

Prof. Dr. Michael W. Bauer  
Jean Monnet Professor  
Chair of Comparative Public Administration and Policy Analysis  
michael.bauer@uni-speyer.de

April 2018

**MICHAEL W. BAUER**

**STEFAN BECKER**

**Subnational Administrations in the EU  
Multilevel System: Perspectives from the  
Bureaucratic Elite**

**Publication Details:**

Michael W. Bauer and Stefan Becker, 2015: Subnational Administrations in the EU Multilevel System: Perspectives from the Bureaucratic Elite, in: Bauer, Michael W./Trondal, Jarle (eds.): The Palgrave Handbook on the European Administrative System, London/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 432-448.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Although it is acknowledged that European integration poses both significant challenges and opportunities for subnational entities, less is known about how regional actors perceive this new constellation. This chapter seeks to fill this void by analyzing the attitudes of regio-crats, that is, high-level officials at regional level, toward the emerging multilevel system of the European Union EU . In doing so, we not only aim to further our understanding of the European administrative system EAS by elucidating attitudinal patterns and variations in regional bureaucracies but also seek to add to the debate on subnational mobilization, which is a well-established branch of the discussion on multilevel policy making in the EU Hepburn, 2010; Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Jeffery, 1997, 2000; Keating, 1998; Marks, 1992, 1993; Moore, 2008; Tatham, 2010 . In this regard, regio-crats are considered representatives of their regional administration's 'thinking', and their aggregated orientations can therefore be used as evidence for understanding the logics of subnational mobilization. With attitudinal data gathered from five countries, we revisit three central propositions of the early subnational mobilization debate Hooghe, 1995 : i the logic of bypassing the national level leads subnational actors to desire strong supranational institutions, ii the subnational resource base determines the intensity of subnational–supranational political exchange, and iii there should be a certain degree of subnational convergence.<sup>2</sup> We choose these three propositions because they best reflect the core of subnational mobilization theory if the focus lies on explaining the transformation of interaction patterns between subnational and supranational political authorities.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter proceeds as follows. Following this introduction, the three propositions on subnational mobilization will be presented in more detail Section 2 . The regional survey data will then be described, including the socio-demographic composition of the regional elite bureaucracy Section 3 . Subsequently, the three propositions will be confronted with the regio-crats' attitudes and preferences Section 4 . This chapter will conclude by summarizing the findings and highlighting their implications for our understanding of both the emerging EAS and subnational mobilization theory.

## Subnational mobilization theory

The theoretical debate on subnational mobilization encompasses a broad range of assertions and potential empirical implications Hooghe, 1995, 177; Jeffery, 2000;

---

<sup>1</sup> This chapter emerged from a research project funded by the German Research Foundation DFG with the title 'Governance-Präferenzen im europäischen Mehrebenensystem. Subnationale Exekutiveliten zwischen Sozialisierung und Nutzenmaximierung'. We are grateful to Philipp Studinger for his input to an earlier version of this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Some of these 'early' claims have already been criticized by other authors see Jeffery, 2000 , but mainly either on a conceptual basis or on the basis of evidence taken from individual case studies Bourne, 2003 .

<sup>3</sup> Those who interpret subnational mobilization in a different way or from a different perspective would probably opt for other claims. It is true, however, that these particular claims are crucial to our own focus on the vertical transformative potential in the EU that subnational mobilization may explain.

Marks, 1992, 1993 .<sup>4</sup> We choose three claims for systematic assessment in this chapter, which we believe cluster around the core of subnational mobilization theory.

Firstly, the theory has usually portrayed subnational and supranational actors as 'brothers in arms', united in a drive to 'bypass' and eventually disempower the nation state. The expectation is that interest homogeneity will emerge between subnational and supranational actors. Such interest homogeneity is, however, difficult to observe empirically. A central implication is that subnational actors will develop a genuine interest in a strong and active supranational level; they should be seen, for example, to prefer a supranational conception of EU governance than an intergovernmental model. Secondly, the empirical variation in the subnational bodies' eagerness to engage in political exchange with the EU has essentially been explained in terms of varying regional capacities and institutional constellations. The proposition is that subnational entities, if they had the resources in terms of staff, finances, and institutional access, would automatically engage in intensifying interaction with the supranational level. Thus, the subnational resource base should determine the intensity of subnational–supranational political exchange. An empirical implication is that institutionally or economically strong subnational entities should be interested in intense interaction with the supranational level. Thirdly, the theory posits that the political environment of the integration process should little by little favor the intensification of subnational-supranational interaction by transnational learning, interregional competition, or other factors. Thus, subnational entities at least the 'stronger' ones can be expected to take advantage of the emerging new opportunity structures and converge in their engagement with the supranational level. One should thus be able to observe convergence with respect to their preferences regarding engagement with the supranational level.

