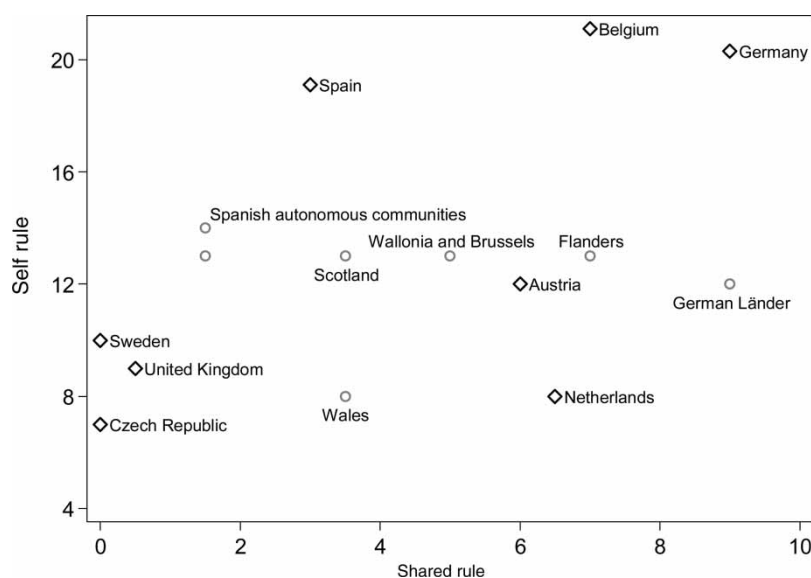


Fig. 1. Degree of regional authority in the countries and their regions under investigation
Source: MARKS *et al.* (2008a)

considered in the UK – Wales and Scotland – display asymmetries, Scotland ranking considerably higher on regional self-rule than Wales (hence we could potentially place Scotland in the ‘high self-rule and low shared rule’ category).

High self-rule and high shared rule: Austria, Belgium and Germany

Austria, Belgium and Germany are all federal systems. Germany’s sixteen federal states (Länder) are mostly post-war constructions in western Germany and the product of reunification in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), respectively (BENZ and LEHMBRUCH, 2002; LEONARDY, 1999). Austrian federalism dates back to ‘the first republic’ established after the First World War (GAMPER, 2006; PLESCHBERGER, 2005). In Belgium, a series of constitutional revisions from 1970 to 1993 finally established a fully fledged federal system with three regions (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels) as well as three linguistic communities (Flemish, French and German; HENDRIKS, 2001a; VERDONCK and DESCHOUWER, 2003; SWENDEN, 2002).

Belgian federated subjects enjoy broad competencies. These are divided between regions and linguistic communities. In Germany, the allocation of competencies across levels is part of the constitution. The basic principle is that the Länder have residual competence after enumeration of the competencies of the federation. Even if in practice most legislation is actually federal, the remit of the Länder is considerable, in particular in terms of education and domestic policies. In Austria, the distribution of powers between the federal state and its Länder is regulated in the Federal Constitutional Act, which grants the Länder a general competence. Shared taxes are by far the most important source of revenue for German Länder. The system gives them little fiscal autonomy, but they play an important role in approving federal taxes and in negotiating the distribution as the consent of the upper chamber (Bundesrat) is required for these matters. Austria has different types of tax revenues which go to the federal government only, to the federal government and the other territorial authorities, to the Länder only, to the Länder and the municipalities, or to the municipalities only. In Belgium, shared taxes are the main source of funding for the regions and communities.

MARKS *et al.* (2008b) gave Germany high scores with regard to shared rule. The scores for self-rule are also high – second only to Belgium. Germany is therefore a case that combines a high level of regional autonomy with a high level of influence over national politics, which can be called a ‘bottom-up’ system of regional government. Similarly, Austria and Belgium also display relatively high levels of shared rule. Like Scotland and Wales in the UK (see above), Belgian federated subjects display asymmetries. With the possible exception of the German linguistic community these are

within the limits of the high self-rule/high shared rule group. The German community is, however, closer to Dutch provinces in terms of regional authority (low self-rule/high shared rule).

High self-rule and low shared rule: Spain

Political regionalization to Autonomous Communities in Spain came about following the transition from the Francoist authoritarian regime (AJA, 2001; KEATING, 1998). After General Francisco Franco’s death in 1975, it was deemed necessary to provide the ‘historic nationalities’ of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia with an option for autonomy. The post-Franco constitution therefore granted autonomy to the ‘nationalities and regions’. The regional governments have a very broad task portfolio and account for a considerable share (38%) of public spending. Funding draws on tax revenues raised by the Autonomous Communities, central government grants and a fiscal equalization system. Here, the Spanish system has been classified as a dualistic system due to the high degree of self-rule and relatively low level of shared rule. However, Spain can clearly be considered as being closer to the federal model of Austria, Germany and Belgium than to the top-down models in the Czech Republic, Sweden and the UK. Asymmetries between Spanish Autonomous Communities – particularly with regard to the ‘historical’ communities’ fiscal autonomy – do not affect the classification of Spain.

Low self-rule and high shared rule: the Netherlands

Until the late eighteenth century, the modern Dutch state was a federal republic of sovereign provinces. Today, the provinces have a much less significant role (for an overview, see ANDEWEG and IRWIN, 2005; DE VRIES, 2004; HENDRIKS, 2001b). Most service provision falls within the remit of the municipalities. Dutch local government is highly dependent on central government funding. Regional government in the Netherlands is often a matter of co-government. Due to a very low score for regional self-rule and formal and informal arrangements for linking the regional and national levels, the Netherlands can be considered a ‘fused’ system. The Dutch system, however, is clearly much closer to the top-down systems than to the three federations being considered here.

