

## 1. Introduction: Territoriality of the vote. A framework for analysis

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### 1.1. Introduction

Over the last 40 years the institutional landscape in Western Europe has changed considerably. One of the most notable transformations of the state concern processes of decentralization, federalization and regionalization. This development is well documented by the regional authority index developed by Hooghe, Marks, and Schakel (2010). For the 13 Western European countries which are subject of research in this book, they observe that each of them underwent regional reform except for the Swiss *cantons* and the Faroe islands. Not only the authority exercised by regional governments has increased but the biggest driver of this growth of regional authority has been the proliferation of elected institutions at the regional level (Marks et al., 2010).

Indeed, regional elections have been introduced in various countries at various times in Western Europe. In the post Second World War period regional elections have been held since 1945 for Austrian and German *Länder*, the Faroe islands in Denmark, *regioni a statuto speciale* in Italy, Dutch *provincies*, Swedish *län*, Swiss *cantons* and Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom. Direct elections have been introduced in the 1970s in the *Deutsche Gemeinschaft* in Belgium, Danish *amter* and Greenland, *regioni a statuto ordinario* in Italy, and Norwegian *fylker*. During the 1980s, French *régions* and Spanish *autónomas comunidades* followed and in the 1990s elections have been introduced for *gemeenschappen* and *gewesten* in Belgium, Greek *nomoi*, and London, Scotland and Wales in the United Kingdom. Clearly, regional elections are on the rise. We have now more regional elections in

Western Europe than ever before and the importance of these elections has significantly increased as well.

The decentralization processes and introduction of regional elections has not gone unnoticed by political scientists. Most scholars analyzing regional voting behavior are interested in the difference between the national and regional vote. The starting point of these studies is often the same, namely, the second-order election model (Henderson and McEwen, 2010; Jeffery and Hough, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2009; Tronconi and Roux, 2009). The basic tenet of the second-order election model is that regional elections are subordinate to first-order national elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). As a result, voters tend to turnout less and those voters who bother to cast a vote have a tendency to support opposition, small, or new parties to the detriment of parties in national government.

The rank order of elections has been recently contested by quantitative, aggregate studies. Henderson and McEwen (2010) and Schakel and Dandoy (2012) find that regional turnout is just a bit lower than turnout for national elections for many regions and in some regions, such as some of the Swiss cantons and small (islands) regions such as *Åland*, Faroe islands, Greenland and *Valle d'Aosta*, regional turnout surpasses turnout for national elections. In addition, a study on more than 2900 regional elections (Schakel and Jeffery, 2013) shows that the extent to which government parties lose vote share in regional elections varies highly across regions and depends on the amount of authority exercised by the regional government and the extent to which non-statewide parties (NSWP) participate.

This book aims to study regional elections whilst avoiding what has been termed by Jeffery and Wincott (2010) as 'methodological nationalism', that is, the tendency of political scientists to take the national level as the unit of analysis. This tendency to choose the nation-state as a unit of analysis has been widespread across election research, and has often been an unreflected and uncritical, or 'naturalized' choice. As a result, most research on elections and

election surveys are about ‘national’ elections and more in particular about lower chamber and presidential elections. A consequence of methodological nationalism is that phenomena not manifest or significant at the regional scale of analysis remain ‘hidden from view’ or, as Michael Keating puts it more directly (1998, p.ix): ‘territorial effects have been a constant presence in European politics, but (...) too often social scientists have simply not looked for them, or defined them out of existence where they conflicted with successive modernization paradigms’. This is not to say that the nation-state is becoming redundant or rendered insignificant as regional-scale politics becomes more important. The national scale remains the primary focus of most citizens, political parties and interest groups in most areas of political contestation in most advanced democracies. What this collection of country studies aims to achieve is to study regional elections ‘on their own terms’ instead of taking the ‘prism’ of national level politics as natural starting point (Jeffery and Schakel, 2012).

This book presents 13 country studies which analyze regional election results in depth. The countries are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> These countries are all long-standing democracies with a history of more than five decades of holding free and fair national elections (except for Spain). The country selection is useful to study because they vary considerably in their experience with regional elections: some have held regional elections for more than 50 years (Austria, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland) while other introduced elections in the 1970s (Denmark, Norway), 1980s (France and Spain) and 1990s (Belgium, Greece, and the United Kingdom). In addition, some countries introduced regional elections at various times for different territories: Belgium introduced elections for the *Deutsche Gemeinschaft* in 1974, for the *Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest* in 1989, and for the *Vlaamse Gemeenschap* and the *Région Wallonne* in 1995; in Germany, elections for the East German *Länder* were reinstated in 1990; and in Italy and

Spain elections for *regioni a statuto ordinare*, respectively non-historic *comunidades autónomas* were introduced at later dates than for *regioni a statuto speciale* and the historic *comunidades autónomas*.

Regional elections are held to elect representatives for the regional government and therefore we need to define regional government. A regional government is the government of a coherent territorial entity situated between the local and national levels with a capacity of authoritative decision-making (Hooghe et al., 2010). More in practical terms, Hooghe et al. (2010) include levels of government with an average population greater than 150,000. For the purpose of the book we include regional governments which hold direct elections and exclude regional governments with indirect elections or which do not hold elections. This decision leaves the vexed issue of multiple regional tiers which hold direct elections in a country. We have decided to focus on the highest regional tier which in all cases is also the more authoritative regional government. The following sub-national elections are excluded: provincial elections in Belgium, Italy and Spain, departmental (cantonal) elections in France, *Kreise* elections in Germany, and county elections in the United Kingdom. The list of regional elections analyzed in this book is presented in table 1.1.

[Table 1.1 about here]

The authors apply a common framework which distinguishes between five dependent variables. Each country chapter will discuss congruence between the regional and national vote, turnout, change in vote shares between regional and national elections, government congruence, and electoral strength for non-statewide parties. These dependent variables are selected because they are thought to reflect the most important elements of regional voting behavior (see below). In addition, each of the contributions will discuss a common set of

hypotheses in order to be able to derive the most important factors which lead to divergent regional election results.

