

Rethinking European Elections: The Importance of Regional Spillover Into the European Electoral Arena*

ARJAN H. SCHAKEL
 Maastricht University

Abstract

The European Union has developed into a multilevel electoral system in which elections take place at regional, national and European tiers of governance. Election scholars have taken up an interest in European and regional elections and the dominant approach to study these elections is the second-order election model. This model has generated important insights but it also faces limitations. A multilevel party system perspective exposes several vertical and horizontal interactions between electoral arenas. An empirical analysis on second-order effects in European elections held in 217 regions and 11 countries reveals that regional authority, regional identity and electoral timing of regional *vis-à-vis* European elections significantly alters the extent and way in which national politics flows into the European electoral arena. These results provide strong evidence that regionalization has significantly transformed European elections but this impact only comes to the fore once one adopts a multilevel party system perspective.

Keywords: European elections; regional spillover; second-order election model; multilevel electoral system

Introduction

Representative institutions in Europe have dramatically changed over the past decades. The number of Member States holding European elections increased from 9 in 1979, when the first direct election to the European Parliament was held, to 28 for the latest European election in 2014. The increasing scope of European elections was matched by an increase in powers for the institutions of the European Union (EU). Decision-making powers have been shifted upwards from national government to the EU which nowadays decides on important policies such as agriculture, external trade, fiscal and monetary union, and the internal market. The story of a widening and deepening Europe is probably familiar to most scholars but less well known is that a similar rise in electoral democracy has taken place at the regional level.¹ Today 19 out of 28 EU Member States hold elections for regional assemblies and, since 1970, no less than 15 out of 28 EU-Member States have introduced regional elections (Dandoy and Schakel, 2013; Schakel, 2017). The establishment of regional electoral institutions also included a significant reallocation of authority downwards from national to regional

*I would like to thank *JCMS*' anonymous referees for excellent comments and feedback, as well as the symposium editors Heather A.D. Mbaye and Michaël Tatham for advice on a draft version. I would also like to thank the Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg in Delmenhorst, Germany for providing financial support as well for being gracious hosts during my research leave which enabled me to collect European election data.

¹ Regional government is defined as a tier between local and national government with an average population of at least 150,000 citizens (Hooghe *et al.*, 2016). This population threshold is similar to the lower boundary of the NUTS-3 classification (*Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques*) which are defined as regions with an average population size between 150,000 and 800,000 citizens.

government. Many regions can tax corporate and personal income, can borrow freely on the financial market, and have competencies in key policies such as immigration, education, culture and welfare (Hooghe *et al.*, 2016).

The upshot is that the EU has transformed into a multilevel political system whereby voters have multiple opportunities to voice their preferences about policy and to elect their representatives.² The proliferation of supra- and sub-national elections has not escaped the attention of election scholars and they developed the second-order election (SOE) model. Although this model has generated useful insights into European and regional electoral dynamics, it also faces important limitations. The SOE-model matches regional or European election results to the outcomes of previously held national elections. This comparison overlooks the possibility that regional politics may also spillover into the European electoral arena. In this symposium article, I argue that a multilevel party system conceptualization is required for a comprehensive understanding of how electoral dynamics in one electoral arena may spillover into another electoral arena. An empirical analysis of European election results in 217 regions in 11 EU Member States shows that SOE-effects are affected by regional authority, regional identity and the timing of regional elections *vis-à-vis* European elections. The results reveal that regional politics significantly modifies the extent and way in which national politics flows into the European electoral arena. The results also expose a need for new conceptual thinking and in the discussion I lay out the most important linkages to consider when one analyses electoral outcomes in multilevel electoral systems.

In the next section I briefly discuss the downward decentralization trend from national to regional government and I show that this included a significant proliferation of regional electoral institutions. In the section II, I point out the limitations of the SOE-model regarding electoral dynamics in multi-tiered systems. In section III, I develop a conceptualization of the European multilevel party system and I introduce four hypotheses on how regional politics may impact European election outcomes. Section IV introduces data and method and presents the empirical analysis. The final section discusses the implications of the presented results.

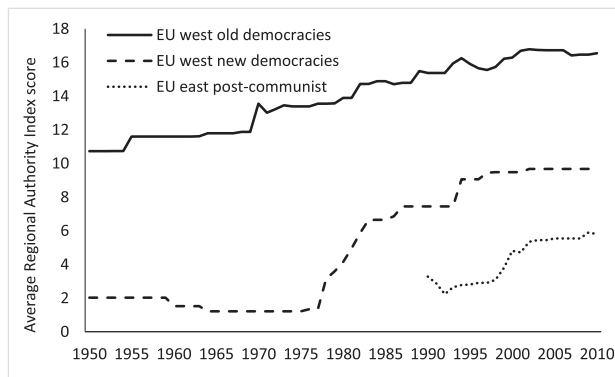
I. The Proliferation of Regional Electoral Institutions

A detailed measurement for the authority exercised by regional government is provided by the regional authority index (Hooghe *et al.*, 2016). This fine-grained measurement traces decentralization in the 28 EU Member States on annual basis from 1950 to 2010 along two dimensions. Self-rule is the authority that a subnational government exercises in its own territory. Shared rule is the authority that a subnational government exercises in the country as a whole.³ Scores range from 0 (no regional government) to a maximum

² See Tatham and Mbaye's contribution to this symposium.

³ Both self-rule and shared rule consist of five sub-dimensions. Self-rule measures the extent of independence of a regional government from national government (*institutional depth*), the range of a regional government's authority over policy in its jurisdiction (*policy scope*), the authority a regional government has over taxation within its own jurisdiction (*fiscal autonomy*), the authority of a regional government to borrow on financial markets (*borrowing autonomy*), and whether a regional government is endowed with representative institutions (*representation*). Shared rule measures the extent to which a regional government co-determines national policy-making (*law-making*), the extent to which a regional government co-determines national executive policy in intergovernmental fora (*executive control*), the extent to which a regional government co-determines how national tax revenues are distributed (*fiscal control*), the extent to which a regional government co-determines the restrictions placed on borrowing (*borrowing control*), and the extent to which regional government can initiate or constrain constitutional reform (*constitutional reform*).

Figure 1: Development in Regional Authority since 1950



Source: Hooghe *et al.* (2016).

score of 30 (full authority). Figure 1 displays average scores for old and new western EU Member States and for post-communist EU Member States.⁴ Although starting in different time periods and from different initial levels, the trend in regional authority is similar across Europe: authority for regional government is increasing.

