SYMPOSIUM on Regional Authority and the Postfunctionalist Theory of Governance

Abstract

This symposium engages two recent books on regional governance. The first sets out a measure of regional authority for 81 countries in North America, Europe, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific from 1950 to 2010. The second theorizes how regional governance is shaped by functional and communal pressures. These pressures are detected in many historical episodes of jurisdictional reform. These books seek to pin them down empirically. Community and efficiency appear to have tangible and contrasting effects that explain how jurisdictions are designed, why regional governance has become differentiated, and how multilevel governance has deepened over the past several decades.

The symposium consists of contributions by Kent Eaton, Jean-Paul Faguet, and Imke Harbers followed by a response from the authors.

- Liesbet Hooghe, Gary Marks, Arjan H. Schakel, Sara Niedzwiecki, Sandra Chapman Osterkatz, and Sarah Shair-Rosenfield, *Measuring Regional Authority: A Postfunctionalist Theory of Governance*. Volume I, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. 687pp.
- Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, (with Arjan H. Schakel, Sara Niedzwiecki, Sandra Chapman Osterkatz, and Sarah Shair-Rosenfield). *Community, Scale, and Regional Governance: A Postfunctionalist Theory of Governance, Volume II.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. 195pp.

KEYWORDS: governance, multilevel governance, regions, Europe, Asia, Latin America, scale, territorial

Regional Authority and the Postfunctionalist Theory of Governance

Kent Eaton

A Postfunctionalist Theory of Governance succeeds at more than one scale, to use a word that matters much to the two scholars, Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, who have brought to fruition this remarkable, multi-volume, collaborative project. At the heart of volumes 1 and 2 is a sustained and disciplined focus on subnational regions, whose governments operate between the national and local levels, and whose significance has often gone unappreciated and unexamined in the comparative politics subfield of political science. Hooghe and Marks have made path-breaking contributions – conceptual, empirical, and theoretical – to our understanding of the increasing salience of subnational regions as spaces of governance.

Conceptually, one of the distinctive strengths of these first two volumes is the decision to focus on the *authority* of regions as the central concept of concern. Among other things, this conceptual move enables Hooghe and Marks to help bridge the literatures on decentralization and federalism, which have tended to use different conceptual vocabularies and to talk past one another to a surprising degree given their shared interest in subnational governance. Whereas students of federalism have focused on the constitutional constraints and opportunities within which subnational governments operate, and students of decentralization have focused on the processes through which these governments are empowered, both can be said to be fundamentally interested in the authority of regional governments, which Hooghe and Marks insist is the key concept we should be privileging. In this sense, the authors have

given us a common vocabulary that could lead to greater mutual intelligibility across the burgeoning scholarship on territorial politics and multi-level governance.

Having selected regional authority as their core concept, Hooghe and Marks then disaggregate authority into its two main components of self-rule and shared rule, both of which are further disaggregated into five dimensions each, for a total of 10 dimensions along which regional authority can vary across time and space. While the authors note that "these dimensions are quite strongly associated with each other and can be thought of as indicators of a latent variable (vol. 1, p. 15)," the clarity of the disaggregation also means that others who are so inclined can use the Regional Authority Index to theorize about different combinations of particular subsets of these 10 dimensions (and generate theories that might actually look different from the theory of "community and scale" that the authors derive from the data). This is the mark of a highly generative, and generous, project.

Beyond the rigor of the conceptualization and the transparency of the measurement guidelines, what is likely to most impress many readers is the herculean nature of the empirical effort through which regional authority is then scored for 81 countries across Asia, Europe, and the Americas, often for a period of up to 60 years (1950-2010). The only way to pull off a coding exercise of such daunting scope is to assemble a team of researchers to conduct the requisite country profiles, constituted in this case by Arjan Schakel, Sara Niedzwiecki, Sandra Chapman Osterkatz, and Sarah Shair-Rosenfield. Trained in the same measurement techniques, the research team is particularly careful to anchor their coding decisions in an array of secondary sources, which are much more readily available for some cases (Brazil, Canada Russia) than others (Belize, Brunei, Bulgaria). The end result is not just a stunning 1.7 million region/year

observations, but a text that is able to use illustrative examples from an unusually disparate set of country cases (drawn from five continents!) to render concrete the various analytical points the authors wish to make. Derived from such a large dataset, the empirical findings become that much more arresting – and the volumes are loaded with them. For instance, sifting through the data, the authors find that, once granted and/or increased by the center, regional authority almost never decreases except in the context of regime change, that is, unless the national regime type changes from democratic to authoritarian. According to another intriguing pattern, the authors find that the asymmetric treatment of subnational regions (what they call "differentiated governance") is much less stable than the granting of autonomy to all subnational regions on a symmetric basis. Or, to name a third pattern, when national governments institute "differentiated governance," they are far more likely to introduce changes that empower rather than disempower specific regions with special forms of authority.

Just as significant as these conceptual and empirical contributions is the compelling theoretical framework that Hooghe and Marks elaborate to help explain the patterns of regional authority they've documented around the world. Not many political scientists these days are offering wholesale theories of governance, and the challenge of course is to articulate a theory that can literally travel the globe without becoming so esoteric or abstract or trivial that it loses its ability to offer substantive and meaningful insights in highly disparate settings. Considering these constraints, I'm struck by the usefulness of the authors' main theoretical claim that regional authority can everywhere be understood as the result of deep struggles between rival advocates of "community" and "scale," alternately conceptualized as "sociality" and "efficiency."