DATA FOR ANALYSING GOVERNMENT FORMATION IN MULTILEVEL STATES

Information on a wide array of factors needs to be collected in order to evaluate the hypotheses about coalition formation. An important variable in the analysis of coalition formation and policy-making is the policy preferences of political actors on decisive policy dimensions (for example, LAVER and SHEPSLE, 1996;

BRÄUNINGER and DEBUS, 2009; KNILL *et al.*, 2010; MARTIN and VANBERG, 2011). When studying national-level coalitions there are two main sources of party policy positions available: data drawn from expert surveys (for example, LAVER and HUNT, 1992; BENOIT and LAVER, 2006; WARWICK, 2006); and data drawn from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) (for example, KLINGEMANN *et al.*, 2006). The CMP data are based on a content analysis of the election manifestos of the political parties in several countries during the post-war period. When studying coalition formation at the sub-national level, information on party policy positions is not readily available (however, see ALONSO, 2012). This means that gathering such data can represent a significant hurdle.

The present paper follows the approach taken by the CMP project and, thus, the idea that election manifestos cover the positions of a party on a couple of policy dimensions at a particular point in time. Nearly all parties publish a programme for government in which its goals for the next legislative period are outlined. Election manifestos have the additional advantage that they are – usually – published before every election, so that changes in the parties' policy positions can be observed. Moreover, because election programmes must normally be passed by a party congress or at least by a wider group of party elites, they should more or less reflect the mean of the positions of all intra-party groups weighted by their importance (KLINGEMANN *et al.*, 1994).

In the case of regional parties, no comparative dataset exists that covers party policy positions or issue salencies. A study by POGORELIS *et al.* (2005) developed a CMP-styled coding scheme to extract issue salencies of Scottish and Welsh regional parties. Their promising results showed that regional parties in the UK do indeed stress different policy issues compared with their national counterparts. LIBBRECHT *et al.* (2009) developed a similar coding scheme for the parties in the Spanish Autonomous Communities. Because of the problems involved in obtaining election manifestos for all parties represented in regional parliaments, Libbrecht *et al.* focused, however, on a hand-coded analysis of manifestos of the two major Spanish parties, the socialist PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) and the conservative PP (Partido Popular), in nine autonomous regions only. BRÄUNINGER and DEBUS (2008, 2012) (cf. DÄUBLER and DEBUS, 2009) collected the manifestos and coalition agreements of German parties and governments at the Länder level and conducted automated content analysis using the Wordscores technique (LAVER *et al.*, 2003; cf. LOWE, 2008). Their results showed that German parties at the state level not only adopt policy positions that converge with the preferences of the respective electorate in each Land (MÜLLER, 2009b), but also that the state party positions are better predictors of coalition outcomes at the state level than the positions of the national parties (BRÄUNINGER and DEBUS, 2008, p. 333).

Therefore, the BRÄUNINGER and DEBUS (2008, 2012) dataset that contains parties' positions from 1990 onwards is used as a starting point for the analysis. The present authors collected election manifestos for Austrian, Belgian, British, Czech, Dutch, Spanish and Swedish regional parties in order to increase the variance in the types of multilevel systems studied. Due to the problems involved in obtaining the respective documents for older elections, the authors concentrated on acquiring the manifestos for the regional elections held in the Netherlands in 2007, in Spain (mostly) in 2006, and in Sweden in 2006. In the case of the Czech regions, all manifestos were collected for the 2008 regional elections and a few ones prepared for the 2004 elections. For Britain, all regional election manifestos since the first regional elections following devolution were included.² For the Flemish, Walloon and Brussels parties, the authors referred to the manifestos of the 2004 and 2009 regional elections. In the case of Austria, most of the state party manifestos were from the period between 2003 and 2009.

The positions of regional parties on three dimensions per country – economic, societal and decentralization policy – were assessed by applying the Wordscores approach. At least one of the three dimensions arranges party competition according to the LIPSET and ROKKAN (1967) cleavage theory in the countries under consideration.³ The main advantage of approaches such as Wordscores is that the identification of the positions is left completely to computer algorithms. Therefore, potential problems associated with CMP-styled hand-coding (VOLKENS, 2001) or the 'dictionary procedure' (LAVER and GARRY, 2000) are prevented (for example, BENOIT *et al.*, 2009; MIKHAYLOV *et al.*, 2012). 'Wordscores' is based on the assumption that political actors do not use words at random. Instead, it is assumed that parties use some words more frequently than others, and some not at all, in order to include 'ideological signals' (PAPPI and SHIKANO, 2004) in election manifestos. For example, to show their hostile position towards raising taxes, liberal parties often use the word 'tax' or 'taxes' in connection with decreasing the tax burden, whereas socialist parties try to avoid the using of words like 'tax' or 'taxes'. In other words, it is assumed that the similarity of word usage reveals the similarity of the respective documents' meaning. Technically, Wordscores compares the relative word frequency of texts whose programmatic positions are known with the word distribution of one or more texts of the same character whose position is unknown. LAVER *et al.* (2003, pp. 314–315) referred to these two sorts of documents as 'reference texts' and 'virgin texts', respectively. In essence, the position attributed to a virgin text depends on its similarity with the reference texts regarding the frequency at which words appear in the documents.