The incidence of reform has been especially notable for representative institutions. In 1950, only 9 out of 28 EU Member States held regional elections, 5 across the statewide territory⁵ and 4 in specific territories.⁶ Between 1970, when Italy introduced elections for the *regioni a statuto ordinario*, and 2001, when Slovakia held the first elections to the assemblies for *samosprávne kraje*, 22 reforms have been implemented. Hence, during this period, regional representative institutions have been, on average, introduced every one and a half years. None of these reforms have been reversed nor have the original nine countries disestablished electoral institutions for their regions.⁷ Most European citizens can elect regional and European representatives alongside local and national deputies. In 2017, regional parliaments rule over 420 million people and the European Parliament represents 506 million people.

II. Methodological Nationalism Inherent to the Second-Order Election Model

The proliferation of European and regional electoral institutions has opened up two new fields for comparative inquiry: European (Reif and Schmitt, 1980) and regional elections (Jeffery and Wincott, 2010). The pre-dominant approach to study regional and European elections is the second-order election (SOE) model (Hix and Marsh, 2007, 2011; Pallarés and Keating, 2003; Tronconi and Roux, 2009). In a SOE turnout is low and parties in

⁴ *Old western EU member states*: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. *New western EU member states*: Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Portugal, and Spain. *Post-communist EU member states*: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

⁵ Austria (*Länder*), Belgium (*provincies*), (West-)Germany (*Länder*), Netherlands (*provincies*), Sweden (*län*).

⁶ Denmark (*Føroyar*), Finland (*Åland*), Italy (*regioni a statuto speciale*), United Kingdom (Northern Ireland).

⁷ Elections in Northern Ireland were suspended between 1977–99 and 2002–07 and a pilot program in Finland which introduced elections to the provincial assembly of *Kainuu* in 2005 was suspended in 2012.

national government lose vote share, whereas opposition, small and new parties gain votes (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). The assumption is that this electoral behaviour is brought about by the fact that there is 'less at stake' in SOEs compared to first-order, national elections (Marsh and Mikhaylov, 2010). Second-order parliaments do not have comparable decision-making and executive oversight powers as national parliaments (Reif, 1985). As a result, voters do not care to turn out (Fauvelle-Aymar and Stegmaier, 2008; Franklin and Hobolt, 2011) except for discontent voters who voice their dissatisfaction by punishing parties in government while favouring opposition and small parties (Oppenhuis *et al.*, 1996; Van der Eijk *et al.*, 1996). Another outcome is that media coverage tends to be low and political parties tend to invest fewer campaign resources (De Vreese *et al.*, 2006; Weber, 2007).

The SOE-model has generated useful insights but by taking this model as a starting point scholars also incorporate the assumption that regional (and European) elections are subordinate to national politics.⁸ The nation-state constitutes the main unit of analysis whereas the region is neglected as a unit for political analysis. This is criticized by Jeffery and Wincott (2010) as 'methodological nationalism': election scholars too easily assume that the nation-state and, by extension, the national election, is the only or the most dominant arena for political contestation. An example will help to clarify how this assumption may lead to shortcomings in our understanding of electoral outcomes.

The SOE model compares vote shares between European and preceding national elections. Parties in national government should lose vote share whereas opposition parties should win vote share. The Scottish National Party (SNP) is classified by SOE scholars as an opposition party because the party is not part of executive government at the UK-level and a vote share win for the SNP in European elections is interpreted as a SOE-effect. However, scholars working on Scottish nationalism and/or Scottish elections will probably very quickly point out that the vote share gain for the SNP may result from voters who positively evaluate the SNP's performance in government at Holyrood and not because the party was in opposition in Westminster (Schakel and Dandoy, 2013). This 'territorial effect' is not on the 'radar' of election scholars when the SOE-model is taken as a theoretical starting point (*cf.* Keating, 1998, p. ix, 2009).

There is an increasing body of evidence that the region has become much more important as a locus for social and political life over the past four decades. There is compelling evidence that shows that inter-regional policy variation is widening (for example, McEwen and Moreno, 2005) and that the number of regional (or non-statewide) political parties contesting regional elections is growing (Jeffery, 2010; Massetti and Schakel, 2017). So far, this evidence has led election scholars to explore when and where regional elections are second-order and they discovered significant variation in SOE-effects across regional elections (Dandoy and Schakel, 2013; Hough and Jeffery, 2006; Pallares and Keating, 2003; Schakel, 2017). However, theoretical innovation by this scholarship has mostly been limited to refining the SOE-model for regional elections. To fully appreciate the importance of the regional electoral arena one needs to adopt a European multilevel party system perspective.

⁸ A more encompassing discussion and a more elaborate critique on the second-order election model can be found in Schakel and Jeffery (2013).

III. Conceptualizing the European Multilevel Party System

Swenden and Maddens (2009, p. 6) provide a useful definition for a multilevel party system which ‘brings together a statewide party system which emerges from statewide elections and a set of regional party systems reflecting the outcome for regional elections’. Swenden and Maddens (2009, p. 6) point out that this conceptualization invites one to consider how regional party systems *interact* with each other (horizontal interaction) and with the statewide party system (vertical interaction).⁹ In addition, a multilevel party system perspective reveals that ‘methodological nationalism’ is inherent to the SOE-model. This model is concerned with a vertical ‘top-down’ interaction, that is on how developments in the statewide electoral arena affect regional party systems. However, vertical interactions can also be bottom-up, that is developments in the regional electoral arena can trigger changes in the statewide electoral arena. For example, party success in regional elections may lead to electoral success at the national level because parties can use the regional electoral arena as a ‘springboard’ to gain access to the statewide electoral arena (Brancati, 2008; Massetti and Schakel, 2013).

In addition, the SOE-model overlooks possible horizontal interactions between regional party systems. One example is the widening support for autonomist parties in Spain during the 1980s and early 1990s (Swenden and Maddens, 2009, pp. 8–9). Pallarés and Keating (2003) show that this was mainly a consequence of the rapid growth of these parties in non-historic communities (such as the Canary Islands or Aragon) rather than further electoral growth of autonomist parties in the historic communities (Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia). In other words, the emergence of autonomist parties in the historic communities triggered the break-through of autonomist parties in other regional elections (a ‘snowball-effect’). Horizontal and (bottom-up) vertical interactions may also unfold simultaneously. The Greens in Austria and Germany (respectively *Die Grünen–Die Grüne Alternative* and *Bündnis 90–Die Grünen*) first achieved electoral success and governmental representation in one or few *Länder*, then they gained representation in other *Länder*, paving the way for statewide electoral success and a role in federal government at a later stage.