Reflecting the "postfunctionalist" adjective they assign to their theory, Hooghe and Marks offer a powerful challenge to the overly technocratic and insufficiently political approaches that have characterized both the study of regional governance in the public administration literature and the kind of programming that has been adopted in this area on the part of multilateral and bilateral development practitioners. The historical record tells us that diverse communities have shaped the territorial distribution of authority "from the ground up," resulting in highly diverse designs that typically upset the homogenizing impulses of the center. As Hooghe and Marks remind us, "territorial community is perhaps the strongest form of solidarity there is (vol. 2, p. 3)." In this sense, the authors provide a damning account of purely functionalist or efficiency-based approaches to this topic; anyone with a technocratic mindset couldn't read these volumes and not walk away with a profound sense of what they are missing by focusing only on the efficiency imperatives of "scale." And yet, to their credit, Hooghe and Marks craft a theoretical framework that still maintains a central role for considerations of "scale," and for those actors (from Napoleon to Pinochet) who have forcefully imprinted efficiency goals on the design of regional governance. Taken together, what's impressive is how much the rival pressures created by "community and scale" can help account for so much of the messy politics surrounding territory that we see in the world today. To my mind, the theory of "community and scale" strikes a balance that is difficult to achieve, providing a quite elegant and yet very rich way to think about territorial governance.

In addition to these impressive conceptual, empirical, and theoretical contributions, I'd also like to emphasize what is perhaps most unique about this multi-volume project, which derives from the authors' focus on the design of jurisdictions and what they call the *Who*

Question. It is not much of an overstatement to say that virtually all of American political science focuses on the question of how and why decisions are made within existing jurisdictions, often without problematizing the size or boundaries or existence of those jurisdictions. Even when political scientists take up topics that touch directly on jurisdictional matters, such as state-building and transnational integration, the priority is not to question existing jurisdictional boundaries, focusing in the former case on how capacity accrues within existing states, and in the latter case on how societal and economic actors interact across existing state boundaries. Asking the *Who Question* has of course been central to the robust literature on nationalism, but within political science this fundamental question has mostly been confined to that field of study.

Commensurate with the ambition and scope of what Hooghe and Marks set out to do in these two volumes, they will be certain to trigger a lively debate at each of the levels flagged above – conceptual, empirical, and theoretical. As a contribution to that debate, I wish to identify three questions that arose from my reading of this *Postfunctionalist Theory of Governance*. The first has to do with authority, which Hooghe and Marks have for good reason chosen as the core concept in their work. One likely critique here would be that the focus on formal as opposed to informal authority is limiting, particularly in the case of less institutionalized polities that lack a robust tradition of the rule of law. While we might imagine that formal levels of authority map quite well onto the authority that regions actually wield vis-à-vis the center in places like France or Germany, this becomes more questionable in contexts where powerful national governments run roughshod over formal constraints, and where judiciaries are not strong or independent enough to prevent such behavior in defense of

regional governments. If this is an obvious critique, then the obvious response is that including informal authority would necessarily sacrifice the transparency of measurement that makes this project so distinctive, and in turn would dramatically reduce the range of countries included in the dataset.

Another line of thought has to do not with the difference between formal and informal authority, but with the difference between authority and capacity. In the *Postfunctionalist Theory of Governance*, one could argue that authority and capacity are somewhat conflated to the extent that authority is defined as the "capacity to make legitimate and binding decisions for a collectivity (vol. 2, p. 29)." Thus capacity is subsumed within the definition of authority rather than treated as a term to be separately conceptualized and assessed. Understanding the relationship between authority and capacity is a tricky business; according to Rebecca Abers and Margaret Keck (2013), authority and capacity cannot be easily or even profitably disentangled, and should instead be understood to mutually constitute each other. A distinct approach, however, is to insist on the conceptual difference between formal grants of authority to make binding decisions, on the one hand, and the administrative/institutional/state capacity necessary to actually implement those decisions, on the other. In recent years, comparative politics has witnessed renewed and intense interest in the conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement of state capacity. Though much of this new literature focuses on the national rather than subnational level (Kurtz 2013, Saylor 2014, Soifer 2015), others seek to understand the sources and implications of uneven capacity at the subnational level. For example, Prerna Singh (2015) argues that strong subnational identities, or what she calls subnationalism, have led to higher levels of subnational capacity in some Indian states

than in others. Imke Harbers (2014) shows that variation in state capacity across subnational governments can help us understand territorial patterns of citizen satisfaction with public services. Daniel Ziblatt (2006) demonstrates that higher levels of subnational capacity, or what he calls infrastructural power, can help explain why countries (like Germany) opted for federalism over unitarism. In his account, it is the existence of capacity that holds the keys for understanding struggles over the territorial distribution of authority. In my own work on Latin America (Eaton 2017), I argue that subnational capacity matters more than authority in explaining why and when subnational governments are able to deviate from the ideological orientation of the national government; provided they have the requisite capacity, subnational governments, surprisingly, can meaningfully challenge the center even if they do not have much formal authority.

If capacity should be conceptualized and measured separately from authority, this leads us to ask how different levels of capacity might shape the struggle between community and scale upon which Hooghe and Marks are focused. We tend to think of capacity as a "stickier" variable than authority; whereas the latter can be changed from one day to the next, the former typically accrues more slowly and incrementally. Could greater attention to capacity help account for some of the cross-national patterns that are illuminated by the regional authority index? Perceptions of regional capacity likely shape the struggles over regional authority that are taking place today, and in a number of ways. Just to name two, deficient capacity may make it far less threatening for the center to formally devolve authority if it is worried about how this authority may be used, just as subnational governments may resist the transfer of authority if deficient capacity would likely prevent them from successfully

responding to demands from constituents that they actually put this authority to specific uses. In Latin America, to name one world region where the authority of subnational regions has experienced substantial volatility, one could argue that the decentralization of authority in the 1980s brought into relief widespread problems of insufficient subnational capacity in ways that have more recently fueled the recentralization of authority. To state this question more broadly, how much conceptual distance should there be between authority and capacity?

