TOWARDS A TERRITORIAL POLITICAL CAPACITY APPROACH FOR STUDYING EUROPEAN REGIONS

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The comparative analysis of the sub-national level has become an increasingly prominent feature across the social sciences in recent years and this trend has started to address the general tendency in the past to make an 'unreflected choice' of the nation-state as the default unit of analysis (Jeffery 2013). Jeffery and Wincott (2010, p.174), for example, note that the methodological nationalism which characterises these unreflected choices has driven 'the blinkering of political science to the enduring significance of sub-state social mobilization and political contestation.' Perhaps one of the most influential studies that has challenged these assumptions has been the Regional Authority Index (RAI) developed initially by Hooghe, Marks and Schakel (2010) and updated by Hooghe et al. (2016). The RAI provides arguably the most comprehensive attempt to systematically compare the sub-national across a wide range of states and has become a key reference point for the analysis of territorial politics. A core objective of the RAI was to 'provide a reasonably valid measure of subnational government structure that is sensitive to cross-sectional and temporal variation' and which was robust in terms of transparency, as well as reliability and validity (Hooghe et al. 2016, p.4). The result is that the RAI was designed to be somewhat limited in scope. Hooghe et al. (2016, 16) explain that the index 'excludes informal arrangements' or contextual factors, such as leadership, political parties, or corruption, which may affect government performance. The main objective of this article is to explore the extent to which it is possible to develop a systematic approach to building these types of factors back into the analysis of the sub-national level via the development of a complementary index or set of measures.

To this end, the article proposes a framework for studying the 'territorial political capacity' (TPC) of regions in Europe. It is inspired by a four-year cross-national comparative research project on 'territorial governance in western Europe between convergence and capacity'.[1] The project's central question was formulated in terms of the tension between convergence and

territorial capacity building in the period of economic crisis starting in 2008. The pressures promoting a harder form of convergence between states are usually presented as economic, in the form of globalisation, European integration (framed as a form of globalisation) and fiscal policy; or epistemic, via the trans-national diffusion of scientific and economic expertise and technical norms and instruments (Dyson, 2014, Jessop, 2007, Knill, 2005; Pollitt, 2001; Bennett, 1991). Pressures of hard and soft convergence and divergence also affect the styles of and rules governing inter-governmental relations; the institutional, material and constructed capacities of sub-national administrations and the reform of regional and local service delivery. The project has furthered comparative reflection on convergence and divergence and elaborated a typology – the *States of Convergence in Territorial Governance* – that provides an operational template for comparing the interplay of exogenous and endogenous dynamics at the territorial level, a framework that accommodates structure, agency and interaction (Cole, Harguindéguy, Pasquier, Stafford and de Visscher, 2015). The main aim of this article is essentially conceptual, however, rather than the presentation of detailed findings from the empirical field work, which have been extensively published elsewhere (Cole, 2014, Cole and Pasquier, 2015, Cole and Stafford, 2015; Harguindéguy, Pasquier and Cole, 2015; Cole and de Visscher, 2016; Stafford, 2016; Pasquier, 2016; Harguindéguy and Rodriguez Lopez, 2016; Harguindéguy and Cole, 2017).

Drawing on the research carried out within the project, the article puts forward a Territorial Political Capacity Index, designed to complement the analysis provided within the RAI. The article needs to be read in the context of the thorough discussion on the indexes of decentralisation presented in the introductory article of this special section, to which the interested reader is referred. Rather like the indexes of decentralization, discussions of political capacity are essentially contestable.

The concept of capacity is generally used to apply to the state, in a rich debate which engages scholars from political science, sociology, international political economy and international relations (for example Besley and Perrson, 2009, Dyson, 2014, Enriquez and Centeno, 2012). State capacity is a polycentric concept that draws on arguments based on resources, institutions, implementation, conditionality and processes of governance. We observe that such debates are often framed in the negative, in terms of the crisis of state capacity (Le Galès, 1999) and the hollowing out of the state (Jessop, 2013).   In relation to territorial forms, capacity was originally mobilised in more positive terms to refer to building governing capacity, conceptualized in terms of resources (material and political); interactions (territorial coalitions and networks) and practices (collective action repertoires) (Stone, 1989; Pasquier, 2004; Painter & Pierre, 2005; Keating, Hepburn & Cairney, 2009). Building governing capacity makes real sense in a context of regions as loosely bounded spaces, relying on persuasion, emulation and the attractiveness of the territorial project (Keating, 1998). Following this brief presentation of governing capacity as a form of positive mobilization of resources, interactions and practices, the main sections deal with the capacity to develop rules and regulations, raise finances, interact with central state institutions and mobilise resources; the capacity to operationalise more informal mechanisms linked to party, leadership and network dynamics; and the capacity to articulate, negotiate and diffuse a territorial model in a multi-organisational sense.

---Figure 1 and Table 1 around here---

The proposed framework identifies three main dimensions of territorial political capacity. Mainly material indicators include institutions and institutional resources. Mixed material and constructed indicators centre on causal mechanisms of party and leadership capacity. Mainly

constructed indicators are drawn from territorial praxis. Bringing together material, mixed and constructed indicators is intended to offer a more subtle and nuanced reading of individual places, as well as to draw comparisons between types of place. How do we back up the claim that these indicators capture territorial political capacity? Bearing in mind the essentially contested nature of any conceptualisation, and the simultaneously constructed and porous nature of all categorisations, the framework proposed is robust: the first dimension is mapped onto the Regional Authority Index: (institutions [self-rule], inter-governmental relations [shared rule]), the second (party and leadership capacity) uses a coded scale based mainly on primary interview data to uncover territorial and multi-level dynamics; and the final one is drawn from praxis, as interpreted by discourse and practice as entry points into understanding the resilience of territorial models. Our contention is that this range of indicators captures well the hybrid mix of material and constructed dimensions that is required to understand political capacity in any one place.