Research has shown that European elections are second-order regarding first-order, national elections (Hix and Marsh, 2007, 2011) but the extent to which regional politics impacts European election results has, as far as I know, not been assessed. Distinguishing theoretically and empirically between regional and national spillover into the European party system falls beyond the scope of this symposium article.¹⁰ Instead, *I will focus on the question of whether regionalization has an indirect transformative effect, that is, whether regional politics modifies the extent to which national politics spills over into the European electoral arena. When this modifying effect is shown to exist*

⁹ Swenden and Maddens (2009, p. 6) also point out that *integration* of the party system is also a focal point for election scholars: ‘The integration of a multilevel party system depends on the extent to which the same parties are represented at the various levels of the system and how evenly balanced their support is across the levels and regions of the state’. In this section, I focus on horizontal and vertical interactions.

¹⁰ Studying the direct impact of regional politics on European election results requires a comparison between European and previously held national *and* regional elections whereby vote share swings are calculated for government, opposition, no seat, and new parties in relation to both the national and regional electoral arenas. Furthermore, such an analysis also requires an empirical strategy which allows for parsing out national from regional spillover. When it is shown that regional politics impacts indirectly on European election results it is worthwhile to embark on this data-intensive endeavour.

empirically it suggests, at the very least, that the SOE-model for European elections needs to be refined to accommodate territorial effects. I hypothesize four possible ways in which regional politics may impact the magnitude of SOE-effects in European elections.

First, SOE-effects in European elections decrease as regional authority increases. Voters from within powerful regions are accustomed to making decisions in two equally important elections. These voters have developed ways to access information about candidates, parties and their policies for both regional and national elections and for them it is relatively easy to transfer similar behaviour into a third (European) electoral arena.¹¹ This is not the case for a voter from within less powerful regions who has 'to learn from scratch'. These voters may rely on 'short-cuts' such as cues arising from the national electoral arena. When another non-important election is held, these voters simply transfer their SOE-behaviour from one electoral contest into another and they do not investigate how far candidates and parties and their issues and policies differ across SOE-arenas.

Second, SOE-effects in European elections are smaller in regions with strong regional identities. Studies have shown that regional parties are consistent and convinced supporters of European integration (Jolly, 2007), in particular those which are secessionist and aim for an independence for their region.¹² Although there is evidence for a 'eurosceptic turn' among these parties in the 2000s (Elias, 2008, Massetti, 2009), overall the regional party family is still europhile (Bakker *et al.*, 2012; Szöcsik, 2013). In addition, EU regional policy has reinforced the region as a relevant decision-making level which induces regional parties to constitute themselves as competent actors to represent the region in Brussels to attract EU subsidies to the region and to make sure that regional interests are voiced at the EU level (De Winter *et al.*, 2006, p. 202).¹³ Regional parties mobilize their voters to turn out and vote for them in European elections and, as a result, voters are less inclined to base their vote choice on cues arising from the national electoral arena.

Third, SOE-effects increase when a regional election precedes a European election but, fourth, SOE-effects decrease when regional and European elections are held concurrently. An electoral timing effect can be expected while it relates to the basic assumption of the SOE-model, i.e. what is at stake in elections determines the extent to which we may observe SOE-effects. When elections are held on the same date, the stakes for political parties and candidates increase resulting in more intensive campaigns and increased media attention which makes it easier for the voter to access information (Cox and Munger, 1989). Furthermore, simultaneous elections lower the costs for voters to cast a vote because the fixed costs of turning out can be divided over multiple elections (Geys, 2006). When regional elections are more important than European elections one may also expect that voters base their European vote choice on cues arising from the regional electoral arena instead of or in addition to the national electoral arena. In non-simultaneous elections, the involved stakes for parties and candidates are relatively lower and campaign efforts and media attention diminish as

¹¹ See also Léon's contribution to this symposium.

¹² See also Cetrà and Liñeira's contribution to this symposium.

¹³ See also Tatham's contribution to this symposium.

Table 1: Included Countries and Regions, Number of Parties, Regions, and Included European and National Elections

<i>Country</i>	<i>Parties</i>	<i>Regions</i>		<i>European</i>		<i>National</i>	
				<i>First</i>	<i>Last</i>	<i>First</i>	<i>Last</i>
Austria	21	Länder	9	1999	2014	1995	2013
Belgium	47	Communities and Regions	4	1979	2014	1978	2014
Denmark	19	Amter	15	1979	2004	1977	2001
		Regions	5	2009	2014	2007	2011
France	43	Régions	22	1979	2014	1978	2012
Germany	28	Länder (West)	10	1979	2014	1978	2013
		Länder (East)	6	1994	2014	1990	2013
Greece	41	Nomoi	48	1984	2004	1976	2004
		Peripheria	13	2009	2014	2007	2012
Italy	109	Regioni ordinarie	15	1979	2014	1979	2013
		Regioni speciale	4	1979	2014	1979	2013
		Provincia speciale	2	1979	2014	1979	2013
Netherlands	38	Provincies	12	1979	2014	1977	2012
Spain	82	Comunidades (non-historic)	14	1989	2014	1986	2011
		Comunidades (historic)	3	1989	2014	1986	2011
		Ciudades	2	1989	2014	1986	2011
Sweden	22	Landstinge	21	1999	2014	1998	2010
UK	60	Devolved entities	4	1979	2014	1979	2010
		Regions	8	1979	2014	1979	2010

a result (Henderson and McEwen, 2010). Additionally, the relative costs of voting are higher since elections are multiplied. SOE-effects will increase to the extent that the stakes decrease and this may especially happen when one type of SOE is preceded by another type of SOE, such as when a regional election has been held before a European election.

IV. Data, Method and Empirical Analysis: Regional Spillover into the European Electoral Arena

The empirical analysis will focus on 11 EU Member States which hold regional, national and European elections (Table 1).¹⁴ The development of a multilevel electoral system differs across this set of countries. Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have held European elections ever since 1979 whereas Greece, Spain, Sweden and Austria followed in 1981, 1987, 1995 and 1996, respectively.¹⁵ A country's experience in holding regional elections also varies considerably. Austria, West Germany, special statute regions in Italy, and the Netherlands have held regional elections since 1950. Italy (ordinary regions) and Sweden introduced

¹⁴ The dataset is part of an on-going large data collection project on regional, national and European election results at the regional level for all 28 EU Member States for elections held since 1979 or the first time a European election was held in a country.

¹⁵ The analysis excludes these four European elections because they were held in one country only.

regional elections in the 1970s; France, Greece and Spain established regional electoral arenas in the 1980s; Germany re-instated elections for the Eastern *Länder* in 1990; and Belgium and the United Kingdom introduced regional elections later in the 1990s.