More precisely, the Wordscores technique can be broken down into the following steps. First, the most

important policy dimensions have to be identified. In the second step, 'reference texts' must be selected. This is crucial for the subsequent procedure as well as for the stability of the results as the word frequencies are used to estimate the positions of the 'virgin texts' or, in more practical terms, the political actors' positions. In order to obtain valid results, the 'reference texts' must meet various criteria. They must be of the same character as the 'virgin texts', meaning that all texts should be very similar in terms of their structure (LAVER *et al.*, 2003, p. 315). To assess the policy area-specific position of an election manifesto, it is therefore most appropriate to use election manifestos as 'reference texts'. A further critical factor is the allocation of political actors' positions to the selected 'reference texts'. When assuming that election manifestos are the best choice for 'reference texts' due to their wide coverage of policy issues, it is necessary to select reference scores (for example, party positions extracted in expert surveys) that fit in terms of actors, time and policy dimension, and allocate them to the corresponding 'virgin text'.

In particular, the use of election manifestos from the national level as 'reference texts' could pose a potential problem when deriving the policy positions

of regional parties. Thus, it is assumed that parties from different levels of the political system use the same type of language and discuss topics related to similar policy areas. Despite these assumptions, a comparison between the policy positions of Swiss cantonal parties estimated on the basis of Wordscores (GIGER *et al.*, 2011) and data based on a survey among regional party leaders performed by LADNER and BRÄNDLE (2001) shows a significantly positive correlation (Pearson's $r = 0.68$) between both different types of measurements.⁴ This finding indicates that applying automated text analysis provides promising results for estimating the policy preferences of regional political actors.⁵

How does one measure 'cross-cutting' coalitions in an adequate manner? Applying a simple dummy variable that differentiates between 'fully congruent' and 'fully incongruent' coalitions implies that a large number of very different potential party combinations would end up in the cross-cutting category. The latter would be the case in multilevel systems with a large number of parliamentary represented parties. Here, the chance of a coalition being cross-cutting increases when following the simple dichotomous coding scheme described

Table 1. Coding the cross-cutting degree of a coalition

Coalition number	Christian Democrats (CDU) (69 seats)	Social Democrats (SPD) (39 seats)	Free Democratic Party (FDP) (14 seats)	Greens (19 seats)	Republicans (REP) (14 seats)	Seats held by the coalition	Cross-cutting coalition	Share of 'cross-cutting seats'
1	0	0	0	0	1	14	0	0.000
2	0	0	0	1	0	19	0	0.000
3	0	0	0	1	1	33	0	0.000
4	0	0	1	0	0	14	0	0.000
5	0	0	1	0	1	28	1	0.500
6	0	0	1	1	0	33	1	0.424
7	0	0	1	1	1	47	1	0.298
8	0	1	0	0	0	39	0	0.000
9	0	1	0	0	1	53	0	0.000
10	0	1	0	1	0	58	0	0.000
11	0	1	0	1	1	72	0	0.000
12	0	1	1	0	0	53	1	0.264
13	0	1	1	0	1	67	1	0.209
14	0	1	1	1	0	72	1	0.194
15	0	1	1	1	1	86	1	0.163
16	1	0	0	0	0	69	0	0.000
17	1	0	0	0	1	83	1	0.169
18	1	0	0	1	0	88	1	0.216
19	1	0	0	1	1	102	1	0.324
20	1	0	1	0	0	83	0	0.000
21	1	0	1	0	1	97	1	0.144
22	1	0	1	1	0	102	1	0.186
23	1	0	1	1	1	116	1	0.284
24	1	1	0	0	0	108	1	0.361
25	1	1	0	0	1	122	1	0.434
26	1	1	0	1	0	127	1	0.457
27	1	1	0	1	1	141	1	0.489
28	1	1	1	0	0	122	1	0.320
29	1	1	1	0	1	136	1	0.390
30	1	1	1	1	0	141	1	0.411
31	1	1	1	1	1	155	1	0.465

previously. In order to tackle this shortcoming, a continuous measure was generated. This variable can be understood as the share of the parliamentarians who would have to leave a possible coalition in order for the coalition no longer to be cross-cutting. As an illustration, Table 1 lists all coalitions which could have been formed after the Baden-Württemberg state election in 1996. A coalition formed between the Free Democratic Party (FDP), which was part of the coalition at the national level, and the Republicans (REP) only (coalition #5), who held no seats in the Bundestag, is coded 0.5 since half of the seats are held by a party that was not governing at the national level. If the Christian Democrats (CDU) were to join the hypothetical FDP/REP coalition (coalition #21), then the value of the refined cross-cutting variable would drop significantly since the Republicans' seat share within the coalition then decreases.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL GOVERNMENT FORMATION

Regional party competition in eight European countries

As mentioned above, the positions of regional parties on different dimensions were determined by applying the Wordscores technique to a large number of regional election manifestos. In total, more than nine hundred election manifestos were collected, so that the analysis covers seventy-two regional parties in the selected eight countries. In cases where the authors were not able to find a programmatic document detailing the policy preferences of a regional party, the arithmetic mean of the respective party's score was allocated to the missing cases. The period covered started in the 1990s and ended at the end of the 2000s. To be more specific, regional government formation was analysed for the following periods:

- In Austria between 1991 and 2009.
- In Belgium between 1995 and 2009.
- In Germany between 1990 and 2009.
- In Sweden between 1998 and 2006.
- In the Dutch case between 1991 and 2007.
- In Spain between 1991 and 2007.

In the case of the Czech Republic, the second and third regional elections held in 2004 and 2008,⁶ respectively, were incorporated, whereas all regional elections in the UK since devolution in 1999 (that is, the Scottish and Welsh regional elections in 1999, 2003 and 2007) were included.