Next to a deductive part the country chapters will also employ an inductive research strategy. The contributors of the country studies were asked to assess in how far they can identify factors which may impact on regional voting behavior in addition to the set of variables identified in the common framework. In other words, a 'top-down' approach is combined with a 'bottom-up' line of research. In the conclusion of the book we will make an overall assessment of the various proposed independent variables. We hope that the combination of deductive and inductive elements in the research framework does justice to the appeal of methodological nationalism to study regional elections on their own terms and, at the same time, also acknowledges the valuable work done by scholars who incorporated 'nationalist' assumptions in their work.

In the remainder of this introduction we proceed in two steps. First, we confront the use of the second-order election model as the dominant framework in regional election research by pointing out conceptual and empirical challenges. Next, we present the analytical framework of the book which consists of two parts. The first part focuses on the factors that may impact on regional election behavior and identifies regional institutions and territorial cleavages as two broad categories of independent variables. The second part focuses on the dependent variable side and introduces congruence of the vote as the main aspect of regional electoral behavior. In order to gain insight into the causes of dissimilarity in the vote, this framework also includes turnout, vote share changes, government congruence and vote shares for non-statewide parties as secondary dependent variables. We conclude the introduction by briefly introducing the country studies and we save the summary and implications of the country chapters for the conclusion of the book.

## 1.2. Conceptual and empirical challenges for the second-order election model

Perhaps the most often used framework to study regional elections is the second-order election model. The core claim of second-order election model is that there is a hierarchy in perceived importance of different types of elections. National elections are of a first-order nature and all other elections, such as European, subnational, second chamber and by-elections are subordinate to first-order elections. Because there is 'less at stake' in second-order elections, voters are prompted to use their vote to vent their spleen about national level politics (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). The second-order model echoes earlier work on US Congressional mid-term elections (Miller and Mackie, 1973; Tufte, 1975) and US scholars have labeled these elections as 'barometer' elections (Anderson and Ward, 1996) or mid-term 'referendums' (Simon et al., 1991; Simon, 1989; Carsey and Wright, 1998).

The core assumption underlying second-order election model is that there is 'less at stake' in regional elections and this leads to three predictions with regard to regional election results:

1. Turnout in regional elections is lower than for national elections.
2. Government parties lose votes.
3. Small, new and opposition parties gain votes.

Because there is generally less at stake in regional than in national elections voters are inclined not to cast a vote in regional elections. The voters who do turn out use regional elections to send a signal to the party in statewide office by voting for the party in opposition or to vote for new and/or small parties. We argue that the second-order election model may be challenged on a conceptual as well as on an empirical basis.

If one traces the intellectual roots of the second-order election model one will stumble upon a developed US scholarship on mid-term Congressional elections (Schakel and Jeffery, 2012). The term second-order election was introduced by Reif and Schmitt (1980) to explain patterns

observed in the first European Parliament (EP) election. They were inspired by the work of Dinkel (1977) on German *Länder* elections who was in turn influenced by the US literature on mid-term elections (Reif, 1997). Elections for the US Congress are held every second year and they coincide with US presidential elections once every four years. Hence, a mid-term election occurs when an election for the Congress is held at mid-term between two presidential elections. The idea is that every election, i.e. including state and local elections, are subordinate to the first-order, presidential election and are used by voters to send a signal to the presidential party. It appears that mid-term Congressional elections produce a systematic loss for the party of the president and only two out of a total of 28 mid-term elections between 1900 and 1980 did not produce a loss (Niemi and Fett, 1986). The US literature takes the mid-term loss as a given and tries to explain the magnitude of this loss (for instance Erikson, 1988; Soberg Shugart, 1995).

Mid-term elections have produced a large scholarship, but, unfortunately, this literature is not very useful for analyzing regional elections in Europe due to US 'exceptionalism' in regard to its electoral institutions. Mid-term elections are particularly rare for regional elections in European countries. National and regional elections often have independent electoral cycles and regional elections can be placed anywhere in the national electoral cycle. In the US, horizontal and vertical simultaneity is widespread, that is, several subnational and national elections are held at the same date whereas the picture is far more varied and complex in Europe. In addition, the terms for office in the US are fixed whereas early (or late) elections are common in Europe. Finally, the US has a clear two-party structure with regular government alternation which enables voters to use state and mid-term elections to send a signal to the president in office by voting for the opposition party. In Europe, multiparty coalitions are the norm and government alternation is not regular for all parties. In addition, there is a relatively high turnover of parties in the party systems of many European countries

compared to the US party system. Together these factors hamper a voter's ability to use their regional vote to send a signal to the national electoral arena. Second-order election scholars adhere to the the same assumption as the scholars across the ocean and presume that electoral behavior in second-order elections is shaped by political factors in the first-order arena and that voters use second-order elections to express satisfaction or disappointment towards national politics. In other words, regional election results can be largely explained by observing which parties are in government or in opposition at the statewide level. Reif and Schmitt (1980, p.8) stated that second-order elections may be found beyond the remit of EP-elections and that local, second chamber, by-elections, and regional elections may be second-order as well. This has lead several authors to apply second-order election theory to regional elections (Pallares and Keating, 2003; Dupoirier, 2004; Floridaia, 2010). In particular Jeffery and Hough have advanced regional election studies, they started with German Land elections (2001, 2003) and included in two subsequent studies Austria, Belgium and Italy (2006) and Canada, Spain and the United Kingdom (2009). As soon as they went beyond the German case, Jeffery and Hough recognized that the 'analytical lens for exploring regional elections, that of "second-orderness" is found wanting' (2003, p.211). This led them to analyze regional power and depth of territorial cleavages next to the placement of the regional election in the national election cycle as variables to explain government party losses. Nevertheless, they remained 'captured' within the second-order election framework by hypothesizing that 'the more significant decision-making powers there are at stake in sub-state elections, the less second-order voting behavior will be' and that 'if sub-state elections are held in areas with distinctive territorial identities, voters are more likely to disconnect themselves from the first-order, statewide arena' (Jeffery and Hough, 2009, p.224).