Research Design

Our objective, through extensive fieldwork (2012-2015), was to compare four European regions in a period of economic crisis and political reconfiguration. These regions - Andalusia (Spain), Brittany (France), Wales (United Kingdom) and Wallonia (Belgium) - were caught between somewhat contradictory pressures for economic and political convergence and the temptation to develop more autonomous forms of regional governance. The central hypothesis was the top-down one that converging pressures – especially budgetary retrenchment and the requirements of normative Europeanization - had been intensified by the context of the fiscal and sovereign debt crisis since 2008 (Thorhallsson and Kattel, 2013, Braun and Treib, 2014). The internal stability pacts in Germany (Vetter, 2010, Benz and Heinz, 2016), the tighter fiscal steering in France (Cole, 2014), the adoption of new financial and budgetary instruments in Spain (Harguindeguy, Pasquier and Cole, 2015; Ruiz, 2013; Colino, 2013), all suggested that the euro and sovereign debt crises had enhanced central government controls over sub-state governments. Even in Belgium, the impact of new accounting norms (SEC 2010) and audit procedures following the Fiscal Compact treaty had strengthened the role of Federal and EU actors (Cole and de Visscher, 2016). The general conclusion was that economic crisis undermines the territorial capacities of what we labelled as 'second order strong identity' regions.

The period from 2008 was also illustrative, however, of the resilience of certain territorial models. From this perspective, the ability of cities and regions to respond to economic crisis (by developing a narrative of the common good, by playing on their size, by established practices of cooperation, by routines that have demonstrated their usefulness in the past) is one aspect of their broader political capacity, understood as a hybrid indicator of the material and constructed dimensions of territorial governance (Stone, 1989, Cole and Pasquier, 2015). Understanding a region requires combining different levels of analysis and distinctive ways of

knowing; broad-based (quasi-statistical) variables facilitate comparison, while the focus on resilience and capacity requires primary data collection, drilling down into the practices of comparable panels of actors.

These four regions governed by social-democratic parties were compared using a 'most similar' logic (Cole, Harguindéguy, Pasquier, Stafford and de Visscher, 2015). They have variable degrees of decentralised authority: as a minimum, each has a directly elected regional Assembly. The case for comparison is made on the basis of functional and political similarity (economic status, traditions of party control, positioning in relation to central government and the EU, the role of territorial identity markers) rather than strict equivalence in terms of size (Andalusia, with 8,000,000 inhabitants, being much larger than the three other regions, each with around 3,000,000). These regions we label as 'second order, strong identity': namely, a family of regions with a strong sense of their own role which do not look to secure independence (unlike Catalonia, Scotland or to a lesser degree Flanders), but which use their identity markers (and solidarity arguments) to obtain transfers from central government and the EU. Collectively the four regions have a distinctive territorial identity, or at least (in the case of Wallonia) a developed sense of regional milieu. The four regions exist in states that cover the range of logical possibilities for comparison: a loose federal state (Belgium), a hybrid state with some federal characteristics (Spain), a predominantly unitary state modified by forms of asymmetrical devolution (United Kingdom) and a decentralised but still unitary state (France). The EU context provides the core similarity between these states, with three of the four participating in the euro and signed up to the Treaty on European Stability and Governance (TSGG). They each sustained a coherent territorial narrative that mixed signifiers from the centre-periphery and the left-right axes.

- Table 2 around here

Our research design is fundamentally a most similar one, rooted in the ontology of the comparative case study. There is no single comparative case study method. While Yin (2002) frames the comparative case study as part of a positivistic, quasi-experimental design (as Przeworski and Teune [1970] did in their classic work), more constructivist minded scholars such as Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995) emphasise cases as bounded phenomena allowing holistic, yet particularistic analysis. The concern for classification and measurement is necessarily less absolute in the comparative case study (than in pure index approaches) but careful case selection allows rather more profound analysis of social phenomena, in this case the response of regions to economic crisis and the adaptation of territorial models to internal and external challenges.

Fieldwork was conducted in these four regions over an 18-month period (November 2012 to May 2014). The research fieldwork consisted in collecting statistical and secondary data on the four regions in comparative context, and, at its heart, organising interviews with territorial actors (around 25 interviews per region). Over 100 semi-structured interviews took place across the four regions, using a common interview schedule (designed to capture the core research questions of convergence and capacity building in a context of economic crisis and political fragmentation). Within each region, functionally equivalent panels were identified, composed of three cognate groups: the public administration group (devolved government, regional or regional state actors), the policy community group (representatives of professional and policy communities in the fields of public finance and secondary education) and the political actors group (elected representatives with competence in two policy fields [budget policy and secondary education], controlled for by party affiliation). A dataset of 102 interviews was

compiled using NVivo 10, a qualitative research software package and deposited with the Be Quali data archive (hereby meeting the criterion of openness and transparency) (Cole, et. al. 2018).

The case selection insisted primarily upon the control of our regions by social-democratic parties. In these regions, party represented a powerful organisational force for mobilisation, party values represented a powerful filter of exogenous changes, and party networks provided an organisational capacity to fight and win elections. In Andalusia, Wales and Wallonia in particular, defensive strategies, based on reviving traditional models and territorial repertoires, were successful. The regional election results renewed the social-democrat compact in all four of the regions during the research process (the victory of PS in Wallonia 2014 and in Brittany, 2015; the return of PSOE in Andalucía, 2015; and the narrow return of Labour in Wales in 2016). But mapping or coding these dynamics in a meaningful way is extremely challenging, a theme addressed in the next section.

Comparing Regions: the Regional Authority Index and its Limits

The starting point for the TPC Index developed within this article, as highlighted in the introduction, is the Regional Authority Index (RAI) produced by Hooghe et al. (2010) and replicated at the local level by Ladner et al (2016) through the LAI (Local Autonomy Index). The RAI provides a framework for situating models of decentralisation within wider models of sub-national, intermediate or regional tiers of governance. The RAI draws on the study of federalism, notably Elazar (1991), and separates regional authority into two domains: *self-rule* - 'the authority that a subnational government exercises in its own territory' and *shared rule* –

'the authority that a subnational government co-exercises in the country as a whole' (Hooghe et al. 2016, p.23). In order to estimate variation in regional governance arrangements across regions and countries the RAI disaggregates both self and shared rule domains into a set of dimensions with measurable indicators (Table 1).