A particularity of government formation in the Austrian states must be discussed here. In seven of nine states a constitutional requirement existed until 1999 which meant that cabinet offices must be allocated to the parties represented in the parliament according to a proportional norm. Although this might be considered to

reduce the merit of analysing government formation in Austrian states, one must refer to the formulation of policy agreements between parties at the regional level. Despite the fact that all (or most) parliamentary parties become members of the cabinet, some parties agree on a common policy programme for the legislative period. These 'policy coalitions' were identified by studying election reports in the *Austrian Yearbook of Politics* (POLITISCHE AKADEMIE DER ÖVP, various years) and they are referred to in the analysis as the coalitions ultimately formed.⁷

The following figures show the positions of regional parties in the selected countries under study. The descriptive analysis of regional party competition is restricted to the Dutch and German cases so that the party positions in two states are covered that allocate different degrees of authority to the regional level. In addition, the positions of British parties at the regional level are presented in order to include a country in which the decentralization dimension represents a decisive dimension of party competition. The party positions from the expert survey by BENOIT and LAVER (2006) served as reference scores for the Wordscores analysis.⁸ Reference texts here were the respective national election manifestos of the parties for the first national election in the twenty-first century.⁹

As party competition in Germany and the Netherlands is mainly structured by an economic left-right conflict and by a policy dimension that differentiates between progressive and conservative views on the order of society, Figs 2 and 3 present the mean positions of regional parties in both countries on these dimensions. As the figures show, the ordering of the German and Dutch parties differs between the economic and societal policy dimension. In addition, the positions of regional parties clearly vary between regions and between sub-national organizations of each party. Consider, for instance, the policy positions of the German and Dutch Christian Democratic parties (CDU/CDA) and the Social Democrats (SPD/PvdA) in the *Länder* and *Provinces*, respectively. Their positions vary across the economic and societal policy dimension, so that the programmatic distance between a Christian democratic regional party and a left-wing or ecologist party may be less when looking at the manifestos of the regional parties than it would be for the national parties' manifestos.

Turning to regional party competition in the UK, where elections to the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly have taken place since 1999, a fairly strong relationship is found between the positions of regional parties on the economic dimension and the decentralization conflict line. The more a party is positioned to the left on the economic dimension, the more it favours further decentralization. One 'bloc' of parties is represented by the Welsh regionalists (Plaid Cymru) and the Liberal Democrats. Both

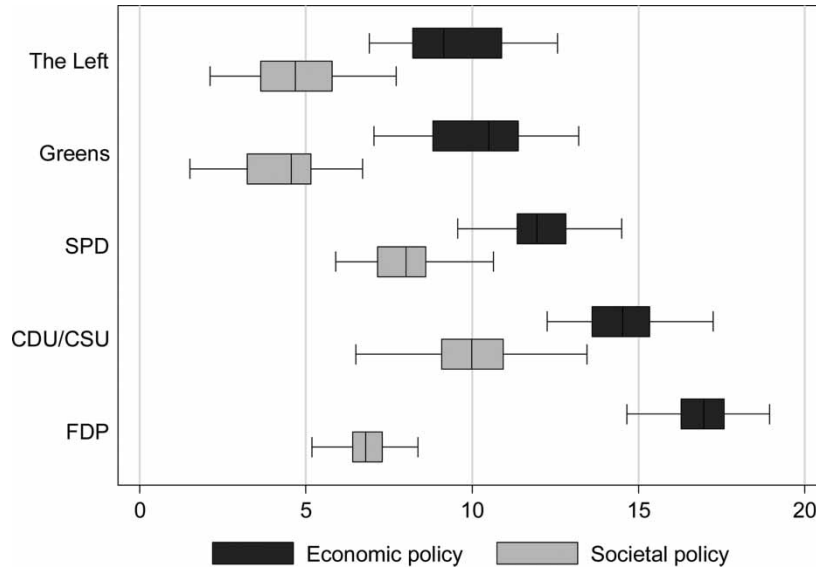


Fig. 2. Positions of German regional parties on the economic and societal policy dimension

Note: Low scores indicate an economically leftist and societal progressive policy position, while high scores indicate economically liberal and societal conservative policy preferences

parties clearly favour further decentralization and a ‘strong’ state on economic and welfare issues. The Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) appears to be – somewhat surprisingly – more moderate in terms of economic policy and decentralization policy when comparing with the sub-state election manifestos of Plaid Cymru. As becomes clear from Fig. 4, Labour, the Conservatives and the right-wing populist UK Independence Party (UKIP) are the parties that are sceptical on further delegation of competencies to the sub-state units in Britain. In addition, the analysis

of regional election manifestos reveals that the Liberal Democrats, together with the SNP and Plaid Cymru, are the new left-wing parties on the economic policy dimension, whereas Labour adopts a centrist position on this issue area, at least on the sub-state level. When the few outliers of the Labour and Conservative election manifestos are seriously considered, there is, however, a potential for coalitions with the parties mentioned last and the Liberal Democrats or regionalist parties in Scotland and Wales in terms of economic and decentralization policy.

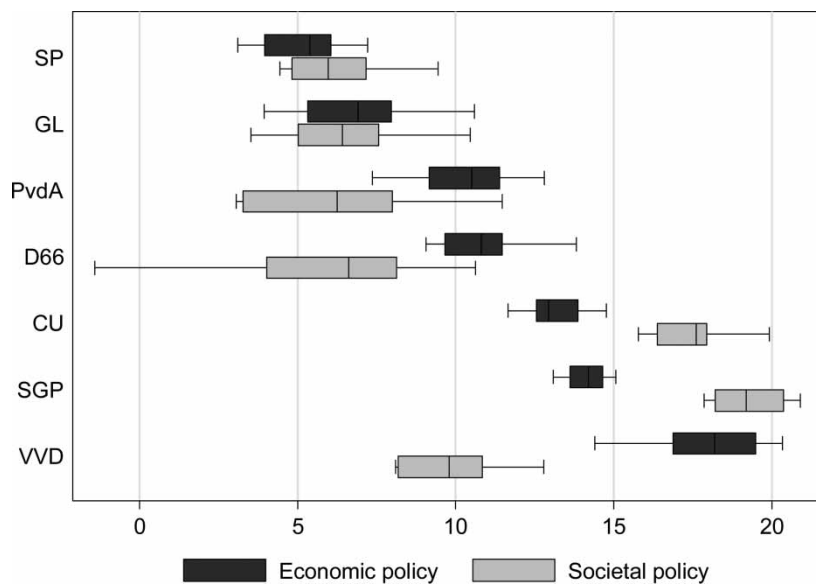


Fig. 3. Positions of Dutch regional parties on the economic and societal policy dimension