Another question has to do with the authors' theoretical framework and the tension between "community" and "scale" as it plays out in the political arena. One intriguing empirical pattern identified by Hooghe and Marks is that scale (i.e. efficiency) designs are often implemented in the aftermath of political discontinuity, defined as exceptional moments when the number of veto players shrinks and designers suddenly enjoy much more freedom to redistribute authority between territorial units according to orderly, efficiency-enhancing, top-down designs. In contrast, community-centered designs tend to emerge in a more path dependent fashion as local communities accumulate and use their power to demand authority successfully, but unevenly, from below. To some extent, then, the struggle between "community" and "scale" takes place as the conflict between rival logics – the former bottom-up and the latter top-down. One reaction here is that it is clearer why the bottom-up logic would generate community-based designs than that the top-down logic would produce efficiency-based designs. While efficiency-based designs may well depend on political discontinuity, it may not make sense to assume that state elites at the top, if given their druthers, will necessarily prioritize scale or efficiency considerations over other considerations, including tenure security, political support, or geopolitical dynamics in borderland regions. The

assumption that technocrats will prefer scale designs seems safer than that politicians or top government officials or elected officials will prefer scale designs when given the chance. It seems that we would want to bring politics more directly into the dynamics of top-down reform dynamics rather than anticipate that considerations of scale will dominate these dynamics. Simply put, the political logic of the push from below in the direction of "community" is clearer than the political logic of the push from above in the direction of "scale."

Just as we should likely broaden the set of motivations (beyond efficiency) that drive national politicians, it also makes sense to think as broadly as possible about the "polity preferences" of those international actors who seek to influence the design of regional authority within countries. At first blush, the conflicts between community and scale over the design of subnational regions that Hooghe and Marks describe may strike many readers as quintessentially domestic conflicts; from the perspective of Stein Rokkan or Charles Tilly, what could be more easily covered by sovereignty norms – or more politically sensitive – than decisions by national governments about whether and how they want to empower subnational regions? Increasingly, however, it might be important to relax the domestic parameters of the conflict between community and scale to think in a more sustained way about how international and transnational actors and forces line up, and take sides, in this conflict, particularly in the countries of the global south where external actors tend to exert a great deal of sway. Oftentimes it seems that these external actors mostly line up on the side of scale designs and that they are usually interested in advancing efficiency concerns, as is typically the case for international financial institutions and multilateral organizations. But one can also identify transnational networks and international NGOs that may be more likely to favor and

promote community-driven designs in the express attempt to empower subnational communities (especially where ethnic communities are concentrated territorially). One case in point would be the transnational environmental NGOs who support and defend the right to prior consultation on the part subnational communities in the hopes of forestalling contamination from extractive industries. We'll have to wait for volumes 3 and 4 for the systematic treatment of international actors, organizations, and governance, but what's exciting is that other scholars, animated by a host of substantive and normative concerns, can already pick up and deploy the eminently usable conceptual and theoretical framework that Hooghe and Marks have given us to study regional authority.

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Scale Meets Community: Hooghe and Marks' Theory of Multilevel Governance

Jean-Paul Faguet

Volume II of Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks' ambitious series is a slim and elegant book. This is especially so in comparison to Volume 1, a book that is chunkily rich in methodology and data, and well worth its non-trivial weight. Volume 2, by contrast, is a mere 162 pages of text. But the insights it contains are remarkable. It is an analytical *tour de force* that will change how we think about governance across space for decades to come.

Let me discuss first what I most like about this book. There is a great deal to like, so let me focus on those things I found most striking on my initial reading. First, this is an immensely – and yet effortlessly – learned piece of scholarship. It is the product of years of work and study, not just by its principal authors, but by a larger team of colleagues and graduate students who toiled with them to corral a vast trove of information, and then fashioned it into the novel and immensely useful Regional Authority Index dataset. That done, they spent years analyzing the data in ways that eventually led to this book.

Community, Scale, and Regional Governance is a rich contribution to theory. But it is one based on a deep and detailed knowledge of the political economy of subnational and supranational governance across all of the world's regions. This expertise is remarkable not just for the breadth of countries covered – the scope is global – but also for the depth of knowledge within each country. Many of the world's 190+ countries are geographically, socially, and

politically highly diverse. Much of political science skates over this diversity, focusing on national systems and national political characteristics. But as an increasing number of scholars have argued in recent years (Boone 2014, Diaz-Cayeros 2006, Eaton 2006, Faguet 2012, and Faguet and Pöschl 2015), this is a mistake insofar as it obscures the subnational tensions that often determined important national outcomes, beneath a façade of national homogeneity and the presumption of equilibrium in institutional design. Here, Hooghe and Marks take the opposite tack, plumbing the levels and dimensions of countries' subnational diversity in an explicit attempt to understand where this diversity comes from, and how it affects subnational and national governance.

The book displays this broad and deep knowledge in ways that are illuminating, lend weight to its arguments, and are interesting in and of themselves. And through all this learnedness it avoids becoming pedantic, even as the authors move seamlessly – often in the same sentence – from the political and administrative details of regional governments in the Andes, to municipalities in Europe, and then island administrations in Southeast Asia. The effect on the reader is informative, and even inspirational, as we watch the authors polish each piece of analysis carefully before adding it to their growing edifice.

Secondly, the book deploys an interdisciplinary political economy approach. This is not only close to my own heart – though it is – but also strictly advantageous for the analysis of governance institutions in a social context. Over recent decades, our awareness of the power of institutions to affect a broad array of outcomes across the economy, social relations, and political systems has grown. As a result, the analysis of institutions and institutional change sits less and less comfortably within the confines of any single discipline. If the sources of

institutional change are multidisciplinary, and their effects are multidisciplinary, then their analysis – if it is to be coherent and complete – should be interdisciplinary.

Hooghe and Marks' work fits the bill. Their take on "political economy" here is a blend of public economics and political sociology. This combination is particularly well-suited to an analysis of public goods, scale economies, externalities, and informational asymmetries that is embedded in a broader social context of community and identity. The authors are clearly well-versed in both fields, and their approach is gratifyingly unified, blending what are, in the end, two very different subfields into a supple, coherent analytical tool.