The *self-rule* dimension of the Regional Authority Index might be taken as a proxy for institutions and institutional resources and is thus germane to our enterprise. The self-rule axis is identified in terms of five indicators: institutional depth; policy scope, fiscal autonomy, borrowing autonomy and representation. In the 2016 version of the RAI, Wallonia arrives ahead under the self-rule criteria (19 points), followed closely by Andalusia (18.5 points), Brittany (10 points) and Wales (9 points). The ranking is logical. Wallonia has developed its institutional and budgetary resources and policy competencies as the result of over three decades of developing decentralisation and confederalisation. As one of the most powerful Spanish autonomous communities, Andalusia has also enjoyed a consistent set of self-ruled competencies in strategic sectors like health and education, though its fiscal capacity is more limited and was restrained further under the first Rajoy government (2011-2015). Wales had less far-reaching autonomy than in Wallonia or Andalusia during the 1999-2010 period. In the case of Brittany, finally, the regional Council has no formal regulatory or legislative powers. The NOTRe law of July 2015 changed little in this respect.

On the other hand, none of our regions perform particularly highly in terms of the *shared rule* dimension of the RAI. In the 2016 version of the RAI, Wales and Andalusia arrived ahead (6.5 points each on the RAI scale) of Wallonia (5 points) and Brittany (0 point). The French regions in particular appear weak in terms of formal self-rule, though informal influence has long been

observed in organisational sociology (Pasquier, 2012). In each case, key findings about our regions require more sustained, context-specific investigation. The RAI is a very useful instrument as an entry point for more detailed case study analysis, but it is necessary to adapt the index to make sense in a small n. context, the object of the next section.

Comparing Regions Using TPC: Adapting the RAI to a Small-N Context

Taken as an aggregate of both its self-rule and shared rule dimensions, the RAI presents a rather broad-brush description of our regions. Hooghe et al. (2016, 21) argue that the focus on legal authority and the minimalism of the RAI is in part driven by the objective to 'make it possible for researchers to investigate the causal links between the structure of government and its causes and consequences' (Hooghe et al. 2016, 21). Therefore informal factors and social norms, such as party politics, leadership and territorial models, are left aside from the RAI. Hence, while we propose a scheme that is closely mapped to the weightings in the RAI, three new variables are introduced - party capacity, leadership capacity and territorial models - in order to capture dimensions of self- and shared rule in a small-n context. These are now presented in turn and applied to our four regions.

The Party System and the Regional Interest

More often than not, party dynamics are the principal 'unseen' forces at work that are not adequately captured by existing models such as the Regional Authority Index. The presence or not of a powerful regionalist party, the attitudes adopted by national parties to issues of territorial identity, the rewards to be gained by emphasising one or another level of governance: all of these are in part shaped by the party linkage function (Toubeau and Massetti, 2013; Swenden and Manners, 2009). Party capacity attempts to capture the extent to which a region

has a territorial party system and influence over national party system. It is divided into two variants, reflecting the vertical (reach) and horizontal (scope) dimensions of this phenomenon. It is subject to temporal dynamics; the conclusions are drawn on the basis of findings from fieldwork carried out in 2012-2014.

Vertical party capacity is backed by an important, if emergent literature (for example Fabre [2008] and the concept of influence or, in the Spanish case, Villena-Oliver & Aldeguer-Cerdá [2017]). It indicates the level of involvement of regional party elites in state-wide decision-making arenas. Promoting the regional interest through lobbying national parties or national parliamentary institutions is a classic mechanism of defending a territorial interest at the higher level. This can manifest itself in several forms. The highest score (3) is that of a strong influence of territorial parties in national party agendas. This might best be illustrated by interview evidence. In the words of one powerful PS deputy interviewed in 2013: 'Breton deputies represent 10% of the total PS group in the National Assembly. We meet regularly with xxx, the President of the Breton region who is also Defence minister and we invite the Breton PS senators along. We have made it clear to the government that if we are not listened we will not support government bills'. A weaker measure (2) would, for example, concern the French tradition of dual mandates (*cumul des mandats*) whereby individuals combine local and national elected positions. Weak and non-existent forms of territorial influence in national party agendas are signalled by the absence of such informal mechanisms.

Horizontal party capacity measures a rather different phenomenon, namely the concept of stratarchy. Swenden & Maddens (2009) conclude that the regional branches of state-wide parties have become more autonomous and territorially focused as a response to decentralization. In Wales, for example, the Labour Party has developed an increasingly

autonomous stance, along with the other Welsh parties (Bradbury, 2009). In Wallonia, the

Socialist Party exists only at the territorial level (Verleden, 2009). In Andalusia, the PSOE-A

((*Partido Socialista Obrero Español-Andalucía*, Spanish Socialist Workers Party-Andalusia),

is a Socialist bastion that has been run by its own (informal) rules, while also figuring largely

in the national party organisation (Barzelay, 1987).These accounts are confirmed by interview

evidence. One interviewee in Andalucía complained that after 35 years at the head of the

region, the dominating party 'seems to control most of the territorial centres of power' in public

administration and civil society'. Wales, Andalusia, Wallonia and, to a lesser degree, Brittany

all provide examples of these 'invisible' party dynamics. This emergent literature on stratarchy

and territorial party capacity leads us to propose the following. The highest ranking (3) goes to

the strong territorial party: free to conduct its affairs without interference from the central party

and exercising single party government. The second highest ranking (2) integrates largely

converging interview-based evidence for the linkage between parties and territorial institutions

(economy, associations, institutions).   Weak territory specific parties (1) and the absence of a

cohesive territorial party system (0) complete the measurement.

Partisan variables were central to understanding territorial dynamics in all four regions. Our

cases revealed many examples of such influence. In Brittany, we observed the far-reach of

territorial elites into national government, especially during the fieldwork period; the PS was

also at the centre of territorial networks at the time of investigation (Cole and Pasquier, 2015).