Note: Low scores indicate an economically leftist and societal progressive policy position, while high scores indicate economically liberal and societal conservative policy preferences

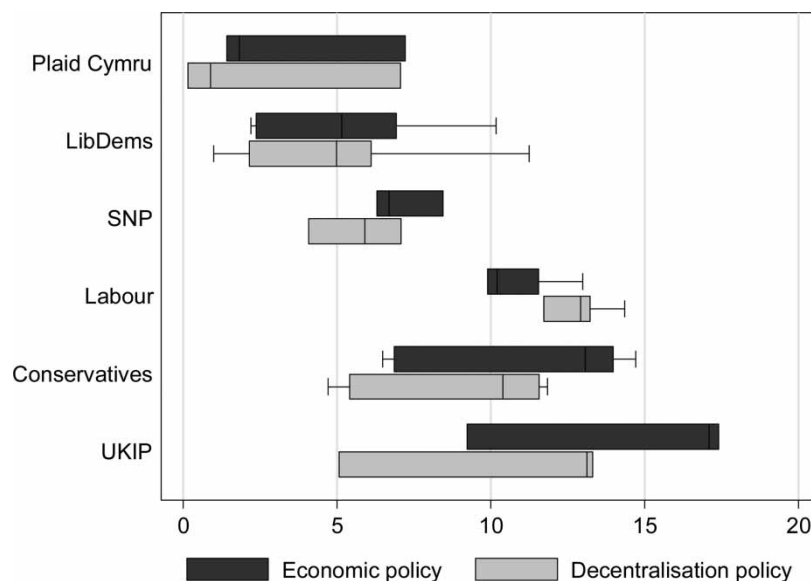


Fig. 4. Positions of Scottish and Welsh regional parties on the economic and decentralization policy dimension

Note: Low scores indicate an economically leftist position and a positive stance on further decentralization, while high scores indicate economically liberal and sceptical policy positions on further decentralization

Determinants of coalition formation at the regional level

To identify the factors that drive government formation at the regional level, this section refers to a statistical approach that has become standard in studies of government formation following the study by MARTIN and STEVENSON (2001). This approach models government formation as an unordered discrete choice problem, where each formation opportunity represents one case and the set of discrete alternatives is the set of all potential combinations of parties that might form a government. Thus, it is assumed that the actors in a political system choose one of the often numerous governments that may form. The number of potential governments in a political system is equal to $2^n - 1$, where n is the number of parties represented in parliament.

To evaluate this discrete choice problem, MARTIN and STEVENSON (2001) adopted the conditional logit model (MCFADDEN, 1973). Applied to coalition formation, the logic is that the actors involved in bargaining make a choice between the governments that may form. The dependent variable in this analysis describes the actors' choice and is a variable indicating the outcome in each formation opportunity.¹⁰ Using this type of approach, one can include a number of different types of variables; for example, one can include variables drawn from more traditional coalition theories, which typically vary across potential governments, that is, they are choice-specific features (for example, if a government is minimal winning).¹¹ In addition, one can also include variables that vary only across formation opportunities, for example, across contexts, such as a feature measuring the nationalization of the electoral results in the different regions. Such variables,

however, must be interacted with a choice-specific feature in order to remain part of the analysis. As the authors are interested here in evaluating whether certain contextual features increase or decrease the importance of regional-national congruence in coalition patterns, such contextual features are thus interacted with a variable specifying if a potential government is congruent with the national-level cabinet in office at the time of formation.¹²

Before turning to the results of the multivariate analysis, Table 2 provides an overview of the characteristics of potential and formed coalitions on the regional level in the eight countries under study. As shown, 219 coalitions that formed were minimal winning and ninety-six were minimum winning. Furthermore, 202 of the 352 (coalition) governments were in line with the bargaining proposition model. If, by contrast, a party combination has no parliamentary majority, then the chance of this potential government getting into office should decrease. As the data reveal, only forty-one of the 352 governments under consideration here did not control a majority of seats. With respect to the results of the descriptive statistics shown in Table 2, there is evidence for a pivotal position of the largest parliamentary actor in the coalition game: 299 of 352 governments include the largest parliamentary party.

The second group of variables includes information on the ideological diversity of each potential coalition as well as an incumbency measure. In all eight countries the policy area-specific distance of all possible coalitions reaches a significantly higher value than the policy area-specific heterogeneity of all formed coalitions. Coalitions also seem to be more likely to form if they include the same parties as the incumbent government.