Thirdly, the book is well and clearly written, even as the ideas expressed are both deep and powerful. It is a pleasure to read. This is not something that can be said of many academic books, and even fewer books of theory. It reads as finest liquor – centuries of thinking and a wealth of data distilled into a compact purity of form. I could go on, but Hooghe and Marks' words are preferable. So let me instead quote two examples:

> What principles underpin governance? One must begin by asking which group of persons should form a jurisdiction. This is the *Who Question*: who should have the right to make collectively binding decisions? Only after persons are conceived as members of a group does it make sense to ask how that group should make decisions. Democracy does not provide an answer. The principles that underpin democracy say nothing about who the people are. Majority rule, yes, but a majority of *which* people? Minority rights, but in relation to *which* majority? Principles of democracy, justice, or individual rights do not tell one which groups of persons should exercise governance to achieve these goods. The fundamental question of governance – the *Who Question* – is logically and ontologically prior to questions relating to how a group makes decisions or what those decisions are. A theory of governance should, at a minimum, seek to

> explain the territorial structure of authority: which groups at which scales have authority to make what kinds decisions? (p.5)

And also,

> Providing individuals with the policies they want is not the same as giving them the authority to collectively determine those policies. Self-rule is the independent exercise of authority. So, individuals may demand self-rule even if the central government tailors public goods to their preferences. The reason for this takes one to the core of governance, the exercise of legitimate power.
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> Power is a capacity unlike any other because it is the present means to obtain some future good (Hobbes 1651/2001). It is the potential to realize one's will in the face of resistance. Unlike money, it is not depleted when it is spent. With what might a people exchange the power to make its laws? This is precisely why conflict over the allocation of authority can be so difficult to resolve. Power, and its legitimate expression, authority, are master goods that relieve the bearer from trusting in the promises of others.
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> A theory of governance should explain the institutional frame – the structure of authority – in which policies for this community, rather than that community, are decided. Knowledge about policy preferences, no matter how precise, cannot explain preferences over which groups should have the right to exercise collective authority. Preferences over governance are shaped by group attachments as well as by policy preferences. (pp.16-17)

This is clear, deep, beautiful prose.

What does this book achieve? First, it provides a coherent theory of government at the intersection of public economics (public goods) and the sociality of jurisdictional design (how people feel and act with respect to their communities). This is a blend not just across

disciplines, but also hierarchical styles, combining the top-down analysis of public goods provision with the bottom up analysis of social groups as a function of identity.

Some may choose to criticize work like this as “lacking originality”, pointing an accusing finger at elements of an interdisciplinary synthesis (e.g. community, identity) that were already well-known. Attacks of this nature inevitably miss the point. The novelty of interdisciplinary work lies in the synthesis, not its components. Like a new machine, a new model is valuable for what it can do, not what it is made of. "Lack of originality" is an easy line of attack. But there's a huge distance between a handful of insights that cross disciplinary lines, and the hard work of integrating these into a coherent, tractable conceptual apparatus that can be tested empirically. This is precisely what Hooghe and Marks have achieved.

Second, the book restates the famous Oates decentralization theorem, which holds that governments should centralize where necessary, based on scale economies and externalities, and decentralize where possible. But it does so in a more robust way, adding to Oates’ public goods criteria a crucial second dimension: sociality.

Third, it synthesizes quantitative, large-N methods with qualitative, small-N analysis successfully. This gives the book both breadth and depth. Hooghe and Marks are able to plumb the nuanced causes of governance arrangements in particular municipalities and regions that are highly illustrative, and at the same time generalize about the causes and consequences of different governance arrangements across most of the countries of the world. This is no mean feat.

Fourth, the deployment of these “Q^{2}” tools allows the authors to probe the deep drivers of decentralization/multilevel governance, rather than treating these phenomena as black

holes – institutional givens in particular places at particular times, whose effects may be analyzed, but whose provenance is unknown. Placing decentralization and multilevel governance at the center of the frame is an intellectual exercise at least as important as studying their effects, and often a more fertile one.

Fifth, their concept of the Ladder of Governance sheds light on a striking regularity across countries, cultures, and regions of the world with a simple tool that is as elegant as it is far-reaching. Jurisdictional tiers, according to Hooghe and Marks, will be "arrayed at roughly equal intervals on an exponential population scale. The design will take the form of a Russian doll arrangement. The result is an elegant functional design which limits the number of jurisdictional levels, adjusts policy provision to scale diversity, and simplifies coordination by nesting each lower-level jurisdiction within a single jurisdiction at a higher level (Hooghe and Marks 2009)." (p.12) This gives shape to a rough intuition we all have, but which few of us previously understood.

At the end of a tour de force that marries the hierarchical analysis of public goods provision with the political sociology of identity and community formation, where can we go next? Which questions do Hooghe and Marks leave unanswered? For any productive piece of research, the answer is many, of course. One that strikes me is that adding issues of political party structure, and in particular parties' internal structures, to key characteristics of multilevel governance is likely to result in a fertile line of inquiry.

The importance of the internal structures of political parties has been largely overlooked, but is hard to overstate. Consider a few of the exceptions. Ardanaz et al. (2014) show how internal pressures within Argentina's political parties shaped both congressional

dynamics and fiscal policy, leading to Argentina's macroeconomic disaster at the turn of the millennium. Myerson (2014) and Myerson et al. (2015) tie internal political party structure to the stability of institutional reform, including decentralization itself, and to political stability more generally. Faguet (2017a and 2017b) show how the move to multilevel governance in Bolivia fatally undermined a highly centralized political party system, populated by internally centralized parties. Decentralization facilitated the creation of new, regionally and locally-specific parties and movements, undermining the national political party system, which disintegrated from the bottom up.

These examples underline the larger point that politics affects governance, and governance affects politics. Each system operates simultaneously and continuously, at different levels of hierarchy and spatial aggregation. The study of how these parallel systems interact with one another, and their mutual effects on outcomes of interest that are further afield, such as corruption or economic growth, are areas where the application of Hooghe and Marks' analytical framework are likely to reap rich rewards in future. Scholars who choose to go down this path will do well to mimic Hooghe and Marks' methodological rigor, analytical style, and clarity of thought and expression.