More recently, Charlie Jeffery realized that we need to go 'beyond the nation-state' (Jeffery, 2011, p.137) in order to understand political processes at the regional level. Jeffery posits that

regional election research, including his own work, has been subject to ‘methodological nationalism’, that is, ‘a set of assumptions that establish the nation-state as a natural unit of analysis’ (Jeffery, 2011, p.137). Reporting on contributions to an edited collection on regional elections in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK, Jeffery and Hough (2006, p.252) conclude: ‘The general finding, then, is that most sub-state elections do indeed appear to be second-order, subordinate to voters’ considerations of state-level politics’. However, in later work Jeffery acknowledged that ‘there may be a sense of self-fulfilling prophesy at play here. Research findings may be path-dependent on research questions. If other starting points are taken which treat regional elections on their own terms, rather than as functions of national elections, a different or at least more nuanced picture might emerge’ (Schakel and Jeffery, 2012, p.4).

The second-order election model can be empirically challenged as well. Regional election studies confirmed several predictions of second-order election theory. Regional turnout is lower than for national elections (Pallares and Keating, 2003; Schakel and Dandoy, 2012), government parties tend to lose vote share whereas opposition, new and small parties gain in regional elections (Jeffery and Hough, 2003; Pallares and Keating, 2003), and the extent to which government parties lose and opposition parties win vote share varies according to the placement of the regional election in the national electoral calendar (Jeffery and Hough, 2003). However, the same set of studies also concludes that the degree to which regional elections may be considered second-order varies substantively. Even if regional elections are frequently second-order, it is not in a uniform way across countries. Canadian elections are considered to be clearly non second-order (Jeffery and Hough, 2009, p.231) and France displays a larger incongruence between national and regional elections than Austria or Germany (Dupoirier, 2004, p.585). Jeffery and Hough (2003) found only partial confirmation that regional elections are second-order in the case of Germany and Spain. In addition, the

authors observe a reduced tendency to follow the national electoral cycle and a growing dissimilarity of regional and national election results. Similarly, Tronconi and Roux (2009) conclude in the case of the Italian regions that the degree to which regional elections may be considered to be second-order depends on the decade of observation. In addition, Pallares and Keating (2003) observed that Spanish governing parties generally lose regional elections, but national opposition parties do not consistently win. For French regions, Dupoirier (2004, p.590) concludes that only some of the regions can be considered clearly second-order or nationalized. Finally, in our own comparative work we conclude that the second-order election predictions are not born out for a majority of regions. Turnout in the regions of Switzerland, Denmark (Faroe Islands and Greenland), and Italy (special statute regions) is higher for regional than for national elections and those regions which hold elections at their date of choosing report higher turnout rates than those regions which hold their elections at the same date (Schakel and Dandoy, 2012). With respect to government party losses Schakel and Jeffery (2012) conclude that only 18 per cent out of a total of 2,933 regional elections clearly follow second-order predictions.

In conclusion, the second-order election model has limited explanatory power with regard to regional election results and the model can be questioned on a conceptual level as well. Our aim in this book is to adopt a framework of analysis which allows to study regional elections ‘on their own terms’ and which, at the same time, also acknowledges that the second-order election model might have some merit.

Regional election research shows that the ‘stakes-based’ assumption in the second-order election model provides an important element in the explanation of regional election results. Regional-scale factors and processes will play a larger role when the regional electoral arena becomes more relevant. Following Jeffery and Hough (2009) we may expect that institutional

factors, most importantly regional authority, and territorial cleavages may increase the stakes of a regional election. Each set of factors is discussed below.

### 1.3. What is at stake: institutions

The authority exercised by regional government is often considered as a key institutional variable capable of influencing regional electorates and regional party strategies (Hough and Jeffery, 2006; Pallarés and Keating, 2003; Swenden, 2006). Thorlakson (2007) argues that decentralization gives both parties and voters incentive and opportunity to mobilize and respond to locally defined issues which may lead to the development of ‘unique’ party systems at the regional level. With decentralization the regional level becomes more relevant to the voter. Voters may understand that the regional level has independent policy-making capacity and may vote according to their evaluation of the performance of regional government. This creates in turn an incentive for parties in the regional arena to deviate their policies from the statewide party when adhering to the statewide party policies involves electoral risks in the regional arena (Hough and Jeffery, 2006; Maddens and Libbrecht, 2009). Decentralization also creates multiple regional arenas of competition which leads to the potential for issues to be mobilized differently across the regions resulting in variation in dimensions of conflict and variation in voter and party alignments (Thorlakson, 2009). A shift of authority in fiscal matters and policy making from the national to the regional level intensifies these processes.

The relevance of the regional political arena for regional electorates and regional parties can be assessed according to various indicators. Most importantly we analyze the effects of decentralization of government authority but we also identify several characteristics of regional election systems which may impact on the regional vote. These are the timing of

regional elections (simultaneity of elections), electoral rules (proportional versus majoritarian systems), and electoral thresholds.

### *Decentralization of government authority*

The most detailed political decentralization measurement is the regional authority index (RAI) developed by Hooghe, Marks and Schakel (2010). This measurement distinguishes between self rule –authority exercised by a regional government over those who live in the region – and shared rule –authority exercised by a regional government or its representatives in the country as a whole. Self rule and shared rule are operationalized according to the following eight dimensions.

Self rule is the sum of the following four dimensions:

- Institutional depth: the extent to which a regional government is autonomous rather than deconcentrated (0-3);
- Policy scope: the range of policies for which a regional government is responsible (0-4);
- Fiscal autonomy: the extent to which a regional government can independently tax its population (0-4);
- Representation: the extent to which a region is endowed with an independent legislature and executive (0-4).

Shared rule is the sum of the following four dimensions:

- Law making: the extent to which regional representatives co-determine national legislation (0-2);
- Executive control: the extent to which a regional government co-determines national policy in intergovernmental meetings (0-2);

- Fiscal control: the extent to which regional representatives co-determine the distribution of national tax revenues (0-2);
- Constitutional reform: the extent to which regional representatives co-determine constitutional change (0-3).

Regional authority varies across countries, within countries between regions, and over time and the RAI captures this variety by providing scores per region on a yearly basis. Table 1.1 presents the countries, regional tiers, the election period, and regional authority index scores.