Table 2. Characteristics of potential and formed coalitions in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom

(a) Potential coalitions												
Country	Alternatives	Minority government	Minimal winning	Minimum winning	Bargaining proposition	Largest party	Incumbent government	Share of 'cross-cutting seats'	Ideological distance			
									Economic	Societal	Decentralization	
Austria	548	266	83	49	210	300	34	0.165	4.72	7.05	2.59	
Belgium	5092	2551	241	120	322	2552	12	0.254	12.35	14.30	11.40	
Czech Republic	654	314	111	30	215	340	26	0.160	7.42	7.14	4.42	
Germany	1573	642	230	87	461	682	73	0.188	3.84	4.55	3.49	
Netherlands	19332	9781	1039	549	2479	8992	60	0.269	9.09	11.55	2.75	
Spain	2008	967	223	97	515	824	75	0.146	5.99	6.85	4.09	
Sweden	9988	4964	677	162	1377	5024	60	0.253	8.68	8.90	4.35	
UK	202	99	23	10	56	104	4	0.179	4.96	5.28	5.68	
Total	39397	19584	2627	1104	5635	18818	344	0.250	8.93	10.57	4.41	

(b) Formed coalitions												
Country	Formations	Minority government	Minimal winning	Minimum winning	Bargaining proposition	Largest party	Incumbent government	Share of 'cross-cutting seats'	Ideological distance			
									Economic	Societal	Decentralization	
Austria	34	6	21	8	18	33	20	0.091	1.80	2.41	1.95	
Belgium	12	0	5	1	4	9	1	0.240	8.40	9.60	6.16	
Czech Republic	26	4	10	1	11	25	7	0.153	5.75	5.22	3.22	
Germany	79	3	70	32	69	68	32	0.119	1.79	2.36	1.74	
Netherlands	60	1	20	2	19	53	36	0.314	7.75	8.72	2.21	
Spain	75	13	58	46	60	59	45	0.057	1.08	1.23	0.74	
Sweden	60	12	31	5	17	46	23	0.049	5.76	6.46	4.67	
UK	6	2	4	1	4	6	1	0.142	2.51	2.06	3.70	
Total	352	41*	219*	96*	202*	299*	165*	0.131 ⁺	3.88 ⁺	4.36 ⁺	2.42 ⁺	

Note: *Correlation between a formed/not formed coalition significant at the 0.1% level (Fisher's exact test); and ⁺ differences in means (*t*-test) between a formed/not formed coalition significant at the 0.1% level.

Table 3. Conditional logit analyses of regional government formation in eight countries

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
<i>Policy factors</i>					
Economic policy	-0.18** (0.03)	-0.16** (0.03)	-0.15** (0.03)	-0.13** (0.29)	-0.12** (0.04)
Societal/decentralization policy	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.05* (0.03)	-0.07** (0.03)	-0.08** (0.02)
<i>Size factors</i>					
Minority government	-2.07** (0.40)	-2.82** (0.43)	-2.92** (0.43)	-2.86** (0.43)	-2.90** (0.99)
Minimal winning	1.45** (0.24)	1.16** (0.23)	1.06** (0.23)	1.08 (0.24)	1.01** (0.26)
Minimum winning	0.02 (0.25)	-0.28 (0.25)	-0.25 (0.25)	-0.28 (0.26)	-0.27 (0.40)
Bargaining proposition	0.23 (0.22)	0.39† (0.21)	0.39† (0.21)	0.43 (0.21)	0.45 (0.35)
Largest party included	0.62* (0.28)	0.67* (0.26)	0.77** (0.26)	0.80 (0.27)	0.87** (0.33)
<i>Institutional factors</i>					
Incumbent government	3.38** (0.27)	3.34** (0.26)	3.33** (0.25)	3.23** (0.25)	3.12** (0.74)
<i>Multilevel factors</i>					
Cross-cutting coalitions		-3.61** (0.62)	-10.40** (2.15)	-0.91 2.89	-6.76** (1.49)
Cross-cutting coalitions × regional authority			0.25* (0.13)		
Cross-cutting coalitions × localization			7.46** (2.41)	10.53** (2.76)	10.23* (4.30)
Cross-cutting coalitions × shared rule				0.77** 0.17	
Cross-cutting coalitions × self-rule				-1.02** (0.31)	
<i>Interactions with country dummies</i>					
Cross-cutting coalitions in Sweden					-8.68** (0.53)
Cross-cutting coalitions in the Netherlands					3.73** (0.36)
Cross-cutting coalitions in Spain					-2.35† (1.24)
Cross-cutting coalitions in Belgium					-7.11 (4.73)
Cross-cutting coalitions in Austria					-0.60† (0.35)
Cross-cutting coalitions in the Czech Republic					0.88† (0.45)
Cross-cutting coalitions in the UK					-5.22** (1.30)
Number of alternatives	38 990	38 990	38 990	38 990	38 990
Number of formations	352	352	352	352	352
Pseudo- R^2	0.439	0.460	0.471	0.484	0.494
Akaike information criterion (AIC)	1458.98	1407.62	1381.60	1349.98	1314.58
Prediction rate	54.3	54.6	56.0	55.7	56.0
Independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA) test	0.613	0.655	0.765	0.836	0.864

Note: Robust standard errors (clustered by election) are given in parentheses. † $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$. The reference group in Model 5 are all coalition formation opportunities in the German Länder.

The ‘incumbent government’ variable is therefore coded ‘1’ if a potential coalition consists of exactly those parties that form the currently ruling government. There is also evidence that parties avoid the formation of coalitions the higher the share of cross-cutting seats inside a potential coalition.

The section now turns to evaluating the hypotheses about what determines coalition formation in the regions of the eight countries in a multivariate analysis. As mentioned above, the paper relies on the conditional logit model where the formation opportunities are the cases and the potential governments are the choices.

Five regression models that gradually incorporate further explanatory variables are estimated. The first model, presented in Table 3, includes policy distances, variables that account for office-seeking theories and a variable that identifies the incumbent (coalition) government. The distance between parties in a potential coalition on the economic and the country-specific second policy dimension are significantly negative, which implies that coalitions are – as hypothesized – less likely to form the more diverse the involved regional parties are with respect to their policy positions. With regard to office-seeking theories, the results show that minimal winning coalitions are significantly more likely to form, whereas minority governments are less likely to form. In addition, a coalition is more likely to become the next government if it includes the largest party in the regional parliament, or if it consists of the parties that form the incumbent cabinet. Thus, there is support for the second and third hypotheses as well as for some of the hypotheses that were based on office-driven theories of coalition formation. These effects mostly remain stable after incorporating multilevel factors (Models 2–5), implying that government formation at the sub-national level is highly influenced by policy area-specific preferences of political actors, as measured on the basis of the election manifestos of regional parties.