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Contributions of the Postfunctionalist Theory of Governance to Subnational Research in Comparative Politics[1]

Imke Harbers

Over the past two decades, the way scholars of comparative politics think about governance has undergone a profound transformation. While governance was previously conceived of primarily as the work of the central state – with fairly marginal or derivative roles for other levels of government – we now generally view the central state as just one actor in a system of governance that spans multiple tiers. Empirically, this transformation is underpinned by the realization that decentralization has strengthened the formal role of subnational actors, and that we therefore need to look beyond the central level to understand the process of governance.[2] Research on the causes and consequences of decentralization and on subnational governance has matured considerably over the past two decades. Whereas an early generation of scholarship primarily envisioned benefits for the efficiency and effectiveness of public good provision, empirical research on the outcomes of decentralization reforms has found much more mixed results (e.g. Treisman, 2007). Scholars of comparative politics have therefore begun to examine the origins of this variance, and to probe the intervening variables that influence the outcomes of decentralized and multi-level governance. The two volumes at the

[1] This work was supported by a Marie Curie Fellowship [Grant # 656361].

[2] The forthcoming volume "Inside Countries: Subnational Research in Comparative Politics" edited by Agustina Giraudy, Eduardo Moncada and Richard Snyder, provides an insightful overview of different types of contemporary subnational research.

heart of this symposium constitute key contributions to this literature on decentralization and subnational governance. While the first volume "Measuring Regional Authority" (Hooghe et al., 2016) offers a novel conceptualization and original data on the territorial structure of governance within countries, the second book "Community, Scale, and Regional Governance" (Hooghe, & Marks, 2016) theorizes this structure. It demonstrates the importance of community in determining governance, and provides a much-needed correction to functionalist accounts prioritizing scale. In this short commentary, I will highlight the conceptual contributions of this multi-volume project and the formulated postfunctionalist theory of governance to the subnational literature in comparative politics, and explain why geo-coding the Regional Authority Index (RAI) and taking a more explicitly spatial perspective could make the contribution even greater.

"Scaling down": A Fresh Perspective on the Territorial Structure of Governance

Decentralization and the subsequent 'subnational turn' in comparative research have challenged comparativists to refine their conceptual toolbox, and to re-evaluate their approach to the study of governance. Following in the footsteps of many of the classics in comparative politics, countries had generally been understood as the "natural" unit of analysis in the study of politics, and the causes and consequences of cross-country variation in governance were assumed to be contained within them. This approach inspired the conceptualization of decentralized governance as a characteristic that national states possess to varying degrees. Measures of decentralization have thus looked from the top-down and defined decentralization as the opposite of centralized governance, more specifically as the amount of authority not

wielded by the central government. This, however, potentially conflates vastly different types of governance under one label. Vertically, it lumps together all subnational tiers and is therefore unable to speak to the relative importance of subnational tiers at different levels. Horizontally, such aggregate measures are insufficiently sensitive to within-country variation in the authority wielded by regions. Ultimately, studies drawing on these measures run the risk of constituting instances of what Snyder (2001) has described as "mean spirited analysis" in which the use of national measures conceals internal heterogeneity. Rather than providing a useful summary of the role of subnational jurisdictions in governance, national-level decentralization measures may then blur the distinction between very different types of subnational governance. From a measurement perspective, this is imprecise but it constitutes a problem only if there is empirical variation across countries in the way subnational governance is organized both vertically and horizontally.

The Regional Authority Index – developed in the first of the two volumes – effectively pulls out the rug from under the approach of measuring decentralization as a national-level variable. It demonstrates not only that there is significant variation in the structure of subnational governance – both along the vertical and the horizontal axis – but it also demonstrates that this diversity has increased over time. The RAI is novel in that it measures authority directly at the level of subnational jurisdictions. With regard to the vertical division of authority between regional tiers, the RAI shows that an increasing number of countries have more than one regional tier between the local and the national level of government, and that the relative authority of different tiers changes over time (Hooghe, & Marks, 2016, Chapter 3). Such changes are not picked up by national-level measures of decentralization, even though

they may constitute significant changes in the territorial structure of governance. At the horizontal level, there is a persistent shift away from uniform frameworks that treat all jurisdictions within a country equally towards differentiated governance, in which the authoritative competences of some regions differ from those of others in the same country. 'Uniform governance has become the exception rather than the rule' (Hooghe, & Marks, 2016, 17-8), as the analysis of empirical trends in the RAI shows.

For the literature on decentralization and subnational governance, these findings have two important implications. First, they provide some pointers as to why previous studies have found contradictory results for the outcomes of decentralization reforms. Decentralization, measured as the absence of centralized governance, is simply too blunt a tool to adequately capture different types of governance arrangements. The question is thus not so much whether decentralization leads to more efficient public good provision, but which types of governance may have the desired effects.

Second, for the broader literature in comparative politics, these findings highlight why conceiving of states as primary units of analysis has become less appropriate over time. A measure, as Hooghe et al. (2016, 3) point out, 'is a disciplined summary. It attaches conceptual relevance to some phenomena and ignores others.' When most countries had just one regional tier and uniform authority across regions, the analytic costs of measuring decentralization at the national level were fairly minimal. As subnational jurisdictions have come to wield more authority, however, and do so within differentiated frameworks, privileging the national level creates blind spots that are hard to justify and analytically costly. By making new data available at the regional level, the RAI enables scholars to refine their analysis and move forward.