The 11 EU Member States also differ regarding the three key independent variables of interest: regional authority, regional identity and electoral timing. Belgium, Austria and Germany are federal states; Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom are regionalized states; and Denmark, France, Greece, the Netherlands and Sweden are (decentralized) unitary states (Loughlin *et al.*, 2011). In addition, regional authority is symmetrical in Austria, Denmark, France (except for Corsica), Germany, Greece, the Netherlands and Sweden but is asymmetrical in Belgium, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. Regional authority also varies across time. All eleven EU Member States implemented multiple regional reforms and Denmark and Greece replaced one tier of regional governance for another. In all eleven EU Member States one can find regions where regional parties compete in elections but they tend to be nearly absent in Denmark and Greece (Masseti and Schakel, 2017). Finally, national and regional elections tend to be held non-simultaneously with European elections, except for some instances.¹⁶

Second-order election effects are assessed by observing vote share swings between European and previously held national elections.¹⁷ A party enters the dataset when it receives a regional vote share of at least 1 per cent in a European or national election. Regional vote shares for European elections are subtracted from regional vote shares won in preceding national elections. Vote share swings are summed for five types of parties (Schakel, 2015):

- *Government parties* held executive office at the national level at the time of the European election;
- *Main and other opposition parties* won seats in national parliament but are not part of the executive government. I differentiate between the main opposition party that won most parliamentary seats and other (smaller) opposition parties because the main opposition party can be expected to attract the protest vote¹⁸;
- *No seat parties* contested a national election but did not manage to win a parliamentary seat;
- *New parties* did not participate in the previously held national election but won vote share in the European election.

The regional authority index provides scores for self-rule and shared rule (Hooghe *et al.*, 2016) which are entered separately into the models to trace the differences between, on the one hand, regions in unitary states (Denmark, France, Greece and Sweden) which only have self-rule, and on the other hand, regions in federal (Austria, Belgium and Germany), regionalized (Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom), and unitary decentralized

¹⁶ Simultaneous European, national, and regional elections: Belgium (1999, 2014); simultaneous European and national elections: Greece (1989); simultaneous European and regional elections: Belgium (2004, 2009), Spain (1999, non-historic communities), Abruzzo (2014), Andalusia (2014), Piemonte (2014), Sardinia (1994–2004), Thuringia (2004).

¹⁷ Another effect is lower turnout in the second-order election compared to national elections. I do not look at turnout because such an analysis requires the inclusion of several additional explanatory variables – such as financial contributions to or from the EU and public support for the EU (Matilla, 2003) – which tend not to be available at the regional level.

¹⁸ Government parties are not differentiated between a main and other category because the other category remains empty in cases of single party government which occurred frequently in France, Greece, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

states (the Netherlands) which have both self-rule and shared rule. The impact of regional identity is assessed by three dummy variables: a regional language dummy which scores positive when a majority of people in a region speaks a different language from the main national language; a statehood variables which scores positive when a region has a history of sovereign statehood for at least 30 years between 1200 AD and 1950; and a distance variable which scores positive when a region is an island or archipelago and at least 30 km from the mainland (Hooghe and Marks, 2016). One may expect that regional parties will contest elections in these regions because they can mobilize the regional voter by invoking regional identities which can be based on speaking a regional language, a history of independent statehood, or geographical distance from the centre.¹⁹ Two dummy variables assess the impact of electoral timing of the European *vis-à-vis* regional elections. One dummy indicates when a European election is held before a regional election and another dummy indicates when a European election is held concurrently with a regional election.

The models include six control variables to control for national spillover in the European electoral arena. SOE-effects tend to follow a parabolic path whereby vote share losses (gains) are largest at mid-term of the national election cycle (two years in most countries) and tend to be smaller the closer the European election is held to a preceding or forthcoming national election. This relationship is modelled by introducing a cycle and cycle-squared variable whereby the cycle variable is derived by taking the number of days between a European and a previously held national election and dividing this number by 365 days to obtain years. One dummy indicates simultaneous European and national elections, another dummy indicates elections with compulsory voting, and a third dummy signals national elections conducted under (more) majoritarian rule (all European elections are held under proportional rule). Finally, the size of regions is a ratio variable which is derived by dividing the regional electorate by the statewide electorate (both for national elections).²⁰ Descriptive statistics are provided in Table A1 in the Appendix. The method for model estimation is ordinary least regression with panel corrected standard errors (Beck and Katz, 1995, 2011) and the full results are shown in Table A2 in the Appendix. The models include country and European election dummies because regions are clustered in countries and European elections have taken place at the same date.²¹

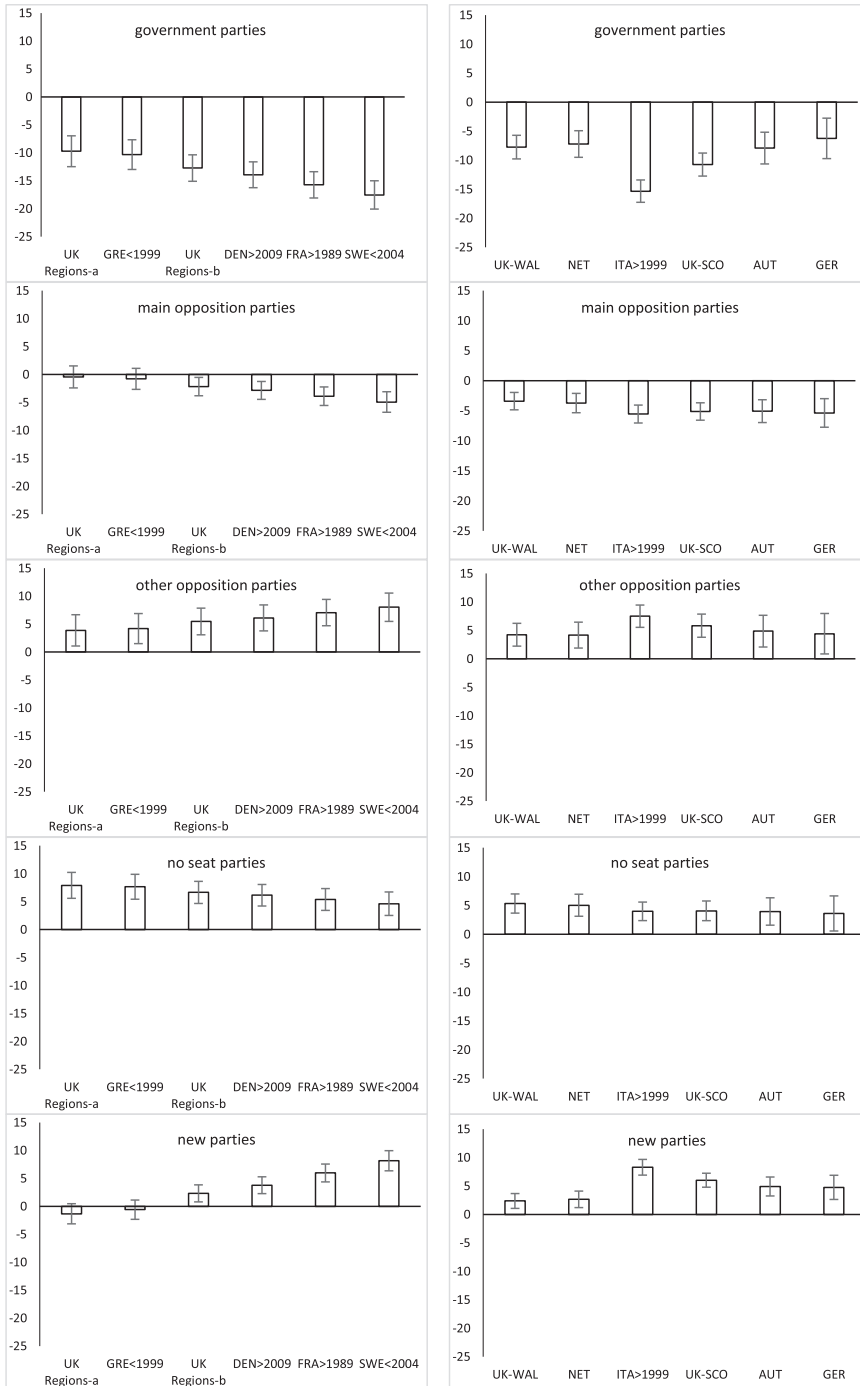
Figure 2 displays vote share swings between European and previously held national elections for five party categories. Shown are averages and their 95 per cent confidence intervals and these estimates are derived by setting the self-rule and shared rule scores as shown in Table 2 while keeping all the other independent variables at their mean (continuous variables) or mode (dummy variables) (see Appendix Table A1) and by including a European election fixed effect for 2014. Countries with regions which have only self-rule are shown on the left-hand side whereas countries with regions which have