Of particular interest here are multilevel factors and their impact on government formation at the regional level. In line with the fourth hypothesis, the conditional logit analysis shows a strong negative impact of cross-cutting coalitions, which implies that (coalition) governments are less likely to form if they have a high seat share of cross-cutting parties and, thus, do not reflect the partisan composition of government and opposition at the superior level to a decisive degree. When interacting the cross-cutting variable with the degree of regional authority according to the dataset by MARKS *et al.* (2008b), one obtains a positive and significant effect, suggesting that parties' incentives to avoid cross-cutting coalitions are lower the more competencies the respective region has. This gives some preliminary support for the fifth hypothesis. There is also evidence to support the sixth hypothesis, which focuses on the effect of localization of a party system on government formation: the more a party system on the regional level deviates from the national sphere of a political system, the higher the seat share of cross-cutting parties within the respective region (see Models 5 and 6). Thus, there is support for the general idea that the role of national-regional congruence varies across contexts.

Finally, the authors explicitly differentiate between the concepts of 'shared rule' and 'self-rule' as mentioned in Hypotheses 5a and 5b. It was anticipated that cross-cutting coalitions would become less likely the more regional governments are involved in decision-making in the national sphere, whereas cross-cutting coalitions should be less likely in cases where regions have no

significant policy-making power or autonomy. As the results of Model 4 indicate, the findings do not correspond with the predictions. Instead, they show that cross-cutting coalitions are significantly more likely the more regional governments are interlocked in decision-making procedures at the national level. There is also no empirical evidence to suggest that cross-cutting coalitions are more likely in countries and regions, respectively, with higher scores for self-rule.¹³ Instead of interacting the 'cross-cutting' degree of a potential coalition with the regional authority data by MARKS *et al.* (2008b), it is also possible to estimate country-specific interaction effects (see Model 5). Compared with Germany, which serves as the reference category in the fifth regression model, cross-cutting coalitions are less likely to be formed in Scotland and Wales, the Austrian Länder, the Spanish provinces and in the Swedish regions, whereas they are significantly more likely in the Dutch provinces and the Czech *kraje*. The latter is a quite surprising finding, given the lower degree of regional authority in the Netherlands and the Czech Republic when compared with Germany.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the analysis of regional election manifestos have shown that patterns of party competition at the regional level differ from those at the national level, and that there is significant variation in the parties' positions across regions. The data on parties' policy positions drawn from the regional manifestos were then used in a conditional logit analysis to predict coalition outcomes in the regions of the eight studied countries. The results suggest that regional government formation is not only determined by variables that originate from office and policy-seeking theories on coalition formation which are generally used to explain government formation at the national level (for example, MARTIN and STEVENSON, 2001). Moreover, variables that reflect multilevel features are also decisive for the outcome of the government formation process at the regional level, which indicates that the behaviour of political actors at the regional level is restricted by the patterns of party competition in the national sphere: cross-cutting coalitions are clearly less likely to form in all multilevel systems studied here. This finding suggests that there is pressure from the superior level to install such coalitions in the regions that reflect the partisan composition of government and opposition at the national level.

With the aim of explaining the varying role of congruence, some contextual features were also included in the analysis, and it was found that congruent coalitions are more unlikely to form in contexts where the regional party systems are not or only slightly nationalized, that is, constellations that are very dissimilar to

those at the national level. There is also empirical evidence that the share of cross-cutting parties in coalitions is larger if a region has strong policy-making competencies. Somewhat puzzling, however, is the finding that cross-cutting coalitions are more likely to form the more a regional government is involved in political decision-making in the national arena. One reason for this might be that the 'top down' perspective on regional government formation adopted in this paper only partly reflects the overall strategy of parties in multilevel systems. It could be argued, for instance, that government formation at the regional level is a 'proving ground' for future alliances at the federal level.

A number of studies have identified this type of 'bottom up' strategy in the behaviour of Italian parties in the regions (WILSON, 2009) or of German parties at the Länder level (for example, JUN, 1994; DOWNS, 1998). Prominent examples are the coalitions between the Social Democrats and Liberals in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia formed in 1956 and 1966, respectively. A coalition of this kind was not possible at the federal level until the SPD adopted a more ideologically moderate policy position in 1959 in favour of market economy principles (SAALFELD, 2000, p. 45). Thus, for policy-related as well as for strategic reasons, the state level appears to be an ideal forum for learning how to govern together. A further example is the Belgian government formation process in 2010. The first coalition option to feature in discussions regarding the next Belgian government reflected the partisan composition of governments in the two main Belgian regions, Wallonia and Flanders. This can be explained by the fact that the Belgian regions are so important for national policy-making that it would make sense to include all parties that form the regional governments in the next national government as well. This 'bottom up' perspective strengthens the importance of regions in political decision-making and again highlights the importance of relaxing assumptions that are based on 'methodological nationalism' (SNYDER, 2001; JEFFERY, 2008).

The data on regional party preferences and the analysis of government formation at the regional level presented here also provide impetus for further studies. First, further studies should evaluate the role of centralization of party organizations, where similar hypotheses could be developed as when focusing on regional authority, but instead of focusing on the variation across regions, one could address the variation across party organizations (for example, THORLAKSON, 2011). For example, it would be expected that a high degree of centralization would lead to more congruent coalitions.