## Data

In order to scrutinize these claims, this chapter reports on the preferences and beliefs of regional bureaucrats with substantial exposure to EU-policy-making. We carried out a telephone survey of regiocrats in five countries and 60 regions. Interviews were conducted by native speakers in the five languages of the 347 interviewees. Between one and 11 individuals were interviewed in each of the 60 regions, averaging 5.5 interviewees per region. Regional civil servants were randomly selected with the constraining criteria that they had to hold a senior position and that they had to have policy responsibilities in areas where EU influence is strong such as regional economic development and agriculture . The countries were chosen to reflect various accession waves and a broad geographical distribution. We eventually settled for Germany, Spain, France, Poland, and Hungary. While we included countries from southern, eastern, and western Europe, we could not for pragmatic reasons select a country from northern Europe. Thus, while we are confident that our findings apply to similar countries, they cannot safely be extended to the Scandinavian, Baltic, or Anglo-Saxon states.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Hooghe and Marks have refined their prominent theoretical claims in separate and joint publications over the years Bache, 1998, 1999; Hooghe and Marks, 1996, 2001; Marks et al., 1996 , but the crucial claims revisited here have remained by and large intact. Because we believe that these claims are outlined with greater purity in the original publications, we refer in the following to these.

<sup>5</sup> A fuller description of the data set can be found in an earlier work see Bauer et al., 2010 .

There are two main reasons for selecting regio-crats to study subnational mobilization. Firstly, surveying individuals as representatives of an organization allows us to compare responses to standardized ‘stimuli’ over a broad range of institutional contexts and configurations (Aberbach et al., 1981, 2006). Secondly, and most importantly, we assume that the institutional positions of regional top officials will determine their beliefs and attitudes.<sup>6</sup> The responses of regio-crats are to a large extent representative of the ‘philosophy’ or ‘thinking’ found within the institution. Unlike politicians, top regio-crats usually have substantial permanence within their institution, where they occupy a pivotal position between subnational administration and politics. They are socialized within their organization and, at the same time, given their seniority, they are able to shape the regional position in their respective policy areas. The socio-demographic composition of our sample hardly differs from findings for other elite bureaucracies – for example, Aberbach et al., 1981. The regio-crats in the countries under consideration are predominantly male and middle-aged. Nearly 40 percent of the interviewees are aged between 46 and 55 years; about 30 percent are aged over 55 years. As with many other top positions in the public and private sectors, the proportion of women is significantly lower than that of men. Only about one third of the sample are women. Apart from two exceptions, all interviewees have a university degree. Their disciplinary background is, however, quite heterogeneous. Within the German Länder administrations, we observed a predominance of people trained in law and public administration, although the proportion of these specialists is somewhat lower than in the German federal administration (Luhmann and Mayntz, 1973; Schwanke and Ebinger, 2006). Among the Spanish and French regio-crats, we also found a relative predominance of public servants trained in law or public policy, but officials with other educational backgrounds – for example, economics, natural sciences, and social sciences and humanities – are almost equally well represented. Among the Polish and Hungarian regio-crats, economists constitute the largest group.<sup>7</sup>

## Evidence

### Preferences for EU-governance

If we follow the argument that supranational institutions are on the side of subnational authorities, we should find regio-crats being in favor of strong and active supranational institutions. A strong supranational orientation with respect to the EU-governance structure encompasses at least two aspects. Firstly, decision-making procedures should be dominated by supranational rather than intergovernmental institutions. Secondly, supranational institutions should also become stronger and more powerful

---

<sup>6</sup> The extent to which the position of an individual within an organization determines his/her attitudes is a matter of debate – in particular if compared to other potential causal factors, such as individual utility or socialization in someone’s formative years before joining the organization. Nevertheless, the existence of a basic link between an individual – especially if he/she is at the top of an organization – and the general aims and philosophy of this organization is well established, and the elite survey method is certainly a standard tool used in this area (Bauer, 2012; Hooghe, 2002; Kassim et al., 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Our data reveal that regarding the questions addressed in this chapter, national preference trends are clearly and robustly identifiable. This encourages us to focus on the presentation and comparison of the results of the national subsamples. For more details about the sample, see Bauer et al. 2010.