¹⁹ I do not classify regional parties as a separate category because this would interfere with the categorization of parties. A regional party can be in government or in opposition and can be a new, or no seat. When party categories overlap one cannot attribute a vote share loss or gain to one single party category.

²⁰ The number of valid votes is taken in case the size of the electorate is missing.

²¹ The results appear to be robust across various model specifications, i.e. models which include an autocorrelation coefficient, fixed effects (by region) models, and mixed effects linear regression models whereby aggregated vote share swings are clustered in regions which, in turn, are clustered by country. These results are available upon request.

Figure 2: The Combined Effect of Self-rule and Shared Rule on the Vote Share Swing between European and Previously Held National Elections for Five Categories of Party.



Note: Estimates are based on the results shown in Table A2 in the Appendix.

Table 2: Regional Authority Index (RAI) Scores in 11 EU Member States.

	<i>Country</i>	<i>Self-rule</i>	<i>Shared rule</i>	<i>RAI-score</i>
UK Regions-a	UK regions before 1994 and in 2014	0	0	0
GRE<1999 ¹	Greece before 1999	1	0	1
UK Regions-b	UK regions between 1994 and 2014	5	0	5
DEN>2009	Denmark since 2009	7	0	7
FRA>1989 ²	France since 1989	10	0	10
SWE<2004 ³	Sweden before 2004	13	0	13
UK-WAL	Wales in the UK	9	6.5	15.5
NET ⁴	Netherlands	10	7.5	17.5
ITA>1999 ⁵	Italy since 1999	15	3	18
UK-SCO	Scotland in the UK	14	6.5	20.5
AUT ⁶	Austria	14	9	23
GER	Germany	15	11	26

Notes:

¹ Greece before 1999 also represents France in 1979 (2+0).

² France since 1989 also represents Greece since 1999 (9+0) and Italy before 1999 (10/11+0/1).

³ Sweden also represents Sweden since 2004 (12+0) and Denmark before 2009 (12+0).

⁴ Netherlands also represents Wallonia and Flanders in Belgium between 1989 and 1994 (11+9).

⁵ Italy since 1999 also represents Brussels in Belgium since 2004 (13+5).

⁶ Austria also represents Spain (14+9.5) and Flanders and Wallonia in Belgium since 2004 (14+10).

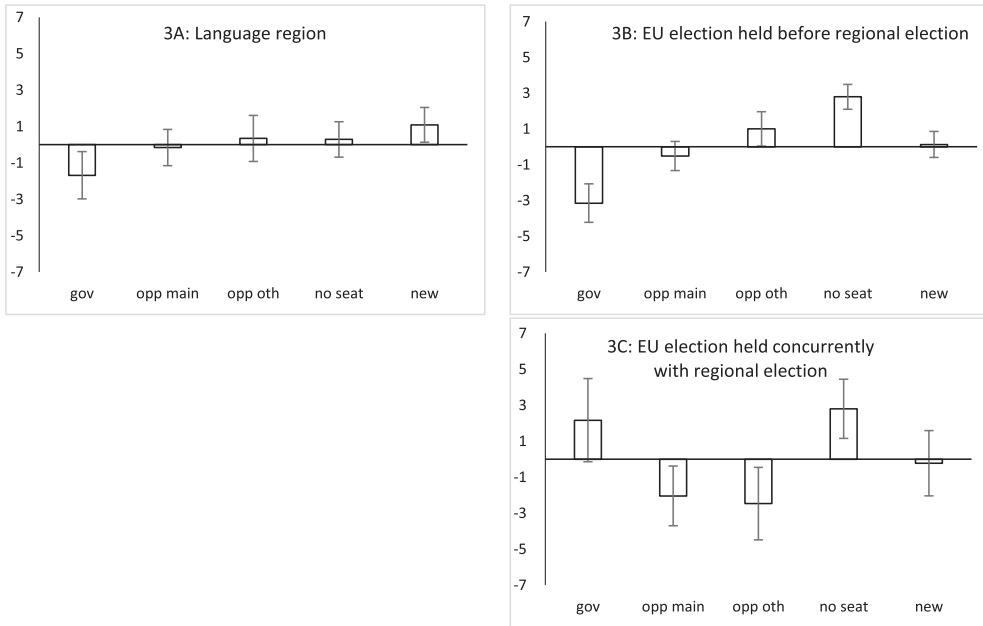
both self-rule and shared rule are shown on the right-hand side. The countries are ordered on the x-axis according to their self-rule and shared rule scores from low (left) to high (right) (Table 2).