Interdependence in overlapping systems

Another piece of heritage that the comparative politics literature has taken from the classics in the field is the notion that the causes and consequences of the phenomena we care about are contained within well-bounded units, traditionally countries. These units are then assumed to be independent from one another, so that scholars can select one (or more) for analysis of a causal process of interest. When subnational units, rather than whole countries, are the units of analysis, this assumption of unit-independence comes under pressure. Subnational boundaries are arguable more permeable than national borders, and units within a country are exposed to common influences from the national level. Subnational units are therefore embedded both vertically and horizontally. Relaxing the assumption of unit independence, however, requires expanding the canon of comparative politics to include methodological approaches better suited to the analysis of interdependence. Because many of the founders of the field focused on interactions within well-bounded systems (e.g. Sartori 1976/2005), the analysis of interactions between and across multiple systems – either horizontally or vertically – has remained a challenge for comparativists.[3]

In examining the division of territories into jurisdictions, Hooghe and Marks (2016) contribute to shifting the focus of comparative politics from dynamics within well-bounded systems to interdependence among multiple overlapping systems. Interestingly, they draw inspiration from the work of Stein Rokkan (1970), one of the founding fathers of the field of comparative politics. His work on modernization and state building sought to understand the

[3] For a more in-depth discussion of how to incorporate spatial dependence in comparative methodology see Giraudy et al. (forthcoming), Harbers and Ingram (2017a) and Harbers and Ingram (2017b).

creation of national political systems from dispersed local communities, and the very creation of boundedness within countries. While Rokkan's work examined how communities were initially integrated into states and which factors favored integration, Hooghe and Marks explore how distinct communities have survived in the face of homogenizing pressure from the center. They highlight the footprint of historical communities in contemporary governance and the role of community in creating pressure for differentiated governance.

Interdependence enters their analysis in multiple ways. For one, the analysis seeks to uncover the factors that allow minority territorial communities to maintain distinct identities even in the face of homogenizing pressures from a central state. Their conceptualization of community emphasizes dense interactions within the community, contrasted with less intense interactions between the community and outsiders. A community is best able to survive when it is geographically isolated: 'the greater the time and effort required for communication between a core and a periphery, the weaker the pressure of homogenization' (Hooghe, & Marks, 2016, 20). Communities at the margin of the territory can therefore resist homogenization even when they are fairly small. Communities in closer proximity to the center need to be populous and large in order to avoid assimilation, because size 'increases interaction within the region as a proportion of all interaction' (Hooghe, & Marks, 2016, 22). Hooghe and Marks do not just 'scale down', however, and replace countries with regions as building blocks of analysis, they also scale back up and identify how the formal empowerment of some communities reverberates throughout other communities in the country. The recognition of some communities may spark demands for empowerment, and thus pressure for regional authority, in others, leaving a broader imprint on the structure of governance.

Conceptually, this book contributes significantly to the study of comparative politics by proposing and in some instances rediscovering ways to think about interdependence. Hooghe and Marks' engagement with some of the classics in the field – chiefly Stein Rokkan and Karl Deutsch – serves to remind comparativists that boundaries and boundedness were not always taken for granted, and that their emergence and the extent to which they delimit political processes has and should be a core focus of the field. Moreover, while Rokkan had strong intuitions about how the intensity of interaction between local communities and the national state came to transform politics in the process of state building, he lacked the empirical and analytical tools to effectively test his intuitions. Recently, the development of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and new techniques for the analysis of spatial data has provided scholars with new techniques to analyze spatial dependence. Rather than assume independence among units, these techniques investigate the existence and nature of interdependence.[4] To access these techniques, data must be geo-coded so that non-spatial data are associated with physical locations. A crucial and timely way to push forward the study of interdependence in comparative politics would therefore be to geo-code the Regional Authority Index.

For one, geo-coding would allow for a more explicit test of some of the spatial concepts contained in the postfunctionalist theory of governance. Notions of distance, remoteness, and connectedness are well theorized and operationalized in spatial analysis. Hooghe and Marks (2016) now operationalize 'distance' as a binary variable, and a jurisdiction is coded as

[4] Darmofal (2015) offers an informative and accessible introduction to spatial analysis in the social sciences.

geographically peripheral if 'it is an island or non-contiguous territory that is 30km or more distant from the mainland of its state' (Hooghe, & Marks, 2016, 130-1). The implication of the theory is more continuous, however, as distance seeks to capture the 'geographical barriers that impede political, economic, and cultural interaction and which sustain cultural distinctiveness even in the face of a prolonged state strategy to assimilate' (Hooghe, & Marks 2016, 73). Only coding non-contiguous islands as remote therefore constitutes are very conservative test of the theory. An alternative operationalization might be travel-time to the closest population center in which the majority language is spoken, a variable that can fairly easily be calculated with GIS software.

Geo-coding the RAI would also make it possible to take the analysis one step further. Since there is an empirical trend towards more regionalized and more differentiated governance over time, one might suspect that the recognition of the distinctiveness of specific communities generates pressures not just within countries, but also across countries. The formation of states often divided linguistic and cultural communities. Where minority territorial communities share a language and culture with a group in a neighboring country, the empowerment of the community in one country might spark similar demands across the border. The recognition of indigenous peoples' right to self-rule during the 1990s, for instance, begs the question of whether the recognition of a community in a given country increases the importance of community in the territorial structure of governance in nearby countries. While geo-coding the RAI would thus make it possible to expand the analysis and examine additional implications of the postfunctionalist theory, it is also worth emphasizing that such a dataset would be a tremendous service to the field and to the burgeoning literature on multi-

level and decentralized governance. Hooghe et al.'s ambition is to 'make it possible for researchers to investigate the causal links between the structure of government and its causes and consequences' (2016, 21). In many cases, however, variables on causes and consequences may not be available at the level of contemporary general-purpose jurisdictions. This could be because a phenomenon of interest does not map onto subnational jurisdictions (Harbers, & Ingram, forthcoming). It could also be because data are not collected for all subnational tiers. Moreover, one of the key findings of the two volumes is that the territorial structure of governance within countries is not static over time, as tiers are created, consolidated and boundaries re-drawn to accommodate changing pressures of community and scale. In addition, Hooghe and Marks show that discontinuity at the central level, for instance in the aftermath of a revolution, decolonization or regime change, is a likely trigger for reforms in the structure of regional governance as incoming central rulers seek to impose their vision on the country. This dynamism is a challenge for subnational research, because new and old units often do not line up in a spreadsheet (Lankina, 2012). They do, however, overlap in space. Geo-coding then makes it possible to match units over time by identifying 'common geographies' (Slez et al., 2017).