vis-à-vis the member states. We measured the first dimension of supranationalism by asking how decisions in the Council of Ministers should be taken: by majority or unanimity. A supranationalist attitude is reflected by support for majority voting. Indeed, only ten percent of all interviewees are in favor of unanimity as the decision-making rule, while an overwhelming majority 90 percent states that they prefer the majority principle. Although we find only low cross-country variation, the French regio-crats above all prefer the majority criterion as the general decision-making rule in the Council of Ministers 96 percent . Our data thus indicate that the vast majority of regio-crats favor a supranational architecture in the EU.<sup>8</sup>

With regard to the second dimension of supranationalism, we asked several questions to elicit the subnational administrators' perceptions of the Commission – usually considered to be their obviously – and other EU-institutions see Table 25.1 . Asked whether the Commission should be the government of the EU, there is positive consensus, with Spanish and Hungarian regio-crats being most in favor.

Furthermore, the average subnational administrator wants to have a Commission that is free from mandatory restrictions, that is, they do not want the Commission to be transformed into an intergovernmental body COREPER III . Only the Polish regio-crats show reservations about a strong Commission. This particular Polish attitude is also reflected in lower support for the statement that the European Parliament should have the same rights as the Council of Ministers during the legislative process. The regio-crats in the other countries are significantly more supportive of a strong European Parliament. Finally, we assessed the preferred role of the European Court of Justice ECJ , which has played an important 'integrationist' role Weiler, 1994 in the history of European integration. Our regio-crats strongly agree with the statement that the ECJ should have the final judgment concerning disputes between member states and the EU; this broad agreement also reflects the general acceptance of the European jurisdiction.

Literature on subnational mobilization has identified different channels through which regions can represent their interests in the European policy-making process Hooghe, 1995; Hooghe and Marks, 1996 . Following the above-mentioned arguments, we may find that regio-crats may not see their national governments as direct enemies, but still feel a stronger affinity with the EU-level. Indeed, by asking them how helpful the different institutions are when it comes to influencing decisions in their favor, we can see that national institutions are rated as less efficient see Table 25.2 .

National parliaments are assessed as the least helpful institution, whereas the European Parliament seems to be a better partner when regions want to influence European decisions. Comparing the mean values per country for the national government and the Commission, we find that the latter institution receives better marks on average. Only the Spanish regio-crats see their national government as being more helpful. In consequence, as expected by subnational mobilization thinking, EU-institutions are seen by and large as potential allies for regional authorities in the European multilevel governance system.

---

<sup>8</sup> There is a slight variation among the countries with respect to the preference in favor of the majority criterion: Poland: 91 percent; Hungary: 87 percent; Spain: 94 percent; and Germany: 84 percent.

Table 25.1: Subnational preferences for EU governance: Supranational versus intergovernmental

	Germany*	Poland*	Hungary*	France*	Spain*	Total*
The EU Commission should be the government of the EU.	7.0	6.3	7.9	6.5	8.3	7.2
In carrying out its tasks, the EU Commission should strictly follow the instructions of the member states.	4.7	6.9	4.0	4.8	4.9	5.0
In the EU legislative process, the European Parliament should have the same rights as the Council of Ministers in which the nation states are represented.	8.5	6.5	7.0	7.3	8.9	7.6
In the case of a dispute between the EU and a member state, the ECJ should render the final judgment/be the final arbiter.	7.7	8.9	9.5	8.0	9.1	8.6

Note: The table reports means by country. The scale of the possible answers ranges from 1 (strong disagreement) to 11 (strong agreement)

Table 25.2: Helpfulness of channels of interest representation

	Germany*	Poland*	Hungary*	France*	Spain*	Total
National Parliament	5.1	6.1	5.8	5.2	6.2	5.6
National Government	8.3	7.9	6.1	7.9	7.7	7.5
European Commission	8.2	9.0	6.9	8.7	7.3	8.0
European Parliament	7.3	8.4	7.2	7.8	7.0	7.5

Note: The table reports the means by country. The scale of the possible answers ranges from 1 (strong rejection) to 11 (strong support)

## Interest in subnational–supranational interaction

In order to empirically analyze the claim that regional entities have a general incentive to intensify subnational–supranational ties, we introduced a distinction between the establishment of institutional structures to potentially interact and policy interaction in specific areas – which we call a ‘polity nexus’ and a ‘policy nexus’ of subnational–supranational interaction.