Figure 2 reveals that European elections are second-order across all countries but SOE-effects vary according to the form and extent of regional authority. Government parties tend to lose more vote share in regions with only self-rule and they lose less vote share in regions which have both self- and shared rule. In contrast to SOE-model expectations, the main opposition party loses vote share and they especially do so in regions with shared rule. Smaller opposition parties win vote share and vote share gains tend to increase according to the extent regions obtain self-rule but decrease to the extent regions acquire shared rule. No seat parties win vote share, especially in regions with less authority. New parties also win vote share, which given their operationalization is not surprising, and gains increase to the extent regions acquire self-rule but tend to decrease to the extent regions obtain shared rule. Taken together, these results strongly indicate that the form and extent of regional authority modifies the extent to which national politics spills over into the European electoral arena.

Figures 3A, 3B and 3C display the impact of regional identity and electoral timing. Shown are the additive effects of a European election taking place in a language region (3A),²² a European election which is held before a regional election (3B), and a European election which is held at the same date as a regional election (3C). When a European

²² Among the three dummies (language, statehood and distance), only the language dummy attains statistical significance. This result corroborates that language is an important marker for regional identity (Laitin, 2000, p. 144) that may subsequently impact voting behaviour.

Figure 3: The Effects of Language Region and Electoral Timing on the Vote Share Swing Between European and Previously Held National Elections for Five Party Categories.



Note: Estimates are based on the results shown in Appendix Table A2.

election takes place in a region where a majority of people speaks a different language from the main national language, new parties benefit from the loss of government parties. Contrary to expectations, government parties lose more vote share, and smaller opposition and no seat parties win more vote share, when a European election precedes a regional election. The hypothesis concerning concurrent regional and European elections is confirmed while in these instances one may find opposite SOE-effects, i.e. government and no seat parties win vote share but the main and other opposition parties lose vote share. The results for regional identity and electoral timing also strongly suggest that regional politics modifies the extent to which national politics flows into the European electoral arena.

Discussion: Conceptual and Empirical Challenges of Studying Elections in a Multilevel Party System

The results presented in this symposium article strongly suggest that regional politics significantly alters the extent and way in which national politics flows into the European electoral arena. It is therefore likely that regionalization has significantly transformed the European multilevel party system. However, this insight only comes to the fore once one acknowledges that methodological nationalism inherent in the SOE-model precludes observing many interactions between electoral arenas. The empirical analysis presented in this symposium article provides one illustration of

the complexities of multilevel electoral behaviour²³ and, at the very least, reveals a need to further develop the SOE-model so that its explanatory power will be increased.

Figure 2 reveals an interesting difference between SOE-effects in European elections held in regions with only self-rule versus regions which also have shared rule. Government parties lose more, no seat parties gain less, and other opposition and new parties win more vote share when self-rule increases but losses and gains level off to the extent regions obtain shared rule. This empirical result runs counter to the hypothesis that SOE effects decrease when regional authority increases. A possible explanation could be that European elections obtain a 'third-order election' status when self-rule increases because there is more 'at stake' in regional elections.²⁴ When regions also obtain shared rule, voters and parties are accustomed to a situation in which the outcomes of a regional election impacts politics at the national level. This induces both voters and parties to exhibit 'first-order election behaviour' in the regional electoral arena. Although European elections do not directly affect national policy-making to a similar extent as regional elections can, it may be still the case that relatively more voters and parties in regions with shared rule transfer their behaviour from the regional to the European electoral arena in comparison to voters and parties in regions without shared rule.

Which interactions between regional, national and European electoral arenas deserve our attention? Apart from the differentiated effects of self-rule and shared rule I would like to discuss three additional linkages. First, a 'snow-ball effect' of parties which increase their territorial scope across regional electoral arenas such as the Green parties in Austria and Germany (Swenden and Maddens, pp. 8–9). A 'snow-ball effect' can also occur at a transnational scale for parties that increase their territorial scope across Europe. Possible examples are Pirate, eurosceptic, and right-wing populist parties. Second, a 'springboard effect' (Brancati, 2008) whereby parties use the regional and/or national electoral arena to gain access to respectively national and/or European elections. A 'springboard effect' has been empirically shown for regionalist parties – defined as parties with a self-rule demand – whose ambition is to win seats in the national electoral arena because that is where decisions on decentralization reforms are taken (Masseti and Schakel, 2013). Third, a 'trickle-down effect' whereby parties use the European and/or national electoral arena to gain access to national and/or regional elections, respectively. Many new parties emerge in the European electoral arena (Figure 2) and we do not know much about their electoral fate after their first appearance.

A multilevel party system perspective exposes a whole myriad of possible vertical and horizontal interactions between regional, national and European electoral arenas. And apart from posing a conceptual challenge, studying elections in a multi-level electoral system perspective also entails a huge data collection challenge (Schakel and Jeffery, 2013). It requires disaggregating electoral outcomes to the regional level and it involves collecting information on regional electoral rules and on how regional executives are formed. Instead of collecting data for 28 EU Member States, election

²³ Another illustrating example of complex multilevel electoral behaviour is provided in León's contribution to this symposium, where Leon shows that in federal countries partisans of the national incumbent party with negative economic assessments are more likely to assign responsibility to regional governments than partisans of other parties and non-partisans. But in non-federal countries there are no differences between partisans.

²⁴ I would like to thank an anonymous referee for suggesting that European elections may become third-order elections.

scholars are now confronted with a need to collect data for hundreds of regions, hundreds of parties and thousands of elections. Studying elections in multilevel party systems is a theoretically challenging and a daunting practical enterprise but one which is worthwhile pursuing while it has the potential to significantly advance scholarship on elections.

Correspondence:

Arjan H. Schakel
 Assistant Professor in Research Methods
 Department of Political Science
 Faculty of Arts and Social Science
 Maastricht University
 PO Box 616
 6200 MD Maastricht
 The Netherlands.
 email: a.schakel@maastrichtuniversity.nl

Appendix

Table A1: Descriptive Statistics for the Dependent and Independent Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
<i>vote share swing government parties</i>	-6.73	-6.19	8.41	-37.88	33.31
<i>vote share swing main opposition parties</i>	-1.86	-1.69	5.92	-26.41	23.57
<i>vote share swing other opposition parties</i>	2.09	1.55	7.30	-20.27	32.44
<i>vote share swing no seat parties</i>	1.86	0.45	6.13	-25.01	36.55
<i>vote share swing new parties</i>	4.55	1.78	6.60	0	37.74
<i>self-rule</i>	9.66	10	4.63	0	15
<i>shared rule</i>	3.08	0	4.19	0	12
<i>language region</i>	0.12	0	0.33	0	1
<i>distance</i>	0.05	0	0.22	0	1
<i>statehood</i>	0.12	0	0.32	0	1
<i>EU election first</i>	0.36	0	0.48	0	1
<i>simultaneous European and regional elections</i>	0.03	0	0.17	0	1
<i>cycle</i>	1.72	1.75	1.10	0	4.08
<i>cycle2</i>	4.17	3.05	4.13	0	16.69
<i>simultaneous European and national elections</i>	0.04	0	0.20	0	1
<i>compulsory voting</i>	0.23	0	0.42	0	1
<i>different electoral system</i>	0.51	1	0.50	0	1
<i>size region</i>	0.06	0.04	0.07	0.00	0.61

Notes: The number of observations is 1,276.