The Breton score of 5 thus combines a high measure of vertical reach (3) with a broad

horizontal scope (2). In Andalusia, the Gonzalez 'favourite son' effect had in the past ensured

that the region's interests were well looked after by Madrid; by 2013, actors from across the

spectrum forwarded party political explanations for the weak relations between regional

government and Madrid during the fieldwork period (Harguindéguy and Cole, 2017) In the

case of Andalusia, the combined score of 5 reflected a continuing measure of national influence in the PSOE (2), with firm party control in Andalusia (3). In the case of Wales, the Labour Party has operated as a veto player for the main political and constitutional developments and maintained a tight grip over power (Wyn Jones and Scully, 2012; Cole and Stafford, 2014), but its vertical reach has depended on governmental and partisan congruence: this justifies a combined score of 4 (3 for horizontal control, 1 for vertical reach). The case of Belgium is rather different, as the nationwide parties disappeared in the 1970s and each main party family (Socialists, Christian Democrats, Liberals) was reconfigured at the level of the linguistic group (francophone or Flemish) (Verleden, 2009). Even in Belgium, however, parties perform a central role, as intra-party bargaining is the only means of ensuring that federation-wide agreements can stick. At the time of fieldwork in early 2014, the Wallon PS combined reach into the Federal level government (2, the Prime Minister di Rupo being a Wallon socialist) with a strong yet contested horizontal influence (2).

Leadership Capacity

A second unseen factor is that of political leadership. Though generally national (and sometimes supranational) in focus, the questions raised by leadership are equally valid at a sub-national level, whether regional, or metropolitan (Borraz and John, 2004). Leadership capacity signifies the extent to which a region has territorial leadership and influence in terms of national political leadership. For the purposes of this exercise, it is divided into two equally weighted components: *Vertical leadership capacity* refers to the degree of influence of regional political leaders in national political and governmental arena. The scale proposed is: 3 – Strong influence of territorial leadership in the national political agenda 2 – Some evidence of influence of territorial leadership in national political agenda 1 – Weak influence of territorial

leadership in national political agenda 0 –Absence of influence of territorial leadership in national political agenda. *Horizontal leadership capacity* is deduced from formal institutional mechanisms, as well as close observation of relationships. The scale proposed is: 3- Territorial political leadership provides strong focus for territorial networks & institutions 2 –Territorial political leadership and limited evidence of providing focus for territorial networks & institutions 1 – Absence or informal territorial political leadership and some evidence of providing focus for territorial networks & institutions 0 – Absence or informal territorial political leadership and no evidence of providing focus for territorial networks & institutions. In both cases, evidence is drawn from detailed knowledge of specific contexts within the individual regions.

In terms of scoring, leadership that cuts across the self-rule and shared rule dimensions is of particular value for enhancing *vertical leadership capacity;* in Wallonia, Brittany and Andalusia, regional party leaders all performed leading national roles. In such cases, leadership can act as a behavioural proxy for forms of shared rule. In the case of Brittany, the tradition of territorial heavyweights in the national government, exemplified by Jean Yves Le Drian, President of the Brittany region and Foreign Affairs minister in the Philippe government, represented a high level of territorial penetration. A similar mechanism was observed in terms of the influence of the President of Andalusia, Susana Díaz, a leading figure in the national political party, the PSOE. In the case of Wallonia, Elio Di Rupo, President of the PS, was Prime Minister between 2011 and 2014; and Charles Michel (former President of the Reform Movement [Movement réformateur - MR) is currently Prime Minister. In Wales, the emergence of a clearly identified political and partisan leadership, symbolised by the two Labour First Ministers (Rhodri Morgan and Carwyn Jones) sustained the claim for enhanced self-rule, but it was less pertinent in terms of formal shared rule.

Horizontal leadership capacity captures the extent to which devolved institutions are at the centre for territorial institutions, networks and interests. The horizontal dimension has a hybrid quality. It refers, in a material sense, to the control of one level of government (typically regions; intermediate structures such as counties [England], Kreise [Germany] and departments [France], or city regions) over another (typically local communes). A preliminary score can de deduced from the self-rule measures of the RAI itself. At the heart of our approach lies the capacity of devolved and decentralised institutions to act as foci for interactions, as the central nexus of networks and interests. [1] Our main proxy for this measure is the linkage between territorial institutions, social and economic interests and civil society that has received sustained attention by scholars of devolution (Keating, 2013). The extent to which regions (and their political leaders) are at the centre of territorial networks and interests is a core dimension of capacity.

Two faces of territorial interest intermediation emerge from our survey. In the most positive framing, devolved institutions provide a policy relevant space for civil society groups, associations and economic interests, the case of Wales in particular (Chaney & Sophocleous, 2019). A rather weaker form of capacity might also be observed in the case of Brittany, where the French region has long adopted a leadership role. The cases of Andalusia and Wallonia demonstrate that the interplay between institutions and associative or private actors can also produce conflict of interests, however. The best exemplar is that of Andalusia (Robles Egea and Aceituno Montes, 2013). One interviewee complained that after 35 years at the head of the

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[1] Formal network analysis uses software packages such as Ucinet, Pajek and Gephi, to connect graphically the actors of a given territory or policy (Ward et. al. 2011). Such analysis was used by John and Cole (1998), for example, to demonstrate variation between political leadership configurations in French and English cities. Such social network analysis lies beyond the scope of this paper, but represents a promising area of further investigation and research.

region, the dominating party 'seems to control most of the territorial centres of power' in public administration and civil society'. The PSOE-A has become directly embedded since 2010 in the scandal of the 'EREs' (a system of funding used by the *Junta* to pay golden parachutes in mass layoffs) that involved trade-unions, public companies, top-level civil servants and the two former presidents of the *Junta*. Likewise, in Wallonia, the PS-led government finally collapsed in August 2017 in a reaction against a funding scandal linked to inter-communal service delivery. In both these cases, there is a fine dividing line between civil society mobilisation, institutional capacity building and practices of party government.