### *Polity nexus:*

Being interested in how regio-crats assess different elements of the emerging institutional setup, we examined our interviewees’ attitudes concerning the following issues: the participation of regional parliaments in the ‘earlywarning

system',<sup>9</sup> the possibility of delegating regional ministers as national representatives in the Council of Ministers, the option of bringing before the ECJ suspected breaches of the subsidiarity principle, and the usefulness of the Committee of the Regions as the formal representation of subnational interests in the EU. Among our sample of regio-crats, there is fairly strong support for the idea that subnational parliaments should signal to the Commission their suspicion that a particular EU proposal violates the subsidiarity principle in the context of the 'early-warning system' see Table 25.3 . Only German regional bureaucrats are less in favor, perhaps unsurprisingly if one considers that German federalism has a strong bias in favor of vertical executive and not legislative multilevel cooperation.

Table 25.3: Strengthening of the institutional nexus

	Germany*	Poland*	Hungary*	France*	Spain*	Total*
Involvement of regional parliaments in the national early-warning system	7.9	8.7	9.0	8.8	8.6	8.6
Possibility to delegate a subnational representative to the Council of Ministers	6.9	8.2	8.1	8.3	8.4	7.9
Right to file an action with the ECJ if the principle of subsidiarity is endangered	5.3	7.4	8.1	8.5	8.9	7.5

*Note:* The table reports the means by country. The scale of the possible answers ranges from 1 (strong rejection) to 11 (strong support)

The Maastricht Treaty has already established the possibility of regional ministers participating in the Council of Ministers as representatives of their respective member states Hooghe, 1995 . Use of this option is made in cases where policies are negotiated that fall under regional responsibility of a particular member state. We receive somewhat lower mean values of bureaucratic support for this instrument than for the option of filing subsidiarity complaints in the early-warning procedure. The reason might be that subnational representatives in the Council of Ministers negotiate on the basis of a 'national' position. Such a position usually already represents a compromise between central and subnational governments; therefore, regional delegates cannot unconditionally promote the position of their individual entity. The pattern is similar with respect to direct complaints to the ECJ regarding suspected breaches of the subsidiarity principle. Spanish, French, and Hungarian respondents are very much in favor of having such an option, whereas the German regio-crats are much less approving.

Finally, we asked about the desired future for the Committee of the Regions, which by many accounts constitutes the single most important structure of interest representation between the subnational and European arenas Hooghe, 1995; Hooghe and Marks, 1996 . We might therefore expect clear-cut preferences in favor of an institutionally strong body representing subnational authorities within

<sup>9</sup> The Lisbon Treaty includes an early-warning mechanism for subsidiarity control. The system allows national parliaments – including regional parliaments – to object to Commission proposals within eight weeks of their publication on the grounds that they breach the principle of subsidiarity.

the EU. The majority of regio-crats indeed want to give more rights to the Committee of the Regions see Table 25.4 ; about one fifth even responded that they want this institution to have a competence equal to the Council of Ministers or the European Parliament ‘third chamber’ . However, German regio-crats are again comparatively more critical: a significant minority even wants to abolish the Committee of the Regions, while one third simply wants to maintain the status quo.

In summary, our data suggest that regio-crats want to moderately or significantly intensify what we call the ‘policy nexus’: they want to introduce or optimize systemic structures that allow the subnational level to potentially engage in a subnational–supranational political exchange. This was to be expected from a subnational mobilization point of view.

Table 25.4: Future role of the Committee of the Regions

	Germany*	Poland*	Hungary*	France*	Spain*	Total*
Abolition	13.3	1.5	4.0	8.2	4.2	6.4
Maintain the status quo	34.7	16.4	14.7	13.1	6.3	18.1
More rights at the stage of law formulation	41.3	61.2	61.3	54.1	75.0	57.4
Equal third chamber alongside EP and Council of Ministers	10.7	20.9	20.0	24.6	14.6	18.1

Note: The table reports percentages of respondents by country

*Policy nexus:*

The ‘policy nexus’ concerns subnational actors’ preferences regarding participation in multilevel policy making across particular policy areas.<sup>10</sup> This aspect is extremely relevant because it reflects subnational attitudes toward the vertical dimension of the EU multilevel governance system. There are two important questions in this regard. Firstly, in which policy areas do subnational bureaucrats want to see their regions involved? Secondly, under what conditions do they want to cooperate with the supranational level? It has been suggested that regions may benefit politically from cooperation between subnational and supranational levels in particular policy areas Mazey, 1994 , but notwithstanding the debate about policy allocation in the EU Alesina et al., 2001; Breuss and Eller, 2003 , this aspect has not yet been studied systematically from a subnational vantage point. Asked whether regional authorities should be involved in policy making across 12 policy areas, regional bureaucrats showed only a moderate desire for participation: on average, they want subnational competences in about four policy areas. However, national differences are evident. Whereas Hungarian respondents are satisfied with few competences 1.6 , Spanish regional bureaucrats demand extensive competences in about eight policy areas. The Polish 4.8 , French 4.3 , and German 3.4 regio-crats desire only modest participation rights across policy areas in the EU multilevel system.