In suggesting geo-coding the RAI, let me be clear in acknowledging that there are excellent reasons for being reluctant to embark on such an endeavor. While international borders tend to be fairly stable over time, subnational jurisdictional boundaries – as discussed above – are much more dynamic. There is, to the best of my knowledge, no comprehensive geo-spatial dataset of subnational jurisdictions containing all subnational tiers, and tracing boundary changes on an annual basis. Geo-coding the RAI would therefore require compiling

such a database, most likely by obtaining geo-spatial data from country-level sources. The magnitude of data gathering required may therefore seem daunting. However, the team behind the RAI has already demonstrated their ability to bring an ambitious data project to a successful conclusion. Since research at the subnational level as well as on interdependence in overlapping systems is likely to occupy the field of comparative politics for years to come, a geo-coded RAI would be an invaluable resource.

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Virtues and Pitfalls of Subnational Comparison

Arjan H. Schakel, Liesbet Hooghe, Gary Marks, Sara Niedzwiecki, Sandra Chapman-Osterkatz, and Sarah Shair-Rosenfield

Kent Eaton, Jean-Paul Faguet, and Imke Harbers positively review our two volumes, but they also raise critical issues. First, Kent Eaton introduces the concept of state capacity in relation to formal authority, and suggests that formal authority may be neither necessary nor sufficient for the exercise of subnational authority. Second, Jean-Paul Faguet suggests that a postfunctionalist theory of multilevel governance would benefit from engaging political parties, and in particular parties' internal organization. Third, Imke Harbers argues that a chief virtue of a multilevel governance perspective is that it problematizes the interdependence among levels and units rather than assuming that each system is a world in itself, and she proposes to geo-code the Regional Authority Index (RAI) to capture inter- and intra-state spatial dependencies.

An inherent challenge in political measurement is to strike a balance "between a universalizing tendency, which is inattentive to contextual differences, and a particularizing approach, which is skeptical about the feasibility of constructing measures that transcend specific contexts" (Adcock and Collier, 2001: 530; Sartori, 1970). This raises the question of the limitations of the RAI. Are there contextual differences that render the measure more or less valid? These questions are pertinent as our team is preparing to update the RAI and extend its

coverage to less developed societies.[5] Eaton takes up this issue by suggesting that authority and capacity are different. In his recent book on subnational governance in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador, Eaton (2017, p. 19) argues that "it is important not to overstate the significance of formal decentralization because the reality is that subnational elected officials … often enjoy significant *de facto* autonomy to act on their ideological preferences. … I find that capacity is a more critical factor than subnational authority in explaining when subnational officials can act on their discordant preferences."

Eaton (2017, pp. 41-3, 179-181) makes a persuasive case that to explain variation in the exercise of subnational authority to challenge national economic regimes one must engage the institutional capacity (e.g. the independence of the regional administration, its resources, cohesion, and freedom from corruption), alongside economic power and coalitional behavior. Having a clean measure of formal subnational authority—the extent to which regional governments are legally empowered to tax, spend, and make policy (the RAI measures legal

[5] The RAI dataset spans individual regions and regional tiers in 81 countries between 1950 and 2010 (see Hooghe et al., 2016; http://garymarks.web.unc.edu). This project was funded by an Advanced European Research Council Grant #249543 and by a European Commission grant #2655307. An update for 43 European and OECD countries to 2016, funded by a grant from the European Commission, will be released in Fall 2018, (#2016.CE.16.BAT.079; Schakel, Danailova, Gein, & Hegewald, forthcoming). We are expanding the dataset to ten additional Asian countries (Shair-Rosenfield, forthcoming), the Ukraine, India, and China. These extensions and updates are funded by a research fund at Arizona State University, and the Kenan and Burton Craige research funds at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The release of a RAI dataset with scores updated through 2018 for all countries is planned for 2019.

authority across ten dimensions)—can be useful for precisely testing this alternative hypothesis. It helps the analyst assess rival causal claims that may otherwise be difficult to disentangle. Formal authority is but one ingredient in how authority is actually exercised, so it is all the more important to have measures of the key variables that do not contaminate each other.

The challenge of doing this varies across context. Ring fencing formal-legal authority is simpler in stable democracies than in countries that experience authoritarian rule or lack a robust tradition of the rule of law. In such cases, it may be tempting to stretch the operationalization of legal authority to include more of what shapes its exercise. There is no silver bullet, and our guiding principle is to make our conceptual, operational, and coding decisions transparent. When the RAI expanded to Asia and Latin America, we knew we needed to develop explicit guidelines for situations where state capacity or informal norms might undercut provisions codified in law. One rule was to require evidence that a reform of subnational authority was actually implemented. If, for example, the constitution states that regional governments may tax their population, but there is no enabling law, we do not code regions as having fiscal authority. Similarly, we date a reform when it comes into effect, not when it is proscribed in legislation (Hooghe et al., 2016, pp. 20-21; Shair-Rosenfield, Marks & Hooghe, 2014). At the same time, the RAI estimates authority independently from regime type so it is possible to assess how the imposition of a military regime, for example, affects each of the ten dimensions (Niedzwiecki, Chapman Osterkatz, Hooghe & Marks, forthcoming). If law matters less in some societies, the RAI might be useful in figuring out why and how.

Incidentally, capacity combined with formal authority may not translate into exercised authority. The Scottish government has had the legal authority *and* state capacity to set the rate of income tax, but has so far not exercised this right, reportedly out of concern that regime competition with lower tax rates in the rest of the United Kingdom would induce Scottish taxpayers to switch tax residence to England.[6] To rephrase in Boolean language: authority and capacity are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the exercise of authority. Mobilization of authority or capacity is also a necessary pre-condition. The impact of authority and capacity may be best conceived as conditional rather than direct.[7]

A core theoretical puzzle is to specify the relative role of these factors across contexts. This is an exciting playing field for research. Whichever theoretical road one takes, formal authority stands as a post in the sand: a phenomenon to explain, a reference against which to contrast executed authority, a control. The upshot is that it seems to make sense to begin by conceiving and estimating formal authority as distinct.