Second, the policy positions of regional parties can be used as a dependent variable. It could be argued that the political culture in a region, measured by macro-sociological indicators such as the share of Roman Catholics or blue-collar workers (LIPSET and ROKKAN, 1967), should have an impact on the deviation of the regional

party from the policy position of the party core (for example, MÜLLER, 2009b; GIGER *et al.*, 2011).

Third, incentives arise in the analysis of government formation in special cases like Austria. As cabinet posts are allocated in terms of the proportional seat share of parties in the regional parliament in most Austrian states, further studies could examine the coalitions that should have formed according to the strength and policy positions of regional parties. Given that Austrian parties at the state level formulate policy agreements for a full legislative term, a further question of interest is how the parties distribute portfolios in an all-party coalition government despite the existence of a coalition policy programme. It might be expected that the coalition parties assume the most important cabinet offices and for the 'opposition' parties to receive the portfolios that are of minor relevance (for example, WARWICK and DRUCKMAN, 2006; BÄCK *et al.*, 2011).

Lastly, it seems worthwhile to shed light on the impact of the partisan composition of regional governments on specific policy outputs. Can 'partisan politics' also be observed in the sub-national sphere similarly to the national level of policy-making (SCHMIDT, 1996; CUSACK, 1999; BRÄUNINGER, 2005; KNILL *et al.*, 2010)? Studies on the determinants of government expenditures of Swiss cantons show, for instance, that left-wing party participation in cantonal governments has no effect on budget size (VATTER and FREITAG, 2007), while studies on policy-making in the German states show, by contrast, that government expenditure in policy areas where state governments have strong competencies are strongly affected by the partisan composition of governments (SCHNEIDER, 2010). More specific measures of policy preferences of political actors in combination with a comparative research design may help to overcome shortcomings of studies that focus on partisan politics in the regions of one country only.

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NOTES

1. It should be made clear here that even though variation across countries is mainly presented in this case, the unit of analysis in the multivariate analysis is a so-called 'formation opportunity', which refers to situations after regional elections (that is, the variation within countries, across regions and across time is being studied).

2. The only missing manifesto in the present analysis is that of the Scottish Labour Party for the 1999 parliamentary elections.
3. Party competition in Germany and the Netherlands is mainly structured by an economic and a societal conflict line, which differentiates between progressive or libertarian policy preferences, on the one side, and conservative or authoritarian positions, on the other side. In Spain, Belgium and the UK, decentralization issues structure party competition additionally to the economic left–right conflict. Austrian, Czech and Swedish party competition is mainly determined by conflicts in economic policy only.
4. There is also a similar, positive and significant relationship between the left–right measure and positions generated using data collected within the framework of the Swiss Electoral Studies and a comprehensive survey among Swiss local parties conducted by several Swiss social scientists (see <http://www.socio.ch/par/>).
5. However, estimating positions using automated text analysis seems to be only reasonable if the chosen policy dimensions do reflect preferences on a number of related issues, rather than on individual controversies.
6. The elections held in Prague are not included, since the regional and municipal spheres are very hard to disentangle in the Czech capital.
7. Similarly, in Swedish regions (and municipalities) all or most parties are represented (on a proportional basis) in the formal executive, which suggests that no coalitions form in these systems. However, a majority party or coalition appoints committee leaders and full-time posts, which form a kind of informal executive, and previous research is followed that has characterized the coalitions that form when these posts are elected as ‘government coalitions’ (for example, BÄCK, 2003). The data on the governing coalitions in the Swedish regions were provided by Bo Per Larsson at the Swedish Association of Local and Regional Authorities.
8. In the case of Germany, party positions from the expert survey by LAVER and HUNT (1992) were also used in order to take account of the longer period under study.
9. In the case of Austria and the Czech Republic, this paper refers to the 2002 federal election manifestos. For the Netherlands and Belgium, this paper refers to the programmatic documents written before the 2003 elections. In Spain and Sweden, the reference points are the 2004

and 2002 national election manifestos, respectively. For the UK, this paper refers to the 2001 general election manifestos. A special case is Germany, since the reference points are the 1990 and 2002 federal elections.

10. In the conditional logit model, the probability that individual i chooses alternative j is:

$$\Pr(Y_i = j) = \frac{e^{\beta z_{ij}}}{\sum_{j=1}^J e^{\beta z_{ij}}}$$

where $j = 1, 2, \dots, J$ for a total of J alternatives. In this specific application, i equals the system and j equals the potential government, or the choice (for example, GREENE, 2000, p. 862; LONG, 1997, pp. 178–186).

11. The conditional logit model assumes the independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA). That is,

the odds of choosing one alternative over another do not depend on any other alternatives in the choice set or on the values of the covariates associated with those alternatives.

(MARTIN and STEVENSON, 2001, p. 39)

It is checked whether the IIA assumption is violated by applying the test procedure developed by Martin and Stevenson. The IIA assumption is violated if the IIA test value given in Table 3 is lower than 0.05, which is not the case in any regression model presented here.

12. This is because the conditional logit model cannot include features that do not vary across the choices, that is, the potential governments that could form after an election (MARTIN and STEVENSON, 2001, 2010; BRAMBOR *et al.*, 2006; LONG and FREESE, 2006). This makes it impossible to include country or election dummies as fixed effects in the regression models. When, for instance, interacting ‘cross-cutting coalition’ (which varies across choices) with the degree of regional authority, the regional authority variable cannot be included by itself (which would be standard within an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression framework), since it varies only across countries or regions, but not across the choice alternatives (that is here, the potential coalitions).
13. The results of the conditional logit analyses remain stable even when single countries are excluded randomly.

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