[Table 1.1 about here]

Regional authority varies to great extent across territory and across time. The lowest RAI-scores are to be found for Danish *Regions* (9.0), French *régions* (8.0) and Greek *nomoi* and *peripheries* (8.0). The most powerful regions can be found in the federal countries of Austria (18.0) Belgium (20.0), Germany (21.0) and Switzerland (19.5) and the special autonomous regions in Denmark (20.0), and Italy (18.0). In between these two groups we may find the regional tiers in unitary decentralized countries of the Netherlands (*provincies*: 14.5), Norway (*fylker*: 10.0) and Sweden (*län*: 10.0) and the regionalized states of Italy (*regioni a statuto ordinare*: 14.0), Spain (*autonomas comunidades* about 15.0) and the United Kingdom (Wales: 11.5, and Scotland: 16.5).

Regional authority not only varies across countries but also between regions within countries. Most notable examples are the different RAI-scores between various regions in Belgium (16.0-20.0), between the *amter/region* (10.0/9.0) and Faroe islands (20.0) and Greenland (20.0) in Denmark, between *Corse* (8.5) and *régions* (8.0) in France, between *regioni a statuto ordinare* (14.0) and *regioni a statuto speciale* (18.0) in Italy, between the historic

(15.5) and non-historic (15.0) *comunidades autónomas* in Spain, and between the devolved institutions in the United Kingdom (9.0-16.5).

Finally, regional authority has also changed over time. Regional authority has increased for the regions in Austria, Belgium, Germany (western *Länder*), Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain. RAI-scores have remained stable for the Danish *amter/regions*, French *régions*, east German *Länder*, Greek *nomoi* and *peripheries*, Norwegian *fylker*, Swedish *län* and Swiss *cantons*. There are only two cases of centralization of authority which happened for Corsica (-0.5) and Northern Ireland when home rule was replaced by deconcentrated government (a change from 9.5 to 1).

From this overview in the variation and development of regional authority it follows that the extent to which regional elections are subordinate to the national electoral arena may be expected to vary to a similar degree. The regional authority index measures formal institutional authority and one could argue that it underestimates the role of regional tiers in the provision of policies which is better assessed with fiscal decentralization measures. Similarly, one could also argue that public perception on the importance of the regional tier is what matters rather than institutional or fiscal authority. Therefore, we have asked the authors of the country chapters to consider fiscal decentralization and, when available, public opinion data alongside regional institutional authority.<sup>ii</sup>

### *Regional election systems*

Taking the second-order election model as a starting point has led regional election scholars to focus on the timing of the regional election in the national election cycle. When regional elections are held at the same date as national elections, regional election outcomes mirrors those for national elections. However, as soon as the regional election decouples from the national election cycle differences in vote share may appear. In their study on elections for the

German *Länder*, Jeffery and Hough (2001, p.76) argue that support for the main political parties in regional elections follows a cyclical pattern. Governing parties enjoy an (often painfully short) honeymoon period shortly after their election victory with levels of support at times even rising higher than the share of vote won. The honeymoon is followed by an (often rapid) drop in support which continues until roughly the middle of the legislative period, when it 'bottoms out'. At the same time support for the main opposition party rises. Only in the period immediately before the next national election do the governing parties recover support (see also Jeffery and Hough, 2003).

Next to vertical simultaneity of elections, one may also assume that holding several (or all) regional elections simultaneously (i.e. horizontal simultaneity) amplifies their second-order qualities by giving them collectively nationwide reach and resonance (Jeffery and Hough, 2006, p.249). Schakel and Dandoy (2012) examine the effect of vertical and horizontal simultaneity on turnout in regional elections in great detail. They identify six electoral cycle regimes according to whether regional elections are held simultaneously with national, local and other regional elections or follow their own independent election cycle. It appears that turnout increases significantly according to the extent to which elections are held concurrently.

Van der Eijk et al. (1996) argues that an increase in turnout for concurrent elections is a consequence of the heightened political atmosphere. Concurrent elections significantly increase turnout as the interest of these elections – in terms of issues, candidates, parties, media coverage and campaign spending – is multiplied (Matilla, 2003). When regional elections are held at the same date one may expect more involvement of candidates, media and parties from the statewide electoral arena creating an approximation to a first-order, national poll.

Table 1.2 reports the extent to which regional elections are held simultaneous with national, local and other regional elections.

[Table 1.2 about here]

Regional elections are rarely held simultaneously with national elections except in Sweden where all local, regional and national elections are held at the same date. However, table 1.2 reports data for the 2000s and regional elections have been held concurrently with national elections in Austria (1945-49), Belgium (1995-99), France (1986), and incidentally with several elections in *Andalusia* and Austrian and German *Länder*. Apart from simultaneity with national elections we may differentiate between three electoral regimes. First, all regional and local elections are held simultaneously. This is the case for Denmark (*amter/regions*), Greece, Italy (*regioni a statuto ordinare*), Norway, Spain (non-historic *comunidades autónomas*) and the United Kingdom (Scotland and Wales). Second, all regional elections are held concurrently but at a different date than for local elections. This electoral cycle regime is present in Belgium, France, and the Netherlands. Finally, regional elections may follow their own independent election cycle which applies to Austrian and German *Länder*, Faroe Islands and Greenland, *regioni a statuto speciale* in Italy, the historic *autonomas comunidades* in Spain, Swiss cantons and the Greater London Authority and Northern Ireland.

Table 1.2 also reports on the electoral rules which translate votes into seats, the electoral thresholds and the number of rounds. Most regional elections consist of one round and only France and Greece have two rounds. The electoral threshold varies from none to two per cent and may go up to ten per cent in the case for some Swiss cantons. Most regional election systems are proportional but mixed electoral systems are applied for (some) regions within

France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Interestingly, majoritarian or plurality electoral systems can only be found in some Swiss cantons.

The overview provided in table 1.2 shows a huge variety in electoral systems across countries and regions which should contribute to the heterogeneity of cross-regional voting behavior. Each chapter presents further details on regional institutions and reports on changes in the applied regional election systems (e.g. compulsory voting, relationship regional assembly – regional executive, as well as country-specific provisions).