We also asked the regio-crats in which policy areas they want to cooperate with the supranational level. Overall, a constellation where policy making is shared

<sup>10</sup> We are aware that multilevel governance is a complex concept comprising aspects both of policy competence and of varying modes of coordination and interaction Benz, 2007; Benz and Zimmer, 2010; Tömmel, 2008 ; we focus here on the former.

vertically across political levels and involves subnational and European actors is preferred for about one policy out of 12. In other words, the subnational preference for vertical cooperation in policy making involving the supranational level turns out to be even lower than the subnational preference for policy competences as such. In short, on the basis of these data, the subnational level should neither be seen as 'by default' expansive in terms of desired policy involvement nor as overly sympathetic to supranational involvement where subnational policy competences are deemed appropriate. Both results sit badly with the present transformative conception of the dynamism of the emerging multilevel governance order in Europe. Again, there is variation across countries. German and Polish regio-crats favor subnational–supranational cooperation in about one policy area, whereas Hungarian bureaucrats do not want to have any policy competences together with the EU level. With a mean value of about two policy areas, French and Spanish regio-crats are relatively open to vertical interaction. Examining these preferences in more detail, we can identify three policies for which a stronger nexus between regions and the EU is supported: research and technology, business development and structural policy, and environmental protection. Around half of the regio-crats favoring subnational competences in these policy areas want the EU as a partner. These policies can be categorized as issues of 'low politics'. By contrast, with regard to policies primarily falling under the sovereignty of the nation state so-called high politics, very few regio-crats favor the involvement of regional authorities. Besides the policy variation, our data also indicate that preferences for EU and regional cooperation in policy making vary cross-nationally. Around one third of the German and Polish as well as half of the French respondents regard shared responsibilities as being most useful in business development and structural policy, while Spanish regio-crats prioritize subnational–supranational cooperation in research and technology, tourism, and environmental protection.

Summing up, regio-crats favor the intensification of subnational–supranational political exchange, yet only to a modest degree. Far from wanting to expand policy involvement in all areas, they carefully select specific policy areas. The areas where the regio-crats favor competences are mainly policies that can be characterized as 'low politics'. Seen from the subnational mobilization theory perspective, this is at best a mixed result.

## **Preference patterns: Convergence and variation**

The third expectation of subnational mobilization theory concerns convergence among comparable groups of subnational entities. Clearly, our nonlongitudinal survey data do not allow us to assess convergence in terms of growing similarity over time, but they do provide evidence of preference patterns. According to subnational mobilization theory, the effects of European integration on regional entities will vary depending on the different resources institutional, financial that individual regions have at their disposal Hooghe, 1995, 192 : more resources mean a greater probability of eagerness to engage in vertical political exchange. Furthermore, the hypothesis that institutionally well-endowed regions should have a higher incentive to engage with the European level implies that subnational administrators from these regions will converge in their attitudes toward policy cooperation with the EU. We therefore compare rich and poor regions, as well as institutionally strong and weaker entities. In their response patterns regarding European governance and

the subnational–supranational polity and policy nexus, our sample of regio-crats shows striking similarities – despite quite different degrees of subnational autonomy. Regional administrators are overwhelmingly in favor of strong supranational institutions and display positive attitudes toward subnational–supranational interaction in general. At that level of generality, however, such a consensus is not surprising. The picture changes at deeper levels of analysis. Distinguishing between poorer and richer regions with respect to the attitudes expressed about the polity nexus, we observe interesting results. We find that the mean values of ‘poorer’ regions are higher than those of socioeconomically richer entities see Table 25.5 . Furthermore, a Kruskal-Wallis test for group differences shows that these differences are significant for the early-warning system and for the right to file an action at the ECJ. This indicates that, on average, regio-crats from socioeconomically well-developed regions are less in favor of a strong integration of regional authorities in the institutional setting of the EU than their poorer counterparts. Subnational mobilization theory would expect this relationship to be the other way around.