These results also place the regions with virtually identical scores on the leadership capacity indicator. Overall, Wallonia emerges narrowly ahead of the other regions: at the *time of fieldwork* its reach into national level government (Elio di Rupo [2010-2014], Charles Michel [2014-]) was of the highest order, within the constraints of Belgium's weak federal system. Likewise, the Socialist Party had governed Wallonia for over 30 years, though its leadership was increasingly contested (2). Overall, Wallonia is accorded the score of 4. Andalusia also scores highly (4), justified both in terms of vertical reach (its influence within the PSOE), and its centrality for territorial interactions (interests and institutions). Its failure to obtain the top score might be explained by the contested nature of the PSOE governance model in Andalusia, however, and the limits of its influence in national politics at the time of data collection (2013-14). Brittany obtained a high score - 2 – for the level of territorial influence in national politics, evidenced by interview-based accounts. In terms of horizontal leadership, the 2 score reflects the centrality of the regional council in terms of territorial interactions, in spite of the absence of formal hierarchical leadership over the other layers of local government. Finally, in Wales the emergence of a clearly identified territorial political and partisan leadership (in the form of long-serving Labour First Ministers Morgan and Jones) sustained the claim for enhanced self-

rule (2), but produced a lower score in terms of shared rule (1), producing an overall score of 3.

Territorial Models: Comparing Regions through using Qualitative Data Analysis

Our third level of comparison is that of idiographic representation, where social reality is subjectively represented. *Territorial models* are considered in terms of legacies of the past and routines; both require drilling down into the literature (for legacies of the past); into the qualitative corpus for lexicographical regularities and consistency of idiographical representations; and into interview data for practices. Though we attribute a score to each of our regions, based on detailed case specific knowledge, the idiographic comparison mainly classifies our regions heuristically, in relation to the discourses, routines and practices associated with their territorial models.   Such analysis only scratches the surface in this paper and requires further investigation and research. The scale proposed is: 3. Strong, consensus-based territorial model (the consistency of shared practices and the coherence of idiographic representations, supported using CAQDAS [the cluster analysis in NVivo], and survey evidence about regional versus national identities, reported elsewhere (Cole et. al 2015). 2 – A relatively strong but contested territorial model (extent of divisions demonstrated in the fieldwork, as we report in section on causal mechanisms), 1 – A weak, contested territorial model, 0 – The absence of a territorial model.

Uncovering full territorial narratives would require us to drill down into the content of the 102 interviews, which lies beyond the limits of this article. The NVivo software programme does provide various tools for penetrating the cognitive worlds of our regional panels, however, the most visual of which is that of the word cloud.   For illustrative purposes only, Figure 2 presents

one word cloud – that of Andalusia – to present a visual representation of the most frequent

words used in the interviews. The cluster analysis feature of NVivo allows the re-grouping of

core themes in the word cloud and interprets the relationships between them[2].

--- Figure 2 around here ---

The Andalusian word cloud displays a powerful focus on the region as a recognised and

pertinent space[3] as well as a strong emphasis on party politics and party competition[4] and a

strong preoccupation with the economic crisis[5]. The cluster analysis identifies the economic

crisis, the challenge of employment, the situation of fiscal and budgetary constraint, the

operation of political system in Spain and Andalusia and dynamics in education as being the

core clusters around which discourse is structured. [6] The data is consistent with traditional

views of Andalusia as an economically challenged region, marked by party division and a

distrust of Madrid (Barzelay, 1987; Coller, 2014; Gómez Fortes, 2010; Hopkin, 2011). The

interview evidence in parallel suggested a sharpening of the territorial model in response to

economic crisis and the reaffirmation of a form of Mediterranean social democracy as a defence

against the neo-liberalism associated with the central government in Madrid.

The Construction and Practice of Territorial Political Capacity

In this section, we propose a hybrid idiographical ranking using the mechanisms of legacies of

the past (significance and salience), routines and practices. Interviewees were invited to answer

a set of questions dealing with the ways of practicing politics in their own regions, and to judge

if this praxis was different from other places[7]. This line of questioning was designed as a mainly

inductive means of uncovering regularities, both synchronically (by comparing three distinct

groups of actors within and across our four regions) and, where possible, diachronically (comparing responses to similar questions over time in particular regions).[8] Given the word length constraints of this article, much of the reasoning below refers to output published elsewhere in the public domain (Cole, 2014, Cole and Pasquier, 2015, Harguindéguy and Cole, 2017, Cole and de Visscher, 2016).

Legacies of the past

Historical references are invaluable in indicating the degree of cohesion across accounts, with citations from the interviews largely confirming the existing literature. The salience of the historical legacy is more or less important depending on the corpus of each case. If each region engages with forms of social construction and imagined community building, history 'matters' the most, in order, for Andalusia, Brittany, Wallonia and Wales.

As observed by Linz and de Miguel (1966, 267-319) in their study of the 'eight Spains', until the late-19th Century Andalusia had been characterised by the lack of industrialisation. Western Andalusia relied heavily on 'latifundism' (an unequal division of rural lands where huge parcels belong to a small group of big landowners) while the Eastern region was based on a 'minifundist' structure of production (signifying a more equal division of lands). The legacy of 'latifundism' features prominently within contemporary debates and forms a key link with the present, notably in the discursive register of the PSOE-A (Harguindéguy and Cole,, 2017). Brittany, one of France's most distinctive regions, also has a very strong claim for historical pertinence (Pasquier, 2004). Though the symbols of statehood of this former Duchy have long been suppressed, the region retains many distinguishing characteristics: the European continent's only Celtic language, a vibrant cultural movement (music, dance, theatre, costume)

and a tested mode of defending the Breton interest in Paris and Brussels (a model built upon the failure of a more assertively nationalist movement during the inter-war period).

History also matters, of course, for Wallonia and Wales, but in rather different ways. For the Belgian region, embedded as part of the Francophone community, there is a history of communal conflict within Belgium (with the Flemish-speaking Flanders region), giving rise to a more affirmed regional presence from 1993, when Belgium became a Federal State. But there is also a dual division of the francophone space: along policy lines, between partisans of the Wallon and Brussels regions and defenders of the Francophone language community; and in terms of identity markers (where anti-clerical and social class cleavages persist to a lesser extent alongside the centre-periphery one). In the case of Wales, our survey provoked few responses in terms of the political culture question or references to history. Our interviews did reveal forms of othering or 'constructed divergence' in relation to England, whereby the originality of the Welsh project of small country governance and its narrative of social democracy were enhanced by the comparison with 'neo-liberal' England.   Many interviewees in Wales and Wallonia converged in defining their own project in terms of rejecting a more powerful neighbour, England or Flanders.