#### 1.4. What is at stake: territorial cleavages

A second important element which may increase the relevance of the regional electoral arena is the extent to which regional elections are used by voters to express different preferences than for national elections. The basis of territorial cleavage theory lies in sociological approaches which explain dissimilarity of party systems by the extent to which territorial cleavages are politicized (Lijphart, 1977; Livingston, 1956). Several scholars analyzing regional elections have observed that if sub-state elections are held in areas with distinctive territorial identities, voters are more likely to disconnect themselves from the first-order arena and make different vote choices in the sub-state context (Jeffery and Hough, 2009).

Increased dissimilarity between vote shares may be expected when sociological differences are politicized by regional actors. Newman (1996, p.7) ascribes the tendency for ethnic differences to be politicized to ‘the rational desire [of social actors] to convert efficiently political resources into political power’. Political actors adapt their demands and presentation to the concerns and language of regionally differentiated groups so as to maximize their influence on state policies. In sum, a territorial cleavage approach predicts that the regional vote will be different from the national vote to the extent that regional voters have a

distinctive socio-economic identity and, more so, to the extent that this distinctive identity is mobilized by a regional party.

We differentiate between diversity with respect to language and history. Table 1.3 displays the regions which score positive on the regional language and the regional history index developed by Fitjar (2009, 2010). The regional language index captures the importance and indigenusness of regional languages in regions. The historical sovereignty index captures the extent to which the region itself or other states than the current sovereign have governed the territory.

[Table 1.3 about here]

A striking observation from table 1.3 is that each country has one or more regions where a group of people speak a minority language. Most countries also have regions with a history of independence and most notably those countries for which state formation happened relatively late, i.e. France, Greece, Germany, and Italy. For Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and, to a lesser extent, France, Sweden and the United Kingdom, the territorial cleavages only affect a minority of regions and population. But in Belgium, Italy, Spain and Switzerland, and to a lesser extent Germany and Greece, territorial cleavages between regions are omnipresent. Territorial heterogeneity can be found with respect to an infinite number of dimensions but most authors relate voting patterns to territorial cleavages with respect to ethnicity, language, religion, history or economy (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Rokkan and Urwin, 1983; Van Houten, 2007). Country chapters discuss territorial cleavages with regard to religion and economy (or any other dimension) when their authors think these territorial cleavages impact on regional electoral outcomes.<sup>iii</sup>

Given the huge diversity in decentralization, the various regional election systems and the huge diversity with respect to territorial cleavages across regions and across time we can only expect that electoral behavior will vary to a similar extent. We would even argue that homogenization of electoral behavior is actually the least likely outcome one may expect. Yet, Caramani (2004) observes a nationalization trend of electoral behavior in West European national elections, that is, voters increasingly vote more alike across the territory. Caramani (2004, p.291-2) offers an interesting hypothesis for the apparent paradox between regional diversity and nationalization of electoral behavior: ‘... federal structures reduce the expression of regional protest in the party system by opening up institutional channels of voice’. If this claim is true then one does expect homogenization of electoral behavior in national elections but one does not for regional elections. In the next section we will describe the aspects according to which regional electoral behavior will be analyzed in the country chapters.

### 1.5. Aspects of regional election behavior

We have chosen to focus on five central aspects of electoral behavior in regional elections:

- (1) Congruence of the vote between regional and national elections
- (2) Turnout in regional and national elections
- (3) Changes in vote shares between regional and national elections
- (4) Congruence between regional and national governments
- (5) Non-statewide party strength in regional and national elections

Congruence of the vote describes the differences in vote shares between regional and national elections. The aim of the book is to assess in how far these differences in the vote are a reflection of the subordination of regional elections to the national electoral arena or whether

the differences are an indication of regionalized voting behavior. *Second-order effects* may be assessed by looking at turnout and changes in vote share for parties in statewide government and opposition. *Regionalized election behavior* may be assessed by looking at government congruence and non-statewide party strength. In other words, the second and third variables reflect the ‘top-down’ line of research whereas the fourth and fifth variable allows us to develop a ‘bottom-up’ approach. Our strategy in the book is to ‘fixate’ the dependent variables across the country chapters and to let the country experts reflect upon the patterns they observe. In the remainder of the introduction we will discuss the five dependent variables that structure the analyses presented in the book.

#### *Congruence of the vote between regional and national elections*

A comparison between regional and national election vote shares is widely used to assess regional distinctiveness (see for example Pallares and Keating, 2003; Jeffery and Hough, 2003, 2009; Skrinis and Teperoglou, 2008; Tronconi and Roux, 2009; Floridaia, 2010). The objective of these analyses is to assess the degree to which electoral results in a specific region diverge from results in another region or from the national electoral arena. Most studies use a dissimilarity index to measure distinctiveness in the vote. This index, sometimes referred to as the Lee index, is identical to the Pedersen’s index of electoral volatility, but, instead of comparing an election with another election held previously in time, a regional election is compared to a national election. The dissimilarity index is calculated by taking the sum of absolute differences between regional and national vote shares for each party and subsequently dividing the sum by two (in order to avoid double counting). The formula is given by:

$$Dissimilarity = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^n |X_{iN} - X_{iR}|$$

$X_{iN}$  is the percentage of the vote won by party  $i$  in a given national election  $N$ , and  $X_{iR}$  is the percentage of the vote won by party  $i$  in the closest (in time) regional election  $R$  to the national election in question. Scores may vary from complete congruence/similarity (0 per cent) to complete incongruence/dissimilarity (100 per cent).

An interesting aspect of the dissimilarity index is that we may vary the comparison with respect to the type of election or vote share – that is national elections (N) or regional elections (R) – in conjunction with the territorial unit of analysis – that is national level (N) or regional level (R) (Schakel, 2013). For instance, we may compare the national party system at the national level (NN) with the regional or national election result in a particular region (NN versus RR or NN versus NR). We may also compare the national vote with the regional vote in the same region (NR versus RR). Finally, we may compare the regional election result aggregated at the national level with a particular regional result (RN versus RR).

The dissimilarity index is used by Hearl, Budge and Pearson (1996) who compare the regional vote in national elections (NR) with the aggregate national vote (NN). The dissimilarity index has also been used by Jeffery and Hough (2003) who compare national election results in a region with the results for regional elections in the same region (NR versus RR). Finally, Dupoirier (2004) used the dissimilarity index in a third way, that is she compares the results of a party for in one region to the results of the same party for all regions (RN versus RR).