Table 25.5: Differences between resource-rich and resource-poor regions with regard to the institutional nexus

<b>Subnational authorities with ...</b>		<b>Integration of regional parliaments in national early warning system</b>	<b>Possibility to delegate a subnational representative to the Council of Ministers</b>	<b>Right to file an action at the ECJ if the principle of subsidiarity is endangered</b>
GDP < EU average	Mean	8.9	8.1	7.8
	sd	2.4	2.9	3.1
	n	233	232	232
GDP > EU average	Mean	8.1	7.6	7
	sd	2.5	3.1	3.4
	n	103	98	102
Kruskal=Wallis test		Significant	Not significant	Significant

*Note:* The table reports the average number of policies for which the respondents favor competences for regions and the EU, differentiated for socioeconomically strong and weak regions, that is, regions with a GDP which is higher/lower than the European average. The data reported are group mean values, standard deviation (sd), and number of respondents (n) for each group

In order to assess the factor ‘institutional strength’, we again divided our sample into two groups, the first characterized by a relatively low degree of regional autonomy (France, Hungary, and Poland) and the second by a relatively high degree (Germany, Spain).<sup>11</sup> Once again, it is the institutionally ill-equipped regions that have higher mean values, which indicates a preference for greater political exchange with the European level see Table 25.6 . Additionally, the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test point to significant group differences. With respect to the policy nexus, we also find significant group differences see Table 25.7 . However, compared to the pattern described above, we see quite a different picture when it comes to the regions’ socioeconomic situation: regio-crats from socioeconomically strong regions are more in favor of cooperation with the EU level across various policy areas.

<sup>11</sup> This classification is based on the regional scores of the regional authority index by Hooghe et al. 2010 . Regions with a value lower than ten are classified as regions with low authority.

Table 25.6: Differences between institutionally strong and weak regions with regard to the institutional nexus

Subnational authorities with ...		Integration of regional parliaments in national early warning system	Possibility to delegate a subnational representative to the Council of Ministers	Right to file an action at the ECJ if the principle of subsidiarity is endangered
Low autonomy	Mean	8.9	8.2	8.0
	sd	2.4	2.8	3.0
	n	210	209	209
High autonomy	Mean	8.2	7.5	6.7
	sd	2.5	3.1	3.3
	n	126	121	125
Kruskal-Wallis test		Significant	Significant	Significant

Note: (The table reports the average number of policies for which the respondents favor competences for regions and the EU, differentiated for institutionally strong and weak regions. The data reported are group mean values, standard deviation (sd), and number of respondents (n) for each group. Note that all group differences are significant

Although the standard deviation within the group of socioeconomically strong regions is higher, the regions on average prefer for about two policies a constellation that brings together European and regional levels. Comparing the groups of regions with low and high autonomy, we observe a similar picture. Albeit at a relatively low level, administrators from institutionally strong entities, compared to their weaker counterparts, would again prefer a more intense interaction with supranational institutions based on policy competences.

Table 25.7: Group differences for subnational–supranational interaction for 12 policies

Subnational authorities with ...				
	GDP < EU average	GDP > EU average	Low autonomy	High autonomy
Mean	1.0	1.8	1.0	1.6
sd	1.5	2.2	1.7	2.0
n	233	105	213	125
Kruskal-Wallis test is significant			Kruskal-Wallis test is significant	

Note: (The table reports the average number of policies for which the respondents favor competences for regions and the EU, differentiated for socioeconomically strong and weak regions and for institutionally strong and weak authorities. The data reported are group mean values, standard deviation (sd), and number of respondents (n) for each group

In summary, our data suggest that it is regions from institutionally weaker regions and from regions that are economically poorer than the EU average who are in favor of consolidating subnational–supranational institutional interaction policy nexus. By contrast, with respect to cooperation in particular policy areas, it is the regions from regions with a GDP above the EU average who are in favor of involving the EU in policy areas in which they have or seek competences policy nexus. These results do not sit well with subnational mobilization theory, according to which – in particular with a view to institutional transformation along

the vertical dimension of multilevel governance – the institutionally ‘stronger’ regions were expected to take the lead.

## Conclusion

Using survey data from five countries, this chapter has shed light on the attitudes and preferences of regional bureaucrats toward the emerging multilevel system of the EU. Their orientations show how subnational administrations deal with increasing integration. While some patterns cut across all subnational bureaucracies, there is also some interesting variation. We used these data to put three crucial propositions of subnational mobilization theory to an empirical assessment: subnational actors want a supranationalist EU; they want to intensify the subnational–supranational exchange; and subnational entities – in particular, institutionally strong ones – can be expected to converge in their preferences regarding interaction with the supranational level. There is good cause to revisit subnational mobilization propositions today because the original concept is based on expectations of transition and transformation, that is, patterns of interaction are supposed to increase as European integration intensifies.