In the Present: Routines and Repertoires

The concept of the collective action repertoire was developed by Charles Tilly to uncover historical regularities, practices and routines in forms of social protest *(*Tilly, 1984*)*.   What practices and routines might be identified in our four regions, using the interviews as a primary empirical source?

Though we identified some dissonance, due to the impact of the economic crisis, the Breton territorial model appeared as robust and influential. Our survey in Brittany in 2013 (and that year's social movement) confirmed key features of the territorial action repertoire, most specifically the efficacy of direct relationships with Paris, the instrumental use of identity, the spectre of disorder, the mobilisation of past symbols of Brittany's specificity, the united front of (some) Breton employers and employees in defence of their collective territorial goods. In Andalusia, the territorial model has been characterised by the provision of a generous regional welfare state, a strong politicisation, best exemplified by the hegemony of the Socialist Party along with the presence of an extended party clientelist network, a moderate level of nationalism and, last but not least, by a strong involvement of the European Union in terms of regional policy funds (Gómez-Fortes 2010; Coller 2014). If actors diagnosed the persistence of certain routines, these reinforced core features of the territorial model, such as low trust relations and the influence of clientelistic party politics.

In Wales, "routine" did not figure at all as a reference and references to "history" were minimal. There was, certainly, a recent experience of division in relation to the regional devolution project: introduced by the Labour government in 1999, devolution was steadfastly opposed by the Conservative Party at the UK level. Almost two decades later, all the main UK parties accepted the principle of devolution and the Welsh branches of these parties had moved considerably closer. The case of Wales is thus one of lessening divisions associated with two decades of practice of the devolution model. In Wallonia, finally, narratives of accommodation and practices of compromise were broadly diffused, but partisan politics continued to divide in narrower terms of office and clientelism. One interviewee in Wallonia observed: 'If there is a Wallon style, it is the rather caricatural one of the Wallon Socialist (the PS has been in power

for 35 years), living the good life, pulling the strings and manoeuvring in his own interest'. The contrast with Flanders was made often in interviews, in reference to a well-organised region with a clear project, to the detriment of the Wallons, lacking an overall vision. Routines were mainly interpreted in terms of strategies for coping with state disintegration at the federal level.

Though we attribute a score to each of our regions, based on detailed case specific knowledge, the idiographic comparison mainly classifies our regions heuristically, in relation to the discourses, routines and practices associated with their territorial models. The idiographic comparison classes our regions in terms of their greater or lesser cohesion around a territorial narrative and the identification of clear routines and practices associated with it. Each region demonstrated a form of resilience, using the economic and political crisis to reaffirm, or redefine the underlying territorial model. The closest approximation to an overarching territorial model is that provided by the French region of Brittany, to which we attribute the score of 3. In terms of past and present routines, Breton actors described an endogenous model that has always sought to build regional consensus, promote collaboration and defend the regional interest in Paris and Brussels (Cole and Pasquier, 2015). They identify core challenges of economic modernisation and transition away from an over-dependence on agriculture. Brittany is followed by Wales, which we also score 3: we observed an elite-level consensus in favour of the new devolved institutions that cut across natural party divisions (Cole & Stafford, 2014). In the two other regions, both scored 2, there was much less consensus in relation to past routines or the current state of territorial relationships. In Andalusia a picture emerged of sharp partisan competition and contested party control (Harguindeguy and Cole, 2017). In Wallonia, we also observed a deeply contested mode of territorial governance based on party clientelism, (even within the ruling PS), and limited linkage on the shared rule axis (Cole and de Visscher,

2016). Such analysis only scratches the surface in this paper and requires further investigation and research. Integrating qualitative data is challenging. It points to inherent limits to the exercise of ranking and rating, which is nonetheless considered to be important in the final section.

Comparing Regions Through Ranking

Comparing regions revives the traditional division formulated by Windelband and Oakes (1980, 165-168) between nomothetic explanations (based on experiments aiming to demonstrate an objective relationship of causality between two phenomena) and idiographic descriptions (focusing on the subjective understanding of social actors *vis-à-vis* a given phenomenon). All indexes involve some form of ranking of regions. Sellers and Lidström (2007, p. 615) justify the LAI as an attempt to give a 'quantitative translation of qualitative variables'. Such an ambition bears some similarities with our own comparative case study approach, which assumes that a deep knowledge of contexts is the preliminary for ranking. In order to compare like with like: the RAI self-rule and shared-rule clusters of measures are retained. New rankings are introduced for unseen forces: party capacity, leadership capacity and territorial models. While economic profile and territorial identities are acknowledged as potentially important dimensions of territorial political capacity, they are dealt with here as part of the comparative case justification, rather than as formal indicators. The revised framework thus attempts to acknowledge the centrality of the RAI in any exercise of comparing regions, but also to situate institutions in terms of actor constellations and interactions, to take account of contexts and routines and to capture informal data.

--- Figure 3 around here ---

In Figure 3, we present the outcome of territorial political capacity as an index based on scores and treated as if were in a large n. design. The ranking in Figure 3 confirms the implicit ordering of the RAI, with Andalusia closely followed by Wallonia, then Wales and somewhat further behind Brittany. The primary cause of these distinctions remains the measures identified within the RAI. Indeed, given the rationale used for the selection of the four regions, it is unsurprising that all four regions end up with relatively similar scores when the three additional variables are combined. However, this hides important subtleties across the regions: for example, Brittany paradoxically has relatively weak formal territorial political leadership, but has demonstrated strong influence on the national political agenda.