The variety in dissimilarity indices do not contribute to our understanding of regional elections since findings and conclusions may be dependent on the measurement used. In order to prevent this from happening in this nook we follow the approach as laid down in Schakel

(2013) who conceptualizes and operationalizes dissimilarity or congruence of the vote in three ways. NN-RR evaluates the extent to which a particular regional party system is different from the national party system and which is the result of two sources of variation: the extent to which a regional electorate is different from the national electorate combined with the extent to which the regional electorate switch their vote between regional and national elections. The regional election is compared to the national election and, at the same time, the national electorate is compared to the regional electorate.

In order to tease out the two sources of variation in party system congruence (NN-RR) one needs to consider electorate congruence (NN-NR) and election congruence (NR-RR). Electorate congruence (NN-NR) taps into the extent to which a particular regional electorate is different from the national electorate. The type of election is held constant and one compares national election results for the whole country with the results for a particular region. The benefit of this conceptualization is that one does not have to consider second-order election effects because one uses first-order election results only. A possible drawback of this conceptualization is that it could lead to an underestimation of regional distinctiveness, since it does not consider the effect of dual voting, i.e. party systems may appear more congruent than they really are because statewide parties typically perform better in national than in regional elections. In contrast, election congruence (NR-RR) evaluates the extent to which a regional electorate votes differently in national and regional elections. This conceptualization keeps the regional electorate constant but varies the type of election. A benefit is that the effects of dual voting are incorporated but one underestimates dissimilarity because regionally distinct electorates may express their distinctiveness in both regional and national elections with low dissimilarity scores as a result.

In this book we explore the conditions under which the regional vote tends to differentiate from the national vote by reflecting upon the patterns in the three operationalizations of

congruence of the vote. Dissimilarity is calculated for those parties which obtained at least five per cent of the regional vote in national elections (NR). The vote share obtained in national elections (i.e. NN or NR) is compared to the closest in time regional election vote share (RR). Data comes from Schakel (2011) and is updated where relevant by the authors of the country chapters.

### *Turnout in regional and national elections*

The aim of this book is to assess in how far congruence in the vote can be attributed to the subordinate status of regional elections to the national electoral arena. One of the clear predictions of the second-order election model is that turnout should be low or, at least, lower in the subordinate election than in the first-order election. The rationale is that there is ‘less at stake’ in the second-order arena and ‘what is important is the political situation of the first-order arena at the moment when the second-order election is being held’ (Reif, 1985, p.8). Consequently, voters are not bothered to turn out in regional elections. Many regional election scholars compare turnout between national and regional elections to evaluate second-order effects (Pallares and Keating, 2003; Jeffery and Hough, 2009; Florida, 2010). Comparative studies on turnout in regional elections are rare (we could find one: Henderson and McEwen, 2010) especially when compared to the number of studies devoted to national turnout (see the literature reviews by Geys, 2006; Blais, 2006; Blais and Dobrzynska, 1998). In this book we analyze turnout, defined as the number of voters who cast a vote (voters) as a proportion to the total number of voters who are allowed to cast a vote (electorate), in regional and national elections. Turnout data comes from Schakel and Dandoy (2012) and is updated where relevant by the authors of the country chapters.

### *Vote share changes between regional and national elections*

Another prediction of the second-order election model is that parties in national government will lose votes whereas parties in the opposition will gain votes in regional elections. Moreover, voters' propensity to behave in these ways follows a cyclical logic; they are most likely to do so at the mid-point between elections that produce national governments, and less likely to do so soon after, or in the run-up to, an election that produces a state-level government. Although this is one of the strongest predictions of the second-order election model, surprisingly, it has had little systematic empirical testing in the case of regional elections. Notable exception is the work by Jeffery and Hough (2001, 2003, 2009) on electoral cycles and multi-level voting in Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom.

In this book, second-order election effects are explored by calculating changes in vote share for government and opposition parties. Vote share change is calculated by subtracting the vote share obtained in regional elections from the vote share received in the previous national election. This operationalization implies that second-order election data is constructed for only those parties which compete in national *and* regional elections. Data on vote share change is obtained from Schakel and Jeffery (2012) and is updated where relevant by the authors of the country chapters.

#### *Government congruence between regional and national electoral arenas*

Government participation in a multi-level setting raises new questions for parties. For example: 'To step in government at only one level or to stay in opposition at both? To opt for a single consistent strategy or to try out various, but sometimes conflicting, coalition formulae? To replicate coalition agreements at the federal level or to adapt them to the regional context, even if this means departing from a coherent party line?' (Ştefuriuc, 2009a, p.2). Similar to parties, voters are also confronted with new questions. Voters are confronted with the possibility to vote for the preferred party they wish to see in regional government or

they may want to send a signal to the party in statewide government by voting for the party in opposition in the national parliament. The former represents regionalized voting behavior whereas the latter indicates the subordinate nature of the regional election to the national electoral arena.

The extent to which a regional voter will hold the national or regional government accountable depends on the structure of the party system. In two-party systems (for instance Greece, Spain, UK), voting for the opposition party in the national parliament sends a clear message to the party in national government. In contrast to two-party systems, voters in multiparty systems are often confronted with coalition governments at both the national and regional tiers which blur government responsibility especially when the coalitions are in part overlapping. As a result, two-party systems may be more conducive to second-order election effects than multilevel party systems.

The extent to which a regional voter is able to hold the national or regional government accountable also depends on the role the region plays in national decision-making. For example, in Germany, *Land* governments directly elect their representatives in the *Bundesrat* (upper chamber) which has veto power over about 60 per cent of legislative acts. Government congruence has therefore a direct bearing on national politics and the vote for the opposition party in national parliament may have huge consequences for federal policies. The German voter has a unique opportunity to balance the federal government party at the national *and* regional level by voting for the opposition in *Land* elections.