In general, regio-crats are indeed in favor of a supranational EU system with strong and independent supranational institutions. Seen in terms of having a powerful ‘brother in arms’ to emancipate them from national tutelage, this is precisely what should be expected on the basis of subnational mobilization theory. The picture gets more complicated, however, when preferences for subnational–supranational political exchange are analyzed. We distinguished between polity- and policy-centered exchange and found that structural vertical interconnections that open up a potential to interact are much more broadly supported than are options to cooperate with the EU in specific policy areas. With the exception of Germany – where reservations are strong – European regio-crats clearly prefer strengthening institutional channels for political exchange with the EU, but are much less keen on working jointly with the supranational level in actual policy making.

The obvious question is why regio-crats show enthusiasm for strengthening the institutional nexus but remain fairly reserved when it comes to cooperation across governmental levels in specific policy areas. We think that the regio-crats’ preferences indicate that there is little hope for transformative governance dynamics fuelled by the expansive agendas of subnational levels; the regio-crats’ yardstick for competence allocation appears to be the status quo of their respective national systems and not a vision of an emerging European multilevel system in which their level could expand its authority. In this view, regional bureaucrats seem to be cautious actors in the European administrative system. After all, the institutional nexus is basically a defensive tool, good for alerting about and, if possible, inhibiting, threatening EU decisions. It does not entail any obligations in terms of positive subnational action. Our data thus suggest that regio-crats think that there are limits to what their subnational authorities should do and where they should engage in intensifying the subnational–supranational nexus in multilevel policy making. Such self-restriction is of great interest, and not only to those expecting huge transformative repercussions from multilevel policy making at subnational level.

Finally, analyzing the preferences for intensifying the polity and the policy nexus from a convergence perspective, we observe that it is the financially and institutionally weak

'camp' that is more eager to support polity-related interaction, while the 'camp' of institutionally stronger and economically better-off regions display some hesitation. In contrast, with respect to subnational–supranational interaction in concrete policy areas, it is the better-off regions whose regio-crats support a relative degree of increased cooperation with the EU. However, the word 'relative' is important here, because, generally speaking, the eagerness to cooperate vertically with the EU in policy making is much less developed than the support for institutional interaction.

This chapter has revisited central claims implicit to subnational mobilization theory; integrating our results into a revised synthesis of subnational mobilization theory is beyond its scope. Regarding future attempts to renew subnational mobilization theory and to remedy the shortfalls that have been identified, the most likely candidate variables are found in the area of 'domestic bargaining games' see also Jeffery, 2000 . Differential regionalist ideologies Massetti and Schakel, 2011 and varying interest intermediation features Tatham 2010, 2011 , for example, appear to be promising ways to account for the differential political strength of regions vis-à-vis the center in subnational mobilization analysis. Whatever the direction subnational mobilization theory may take, we are convinced that bringing in the attitudes and beliefs of regional top bureaucrats as a proxy for the preferences of the regional organizational level is a useful contribution in that it increases empirical leverage and has important theoretical implications.

## References

- Aberbach, J. D. and Rockman, B. A. 2006 'The Past and Future of Political-Administrative Relations: Research from "Bureaucrats and Politicians" to "In the Web of Politics" – and Beyond', *International Journal of Public Administration*, 29, 977–995.
- Aberbach, J. D., Putnam, R. D. and Rockman, B. A. 1981 *Bureaucrats and Politicians in Western Democracies* Cambridge: Harvard University Press .
- Alesina, A., Ignazio, A. and Schuknecht, L. 2001 'What Does the European Union Do?' NBER Working Paper 8647.
- Bache, I. 1998 *Politics of European Union Regional Policy: MultiPLLevel Governance or Flexible Gatekeeping?* Sheffield: Sheffield University Press.
- Bache, I. 1999 'The Extended Gatekeeper: Central Government and the Implementation of EC Regional Policy in the UK', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 6, 28–45.
- Bauer, M. W. 2012 'Tolerant, If Personal Goals Remain Unharmd: Explaining Supranational Bureaucrats' Attitudes to Organizational Change', *Governance*, 25, 485– 510.
- Bauer, M. W. and Börzel, T. 2010 'Regions and the European Union', in Enderlein, H., Wälti, S. and Zürn, M. eds. *Handbook On MultiPLLevel Governance* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar , 253–263.
- Bauer, M. W., Pitschel, D. and Studinger, P. 2010 'Governance Preferences of Subnational Administrative Elites in the European Union. An Empirical Analysis', Working Paper 4/2010, Lehrstuhl Politik und Verwaltung, HU Berlin.