Conclusion

The article contributes to mixed method dialogues. It is best read at different levels: as a contribution to the comparative case study method; as a fine-grained analysis from four European regions with family resemblances and as a refinement to the conceptualization of comparative territorial capacity, in a manner distinct from, but largely consistent with the Regional Authority Index. It does not claim – like the RAI or LAI- to produce a generalizable conceptual framework that can account for regularities across systemic differences. The limited number of cases does not provide the continuous data required for statistical inference. The rationale for not including informal factors in the RAI was the need for clear validity, reliability and transparency. If the RAI and LAI provide parsimonious instruments combining comparison and causality for a large number of cases, TPC adds value in the context of a small n. research design, which seeks to take better account of qualitative insights, to elucidate unseen forces at

work and to test for the internal consistency of idiographic representations and draw cross-case comparisons. The proposed framework is complementary to the RAI, rather than in competition with it.   The RAI encourages breadth and generalisation; TPC prioritises conceptual and comparative depth. Building on the advances of the RAI, our framework favours comparative case study analysis that values conceptualisation based on 'thick description', without falling into the trap of ethnographic exceptionalism. It encourages researchers to embrace methodological pluralism as the most convincing way of enhancing our knowledge of comparative regional capacity. While the RAI and TPC can be fruitfully combined, both approaches would benefit from further research into: weighting, linkage and family resemblance and the dynamic linkage between variables.

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Notes

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[1] Leverhulme Trust International Network grant (IN-2012-109) on 'Territorial Governance between Convergence and Capacity, 2012-2015'.

[2] The NVivo cluster analysis feature identifies clusters of similar words. We selected 5 clusters for the case of Andalusia. This NVivo feature uses Pearson significance tests to identify the correlations between specific words in a cluster. In the word map, the most cited words are graphically enlarged.

[3] 'Andalucía', 'andaluz' and 'andaluces' are translated into English as Andalusia, Andalusian and Andalusians. 'Autonomas' and 'comunidades' are translated into English as autonomous and community, and 'junta' as the regional government. The 'diputacion'/'dipucationes' are the provincial government(s), while 'ayuntamiento' and 'ayuntamientos' are translated as local authority/authorities. 'Sevilla' is translated as Seville, 'competencia' as competencies.

4 'Partido' and 'partidos' are respectively translated as party and parties. The PP and the PSOE are not captured by this word cloud, as it excludes words with fewer than 5 letters. For the record, the PP (Popular

Party) was cited in every interview, with 130 references; the PSOE was cited in 23 out of 25 interviews, with 123 references.

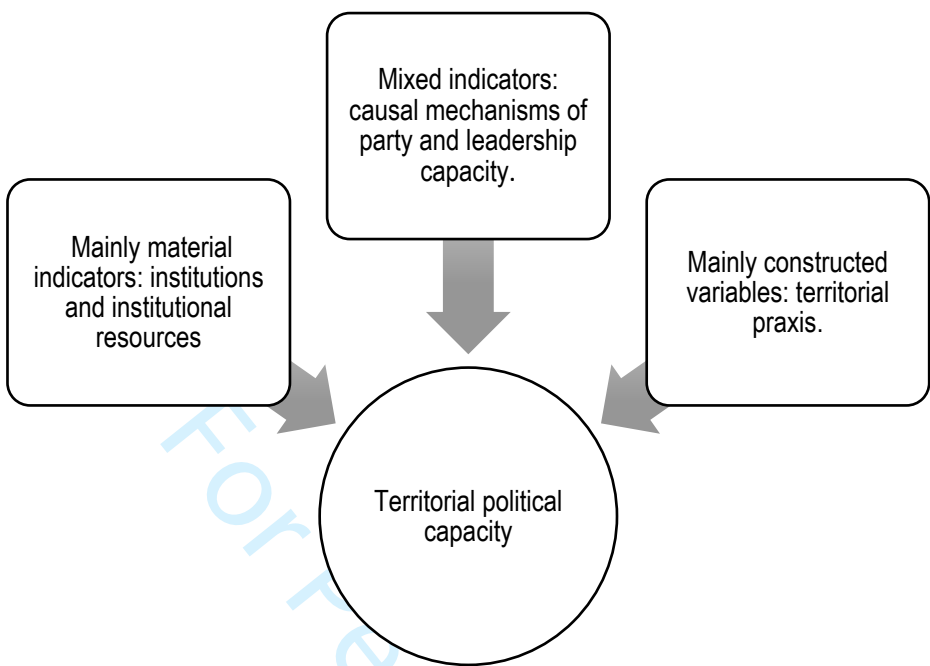[5] 'economia' and 'economica' are translated as economy and economics; 'empleo' as employment and 'trabajo' as work. 'deficit' and 'recortes' are translated as deficit and cuts. 'fondos', 'medidas', 'financiacion' and 'recursos' are translated as funds, measures, finance and resources.

[6] Though there is no formal hierarchy in the clusters, word frequency demonstrates the saliency of specific themes.

[7] The precise questions asked were: 1. 'What are the main traits of the Welsh/Breton/Andalusian/ Wallon policy style?' (designed to capture routines and practices from the past) 2. ' How best would you characterise current relationships between the main actors within your region?' (designed to provide perspectives on intra-regional relationships).

[8] In the case of two regions - Brittany and Wales – longitudinal comparison was possible, as these questions had been asked in previous surveys by the PI. Results are presented in Cole and Stafford (2014) and Cole and Pasquier (2015).

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Mixed indicators: causal mechanisms of party and leadership capacity.

Mainly material indicators: institutions and institutional resources

Mainly constructed variables: territorial praxis.