Looking at aggregate level election results will not allow us to reveal the considerations regional voters might have when they cast their vote. The authors will report on ticket-split voting when voter survey data is available but, unfortunately, regional election surveys are scarce. One way to explore the extent to which voters hold governments accountable is to look at government congruence. For example, in case of complete government *incongruence*

– for instance Labour in Wales and the Conservatives in Westminster – we are not able to assess whether a vote share gain for the party in regional government party is a voter reward for the party in regional government or a punishment for the party in national government. However, in case of government congruence – for instance Labour in Wales and Labour in Westminster – we are more confident that a vote share gain for the party in regional government is a reward given by the voters to regional performance because according to the second-order election model Labour should have lost vote share. Hence, the extent and frequency of government congruence may serve as an indirect measure of a regionalized behavior in regional elections, although this measurement needs to be interpreted with great care and with consideration of the party system structure and particular institutional settings. In analogy to congruence of the vote, government congruence may be conceptualized as the extent to which regional and national governments are similar (Däubler and Debus, 2009; Deschouwer, 2009; Ștefuriuc, 2009b; Swenden, 2002; Wilson, 2009). Government congruence is indicated by a dissimilarity index but, in contrast to congruence in the vote, there is only one operationalization, namely the national government (NN) is compared to the regional government (RR). Another difference is that seat shares instead of vote shares for the governing parties are taken. The government congruence data is compiled by the authors of country chapters.

### *Non-statewide party strength in regional and national elections*

An important cause for diverging regional and national party systems is the presence of what has been labeled as nationalist, regional, regionalist or non-statewide parties. We prefer to adopt the term non-statewide party for two reasons. First, the non-statewide party is defined as a party which participates in elections in only part of the country in contrast to statewide parties which participate in all elections across the statewide territory. Often, regional parties

are defined as receiving its vote share in one region only (Brancati, 2008). However, this operationalization would exclude parties such as the *Lega Nord* in Italy and the PDS in Germany which participate in elections in more than one but not all regions. The *Lega Nord* participates in elections in the northern part of Italy and the PDS is mainly present in the East German *Länder*. These parties contribute clearly to the territorial heterogeneity of the vote and would not be on our ‘radar’ when we would apply a very strict definition.

A second advantage of using the concept of non-statewide party is that it is neutral with regard to the ideology of the party. This allows the authors of the country chapters to discuss the ideology of the non-statewide parties they find in their country. Dandoy (2010) identifies protectionist, decentralist and secessionist parties. Protectionist parties seek to defend the interests of a culturally and linguistically defined minority. Decentralist parties challenge the division of power between the central state and the region. Finally, secessionist parties seek to detach the region from its host-state in order to establish an independent state. To this classification we may add those non-state wide parties which ‘defend’ or ‘represent’ the region on some kind of ideological basis. For example, a non-statewide party may claim for more state subsidies for a relatively poor region or for less fiscal equalization between regions to the benefit of an affluent region.

One should be careful in taking the presence of non-statewide parties as direct evidence for regionalized election behavior. One of the predictions of the second-order election model is that small parties should gain vote share in regional elections. Most non-statewide parties are small parties, particular in a national context. One way to avoid the pitfall of wrongly interpreting non-statewide party strength as regionalized election behavior is to have a closer look on the ideology of these parties. Therefore, the authors will discuss the issues these parties emphasize to attract the regional voter.

We present vote share data for non-statewide parties obtained in regional and national elections. Data on non-statewide parties comes from Massetti and Schakel (2013) and is updated and amended where relevant by the authors of the country chapters.

## 1.6. The book

This book analyzes regional elections for 13 countries in Western Europe (see table 1.1). In total we analyze 2309 elections held in 254 regions in 13 countries between 1945 and 2011. The thirteen country chapters will be analyzed in alphabetic order and each author will explore the explanatory power of regional institutions and territorial cleavages (top-down or deductive approach) with respect to regional electoral behavior but the authors will also propose additional causes for diverging regional party systems when they think these factors should be considered as well (bottom-up or inductive approach).

To enhance comparison across the chapters we have adopted a common framework for the chapters. Each chapter begins with an introduction which is followed by a section on *regional government and regional elections*. The analysis of election data starts with an examination of *congruence of the vote*. The fourth section looks at *second-order election effects* and the authors analyze turnout and vote share changes between the regional and the previous national election. In the next section, the authors look specifically for evidence for *regionalization of the vote* with the help of government congruence and the presence and strength of non-statewide parties. In the conclusion the authors will address the question in how far regional elections in their country are nationalized or regionalized. To further enhance comparison across the chapters we have standardized measurements, figures, and tables.

We have assembled data on the five aspects of regional election behavior and the full variation across regions and parties and over time are provided in country excel files which include five figures and 17 tables. The excel files and the codebook are published on an internet page accompanying this book on the editors website ([www.arjanschakel.nl](http://www.arjanschakel.nl)). The authors of the country chapters reflect upon the most interesting figures and tables which means that not all figures and tables are discussed. Readers who would like to have access to the data or would like to have more detail are advised to download the country excel files.

In the concluding chapter to the book we will draw comparisons between the country chapters and discuss the proposed independent variables and their effects on regional voting patterns. There we will take up the question what we have learned from the in depth country studies and we will point out implications for the study on regional elections.