- Benz, A. 2007 'Multilevel Governance', in Benz, A., Lütz, S., Schimank, U. and Simonis, G. eds. *Handbuch Governance – Theoretische Grundlagen und empirische Anwendungsfelder* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften , 297–310.
- Benz, A. and Zimmer, C. 2010 'The EU's Competences: The "Vertical" Perspective on the Multilevel System', *Living Reviews in European Governance*, 5 1 , available online at <http://www.livingreviews.org/lreg-2010-1>.
- Bourne, A. 2003 'The Impact of European integration on Regional Power', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 41, 597–620.
- Breuss, F. and Eller, M. 2003 'On the Optimal Assignment of Competences in a Multi-Level Governed European Union'. *European Integration online Papers*, 7 8 , available online at <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2003-008a.htm>.
- Hepburn, E. 2010 *Using Europe: Territory Party Strategies in a MultiLevel System* Manchester: Manchester University Press .
- Hooghe, L. 1995 'Subnational Mobilisation in the European Union', *West European Politics*, 18, 175–198.
- Hooghe, L. 2002 *The European Commission and the Integration of Europe. Images of Governance* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press .
- Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. 1996 '“Europe with the Regions”: Channels of Regional Representation in the European Union', *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, 26 1 , 73–91.
- Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. 2001 *MultiLevel Governance and European integration* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield .
- Hooghe, L., Gary, M. and Schakel, A. H. 2010 *The Rise of Regional Authority: A Comparative Study of 42 Countries* London: Routledge .
- Jeffery, C. ed. 1997 *The Regional Dimension of the European Union* London: Frank Cass .
- Jeffery, C. 2000 'Sub-National Mobilization and European Integration: Does It Make Any Difference?' *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 38, 1–23.
- Kassim, H., Peterson, J., Bauer, M. W., Connolly, S., Dehousse, R., Hooghe L. and Thompson, A. 2013 *The European Commission of the TwentyFirst Century* Oxford: Oxford University Press .
- Keating, M. 1998 *The New Regionalism in Western Europe* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar .
- Luhmann, N. and Mayntz, R. 1973 *Personal im öffentlichen Dienst – Eintritt und Karrieren* Baden-Baden: Nomos .
- Marks, G. 1992 'Structural Policy in the European Community', in Sbragia, A.M. ed. *EuroPpolitics – Institutions and Policymaking in the “new” European Community* Washington, DC: Brookings Institution , 191–224.
- Marks, G. 1993 'Structural Policy and Multilevel Governance in the EC', in Cafruny, A.W. and Rosenthal, G. G. eds. *The State of the European Community* New York: Lynne Rienner , 391–410.

- Marks, G., Hooghe, L. and Blank, K. 1996 'European Integration from the 1980s: State-Centric v. Multi-level Governance', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 34, 341–378.
- Masseti, E. and Schakel, A. H. 2011 'Decentralization, Regionalist Parties', Strength and Regionalist Demands', Paper presented at the Policy, Authority, and Identity in the EU Regions panel at EUSA 2011 in Boston.
- Mazey, Sonia 1994 'French Regions and the European Union', *Regional & Federal Studies* 4 3 , 132–157.
- Moore, C. 2008 'A Europe of the Regions vs. the Regions in Europe: Reflections on Regional Engagement in Brussels', *Regional and Federal Studies*, 18, 517–535.
- Schwanke, K. and Ebinger, F. 2006 'Politisierung und Rollenverständnis der deutschen Administrativen Elite 1970–2005 – Wandel trotz Kontinuität', in Bogumil, J., Jann, W. and Nullmeier, F. eds. *Politik und Verwaltung. PVS Sonderheft 37/2006* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag , 228–249.
- Tatham, M. 2010 'With or Without You? Revisiting Territorial State-Bypassing in EU Interest Representation', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 17, 76–99.
- Tatham, M. 2011 'Devolution and EU Policy-Shaping: Bridging the Gap Between Multi-Level Governance and Liberal Intergovernmentalism', *European Political Science Review*, 3, 53–81.
- Tömmel, I. 2008 'Governance und Policy-Making im Mehrebenensystem der EU', in Tömmel, I. ed. *Die Europäische Union – Governance und PolicyPMaking. PVSP Sonderheft* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag , 13–35.
- Weiler, J. H. H. 1994 'A Quiet Revolution: The European Court of Justice and Its Interlocutors', *Comparative Political Studies*, 26, 510–534.