Territorial political capacity

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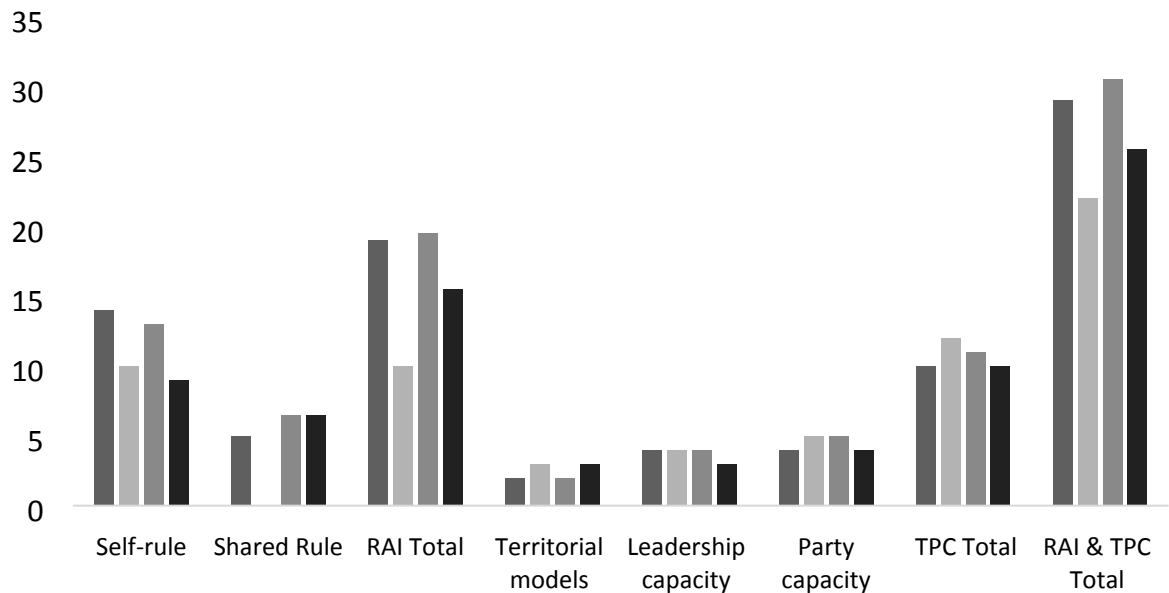42
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**Figure 3: Four Regions measured by the
Regional Authority Index & Territorial Political Capacity Index**

Table 1. The Territorial Political Capacity Framework

Indicator	What's being tested
RAI self-rule axis (Hooghe et al., 2016)	Institutional depth (0-3)- Policy scope (0-4)- Fiscal autonomy (0-4) -Borrowing autonomy (0-2) -Representation: Assembly & Executive (0-4)
RAI shared rule axis (Hooghe et al., 2016)	Law making (0-2) - Executive control (0-2)- Fiscal control (0-2)- Borrowing control (0-2)- Constitutional reform (0-3)
Party capacity - The extent to which a region has a territorial party system and influence over national party system *(1) Horizontal cohesion*	3- Strong autonomous territorial party at the centre of single- or dominant party government 2 - Strong territorial parties in contested party systems 1 - Weak territory specific parties 0 - Absence of cohesive party system
(2) Vertical linkage	3 – Strong influence of territorial parties in national party agendas 2 – Some evidence of influence of territorial parties in national party agendas 1 – Weak influence of territorial parties in national party agendas 0 –Absence of influence of territorial parties in national party agendas
Political Leadership – The extent to which a region has territorial leadership and influence in terms of national political leadership *(1) Horizontal cohesion*	3- Formal territorial political leadership provides strong focus for territorial networks & institutions 2 – Formal territorial political leadership and limited evidence of providing focus for territorial networks & institutions 1 – Absence or informal territorial political leadership and some evidence of providing focus for territorial networks & institutions 0 – Absence or informal territorial political leadership and no evidence of providing focus for territorial networks & institutions
(2) Vertical linkage	3 – Strong influence of territorial leadership in national political agenda 2 – Some evidence of influence of territorial leadership in national political agenda 1 – Weak influence of territorial leadership in national political agenda 0 –Absence of influence of territorial leadership in national political agenda
Territorial models – The extent to which a region has developed a clear territorial model, potentially predicated on collective action repertoire or common defined history	3 – Strong, consensus-based territorial model 2 – Relatively strong but contested territorial model 1 – Weak, contested territorial model 0 – Absence of territorial model

Source: author's elaboration

Table 2 Comparing Four European Regions

	Andalusia	Brittany	Wales	Wallonia
Population (2012-13)	8,437,000	3 237 100	3,074,067	3 563 060
Economic status	Traditional agricultural region deeply affected by the onset of economic crisis, with a very high level of unemployment and strong public sector dependency	Traditionally a poor agricultural region, Brittany had risen to the 7th most prosperous French region in 2000, but its position was declining by the time of fieldwork.	Traditionally a poor heavy industrial region. Wales has suffered from the closure of the coal mines and reduction of steel capacity. Strong public sector dependency	Traditionally Belgium's heavy industry region. Wallonia has suffered from closures in the steel and car industries. Strong public sector dependency
Regional GDP (Eurostat: 2011 figures, to correspond to the phase of project elaboration) EU28 = 100.	Spain: 96 Andalusia: 73	France: 109 Brittany: 89	UK: 105 Wales: West Wales and The Valleys 64 East Wales: 91	Belgium: 120 Brabant Wallon: 119 Hainaut: 79 Liège:90 Luxembourg (BE):81 Namur:86
European axis	Pro-European, recipient of EU structural and CAP funds. Member of the Euro-zone	Pro-European region. Some EU funds, especially CAP Member of the Euro-zone	Massive investment through EU structural funds since 2000. Not in the Euro-zone	Pro-European, recipient of some EU funds. Member of the Euro-zone
Party control (fieldwork)	PSOE-A	PS	Labour	PS
Regime-type	Spain: hybrid state with some federal characteristics	France: decentralised unitary state	United Kingdom: unitary state modified by forms of devolution	Belgium: Loose federal state
Elected Assembly	Yes	Yes, limited powers	Yes	Yes

Source: Population figures are from the following official websites: Andalusia, 2012 Instituto Nacional de la Estadística (2014), "Población de Andalucía", *Cifras oficiales de población resultantes de la revisión del Padrón municipal a 1 de enero*, URL: https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=2915 (last accessed on 11 October 2018).; Brittany, 2012: https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/1285203 (last accessed 7 October 2018); Wales, 2012 https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Projections/National/2012-Based/PopulationProjections-by-Year-Gender (last accessed 2018); Wallonia, 2013 https://www.iweps.be/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/iweps_chiffres_cles_2013deg.pdf (last accessed 7 October 2018). Regional GDP figures are from Eurostat. They represent purchasing power standards (PPS) per inhabitant as a percentage of the EU28 average and are calculated on the basis of national averages and NUTS 2 regions https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tgs00006&plugin=1 (last accessed 07 October 2018).