Jean-Paul Faguet highlights the mediating role of political parties in shaping regional authority. Riker (1964, p. 129) famously claimed that "The federal relationship is centralized

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[6] Michael Gray, Business for Scotland, 'Explaining the limited tax powers in the Scotland Act 2012'. http://www.businessforscotland.com/explaining-the-limited-tax-powers-in-the-scotland-act-2012/ and Alexander Garden and David Welsh of Turcan Connell, Lyon and Turnbull, 'Scottish Devolved Taxation – Where Are We Now?' https://www.lyonandturnbull.com/scottish-devolved-taxation-where-are-we-now (consulted on 17 September 2017).

[7] If this is true, it may signify that the best use of the RAI is in interaction with variables whose causal relationship it conditions.

according to the degree to which the parties organized to operate the central government control the parties organized to operate the constituent units," but recent research suggests that the relationship is reciprocal. Political parties are both consumers and producers of regional authority, and the interplay between how parties are organized internally and how the state is structured requires careful modeling (Faguet, 2017; see also Chhibber & Kollman, 2004; Harbers, 2010). Faguet shows compellingly how, in Bolivia, initial decentralization allowed Evo Morales' decentralized movement to outmanoeuvre the traditional parties, but how, in a second round, activists in the now decentralized parties drove Morales to concede deeper decentralization (Faguet, 2017). This reciprocal relationship reinforces the argument for minimalism—the effort to avoid contaminating a measure by including too much.

Postfunctionalist theory is oriented to the politics of jurisdictional design (Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Schakel, 2009), so we need to respond to Faguet's gentle query of why we "leave unanswered" this "fertile line of inquiry." The aim in Volume II is to consider the causal power of distal factors—having to do with geography, language, and state building—for patterns of regional authority that we see today. This, as Faguet suggests, is a sociological theory. We are keenly aware that these factors do not operate directly, but must be interpreted, mobilized, and mediated by political actors and that the closer one examines a particular outcome, the more one must engage actors, institutions, and preferences. Nonetheless, it seems to be the case that patterns of human settlement, language use, and histories of political independence leave a distinct and detectable footprint on contemporary multilevel governance (Hooghe & Marks, 2016, p. 147).

Several novel strands of research model the interplay between political parties and regional authority. One line of inquiry examines the effects of regional party strength (Brancati, 2008; Massetti & Schakel, 2013, 2017; Meguid, 2015). Another is the relationship between decentralization and the internal party structure of state-wide parties (Faguet, in this issue; Harbers, 2010; Fabre & Swenden, 2013). A third is to take into account elite preferences and elite interaction (Niedzwiecki, 2016; Shair-Rosenfield, 2016; Tatham & Bauer, 2014).

Imke Harbers reminds us that spatial dependence is integral to multilevel governance, and this has important methodological implications. For one, it requires clarity in the definition of territorial space. The RAI is concerned with authority that in most cases is spatially defined by regional administrative units. However, it also encompasses the spatial organizations of indigenous peoples in Latin America, North America, and Asia. These challenge the Euro-centric notion of an ethnic group that is a national minority but a territorial majority in some jurisdiction with fixed borders. At the same time, we did not wish to include governance arrangements for non-territorial groups in a society. Our solution was to include groups with a territorial "homeland" and to exclude autonomy arrangements for groups without a territorially defined jurisdiction.

We welcome Imke Harbers' suggestion to geo-code the RAI so that its observations can be located in physical space. Geo-coding the RAI would involve the construction of a comprehensive geo-spatial dataset containing all subnational jurisdictions at every subnational tier, and tracking boundary changes on an annual basis. This could then be merged into a super-dataset with data collected by scholars and statistical offices following the territorial boundaries of subnational institutions as they change over time, including datasets of election

results, the party composition of regional executives, socio-economic data, and public revenues and expenditures.

The possibilities associated with geo-referenced RAI data are numerous (Harbers & Ingram, 2017). Geo-referenced data could help address research questions on within-subnational unit variation in policy outcomes. For example, researchers in public administration, public health, or development may want to investigate whether the level of regional authority or the kind of authority (e.g. extent of self-rule, or extent or type of tax autonomy) is associated with better social policy outcomes, such as access to immunizations or literacy. Or they could examine the effect of terrain and distance on state capacity while controlling for authority. This would permit assessments of whether infrastructural deficiencies interfere with authority as it is exercised further away from the center (e.g. Shair-Rosenfield, 2017).

Spatial dependence makes it so much more plausible that diffusion—the process whereby units are affected by what takes place in other units—shapes outcomes (Harbers & Ingram, 2017). Competition or convergence may generate diffusion, but in either case, the assumption of unit independence is violated. Using geo-coded electoral support data for the 2012 election in Mexico, Harbers demonstrates that party support in one district increases the likelihood of party support in a nearby district, thus highlighting the importance of location in the dynamics of party nationalization (Harbers, 2017). Diffusion is an implicit recurrent theme in Volume II and comes into play given our finding that demand for self-rule on the part of a minority community affects the society as a whole. Diffusion may operate at the subnational level across national borders particularly when, as Harbers notes, a minority community shares

a language and culture with one in a neighboring country. Moving beyond "methodological nationalism" is a task that transcends replacing countries as a natural unit of analysis by units of varying territorial scales (Giraudy, Moncada & Snyder, 2017); it requires systematic data collection and out-of-the-box thinking about the multiple scales at which interdependence takes place (Jeffery & Wincott, 2010).

Through all of this, the virtue of extending comparison across scale, within and among states, stands out. By controlling for national factors, subnational comparison can gain levers of inference and theory building. Moreover, the causal factors that produce variation among states may not mirror those among units within states. Most states encompass a diversity of territorially distinct institutions and patterns of behavior. Each of the factors discussed in this essay, including legal authority, institutional capacity, political parties, geography, language, and state building vary within states, and the effort to generalize about such phenomena is an exciting frontier of comparative politics.

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