## 1. Introduction: Territoriality of the vote. A framework for analysis

Table 1.1: Countries, regions, regional elections covered

Country	Region	N	Elections		N	RAI	
			First	Last		Min	Max
Austria	Länder	9	1945	2010	131	17.0	18.0
Belgium	Deutsche Gemeinschaft	1	1974	2009	10	5.0	16.0
	Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest	1	1989	2009	5	18.0	18.0
	Vlaamse Gemeenschap	1	1995	2009	4	20.0	20.0
	Région Wallonne	1	1995	2009	4	20.0	20.0
Denmark	Amter	15	1974	2001	120	10.0	10.0
	Region	5	2005	2009	10	9.0	9.0
	Faroe Islands	1	1945	2008	19	20.0	20.0
	Greenland	1	1979	2009	10	10.0	20.0
France	Régions	21	1986	2010	84	8.0	8.0
	Corse	1	1986	2010	3	8.0	8.5
Germany	Länder (west)	10	1949	2011	147	20.0	21.0
	Länder (east)	6	1990	2009	25	21.0	21.0
Greece	Nomoi	50	1994	2006	200	8.0	8.0
	Periphereis	10	2010	2010	10	8.0	8.0
Italy	Regioni a statuto speciale	5	1947	2009	66	9.0	18.0
	Regioni a statuto ordinare	15	1970	2010	120	7.0	14.0
Netherlands	Provincies	12	1946	2011	194	13.5	14.5
Norway	Fylker	19	1975	2011	171	10.0	10.0
Spain	Comunidades autonomas (historic)	5	1980	2011	40	13.5	15.5
	Comunidades autonomas (non-historic)	14	1983	2011	93	12.5	15.0
Sweden	Län	21	1946	2011	445	10.0	10.0
Switzerland	Cantons	26	1945	2009	376	19.5	19.5
United Kingdom	Greater London Authority	1	2000	2008	3	9.0	9.0
	Northern Ireland	1	1945	2007	13	1.0	9.5
	Scotland	1	1999	2007	3	16.5	16.5
	Wales	1	1999	2007	3	11.5	11.5
Total		254			2309		

Notes: RAI = Regional Authority Index score (Hooghe et al., 2010).

Table 1.2: Institutional characteristics of regional election cycles and regional election systems in the 2000s

Country	Regional tier	Vertical simultaneity		Horizontal simultaneity	Electoral system	Electoral threshold	Number of rounds
		National	Local				
Austria	Länder	no	no	no	PR	4-5%	1
Belgium	Gemeenschappen/Gewesten	no	no	yes	PR	5%	1
Denmark	Amter/Region	no	yes	yes	PR	none	1
	Faroe Islands/Greenland	no	no	no	PR	4%	1
France	Régions	no	no	yes	Mixed	none	2
Germany	Länder	no	no	no	Mixed	5%	1
Greece	Nomoi/Peripheries	no	yes	yes	PR	none	2
Italy	Regioni a statuto speciale	no	no	no	PR	none-5%	1
	Regioni a statuto ordinare	no	yes	yes	PR	2-5%	1
Netherlands	Provincies	no	no	yes	PR	none	1
Norway	Fylker	no	yes	yes	PR	none	1
Spain	Comunidades autonomas (historic)	no	no	no	PR	3-5%	1
	Comunidades autonomas (non-historic)	no	yes	yes	PR	3-5%	1
Sweden	Län	yes	yes	yes	PR	3%	1
Switzerland	Cantons	no	no	no	MAJ/PR	none-10%	1
United Kingdom	Greater London Authority	no	no	no	Mixed	5%	1
	Northern Ireland	no	no	no	PR	none	1
	Scotland/Wales	no	yes	yes	Mixed	none	1

Source: the country chapters in this book.

Table 1.3: Regional diversity with regard to language and history

Country	regional language index	regional history index
Austria	Burgenland (1), Carinthia (1)	
Belgium	Brussels (2), Flanders (2), Wallonia (2)	
Denmark	Faroe Islands (3); Greenland (3)	
France	Alsace (1); Aquitaine (2); Brittany (2); Languedoc-Rousillon (2); Lorraine (1); Nord-Pas de Calais (1)	Alsace (2); Lorraine (2); Franche-Comte (1); Languedoc-Rousillon (1); Nord-Pas de Calais (1); Rhone-Alpes (1) Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur (1)
Germany	Saxony (1); Schleswig-Holstein (1)	Baden-Wuerttemberg (2); Bavaria (2); Brandenburg (1); Hesse (1) Mecklenburg Vorpommern (1); Nord Rhine-Westphalia (1); Saxony (1); Saxony-Anhalt (1); Schleswig-Holstein (1); Thuringia (1)
Greece	Central Macedonia (1); Thessaly (1)	Crete (3); Aegean Islands (2) Central Macedonia (2); East Macedonia (2); Thrace (2); Epirus (1); Thessaly (1)
Italy	Friuli-Venezia Giulia (3); Sardinia (3); Trentino Alto Adige (2); Aosta Valley (1); Piedmont (1); Sicily (1)	Friuli-Venezia Giulia (2); Trentino Alto Adige (2); Aosta Valley (1); Lombardy (1); Piedmont (1); Sardinia (1); Sicily (1); Tuscany (1); Veneto (1)
Netherlands	Friesland (3)	
Norway	Finnmark (2)	
Spain	Balearic Islands (3); Catalonia (3); Galicia (3); Valencia (3); Basque Country (2); Navarre (1);	Basque Country (2); Catalonia (2); Anadaluia (1); Navarre (1); Valencia (1)
Sweden	Norbotten (2)	Halland (1); Jamtland (1); Skane (1); Vastra Gotaland (1)
Switzerland	German-/French-speaking cantons (2); Ticino (1)	
United Kingdom	Scotland (2); Wales (2)	Scotland (2)

Notes:

*Regional language index:* The index is made up of the following items, with one point awarded for each item: (1) there is an indigenous regional language that is different from the dominant (plurality) language in the state; (2) the regional language is spoken by at least half the region's population; (3) the language is not the dominant language of any state.

*Regional history index*: the index is made up of the following three criteria, with one point awarded for each: (1) the region has not been part of the current state since its formation; (2) the region was not part of the current state for the entire twentieth century; (3) the region has been an independent state.

*Sources*: Fitjar (2009; 2010); scores for Denmark and Switzerland are added by the authors.

## NOTES

<sup>i</sup> Regional elections also occur in Finland (*Åland*) and in Portugal (*Açores* and *Madeira*) but since these insular regions only represent a small portion of the national territory and population, they are not included in this book.

<sup>ii</sup> In an appendix to the book which is published online ([www.arjanschakel.nl](http://www.arjanschakel.nl)) we discuss regional government according to fiscal decentralization data published by Eurostat (2012), the OECD (1997), and Stegarescu (2004) and according public perceptions by drawing on the Special Eurobarometer 307 commissioned by the European Commission (2009).

<sup>iii</sup> In the appendix to the book (which can be retrieved from [www.arjanschakel.nl](http://www.arjanschakel.nl)) we provide a discussion on regional diversity with regard to economic affluence by drawing on Eurostat (2012) data on regional gross domestic product per capita.