Table A2: Determinants for Vote Share Swings Between EU and Previously Held National Elections for Five Types of Party.

	government			opposition main			opposition other			no seat			new		
	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>sig.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>sig.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>sig.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>sig.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>sig.</i>
<i>self-rule</i>	-0.60	0.10	***	-0.35	0.08	***	0.32	0.10	***	-0.25	0.08	***	0.73	0.08	***
<i>shared rule</i>	1.14	0.23	***	0.02	0.16		-0.38	0.23	*	-0.05	0.20		-0.44	0.15	***
<i>language</i>	-1.68	0.66	**	-0.16	0.51		0.34	0.65		0.28	0.50		1.09	0.49	**
<i>distance</i>	1.25	0.99		1.15	0.75		0.30	0.79		-0.87	0.59		-0.54	0.60	
<i>statehood</i>	0.88	0.70		-0.51	0.52		0.17	0.60		0.25	0.39		0.26	0.41	
<i>EU election first</i>	-3.15	0.55	***	-0.52	0.42		1.00	0.49	**	2.79	0.35	***	0.13	0.37	
<i>sim EU-reg</i>	2.17	1.18	*	-2.04	0.85	**	-2.47	1.03	**	2.80	0.84	***	-0.22	0.93	
<i>cycle</i>	-7.15	0.77	***	5.16	0.59	***	0.09	0.76		-1.72	0.60	***	4.16	0.49	***
<i>cycle2</i>	1.49	0.19	***	-1.44	0.15	***	0.03	0.20		0.79	0.16	***	-1.03	0.13	***
<i>sim EU-nat</i>	-5.01	1.27	***	3.51	0.90	***	0.72	1.15		-2.83	0.99	***	0.90	0.86	
<i>compulsory voting</i>	-10.64	0.85	***	0.16	0.60		7.18	0.82	***	2.70	0.65	***	0.65	0.50	***
<i>diff electoral system</i>	-8.42	1.09	***	-0.79	0.77		1.45	0.97		5.60	0.97	***	1.74	0.58	***
<i>size region</i>	-5.76	2.99	*	1.40	2.03		-2.96	3.24		7.94	2.21	***	-2.61	2.15	
EU election fixed effects (1979 = base)															
1984	-0.82	0.96		3.93	0.71	***	-2.36	0.84	***	0.79	0.63		-1.52	0.61	**
1989	-0.65	1.05		0.20	0.77		-2.58	0.93	***	0.69	0.67		1.29	0.68	*
1994	-2.27	0.95	**	1.20	0.70	*	-0.92	0.84		-0.33	0.64		2.26	0.61	***
1999	-0.92	1.07		5.13	0.81	***	-0.40	0.99		0.79	0.66		-3.54	0.72	***
2004	-4.86	1.05	***	4.97	0.81	***	1.38	0.98		1.73	0.67	**	-2.29	0.73	***
2009	-3.32	1.07	***	-0.59	0.80		3.80	1.01	***	3.39	0.67	***	-2.33	0.70	***
2014	-7.63	1.03	***	0.67	0.77		5.55	0.98	***	3.70	0.67	***	-1.78	0.69	**
Country fixed effects (Austria = base)															
Belgium	11.23	2.12	***	0.80	1.19		1.89	1.82		-4.06	1.43	***	-7.31	1.58	***
Denmark	6.05	2.37	**	-6.54	1.55	***	-1.05	2.28		0.15	1.78		4.57	1.78	**
France	7.52	2.71	***	-3.34	1.72	*	6.84	2.54	***	0.34	2.14		-6.93	1.89	***
Greece	-0.02	1.64		6.24	1.05	***	4.83	1.50	***	-1.48	1.13		-10.19	1.22	***
Germany	15.87	2.61	***	-4.31	1.62	***	0.04	2.44		-3.04	2.12		-7.62	1.77	***
Italy	17.74	2.10	***	2.22	1.29	*	-2.69	1.96		-2.16	1.58		-12.71	1.56	***
Netherlands	-7.19	1.53	***	-0.97	0.85		13.06	1.45	***	3.29	0.70	***	-7.67	1.14	***
Spain	-2.05	1.28		2.22	0.80	***	4.45	1.16	***	1.35	0.68	**	-6.98	1.21	***

Table A2: (Continued)

	government			opposition main			opposition other			no seat			new		
	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>sig.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>sig.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>sig.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>sig.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>sig.</i>
Sweden	0.98	2.37		-3.00	1.49	**	7.53	2.37	****	3.65	1.82	**	-6.52	1.84	****
United Kingdom	-4.20	2.37	*	1.01	1.51		1.30	2.39		9.01	1.92	****	-5.36	1.63	****
constant	6.31	2.41	****	-2.27	1.52		-6.18	2.32	****	-2.40	1.89		2.92	1.71	
R-squared		0.46			0.41			0.36			0.51			0.56	
Wald chi2		1035	****		1035	****		654	****		850	****		1213	****

Notes: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Shown are the results of Prais-Winsten models with panel corrected standard errors (Beck and Katz, 1995, 2011). The dependent variable is an aggregated vote share swing for a party category for 1,276 elections held within 217 regions and eleven EU Member States (Table 1).

References

- Bakker, R., de Vries, C., Edwards, E. *et al.* (2012) 'Measuring Party Positions in Europe: The Chapel Hill Expert Survey Trend File, 1999–2010'. *Party Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 143–52.
- Beck, N. and Katz, J.N. (1995) 'What To Do (And Not To Do) with Time-Series Cross-Section Data'. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 89, No. 3, pp. 634–47.
- Beck, N. and Katz, J.N. (2011) 'Modelling Dynamics in Time-Series-Cross-Section Political Economy Data'. *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 14, pp. 331–52.
- Brancati, D. (2008) 'The Origins and Strengths of Regional Parties'. *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 135–59.
- Cox, G.W. and Munger, M.C. (1989) 'Closeness, Expenditures and Turnout in the 1982 US House Elections'. *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 83, No. 1, pp. 217–30.
- Dandoy, R. and Schakel, A.H. (eds) (2013) *Regional and National Elections in Western Europe. Territoriality of the Vote in the Thirteen Countries* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan).
- De Vreese, C.H., Banducci, S.A., Semetko, H.A. and Boomgaarden, H.G. (2006) 'The News Coverage of the 2004 Parliamentary Election Campaign in 25 Countries'. *European Union Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 477–504.
- De Winter, L., Gomez-Reino, M. and Lynch, P. (eds) (2006) *Autonomist Parties in Europe: Identity Politics and the Revival of the Territorial Cleavage* (Barcelona: ICPS).
- Elias, A. (2008) 'From Euro-Enthusiasm to Euro-Scepticism? A Re-Evaluation of Minority Nationalist Party Attitudes Towards European Integration'. *Regional and Federal Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 5, pp. 557–81.
- Fauvelle-Aymar, C. and Stegmaier, M. (2008) 'Economic and Political Effects on European Parliamentary Electoral Turnout in Post-Communist Europe'. *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4, pp. 661–72.
- Franklin, M.N. and Hobolt, S.B. (2011) 'The Legacy of Lethargy: How Elections to the European Parliament Depress Turnout'. *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 67–76.
- Geys, B. (2006) 'Explaining Voter Turnout. A Review of Aggregate-Level Research'. *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4, pp. 637–63.
- Henderson, A. and McEwen, N. (2010) 'A Comparative Analysis of Voter Turnout in Regional Elections'. *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 405–16.
- Hix, S. and Marsh, M. (2007) 'Punishment or Protest? Understanding European Parliament Elections'. *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 69, No. 2, pp. 495–510.
- Hix, S. and Marsh, M. (2011) 'Second-Order Effects Plus Pan-European Political Swings: An Analysis of European Parliament Elections Across Time'. *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 4–15.
- Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (with Schakel, A.H., Chapman-Osterkatz, S., Niedzwiecki, S. and Shair-Rosenfield, S.) (2016) *Community, Scale, and Regional Governance: A Postfunctional Theory of Governance, Volume II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Hooghe, L., Marks, G., Schakel, A.H., Chapman-Osterkatz, S., Niedzwiecki, S. and Shair-Rosenfield, S. (2016) *Measuring regional Authority: A Postfunctional Theory of Governance, Volume I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Hough, D. and Jeffery, C. (eds) (2006) *Devolution and Electoral Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).
- Jeffery, C. (2010) 'Multi-Level Party Competition in Federal and Regional States'. In Enderlein, H., Wälti, S. and Zürn, M. (eds) *Handbook on Multi-Level Governance* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar), pp. 136–52.
- Jeffery, C. and Wincott, D. (2010) 'Beyond Methodological Nationalism: The Challenge of Territorial Politics'. In Hay, C. (ed.) *New Directions in Political Science* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan/Political Studies Association), pp. 167–88.

- Jolly, S. (2007) 'The Europhile Fringe? Regionalist Party Support for European Integration'. *European Union Politics*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 109–30.
- Keating, M. (1998) *The New Regionalism in Western Europe* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar).
- Keating, M. (2009) 'Putting European Political Science Back Together'. *European Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 297–316.
- Laitin, D. (2000) 'What is a Language Community?' *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 142–55.
- Loughlin, J., Hendriks, F. and Lidström, A. (eds) (2011) *The Oxford Handbook of Local and Regional Democracy in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Marsh, M. and Mikhaylov, S. (2010) 'European Parliament Elections and EU Governance'. *Living Reviews in European Governance*, Vol. 5, No. 4.
- Massetti, E. (2009) 'Explaining Regionalist Party Positioning in a Multi-Dimensional Ideological Space: A Framework for Analysis'. *Regional and Federal Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4/5, pp. 501–31.
- Massetti, E. and Schakel, A.H. (2013) 'Ideology Matters: Why Decentralisation Has a Differentiated Effect on Regionalist Parties' Fortunes in Western Democracies'. *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 52, No. 6, pp. 797–821.
- Massetti, E. and Schakel, A.H. (2017) 'Decentralization Reforms and Regionalist Parties Strength: Accommodation, Empowerment or Both?' *Political Studies*, Vol. 65, No. 2, pp. 432–51.
- Matilla, M. (2003) 'Why Bother? Determinants of Turnout in the European Elections'. *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 449–68.
- McEwen, N. and Moreno, L. (eds) (2005) *The Territorial Politics of Welfare* (London: Routledge).
- Oppenhuys, E., van der Eijk, C. and Franklin, M. (1996) 'The Party Context: Outcomes'. In van der Eijk, C. and Franklin, M. (eds) *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press), pp. 287–306.
- Pallarés, F. and Keating, M. (2003) 'Multi-Level Electoral Competition. Regional Elections and Party Systems in Spain'. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 239–55.
- Reif, K. (1985) 'Ten Second-Order Elections'. In Reif, K. (ed.) *Ten Second-Order Elections* (Aldershot: Gower), pp. 1–36.
- Reif, K. and Schmitt, H. (1980) 'Nine Second-Order National Elections – A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Elections Results'. *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 3–44.
- Schakel, A.H. (2015) 'How to Analyze Second-Order Election Effects? A Refined Second-Order Election Model'. *Comparative European Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 6, pp. 636–55.
- Schakel, A.H. (ed.) (2017) *Regional and National Elections in Eastern Europe. Territoriality of the Vote in Ten Countries* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Schakel, A.H. and Dandoy, R. (2013) 'Introduction: Territoriality of the Vote. A Framework for Analysis'. In Dandoy, R. and Schakel, A.H. (eds) *Regional and National Elections in Western Europe. Territoriality of the Vote in the Thirteen Countries* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 1–26.
- Schakel, A.H. and Jeffery, C. (2013) 'Are Regional Elections Really Second-Order?' *Regional Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 3, pp. 323–41.
- Swenden, W. and Maddens, B. (2009) 'Introduction. Territorial Party Politics in Western Europe: A Framework for Analysis'. In Swenden, W. and Maddens, B. (eds) *Territorial Party Politics in Western Europe* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 1–30.
- Szöcsik, E. (2013) 'Minority Nationalist Parties and European Integration: Europeanists Par Excellence?' Paper presented 13th Biennial Conference of the European Union Studies Association, Baltimore, pp. 9–11 May.

- Tronconi, F. and Roux, C. (2009) 'The Political Systems of Italian Regions Between State-Wide Logics and Increasing Differentiation'. *Modern Italy*, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 151–66.
- Van der Eijk, C., Franklin, M. and Marsh, M. (1996) 'What Voters Teach Us About Europe-Wide Elections: What Europe-Wide Elections Teach Us About Voters'. *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 149–66.
- Weber, T. (2007) 'Campaign Effects and Second-Order Cycles. A Top-Down Approach To European Parliament Elections'. *European Union Politics*, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 509–36.